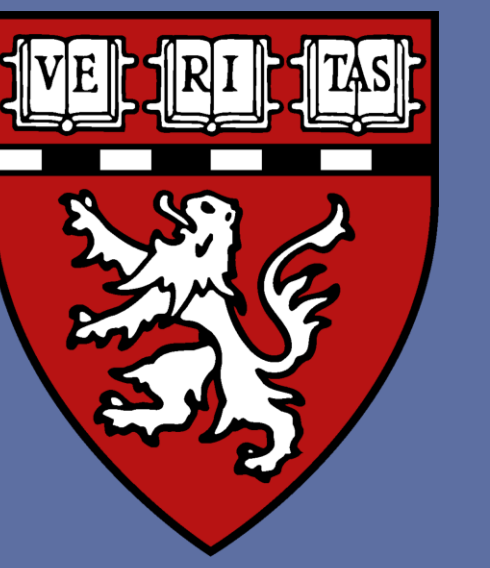




Understanding Social Support Needs for Chinese Immigrant Women from Pregnancy to Postpartum: A Qualitative Study



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BACKGROUND

- Social support serves as a **protective factor** for pregnant women's physical and psychological health.
- However, mothers' needs for **different types of social support** at different phases of pregnancy have not been fully examined by current literature¹.

Types of Social Support Needs ³			
Instrumental	Informational	Emotional	Implicit
Provision of tangible assistance	Provision of information for another person to cope with stress	Provision of warmth and reassuring the person as valuable and heard	Emotional comfort one can obtain from social networks without disclosing or discussing one's problem/stress
Services Help with house chores Financial support	Information on scientific childrearing practice	Actively listen and comfort mothers when they feel nervous	Being in the company of good friends without discussing stress with pregnancy

- **Culturally relevant care** was found to promote Chinese immigrant women's postpartum maternal health², but **very few studies** have focused on Chinese immigrant mothers' social support needs surrounding childbirth in United States.

AIM

- Generate a **theoretical framework** to understand **Chinese immigrant mothers' experiences with social support throughout pregnancy** to inform future studies.
- Capture **cultural nuances** and challenges Chinese immigrant mothers experienced to **inform clinical practice**.

METHOD

- **Sample:** 15 low-income Chinese immigrant mothers (Mean = 30.69, SD=4.36) receiving prenatal care and participating in 10-week "Centering Pregnancy" group-based program at South Cove Community Health Center in Boston.
- **Procedure:** Semi-structured open-ended interviews conducted at 20 weeks prenatal and 6 months postpartum.
- **Framework Analysis** performed by three independent coders: A 5-step structured approach to extract themes from transcripts.

Four themes were identified by Chinese mothers:

Theme 2 Support Mobilization

Chinese mothers reported various support seeking behaviors:

- Mothers reported varying levels of comfort with seeking support, **often preferring trusted source**.
- Ambivalence toward support seeking due to **worries about burdening** others.
- Social support is **perceived as being naturally available** to some mothers, without the necessity to request it explicitly.

But my mother-in-law is not young, and I don't want to give her too much burden.

Theme 4: Implicit Support through Shared Experiences

Chinese mothers perceive sharing experiences as a sense of support

Chinese mothers feel supported when they:

- Feel that they are **facing challenges with loved ones together**.
- Connect with women **who are undergoing similar life phases**.
- Communicating not just one's stress, but also **sharing moments of joy with others**, fosters a feeling of being supported.

We wanted to hangout, but all mothers were very busy taking care of the children.

Theme 1 Immigrant Mothers' Cultural Challenges

Chinese mothers experience many acculturation-related challenges:

- **Language barriers and unfamiliarity** with healthcare system.
- **Smaller support system** after immigration and virtual support from family is insufficient.
- **Cultural gap** between support providers and mothers on childrearing and "doing the month" practices (postpartum period where new mothers are advised to rest for a month following a set of guidelines and traditions).

His mother will help, but we don't like her way of child-rearing, so we try our best to take care by ourselves.

