

An Exploratory Study of the Support Needs of Midwives in relation to Perinatal Mental Health

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BACKGROUND

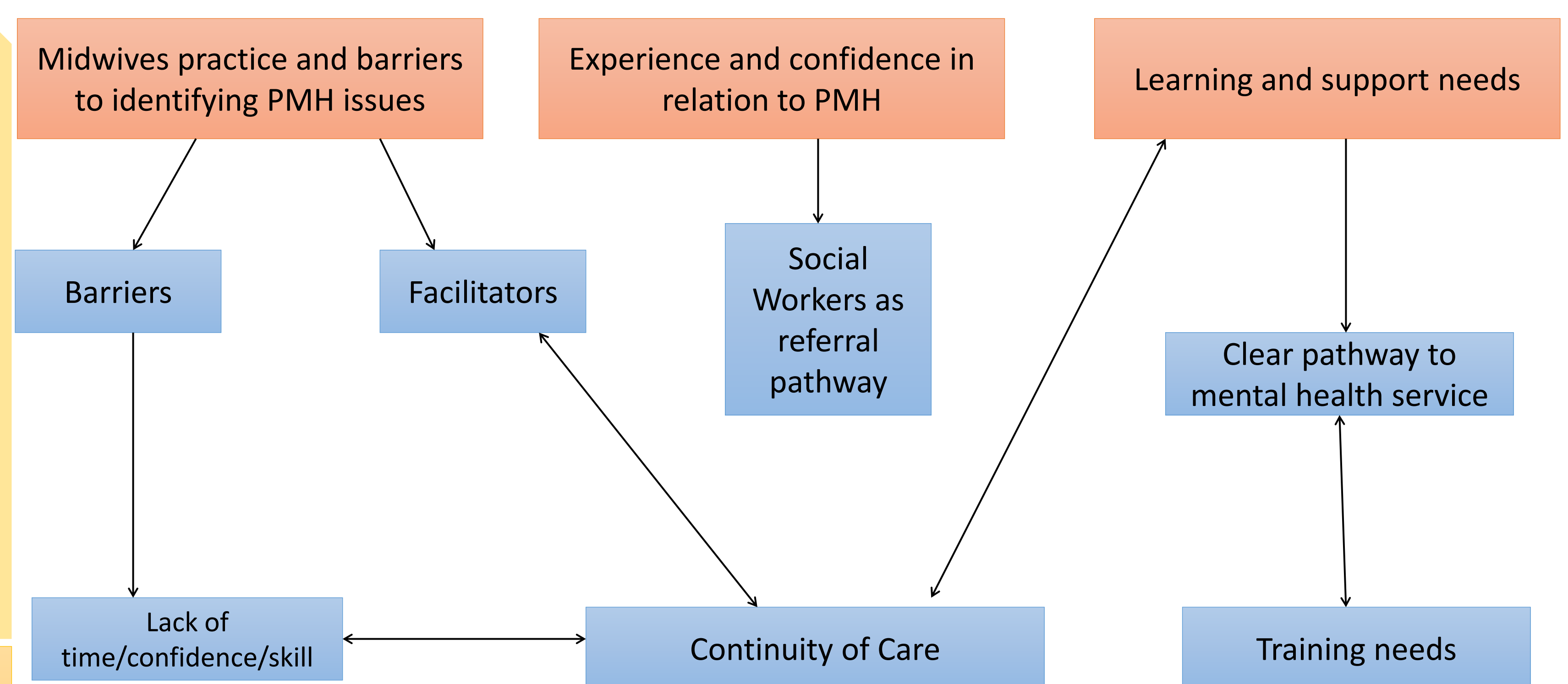
The National Maternity Strategy (2016) and the National Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service Model of Care for Ireland (2017) recommend a central role for midwives in the provision of women-centred care for those with mental health difficulties in pregnancy. Literature suggests that midwives are uncertain about how to support women who disclose a mental health issue (Higgins *et al* ,2018).

RESEARCH AIMS

To explore midwives' support needs in relation to perinatal mental health (PMH) and to facilitate dialogue about the care midwives offer to pregnant women with mental health needs and identify strategies to support them in their role.

The findings will be used to guide the development of training programme for midwives working in antenatal clinics.

Midwives support needs for perinatal mental health



Key
 ► Red -Overarching themes
 ► Light blue -subthemes

METHODS

A qualitative descriptive design was used, six midwives working in hospital and community antenatal clinics in the Republic of Ireland were interviewed. Data was collected over two months in 2020 using semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes and subthemes (Braun & Clarke 2006)

REFERENCES

Department of Health (2016) *Creating a better future together: National Maternity Strategy* .

Health Service Executive (2017) *Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services: Model of Care for Ireland*.

Higgins, A., Downes C, Monahan, M., Gill, A., Lamb, SA., Carroll, M. (2018) Barriers to midwives and nurses addressing mental health issues with women during the perinatal period: The Mind Mothers study. *Journal of clinical nursing*. 27 (9-10):1872-83.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. 1:3 (2) 77-101

RESULTS

- The majority of midwives cared for women who experienced perinatal mental health difficulties during their pregnancy
- Midwives identified limited knowledge of mental illnesses outside of depression and anxiety.
- Midwives reported feeling unsure about discussing self-harm or complex mental health issues with women and described a lack of confidence in this area.
- Training and education about the detection and care for women with mental illness were identified as a key requirement to improve confidence around this issue.
- This training should focus on screening for mental disorders and equipping midwives with the skills and knowledge to identify those women they can support and care for throughout pregnancy and those who require a specialist mental health service.
- Midwifery –led continuity was identified as important in providing women-centred care to women presenting with mental health challenges in pregnancy .
- Clear referral pathways will need to be available as well as collaboration with mental health professionals to support midwives to deliver holistic care to pregnant women