Title: A qualitative study of the determinants of dieting and non-dieting approaches in overweight/obese Australian adults

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Reviewer: Gulcan Garip

Reviewer’s report:

The aim of this paper is to investigate the determinants of dieting and non-dieting approaches of overweight/obese Australian adults in order to inform health professionals’ understanding of overweight and obese adults’ decision-making processes. The paper is well structured and well written. The main contribution of this paper is that it sheds light on overweight/obese adults’ reasons for choosing non-dieting approaches, an area which has been under-researched relative to research into people’s decision-making processes for choosing to diet. The data collection is rigorous, and the interview guide is well suited for the purposes of this research. The model presented in Figure 1 is supported by the findings. Explanations of the derived determinants are clear and justified by illustrative quotes. The following revisions could strengthen the paper:

- Major Compulsory Revisions
  None.

- Minor Essential Revisions
  1. Background, paragraph 4: “…given that obese individuals prefer positive gain-framed…” apostrophe not needed.
  2. Methods, data collection, paragraph 1: “Emerging concepts were grounded in THE data…”
  3. Methods, data collection: Further explanations on the different types of sampling (purposive, theoretical) may be beneficial to readers; specifically, what were the main characteristics of the purposive sample, and what was the basis of the theoretical sampling? The authors later report (in the discussion section) that a convenience sample was used, which undermines the rigour of the aforementioned sampling techniques.
  4. Methods, participants, paragraph 1: “Theoretical sampling led to one formerly…” this sentence was not very clear to me.
  5. Methods, participants, paragraph 1, final sentence: “… rejected…” instead of “rejecting”.
  6. Methods, data analysis: I would hesitate to use the term “causality” in relation to a qualitative analysis. Instead, rephrasing this sentence to read “… indicate
the influences between each of the concepts…”.

7. Results, first paragraph: Acknowledging the overlap between participants’ aim to lose weight whether they are dieters or non-dieters would be relevant as this is stated in the discussion later on.

8. Results, focus of approach, paragraph 1: “Adults who decided to diet primarily…” was this true of all participants? If not, stating whether ‘most’ or ‘some’ may be helpful to some readers.

9. Results, focus of approach, paragraph 1: “… the primary outcomes expected and/or [reported?] by non-dieting adults…” Given that data were collected through interviews, it may be more appropriate to talk about what participants reported, instead of what they experienced.

10. Results, personal autonomy, illustrative quote 2: “diet kitchen at university” – I am not sure what this means.

11. Results, personal autonomy & self-efficacy with approach: The title chosen for these determinants overlap with theoretical constructs from the Self-Determination Theory and Social Cognitive Theory, however there is no discussion relating to either of these theories. I wonder if it would avoid confusion for some readers if alternative titles were chosen instead of the current titles, or perhaps including a section in the discussion to relate these determinants to the theories which they have been influenced from.

12. Results, perceived knowledge and self-efficacy with approach, illustrative quote 2: Part of this quote has been presented in support of Focus of approach. Is it possible that the quote could have been coded for both themes?

13. Results: The dichotomies presented for each determinant have been presented to suggest that dieters fall on one end of the continuum and non-dieters on the other, this is also emphasised in the discussion. The conclusion states that there may be some overlap. Is it possible that some participants may have fallen along the middle of these dichotomies? If so, the results section could benefit from incorporating a few examples of this.

14. Discussion, paragraph 2: “A grounded theory STUDY of bloggers…”

15. Discussion, paragraph 3: Several statements in the discussion section go beyond what the data show. The sentences can be altered to present a more accurate discussion of the findings from this study. “… which MAY HAVE motivated SOME PARTICIPANTS’ attempts to persist…”, “… externalising dieting failure, which MAY HAVE LED others to question…”, “… misleading information, SOME obese adults MAY blame…”, “…which the authors note[d] MAY reinforce[s] a sense…”, “the sense of personal failure MAY reinforce[s]…”

16. Discussion, paragraph 4, first sentence: “…established diets also APPEARED TO INFLUENCE whether…”. This sentence may read better if it were written as two sentences.
17. Discussion, paragraph 4, final sentence: Further explanation on what this community can provide support for, and for who (dieters, non-dieter, both?) could be useful to the reader.

18. Discussion, paragraph 5: “Obese adults HAVE REPORTED BEING introduced to…”, “Adults in this study [also] reported feeling accepted [and reported] when participating…”, “…a sense of hope and encouraging them to diet[s].” “…we found that SOME adults also engaged in…”, “…in the process OF conforming to moral…”

19. Discussion, paragraph 5: “…recent qualitative research suggests their experiences…” No reference has been provided in support of this statement.

20. Discussion, paragraph 5: FatOSphere – has not been written consistently throughout the discussion section.

21. Discussion, paragraph 6: “…while adults who were not confident in their ability to make their own…” A clearer explanation in support of this statement should be made in the results. As it stands, this statement is not well supported in the results section.

22. Discussion, paragraph 8: “…‘healthy’ person MAY HAVE preceded…”, “…adoption of a non-dieting approach in SOME overweight/obese adults.” “Other [previous] research studies have also suggested that SOME…”

- Discretionary Revisions

23. Methods, Data collection: It may be interesting to discuss whether there were any differences between participants who were interviewed face-to-face and those who were interviewed over the phone.

24. Methods, participants: A table summarising participants’ characteristics, including how they were interviewed (telephone versus face-to-face), BMIs, whether they considered themselves a dieter or a non-dieter, etc. could be included.

25. Results, illustrative quotes: It may be useful to some readers to include participants’ BMI and whether they were a dieter or non-dieter (in addition to gender and age) to contextualise the quotes.

26. Discussion, paragraph 8: “…an identity that was protective and familiar.” Further discussion on the reasons for why the “old self” is protective may be of interest to some readers.

27. Discussion, paragraph 8: “…can grow stronger over time.” This statement is not supported by the findings presented in the results section.

28. Discussion, paragraph 9: It may be of interest to some readers if you referred users to existing systematic reviews that capture this growing body of literature (e.g. Brown & Gould, 2011 (already cited in paper); Garip & Yardley, 2011 – A
synthesis of qualitative research on overweight and obese people’s views and experiences of weight management, Clinical Obesity).

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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.