Reviewer’s report

Title: Facilitators and barriers to healthy eating practices and physical activity among adolescent girls in rural South Africa

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Reviewer: Herculina Salome Kruger

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BMC: MANUSCRIPT REVIEW

'Facilitators and barriers to healthy eating practices and physical activity among adolescent girls in rural South Africa'

Review questions:
1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Not sufficient detail on pair selection and duo interview methods. Some quantitative methods in addition to the qualitative methods could be beneficial to provide background.
3. Are the data sound? Yes.
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? Fairly good.
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? Fairly good, but the Discussion is too long with too much repetition of the results. The conclusion supports the data.
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Not stated at all.
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes, but some are not well enough referenced to know if they were published.
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes
9. Is the writing acceptable? No

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. Much of the same results have been found in the urban study in Soweto by the same group, although the setting is different. The importance of the study in a rural setting needs more focus.
2. This is a qualitative study, but there are signs of trying to quantify results. Very often the authors report that ‘most participants …’. It may have been more informing to have some variables also collected as quantitative data, for example the contribution of the school feeding programme or physical activity events at the school. What proportion of the children walk long distances to school, eat breakfast, have a vegetable garden at home, or eat the school feeding scheme
lunches?

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Language editing, and more attention to sentence construction and paragraph style is necessary.

2. It is important to provide more information of the main method used in this study. The duo interview method and how pairs of girls were selected should be explained in more detail. Should the pairs be from the same neighbourhood, but not in the same school? Or could they be from the same school?

3. It is easy to state that after 11 interviews saturation were reached as the researchers did not expect that more interviews would add new information, but how can this be verified? (Also see comments under 4. on Results).

The information provided for the development of the interview guide is sufficient.

4. In general results could have been presented in a more structured way according to the themes and subthemes identified. The role of the different pairs may also be summarized to show how many statements were cited from the earlier compared to later interviews when data saturation occurred. At the moment the pair who made the statement is given in brackets, but it is difficult for the reader to use the information in brackets in a meaningful way.

5. For an international journal it is necessary to translate all Shangaan and Tsonga words into English.

6. The full reference (journal and page numbers) of references 2 and 26 is missing.

7. Has reference 7 been published? Full reference is necessary.

8. Check the reference style to be consistent.

Discretionary Revisions

The Discussion is too long with too much repetition of the results and may also benefit from some subheadings.

General:

Abstract
The abstract is fairly well-written and a good reflection of the study.

Introduction
The introduction states the problem and introduces the reader to the need for further investigation of the perceptions, facilitators and barriers to health eating practices of adolescents. The aim is formulated clearly. However, if reference 7 has been published, it is not clear what more this article will add to the available knowledge.

Results
Paragraph 11: do wild green leaves only grow outside the rainy season? How many rainy seasons are there?
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

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