

# Intimate Partner Violence: Barriers to help-seeking experienced by women in the UK

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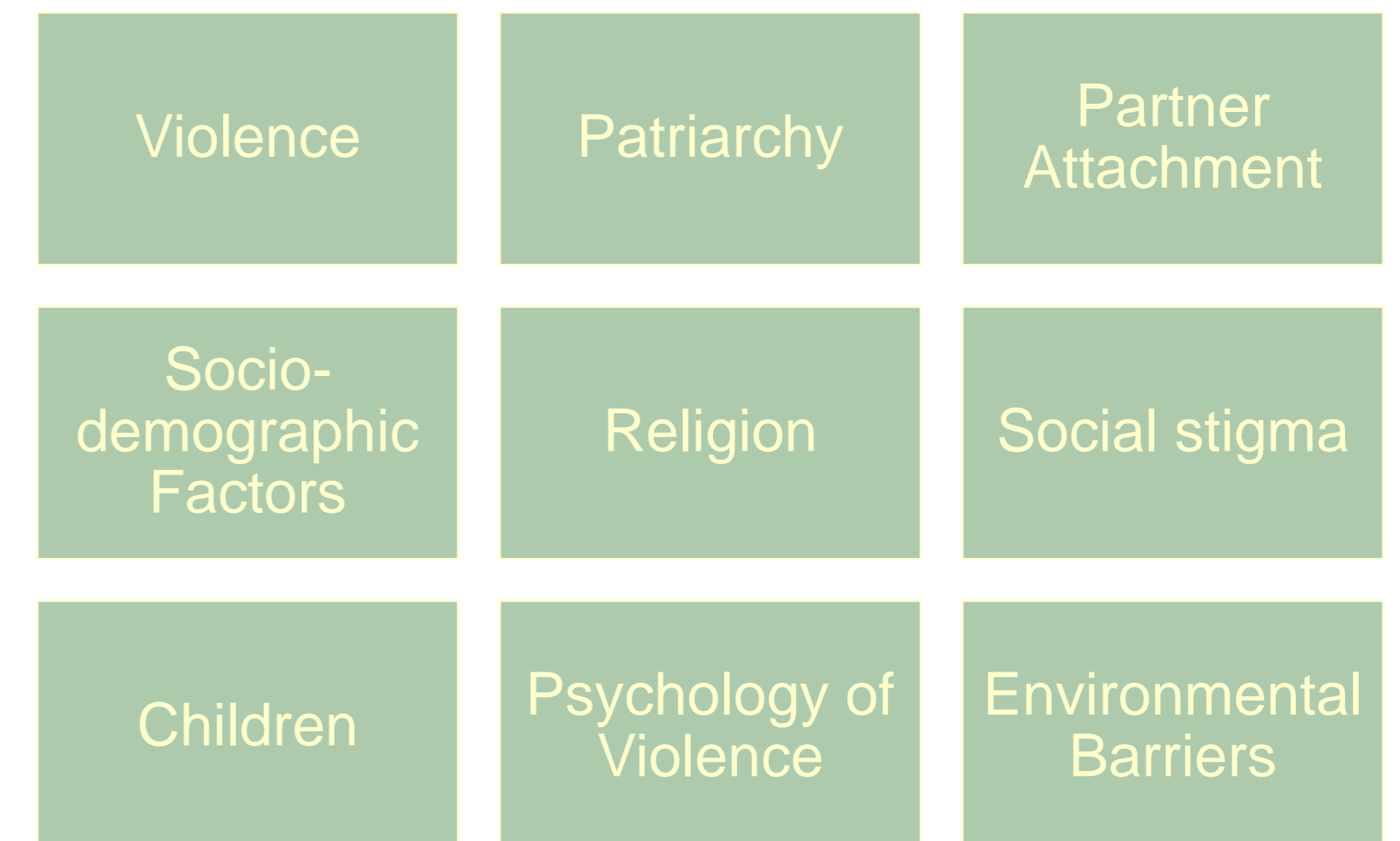
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## The Need for my Research

- Contemporary research has identified barriers to accessing support for women experiencing/ survivors of intimate partner violence (1).
- Currently, there is little qualitative work on the role of pathways to support and women's experiences of disclosing their experiences of domestic abuse in different contexts in the United Kingdom (2).
- My research is based in the UK and by using qualitative interviews I desired to obtain the narratives of women who have experienced intimate partner violence in their relationships, reflecting on the barriers they have faced throughout the help-seeking process.

