Reviewer’s report

Title: Weight maintenance as a tight rope walk: a qualitative interview study

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Reviewer: Wencke Gwozdz

Reviewer’s report:

The article "Weight maintenance as a tight rope walk: a qualitative interview study" touches the highly relevant issue of how to explain behaviour related to weight maintenance. Obesity is one of today’s biggest societal challenge, but still, there is not enough knowledge how behaviour, attitudes and strategies function. This complicates a successful prevention and reduction of overweight and obesity.

By applying grounded theory, it is possible to explore different strategies and attitudes of middle age weight maintainers. The methods are well described and appropriate for the purpose of this study. Thus, the authors come up with four main and very interesting strategies people have to maintain their weight, which could be indeed very useful for public health consultants.

However, there are only few issues that should be revised.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. Page 4: Background: determinants of food habits and physical activity are mostly identified, but not their relative importance (see reviews such as Procter 2007). There is no need to identify determinants on obesity once more, but rather how to change behaviour in a sustainable way.

2. Page 5: Weight maintenance: need to redirect research efforts to primary weight maintenance - This might be rephrased. Why should research focus on that when more than 50% of the population is already overweight or obese? Is it not important to focus on both: primary and secondary weight maintenance?

3. Results: Figure 3: an explanation of the rope’s shape would be helpful within the graphic. This would also ease reading results about the different types and strategies.

4. Page 20: Discussion: Probably there is no need to justify the focus of the study on primary weight maintenance in the beginning. The argument that leaner and younger people without health problems have the highest probability to gain weight is not that surprising. This group might just be less aware of weight issues. And still, there is the big problem of a high prevalence of obesity.

5. Page 21: Discussion: Page 21 should be deleted as it is only a summary of what has been done – repetitive

6. Page 23: Discussion: Macro environment: the role of the media is also to shape consumers identity and self perception (as found out in several types)

7. Page 23: Discussion: Gidden’s theory of agency should be mentioned earlier
as the heading including the term agency is not clear from the beginning. Probably page 22 in the beginning would a good place.

8. Page 24: Discussion: Implications of main strategies: it would be quite interesting how those different types can be easily identified, i.e. what would be helpful tools for public health consultants to identify people’s strategies to give appropriate advice

Discretionary Revisions

9. Page 7: Ethical considerations: might be put in a footnote

10. Page 12: Results: To find the joy: first sentence is a bit confusing for the reader. Could be rephrased in a more clear way

11. Page 14: Results: Holistic eater: it is not obvious from a first glance what is meant by food alarm. Maybe an example would make reading easier here.

12. Page 22: Discussion: The influence of structure and agency on ideal types: the last sentence of the first paragraph is not necessary to bring - this is pretty obvious

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests