



Midwives' Psychosocial Experiences in Pregnancy and Childbirth Services During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The safety aspect of health workers including midwives as the frontline in handling patients during the COVID-19 pandemic is at risk of being very vulnerable to being exposed to COVID-19 which threatens their lives and safety. Physical and mental fatigue in health workers during a pandemic increases the risk of burnout which can reduce the quality of service to patients. The purpose of this study was to review evidence related to the psychosocial experience of midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The method used was a scoping review beginning with the identification of scoping review questions using the PEO framework; identifying relevant articles to be determined based on inclusion and exclusion criteria; searching for articles using databases, namely Proquest, PubMed, Science Direct, and Wiley Online Library; selecting articles whose search flow is described through the PRISMA Flowchart; performing data charting and critical appraisal; compiling and reporting results. The results obtained based on 8 articles that had been critically appraised showed that 6 articles used qualitative studies, 1 article used mixed-method quantitative study, and 1 article used quantitative descriptive study. A total of 3 themes emerged, namely about the psychological impact, challenges and needs of midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic which affected the experience felt by midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services with psychological impacts such as fear and burnout. In addition, there were challenges faced by midwives and things that were needed by midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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ABSTRAK

Aspek keselamatan tenaga kesehatan termasuk bidan sebagai garda terdepan dalam menangani pasien selama pandemic COVID-19 berisiko sangat rentan untuk terpapar COVID-19 yang mengancam jiwa dan keselamatannya. Kelelahan fisik dan mental pada tenaga kesehatan di masa pandemic meningkatkan resiko terjadinya burnout yang dapat mengurangi kualitas dalam pelayanan pada pasien. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mereview evidence terkait dengan pengalaman psikososial bidan dalam pelayanan kehamilan dan persalinan di masa pandemic COVID-19. Metode yang digunakan ialah scoping review diawali dengan identifikasi pertanyaan scoping review menggunakan framework PEO; mengidentifikasi artikel yang relevan dengan ditentukan berdasarkan kriteria inklusi dan eksklusi; melakukan pencarian artikel menggunakan database yakni Proquest, PubMed, Science Direct, dan Wiley Online Library; melakukan seleksi artikel yang alur pencariannya digambarkan melalui PRISMA Flowchart; melakukan data charting dan critical appraisal; menyusun dan melaporkan hasil. Hasil yang diperoleh berdasarkan 8 artikel yang telah dilakukan critical appraisal, sebanyak 6 artikel menggunakan studi kualitatif, 1 artikel menggunakan

kuantitatif mixed-method, dan 1 artikel menggunakan studi deskriptif kuantitatif. Sebanyak 3 tema yang muncul yakni tentang dampak psikologis, tantangan dan kebutuhan bidan dalam pelayanan kehamilan dan persalinan dimasa pandemic COVID-19 yang mempengaruhi pengalaman yang dirasakan oleh bidan dalam pelayanan kehamilan dan persalinan dengan adanya dampak psikologis seperti ketakutan dan burnout. Selain itu terdapat tantangan yang dihadapi oleh bidan dan hal-hal yang menjadi kebutuhan bidan dalam pelayanan kehamilan dan persalinan di masa pandemic COVID-19.

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INTRODUCTION

When the number of patients with COVID-19 increases, more health resources including health workers are needed, but limited resources have an impact on the emergence of great stress and distress (Hanggoro et al., 2020). The number of COVID-19 cases that need to be handled certainly makes health workers including midwives have to make practical decisions by choosing the safest way to provide quality services to patients (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2021). The safety aspect of health workers including midwives as the frontline in handling patients during the COVID-19 pandemic is at risk of being very vulnerable to being exposed to COVID-19 which threatens their lives and safety (Santoso, 2021). As a result, mild to severe stress experienced by health workers has increased higher when compared to non-health workers (Al-Hanawi et al., 2020). On the other hand, physical and mental fatigue in health workers during a pandemic increases the risk of burnout (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2021), which can reduce the quality of care for patients (Lee et al., 2021). Other mental health problems such as sleep disorders, stress, anxiety, and fear of disease transmission (Yalçın Bahat et al., 2020), changes in work patterns, the use of Personal Protective Equipment for a long time, limitations of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), physical exhaustion and community stigma are psychological stress factors faced by health workers (Saleha et al., 2020).