## Barriers to Help-Seeking

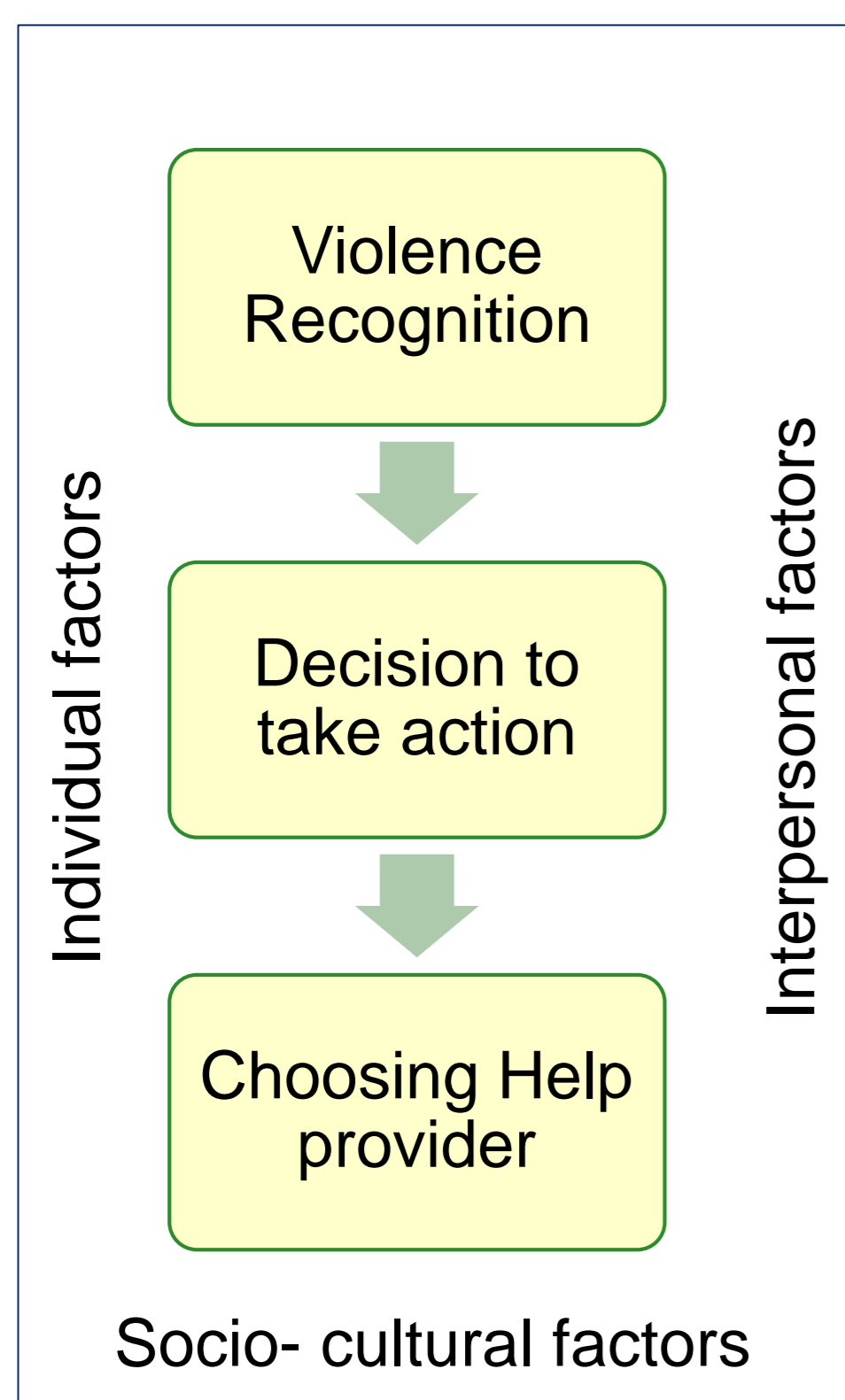
Barriers are often more than one and interlinked (1)



