

Alcohol & Pregnancy: Knowledge and experiences of women and partners



University of South Australia

Crawford-Williams F., Fielder A., Mikocka-Walus A., Steen M., Esterman A.
Contact email: fiona.crawford-williams@mymail.unisa.edu.au

BACKGROUND

- Alcohol can cross the placenta to the foetus and can affect infant development.
- Australian guidelines recommend for pregnant women or women planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option.
- Differing worldwide policies and conflicting media portrayal has led to confusion about accepted alcohol consumption levels during pregnancy.
- Health professionals often do not ask pregnant women about their alcohol consumption. Some believe that women are already aware of the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.
- Since women's alcohol use can be influenced and encouraged by other people around her, partners may play a key role in healthy pregnancy outcomes with regards to alcohol consumption.

METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative study involving focus groups.
- Five focus groups: each with two to seven participants.
- Braun and Clarke's six step protocol was used to analyse all focus groups.
 - Data extracts derived from field notes, summaries, and verbatim transcripts.
 - Extracts of data were coded into logical concepts, and these codes were categorised, re-categorised and condensed to identify major themes.
 - The themes and sub-themes identified through the analysis were reviewed, named and defined.
- Ethics approval (Protocol no. 0000031358 and HREC/13/WCHN/121).

AIMS and OBJECTIVES

- **Aim:** Identify gaps in knowledge about the effects of alcohol use in pregnancy
- **Objective:** Determine the sources and quality of information provided, as well as the influence of friends, family, and partners on pregnant women's drinking habits.

RESULTS

- 21 participants: 8 pregnant women, 9 newly delivered mothers, 4 partners
- Age 23 - 40 years. 81% female, 95% Caucasian
- 7 major themes identified

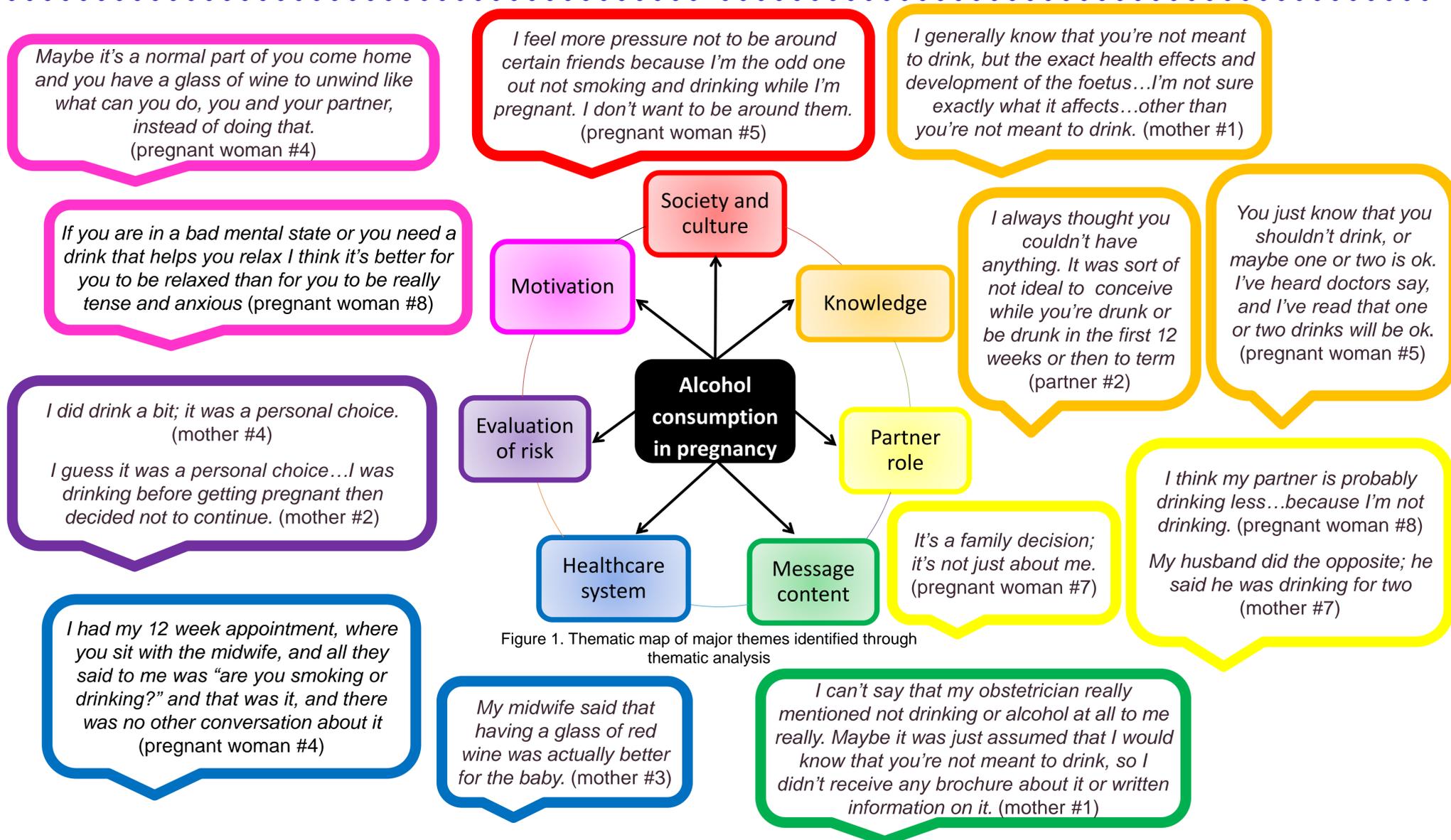


Figure 1. Thematic map of major themes identified through thematic analysis

CONCLUSIONS

- Women and partners recognized that alcohol may cause harm during pregnancy, but many held common misconceptions.
- Findings emphasize the need to provide accurate, comprehensive information about the effects of alcohol consumption on the developing baby, particularly with regard to the lack of evidence about safe quantities of alcohol, and the timing of the exposure.
- To improve knowledge on the topic, messages should include clear and consistent advice, and provide alternative stress relieving options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Findings highlight the need for more thorough routine enquiry regarding alcohol consumption in pregnant women than currently occurs.
- It is important to ensure ongoing health professional education regarding alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

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