Reviewer's report

Title: Social and cultural factors underlying generational differences in overweight: a cross-sectional study among ethnic minorities

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Reviewer: Seeromanie Harding

Reviewer's report:

This paper examines generational differences in overweight among Turkish and Moroccan people living in the Netherlands. It is of aetiological and policy relevance as it could provide clues about the potential influences of the host environments on culturally patterned lifestyles related to overweight.

Major points

The conceptual framework could be developed further. Obesity is related to energy balance but the discussion of how cultural or environmental (social or physical) factors may affect generational differences in energy intake (habitual diets) or energy expenditure (physical activity) is not sufficiently developed. Are there generational differences in residential patterns (e.g. do the first generations tend to live in ethnically dense areas more so than the second)? These issues have relevance for the nature of acculturation not only for peer relationships but also for the maintenance of traditional lifestyles (dietary and physical activity behaviour). Another key issue is that although the focus is on generation status, conceptual justification is required for combining Moroccans and Turks. Turkish men appeared to be more at risk of overweight than Moroccan men. It would be useful to test ethnic specific effects in all of the models using an interaction term. The historical and cultural heritages of these populations differ enormously. Are there differences in dietary habits? What is the prevalence of overweight in home countries and is there any evidence on the social patterning of overweight in these countries? There is other evidence that the social patterning of overweight varies between and within populations over time (e.g. Matijasevich et al BMC Public Health 2009, 9:105).

It is difficult to adequately assess the quality of the data. The response rate seems to be between 26%-30% (former based on total sample as denominator and latter on traced sample, aged 10-30y so this will be an underestimate as 10-14y olds were omitted in final sample). People with missing or invalid data were omitted but there is no discussion of the potential bias by key explanatory factors, generation status and gender. Similarly the use of self-reported height and weight data could be biased by generation status. Was a standard definition used to obtain occupational status? If so a reference is needed. It is also difficult to assess the appropriateness of Berry’s model of acculturation as the items used to derive the schema is insufficiently described. The model building could also be better described.
Minor points
The abstract could be improved, particularly in terms of how social and cultural factors were measured
There are a few grammatical errors which proof reading should pick up.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

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

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