Based on the results of a systematic review and meta-analysis of 13 studies with a combined total of 33.062 participants, it was found out that the prevalence of anxiety levels in health workers assessed in 12 research studies was 23.2% and depression in 10 studies was 22.8% during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pappa, et al., 2020). According to the results of a survey conducted by Lai et al (2020) on health workers at 34 hospitals in China, it was found out that most of the health workers had symptoms of depression (634[50.4%]), anxiety (560[44.6%]), insomnia (427 [34.0%]) and distress (899 [71.5%]) (Lai et al., 2020).

Social support is very much needed by health workers during this crisis to control their emotions (Bennett et al., 2020). Responding to this problem, the Indonesian government made several efforts to overcome burnout in health workers, namely by setting working hours thus they do not work exceed 12 hours a day, recruiting volunteers for health workers (interns, final year medical students, other health professionals), providing incentives and compensation for death to health workers by using sources from the *APBN* and *APBD*, and reducing the burden on hospitals by suppressing the spread of the virus through the Enforcement of Community Activity Restrictions (*PPKM*) (Winurini, 2021).

METHOD

The method used in this research was scoping review. According to Arksey & O'Malley (2005) in Levac et al. (2012), there are four objectives of conducting a scoping review, namely (1) to examine the extent and nature of research activities, (2) to determine the value of conducting a full systematic review, (3) to summarize and disseminate the findings and (4) to identify research gaps in the existing literature (Levac et al., 2012).

Step 1: Identify Scoping Review Questions

The problem in this study was examined through the results of articles in previous research journals, namely about the experience of midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the phenomenon, the PEO framework was used to develop scoping review questions, as follows:

Table 1. Framework PEO

P (Population)	E (Exposure)	O (Outcomes) / (T) Themes
Midwifery	Pandemic COVID-19	Anxiety, Fear, Stress Challenge Support

Step 2: Identifying Articles Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The literature search strategy to identify relevant studies was carried out by setting inclusion criteria, namely articles published from 2019 to 2020 that published in English or Indonesian, which discuss the experiences of midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Article exclusion criteria were in the form of opinion articles, review articles, commentaries and book reviews.

Step 3: Identifying Relevant Studies

The database used in the source search was the Wiley Online Library accessed through the Unisa Library, PubMed accessed through Google, while for Proquest and Science Direct was accessed through the PNRI. The article search strategy was carried out by entering keywords in the searching process which was entered using Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and using truncation / wildcard symbols and boolean operator strategy.

**Step 4:
 Article Selection**

Next, an article section whose process was described through the PRISMA Flowchart. PRISMA is a way to track and write down the number of sources that are examined,

selected or discarded for later use such as in a systematic review or meta-analysis (Garrard, 2020). PRISMA has a flowchart that provides details regarding the four main stages in the review process, consisting of identification, screening, eligibility and included (Gildboy & Bower, 2011).

