

**Social networks  
amongst people with  
alcohol dependence  
who frequently  
attend hospital: an  
exploratory  
qualitative study**

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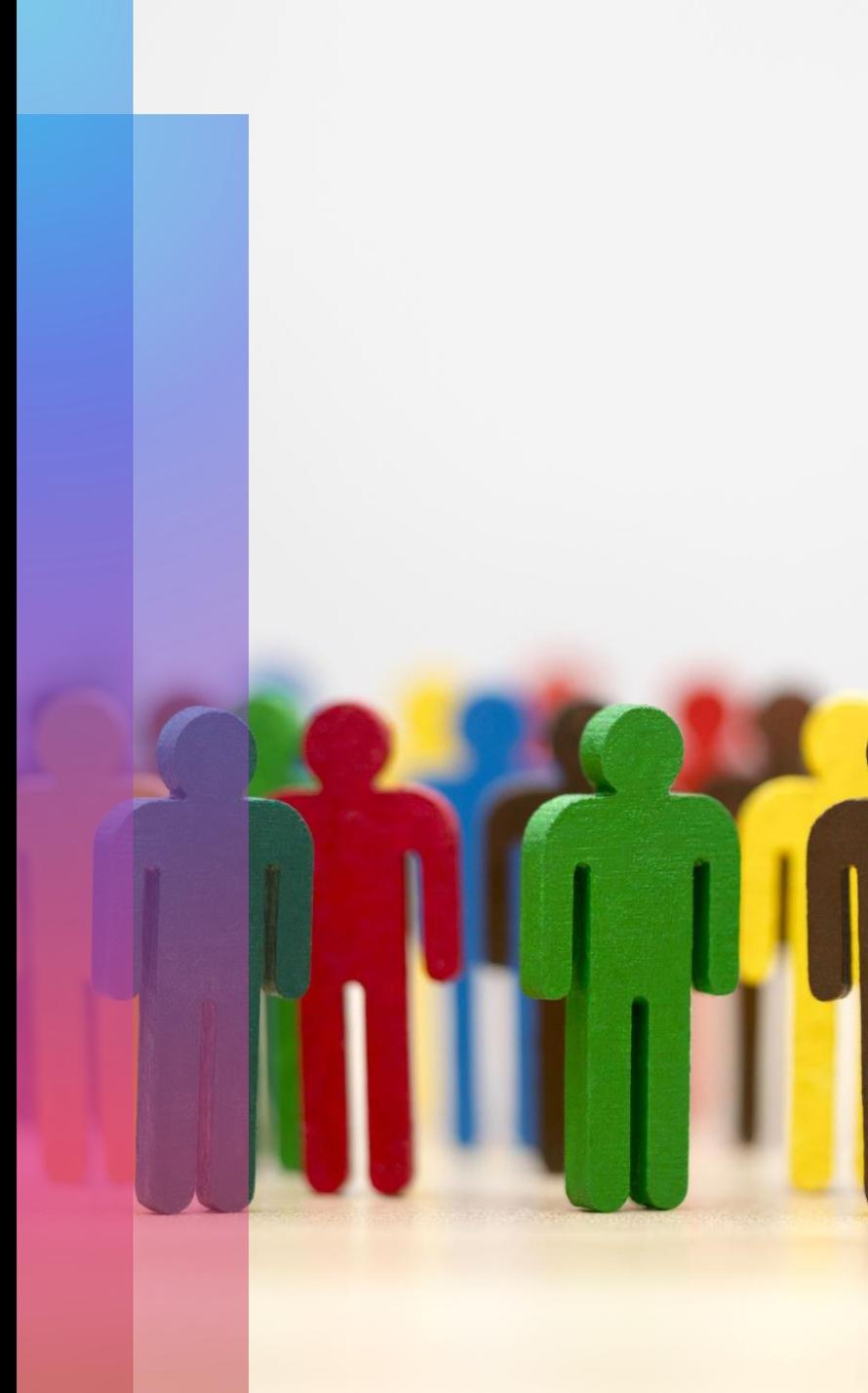
## **Aim of PhD:**

