

# Interpersonal trauma, substance misuse and pregnancy: A phenomenological exploration of pregnant women and midwives in Scotland



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## Aims

This study aims to gain a unique and deep insight into the lived experience of pregnant women who misuse substances and the lived experience of practising midwives.

## Research questions

- 1) What are the mechanisms underlying substance misuse in a sample of pregnant women in Scotland?
- 2) To what extent does a history of interpersonal trauma influence the initiation and use of substances in this sample?
- 3) What are PWMS experiences and perceptions of their journey to motherhood?
- 4) What are midwives' experiences and perceptions of supporting PWMS?

## Methods

### Recruitment

Six eligible pregnant women being supported by specialist midwives and six eligible practising midwives.

### Data collection

Pregnant women – life history calendar followed by semi-structured interview.

Midwives – semi-structured interview.

### Data analysis

Individual life history calendars are converted into chronological timelines that map the sequencing of negative life events and substance use/misuse.

All transcribed interviews are analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

## Progress

- Four pregnant women seen to date.
- Data collection with midwife sample complete.
- Data collection and analysis are ongoing.

## Preliminary results

### Pregnant women

Women to date have given detailed accounts of multiple adverse life events and their early introduction to substances. They recounted the impact these have had on aspects of their lives, in particular, pregnancy and motherhood.

Early emergent themes are:

“Psychological trauma”, “Seeking oblivion”, “Nothing else matters” and Recovery”.

### Midwives

Participants have given detailed accounts of their experiences and perceptions of supporting this client group, the challenges they face in doing so and their recognition of the need to build trusting, person-centred relationships.

Early emergent themes are:

“Psychological trauma”, “Women just like you and me”, “Managing unmanageable situations”, “Stigma”.

### Conflict of interest

This study has been undertaken as a fully funded PhD studentship. There are no conflicts of interest.