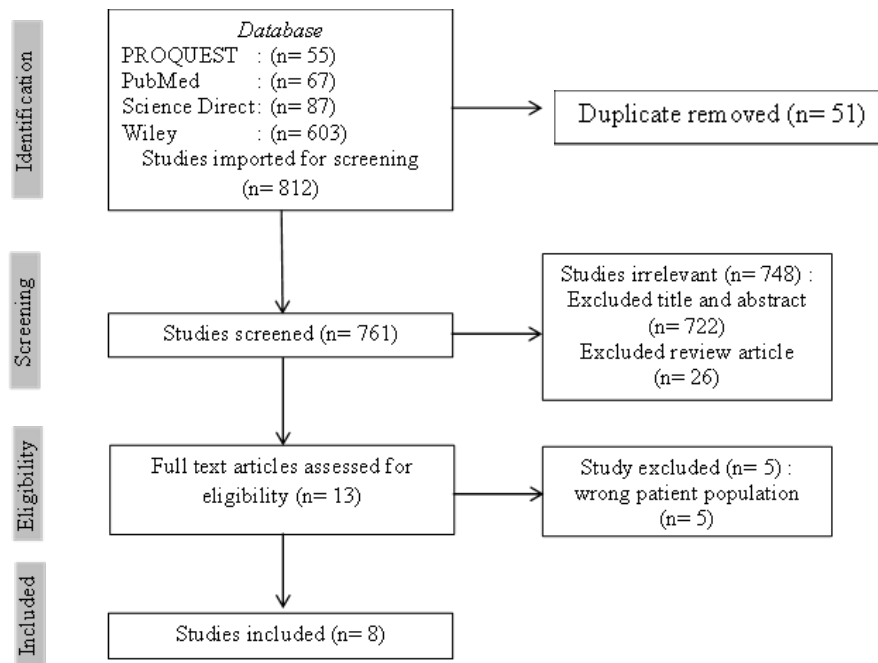


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

**Step 5:
 Synthesis of Evidence**

Of the 8 articles that had been selected, they were entered into the charting data table for further critical appraisal to determine the quality of the articles that had been selected. The tool used in this scoping review was the Mixed Method Appraisal Tool (MMAT). The MMAT is designed to assess the methodological quality of a study from five research categories namely, qualitative research, randomized controlled trials, non-randomized studies, quantitative descriptive studies and mixed-method studies, (Hong et al., 2018). Categorization of article quality is applied with a grade scale of A (Good), B (Quite Good) and C (Poor) to assess the quality of each article.

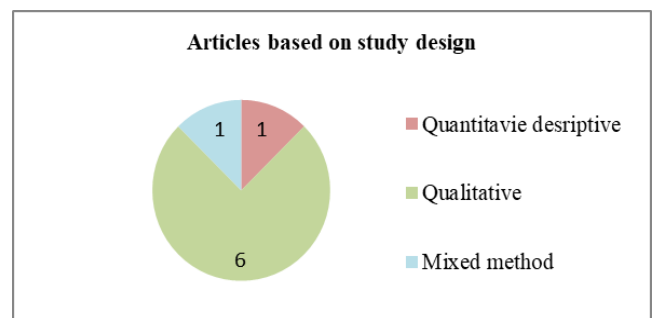


Figure 2. Study design

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Article Characteristics

Based on the critical appraisal results from 8 selected articles, 6 articles used qualitative studies, 1 article used mixed-method quantitative study and 1 article used quantitative descriptive study (Figure 2). Based on the quality of the articles, 7 articles obtained grade A, 1 article obtained grade B and there were no articles with grade C (Figure 3). In articles that had been critical appraisals, there were studies conducted in developed countries including Australia, Spain, the Netherlands, then for research in developing countries namely Indonesia and Iran (Figure 4).

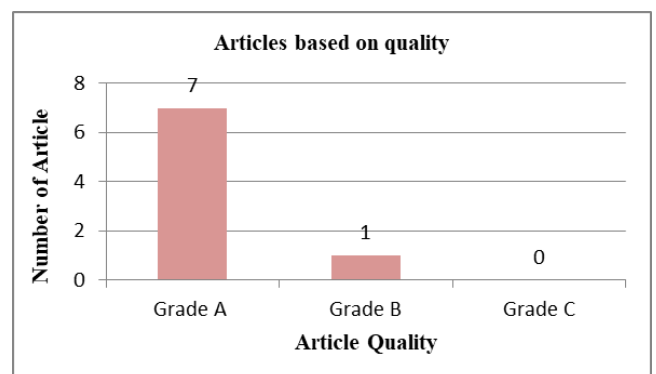


Figure 3. Quality

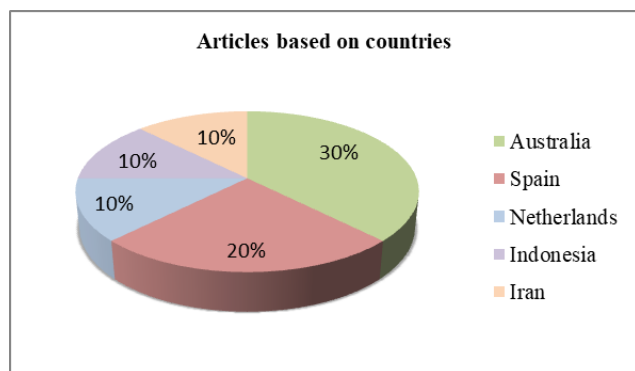


Figure 4. Countries

Thematic Analysis

Based on the selected articles, 3 themes were found, namely the psychological impact, challenges and needs of midwives in providing pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DISCUSSION