**To explore social networks amongst people with alcohol dependence who frequently attend hospital to inform social network therapeutic approaches and questionnaires**

I have no conflict of interest relating to this presentation

# Background

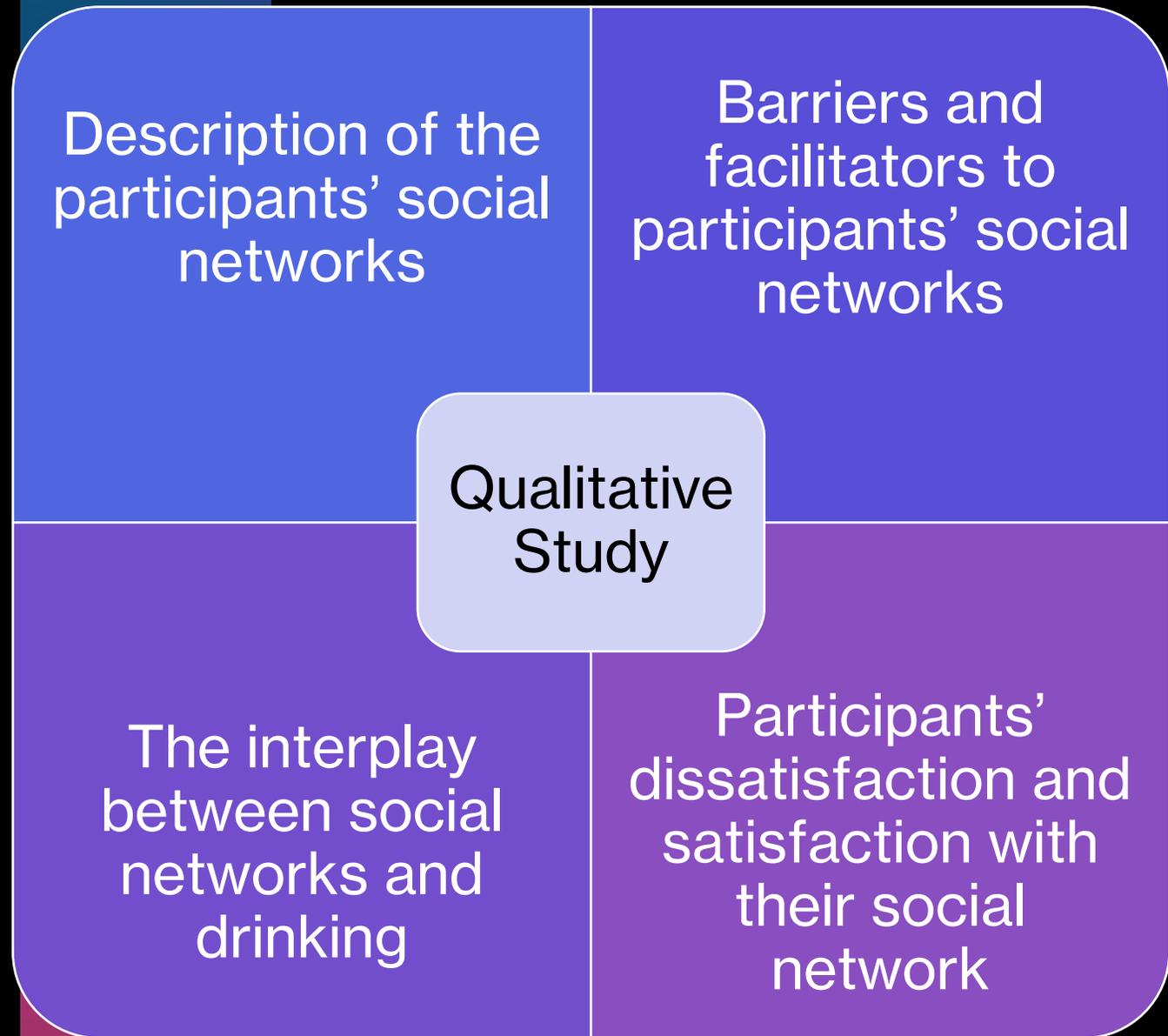
- Social network interventions:
  - Recommended by UK clinical guidelines
  - Used within and outside structured care
- Social network factors that predict reduction in drinking:
  - Increasing contact with people in recovery
  - Reducing pro-drinking networks
  - Improving self efficacy
- Remaining research questions
  - Social networks amongst this population
  - Understanding social networks from a qualitative perspective