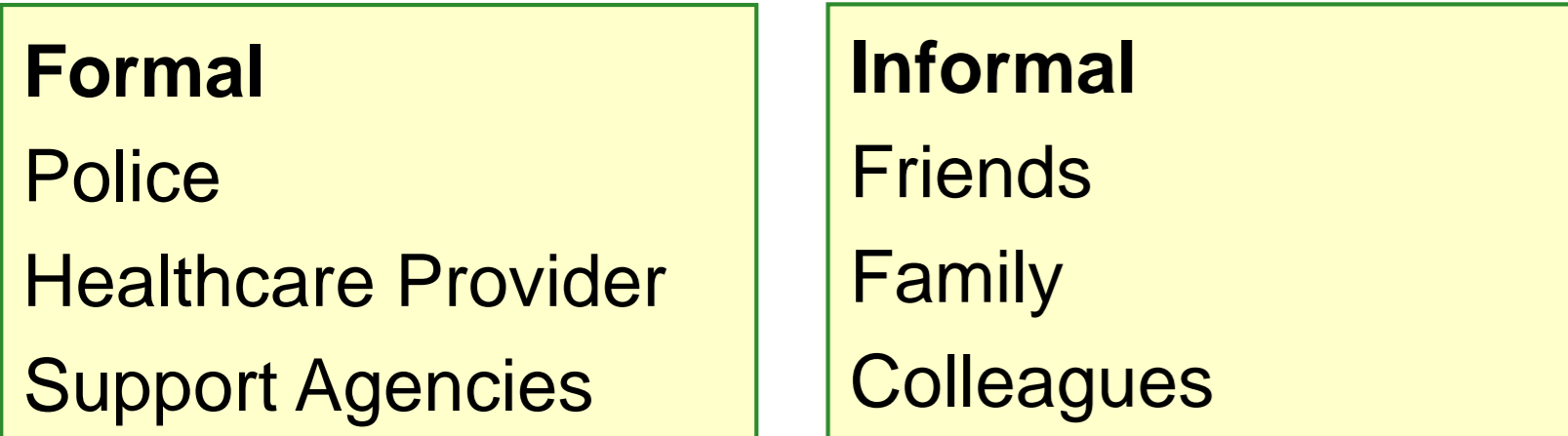
## 3 Stages of Help-Seeking

The three stages outlined below suggest a conceptual framework for help seeking (3).

All stages are influenced by individual, interpersonal and socio-cultural factors



## Formal/ Informal support



The stronger the informal support, the greater the chances of accessing formal support (3)

## Initial Findings

Initial Findings include:

- I had suicidal thoughts and even tried to end it once
- I never saw it as abuse until he actually hit me
- I was walking on egg shells all the time
- If I didn't do as he wanted, he'd hit me or sulk, the sulking was much worse than the hitting
- I had no money, he had it all
- I didn't know how to leave
- I didn't know coercion was not consent
- They kept saying 'why don't you just leave?'
- I just wanted him to be happy but I would always end up upsetting him
- I hated who I had become
- He knew exactly where I was, he had a tracker on my phone
- He would change when we were alone
- He was in my whole life, had taken over it and I don't know how it happened.
- I wanted my children to have a father...you see I hadn't had one and it was important to me
- I would lie to the police or it would be worse when he returned
- I didn't think anyone would believe me
- Everyone thought he was great
- At first I thought I was imagining it, he would act as if nothing had happened.
- He monitored my social media...if I liked a boys picture, then I was having an affair
- I didn't tell anyone, I didn't want them to hate him, he wasn't always like that
- I was so alone
- Self harming was my way of coping
- I just wanted him to protect me
- I felt like it was my fault, like I let him do all those things to me
- I stopped talking to friends and family without realising until I had no one.
- I loved him...I thought I could change him

My research sits within a wider project being undertaken by the None in Three Research Centre, funded by GCRF (through UKRI) and the University of Huddersfield. The aim of the Centre is to reduce gender based violence. The project is multi-country (UK, India, Uganda and Jamaica) and all countries are tackling issues that are most prevalent to them. The UK focus is intimate partner violence in young people's relationships. The Centre is developing an interactive computer game as an intervention to be played in schools allowing children 14-18 years of age to reflect on their intimate relationships, helping them to recognize manipulative, coercive and abusive behaviours and the impact of those on others, whilst understanding healthy relationships. The experiences of women interviewed will influence the script and storyline of the game, paying particular attention to dialogue delivery, attitudes and perceptions. The Centre will also be involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention.



### References

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- (2) Evans, M.A., Feder, G.S. (2014) 'Help-Seeking Amongst Women Survivors of Domestic Violence: A Qualitative Study of Pathways Towards Formal and Informal Support', *Health Expectations* 19: 62-73.
- (3) Liang, B., Goodman, L., Tummala-Narra, P., & Weintraub, S. (2005). A theoretical framework for understanding help-seeking processes among survivors of intimate partner violence. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(1-2), 71-84.