The psychological impact on midwives during the COVID-19 pandemic

1) Fear

The beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak caused fear, anxiety, worry for health workers including midwives (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2021; Hazfiarini et al., 2021; González-Timoneda et al., 2021; Goberna-Tricas et al., 2021). Fear is a temporary emotional state that is experienced differently in each person (Hatemi et al., 2013). The fear felt by midwives in the early days of the pandemic was in terms of facing new challenges brought about by COVID-19 due to limited human resources and sometimes midwives had to deal with an urgent situation themselves (González-Timoneda et al., 2021). In addition, the fear experienced is due to the unknown nature of the disease, the rapid changes, and the lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2021). The most common fear was that midwives were afraid of transmitting the virus to their families due to COVID-19 (Bradfield et al., 2021; Erkal & Koçak, 2020; Goberna-Tricas et al., 2021; Hantoushzadeh et al., 2021; Hazfiarini et al., 2021).

2) Burnout

Burnout is a state of very heavy psychological stress on a person in the form of physical, mental, emotional fatigue that occurs due to stress experienced for a long period of time in situations that require high emotional involvement (Wardani & Amalia, 2021). Somatic symptoms found from burnout experienced by midwives were irritability, changes in food habits, sleeping difficulty, and muscle tension (Erkal & Koçak, 2020). This fatigue caused the midwife to feel dizzy and weak (González-Timoneda et al., 2021). This burnout experience by midwives occurs as a result of a reduction in the number of staff per shift which results in increased work responsibilities and causes unpredictable changes in their work schedule (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2021). Therefore, it is

necessary to develop a system to prevent fatigue and provide opportunities for midwives to rest and relax (Erkal & Koçak, 2020).

Challenges

There are various challenges faced by midwives in providing pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges encountered in the service are the use of PPE which makes them uncomfortable coupled with the use of a face shield which causes respiratory problems and the use of glasses which limits the vision of midwives in providing maternity care (Bradfield et al., 2021; González-Timoneda et al., 2021; Hazfiarini et al., 2021). In addition, in order to reduce the number of visits to health services, the antenatal care system underwent a change using telehealth (Bradfield et al., 2021). However, in practice there are challenges in using telehealth as an online consulting service caused by connection problems or difficulties in communicating with clients who do not have access to appropriate telehealth resources (Stulz et al., 2021). Despite the challenges faced, midwives still try to practice by being as normal as possible and can take lessons based on their experiences for the future (Stulz et al., 2021).

Needs

Based on various experiences experienced by midwives during a pandemic, there are several things that are needed by them. Complaints in the form of fatigue and lack of motivational factors at work indicate the need for support for midwives in service (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2021). Midwives need support from other team members or colleagues to provide optimal services (González-Timoneda et al., 2021). In which case, emotional and psychological support from peers and family are important for midwives to be able to work in challenging circumstances during this COVID-19 pandemic (Bar-zeev et al., 2020; Hazfiarini et al., 2021). In addition, there is a need for attention from government officials, associations of midwives and other stakeholders to ensure the welfare of midwives by providing adequate protection for them (Hazfiarini et al., 2021).

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The scoping review study used 4 databases to search for articles on the psychosocial experiences of midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study only focuses on answering research questions and summarizing the psychosocial experiences of midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services in developed and developing countries.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic affects the experience felt by midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services with psychological impacts such as fear and burnout. In addition, there are challenges faced by midwives and things that are needed by midwives in pregnancy and childbirth services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Midwives should receive greater attention from the government, midwife associations and stakeholders in facing challenges in pregnancy and

childbirth services thus they can continue to provide quality services.

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ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This type of research is a scoping review so it is not applicable for this type of research to register an ethical review.

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Statement of Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the research or preparation of the manuscript.

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