Reviewer’s report

Title: Parental compliance-an emerging problem in Liverpool Community Child Health Surveys 1991-2006

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Reviewer: Arpana Verma

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1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
This is an interesting paper and very important to discuss the reliability of data from surveys. How can the reliability of survey data from dwindling response rates be corrected or taken into account is a constant worry. This is especially important if public health policy, interventions and funding are to be based on these estimates.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Though there is a lot of information in the methods section, the actual details were gleaned from both reading the results and discussion e.g. explanation of the Townsend score and the rationale behind its use and any problems associated with its use. The use of the Townsend score could be the reason behind the main conclusion.

Much more detail regarding the analyses, assumptions and stats used would have been good.

3. Are the data sound?
The data would appear to be sound but how was the data cleaned, outliers identified, data validated? Was the use of MIMAS validated in any way, how and why were the hypothesis tests decided, how was temporality assessed to have influenced the findings?

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
I would suggest that the manuscript with some modification would adhere to relevant standards including correcting typos and sentence structure to read more clearly. The authors may find that multi-level modelling may help to explain any associations found and could aid in the paper’s conclusions to take into account the changes over time.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Much of the discussion is a summary of the results and I would have expected much more critique of the work in line with the published literature to try to explain the observations and results. I am uncertain that the analyses are
sufficiently complex to adequately explain the changes over time to come to the conclusions reached. Also whether the study question has been adequately answered. Non-responder bias can be measured through a variety of different methodologies which were not explored.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
This requires the most work and revision is required.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
There are references to the literature but the discussion could have done with more text on the differences and similarities with the published literature in this field.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes – they are a good reflection.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
This is a very important subject as population health scientists try to make sense of the reliability from studies with poor response rates. However, the manuscript could be aided by better phrasing of key sentences including the last line of the background so ensure the readership is aware of what questions are being asked i.e. if the objective was to ascertain the causes of dropping response rates from 1991-2006 then more emphasis should have been placed on this throughout the manuscript. This should include full expansion and/or explaining all abbreviations and acronyms before using them and better referencing.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare I have no competing interests