Theme 3 Navigating Competing Needs

Chinese mothers encounter difficulties while navigating different roles and competing values:

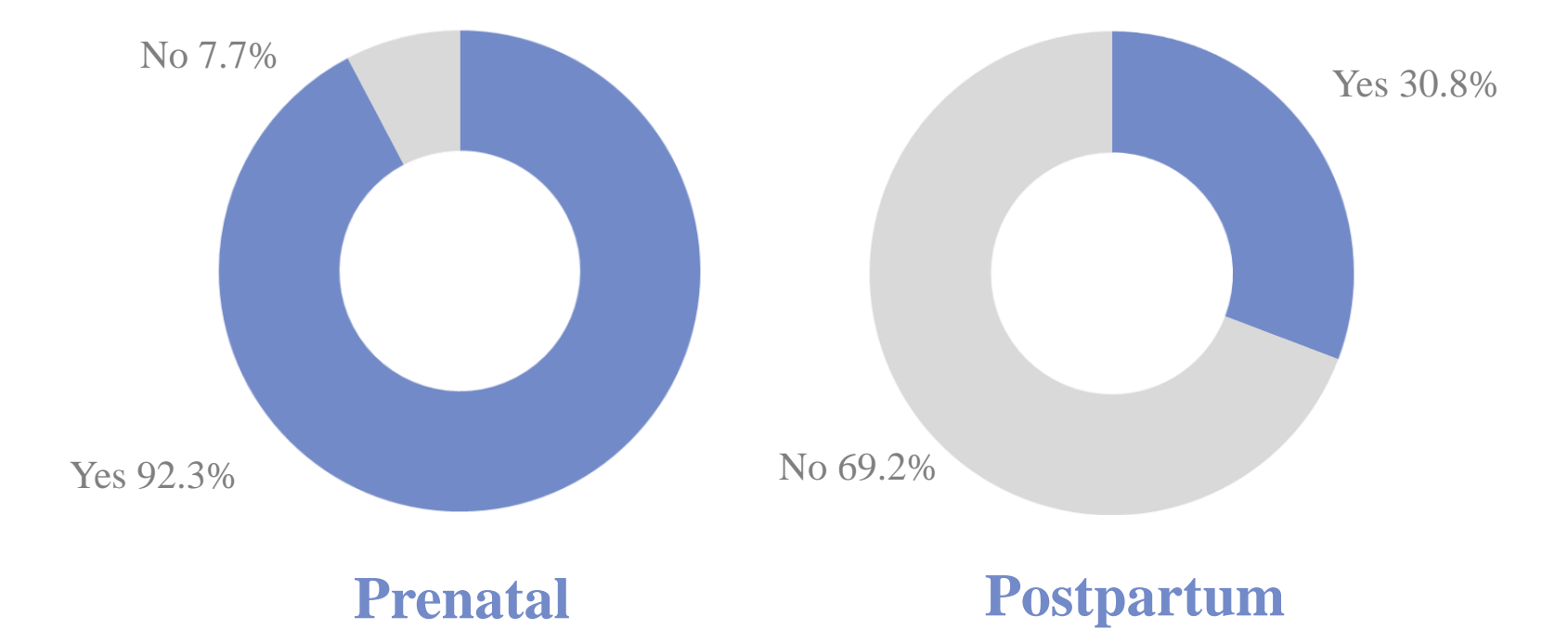
- **Reduced social engagement** (e.g., hanging out with friends) as prenatal care and childrearing responsibilities take precedence.
- Mothers who attempt to **balance career growth and need to care for their newborns** report increasing social support demands.

I realized everyone had experienced the same issue, and I felt so much relieved.

RESULTS

- Women reported:
 - An **increased need for all types of social support** during postpartum phase.
 - Postpartum phase marked by **perceived insufficient support (Perceived support was assessed by question: Do you wish to receive more support? In which aspect?)**
 - **Informational and instrumental support more frequently mentioned than emotional support needs.**
 - **Disparity between expected and actual support** leads to stress and negative feelings.

Perceived sufficient support?



IMPLICATIONS

The importance of providing culturally sensitive care to immigrant mothers:

- Assess **different types** of social support.
- Provide **psychoeducation** to primary support providers.
- Guide mothers to build **realistic expectations** about support needs.
- Help mothers address **acculturation differences and related challenges**.

LIMITATION

- Limitations with written interview transcripts as they do not capture mother's **tones and other verbal information**.
- May be beneficial to include mothers from **other geographical regions in US** (e.g., include regions that are less ethnically diverse).

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