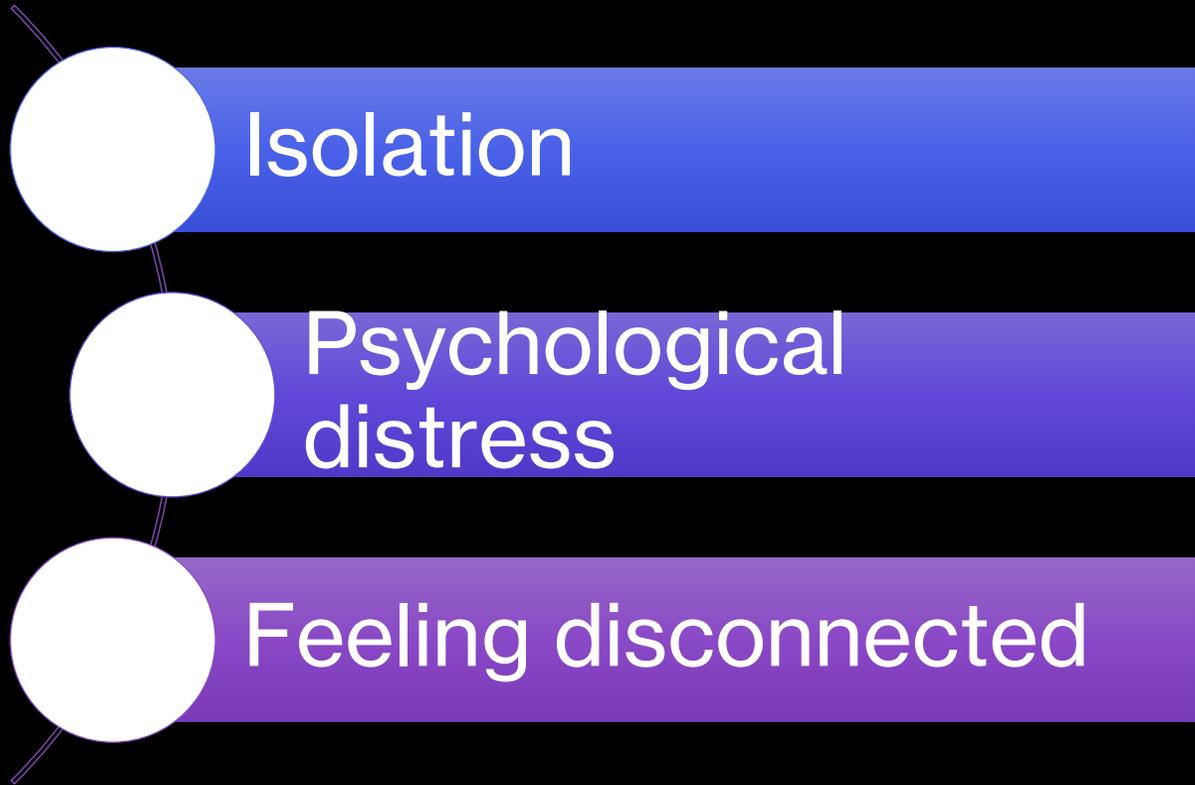
# Methods: Qualitative Interviews

- Interviews were carried out with 29 people who frequently attended hospital for alcohol related reasons
- Mostly conducted in people's homes
- Ranged from 45 to 160 minutes
- Audio recorded & transcribed verbatim
- Analysed using iterative categorisation

