Reviewer's report

Title: Parents’ beliefs about appropriate infant growth and feeding: implications for the prevention of childhood obesity

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Reviewer: Jennifer Savage

Reviewer’s report:

This qualitative study examined parents’ beliefs concerning their infants’ growth, and their receptiveness to early intervention. Overall, the authors provide a detailed introduction, but it needs re-written and framed to be specific to the current aims of the study. After reading the introduction, I was not convinced as to why this research is needed; despite knowing that this research advances the field and is warranted. Overall, the reviewer feels that objective and results of the present study warrant consideration for publication; however, the manuscript needs re-written/organized. Please see comments below.

Abstract: (Minor)
1. Please re-write lines 2 and 3 beginning with “However, there is little guidance…. Your point is not clear.

Introduction: (Major compulsory)
1. When describing “non-modifiable” factors, please be clear that these factors are non-modifiable from the perspective of the child (child birth). However, most of the factors listed are modifiable if intervened prenatally, targeting the mother (gestational weight gain, smoking, child birth weight). Please clarify. Consider removing this portion from introduction and focus on describing modifiable risk factors more coherently.
2. It was difficult to read the first paragraph, please be more coherent. For example, “These include parental feeding practices… you could add breastfeeding duration and infant temperament to this sentence instead of the disjointed sentences that follow. Then proceed to describe these findings in more detail in subsequent paragraphs
3. Delete reference 6, “Persistent obesity from childhood (not central to aims)
4. Not clear what the last sentence in Para 1 is stating? Please clarify.
5. Delete paragraph 2, not central to aims of current study.
6. Paragraph 3: use terminology breastfeeding duration. Again, delete reference to non-modifiable risk factors and just focus on setting up the importance of understanding mothers’ perceptions of infant feeding and how these may differ by maternal pre-pregnancy weight.
7. The introduction really focuses on differences among low and high income and normal versus overweight mothers behaviors; however, this is not included in the
objectives. Given the current introduction, one would expect the objectives to include investigation by maternal weight status or socioeconomic status?

Methods: (Minor)

1. Paragraph 1: what does the number of children found to be overweight/obese in RECEPTION and year 6 mean? Please clarify

2. What were the criteria for inclusion regarding social class? Be more specific. The table implies that you recruited based on income, urban/rural, ethnicity, and prevalence of obesity at each site. But, it is not clear in text.

3. Paragraph 2: (reword) one focus group took place in each of the six identified study sites...

4. What were the inclusion criteria (anything other than infant age?) Income, education, ethnicity, income, parent pre-pregnancy weight? What was your target audience?

5. When referring to box 1, please include text stating what ideas participants were asked to share? Include overview of the questions listed in Box 1.

Results/Discussion (Major Compulsory)

1. Box 1: Include the list of questions that were used to address Objective 3?

2. Description of Sample: Do you have any descriptives on infant weight at birth, gestational weight gain during pregnancy, proportion of pre-term versus full term babies?

3. Like organization of five themes: remind reader by listing each as Theme 1:..., Theme II..., etc. Also, please integrate "sub-themes" within each theme so as to tell a story. Currently disjointed statements.

4. recommend including more examples of each “sub-theme.” The strength of qualitative data is the level of detail provided during focus groups, so please include more examples to justify your statements within each theme.

5. The results and discussion should be two separate sections. The results section needs to be more coherently written. Refer to other manuscripts using similar methodology when structuring the results section. Difficult to justify a one sentence statement with one participant’s response to a question. The subthemes within each theme need to be integrated.

6. Much of your introduction and methods suggest that beliefs about infant weight and feeding practices would differ by parent weight and income. However, it is unclear from the results/discussion if this was the case. Please clarify.

7. There is no real discussion or implication of the findings from this study. Your abstract nicely outlines a discussion section, but when reading the manuscript, those messages were not discussed in detail. Please expand upon the summary section to include a detailed discussion of current study findings, how results relate to previous studies, and what the implications are for these findings and remove these points from the results section. The results need to be integrated into the discussion to address the main findings from this qualitative study.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.