Author's response to reviews

Title: Pregnant women's attitudes towards alcohol consumption: qualitative study

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Zauner,

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to revise the manuscript to enable its consideration for publication. We thank both reviewers for their positive comments. As outlined below, we have addressed the questions and limitations that they have raised. This lists the amendments that we have made to the manuscript. We have addressed their points in the revised paper as fully as possible.

We are extremely grateful to you for considering this revised paper and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Kapil Sayal*
*corresponding author

Reviewer comments

We thank both reviewers for their positive comments and helpful suggestions for improvements. As outlined below, we have endeavoured to address all the points in the revised paper as fully as possible.

Reviewer #1: P Nilsen

1. **Aims and Quantitative data** - As suggested, we have amended the study aims so that we no longer state that exploring women’s awareness of sources of information about drinking in pregnancy is an aim (Changes made to the Abstract, page 5 para 1, and page 19 para 2).

   With regard to the reviewer’s concerns about the “quantitative” data, we have now reported the participants’ responses to closed questions in the ‘Participant Characteristics’ section for clarity (page 9). In addition to demographic information this now includes responses to closed questions about their alcohol consumption, whether they had received specific alcohol advice from health professionals and knowledge of government advice on alcohol limits in pregnancy.

   As suggested, we have also now amended the reporting style in each of the themes as well as in the associated Discussion. The findings relating to the themes are now described in themselves and, within these sections, no attempt is made at quantification.

2. **Quantifying descriptive data** - Please see our response above as to how we have dealt with the more quantitative information. We have also amended the sentence in the Discussion section (page 21 para 2) to make the point that our approach to purposive sampling meant that this is a relatively homogeneous sample of
pregnant women and that future research should incorporate more diverse samples.

As described above, we have amended and moved the section on ‘Advice received about alcohol consumption during pregnancy’ so that the findings from the thematic analysis take precedence in the Results and Discussion.

3. **Themes as the focus of the paper** - We have now made the findings from the thematic analysis the central aspect of the Results section and only these findings are taken up in the Discussion. In line with the above amendments, we have also removed the statement about women finding the advice inconsistent from the section reporting the responses from closed questions. Any other duplication of results has also been removed from this section.

4. **Labelling of the themes** - As suggested, we have re-labelled some of the themes providing clearer labels reflecting their content. We had previously provided brief titles but these have now been expanded to provide a clearer description. We have also made explicit that all the themes deal with factors influencing women’s drinking in pregnancy. Themes 6 and 7 are different in that theme 6 focuses on the influence of confusing or unclear advice on drinking whereas theme 7 reflects the women’s attitudes towards the available advice.

5. **Title to the Section** - Thank you for this suggestion. We have amended the title of the section reporting the thematic analysis to ‘Themes: barriers and facilitators to drinking in pregnancy’. In the Data analysis section of the Methods (page 7 para 2), we also highlight that thematic analysis enables the identification and description of barriers and facilitators to drinking in pregnancy.

6. **Abstract** - We have revised the Conclusions section of the Abstract to more closely reflect the findings in the thematic analysis.

   We have also expanded the Methodological Issues section of the Discussion (page 20 para 1) to describe that different analytic approaches may have yielded some differences in the findings.

7. **Pilot study** - We had referred to this study as a pilot study as it is exploratory in nature. On reflection, we agree that this could be confusing and so have replaced the term pilot study with exploratory study (page 20 para 2).

8. **Title of the paper** - Thank you for this suggestion. We have amended the title of the paper accordingly.

**Reviewer #2: A Alvik**

1. **Advice given to pregnant women in the UK** - In the Introduction section (2nd and 3rd paras), we have described the range of conflicting guidance that has been given to pregnant women in the UK. In our Discussion (Page 22 para 2), we have recommended the need for clear and consistent advice to be provided to pregnant women. The themes produced deductively were generated by the researchers based on previous theory and literature. We have made efforts to ensure that our conclusions and recommendations reflect our data and findings. We have
endeavoured to utilise a transparent approach towards our analysis so that any pre-existing views of the authors do not bias the analyses.

2. **Systematic Review on light drinking and neuro-developmental outcomes (safe threshold for drinking)** - Our Introduction section has focused on several recent well-publicised studies (including a Systematic Review) which have had conflicting findings as these inconsistencies in the literature and the associated media reporting might affect women’s attitudes and drinking behaviour. The full Systematic Review by Grey and Henderson also looked at neuro-developmental outcomes and found no consistent association between light drinking and adverse neuro-developmental outcomes. We now provide the reference (number 5) for the full report (which was commissioned by the UK Department of Health) instead of a briefer paper which focussed on a smaller number of outcomes. In the Introduction (page 4 para 2), we highlight that discrepancies in research findings have generated vast media coverage in the UK.

3. **Anxiety or bad conscience** - Thank you for this suggestion. In the Methodological Issues section of the Discussion (page 20 para 1), we now mention that worry or guilt did not emerge as a theme in the study.

4. **Telephone interviews** - Thank you for the suggestion of this reference which has has now been included in the Discussion section and we highlight (page 20 para 1) that we are unsure about the direction of effect in terms of the confiding of sensitive information with the use of telephone interviews.

5. **Themes identified “inductively” and “deductively”** - Please see page 7 para 2 in the Methods section where we outline the differences between themes that are identified inductively or deductively.

6. **Binge drinking** - We have now clarified that women’s perceptions of safe drinking ranged from 0 glasses to 4 glasses and removed the term binge drinking for clarity. Please note that the section reporting responses to closed questions is now in the ‘Participant Characteristics’ section (page 9).

7. **“Some women mentioned”** - Please see our response to other reviewer in relation to presenting quantitative information. As recommended by the reviewer, we have now refrained from providing further quantitative descriptive data as this was not the main aim of the study.

8. **Re-writing sentences** - Thank you for this suggestion. We have made this amendment which is now to be found in the ‘Participant Characteristics’ section (page 9).

9. **Quantitative Information** - Please see above. It is not possible to link attitude information with the women’s reported drinking status as we have focussed on the thematic analysis in the revised paper as recommended by reviewer 1.

10. **Interview number** - We apologise for this typographical error and have corrected the identification number of this participant (page 10).

11. **Only six women...** - Please see our comments above. We have now removed this sentence as it relied on quantitative information from closed questions.
12. **Cross-national comparison** - This is a very interesting suggestion. We have expanded the Future Research section of the Discussion (page 21 para 2) to suggest the utility of a comparative study from another country to compare attitudes and perceptions of advice and drinking during pregnancy as a cross-national comparison.