# Components of the empirical qualitative study



# Dissatisfaction with social networks: Loneliness



Isolation

Psychological  
distress

Feeling disconnected

# Dissatisfaction with social networks: Loneliness

## ISOLATION

*'I just started drinking indoors, which I said I'd never do... unless I was in company. And then next minute, bang, it just spiralled out of control, I don't know how it happened.... It just 'pop', it went like that. One minute I was drinking in pubs, and the next minute I was drinking indoors like that, by yourself. Nah, it was bad. Yer. Horrible. I wouldn't like to go through it again' (03MA)*

# Dissatisfaction with social networks: Loneliness

## PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS

*I: How do you feel about spending time alone?*

*13MA: Most of the time it don't bother me, but once in a while it does of course... And can be... Frightening. Not frightening, but it's... Lonely.*

*I: Mmm. And what goes through your mind when you are feeling lonely?*

*13MA: Well at the moment ain't too bad, but a couple of months ago I was thinking of ways of ending it... I got through that, haven't had them thoughts for a few months... But I realise all me life now, I've kept meself to meself, I've ended up with no-one, practically... So, maybe it weren't a good thing'*

# Dissatisfaction with social networks: Loneliness

## FEELING DISCONNECTED

*'When I'm having a bad few... I can be alright... then all of a sudden, I just for no reason, no warning, I just go back inside myself again, and I find it very difficult mentally... I can't explain it to you, the depth of how I feel... Because there's many depths to it. And it's just like a lost world sometimes. I don't even take in what's going on around me or nothing' (21FC)*

# Satisfaction with social networks: Connection



Feeling close

Feeling understood

Belonging

# Satisfaction with social networks: Connection

## FEELING CLOSE

*'I always speak to my Mum every morning. So, I have had contact with her, and [a person from his Jehovah Witness congregation] who I am seeing after we finish here... Yesterday I saw my occupational therapist and I saw my keyworker... I am never really on my own very much- there is always contact with someone that's close by.'* (04MC)

# Satisfaction with social networks: Connection

## FEELING UNDERSTOOD

*'I think there's a lot of misunderstanding around alcoholism... So, I guess it's... being able to be natural and be clear, and be honest with them, because you know that they do understand and they do get it, and they are being empathetic to it and they want to learn and understand it more, as opposed to people who... if we're talking about health professionals, may just be doing it because... that's their job, or people who feel obliged because they're in a particular scenario... And I think you can... tell that quite quickly'*  
(12MC)

# Satisfaction with social networks: Connection

## BELONGING

*Even though it was once a week, it was something to look forward to. It felt sort of part of something. Sounds silly, but it was like you felt like you go there, like ‘Hello, want a sandwich or a cup of tea? What you been doing all week? What you get up to?’” (26MA)*

# Implications of this research

Concept of loneliness and connection in Addiction

Measures of loneliness

Therapeutic approaches

- Building connectedness
- Peer support as a source of connection
- Role of health professionals
- Tailoring support to service users' needs and preferences

# References

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**Extra slides**



## Structure

- Social connections
- Social contact
- Substance use status of network

## Function

- Practical support
- Problem solving
- Social support
- Emotional support
- Confiding relationship
- Substance-focussed support
- Being supportive

## Satisfaction

- Network quality
- Feeling connected
- Feeling valued



## Satisfaction

- Network quality
- Feeling connected
- Feeling valued

Participants' dissatisfaction and satisfaction with their social network

### Satisfaction

- Emotional wellbeing
- Connectedness

### Dissatisfaction

- Perceived deficiencies in social network
- Loneliness