

Investigating parent beliefs, strengths, and perceptions of behaviours that parents utilise to protect their children from their substance use.

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Introduction: Parental substance misuse is a significant risk factor for child abuse and neglect, but little is known about how to promote positive parenting behaviours in order to reduce the harm caused to the child.

Method: Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents seeking treatment for their substance use at community and residential Alcohol and Other Drug treatment services. Participants were eight mothers and seven fathers, aged from 30 to 52 years ($M = 38.53$, $SD = 5.69$).

Results: Thematic analyses revealed four broad themes from the data. First, participants described the impacts of substance use on parenting and associated areas they seek to improve, including parent/child attachment, emotion regulation, routine, and discipline strategies, financial impacts, and child safety. Second, participants described the varied parenting practices they engaged in to increase child safety and mitigate risk, such as having adequate adult supervision. The third theme explored the substance use correlates that impacted parenting, such as mental health, trauma, adverse life events and situations that are comorbid with substance use, as well as self-beliefs, and parental insight. The final theme examined social supports and networks. Family members, friends, and community programs were supports that the participants reported were helpful in their recovery, developing their confidence in parenting, and directly to their children.

Discussions and Conclusions: This research highlighted parenting practices that parents engage in to protect their children from the adverse consequences of their substance misuse, as well as identifying the key impacts parents perceive their substance use has on their parenting, areas of development to improve parenting, and needed supports.

Implications for Practice or Policy: This research aims to provide necessary information to promote a strength-based approach to supporting parents who misuse substances, with the goal of improving outcomes for both parents and children.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *No funding was received in the development of this study. The research was conducted as part of a research partnership between The University of Queensland and Lives Lived Well.*