

**EXPLORING MIDWIVES' EXPERIENCES ON THEIR PERCEIVED PRACTICES,
CHALLENGES, AND BENEFITS OF MATERNAL MENTAL HEALTH CARE
PROVISION IN IGANGA DISTRICT.**

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ABSTRACT

Using the phenomenology qualitative research data collection technique, this study explored midwives' experiences on perceived practices, challenges, and benefits of maternal mental health care provision in Iganga district. The study objectives were as follows: to examine midwives' experiences on their perceived practices on maternal mental health care provision in the health facilities in Iganga district. To assess midwives' experiences on their perceived challenges maternal mental health care provision and, to describe the midwives' experiences on their perceived benefits of their midwifery practice on maternal mental health care provision in the health facilities in Iganga district.

From the Analysis of the data only one main theme emerged: midwives' readiness and integration to Primary Health care. The findings indicate that when the midwife's capacity is enhanced in the provision of maternal mental health care services and when there is proper integration of maternal mental care to primary health care then women will be holistically managed during ANC, delivery and PNC period for maternal mental health. With the sub themes of: opportunities, health systems issues and good outcomes of pregnancy, these sub themes closely interrelate.

Majority of midwives saw opportunities to maternal mental service provision as they perceived the practices by midwives; such as of doing history taking while with the pregnant women and mothers in ANC, Labour and PNC as most perceived practice by the midwives.

Health systems issues appeared as a challenge to provision of maternal mental health care services; as the midwives perceive themselves not doing enough as recommended by WHO, they perceived lack of tools, drugs, knowledge and the skills on maternal mental health as some of the major challenges. Cultural beliefs and practices were also a major hindrance to maternal mental health.

Generally, midwives saw good pregnancy outcome as the benefits; the midwives perceived to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality as one of the benefits, most midwives also perceived prevention of post-partum mental illness.

They recommended that training on maternal mental health will improve on the knowledge and skill gaps in the service delivery and also ensure service integration maternal and mental health, a need to carry out sensitization of the community members about mental illness and maternal mental illness. And there is need for an expansion of the scope of practice for midwives and enhanced service integration and collaboration between mental health and maternity services.

