Reviewer's report

Title: Physical Activity and Drinking Behaviour in Preschoolers: Focus Groups with Parents and Teachers

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Reviewer: Trina Hinkley

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper which explores an area with little previous investigation. A major strength is the cross-country inclusion, despite relatively small numbers of participants within each country.

Major compulsory revisions

* It is not clear why only children's drinking behaviour and not other dietary behaviours - such as snacking or fruit & vegetable consumption - were included. A rationale needs to be provided for this.

* There is no rationale provided as to why FG were undertaken across different countries in only those areas with the highest prevalence of overweight/obesity. Exploration of behaviours in areas which did not fit this criteria would have provided a point of contrast, or identified common themes among behaviours/perceptions, with those in overweight/obese areas. Additionally, this would have allowed the researchers to identify potentially resilient behaviours/perceptions which could be drawn on for future interventions.

* There is no rationale for SES inclusion criteria (participants, page 8) in the introduction or why differences might exist by SES.

* Did recruitment also take place through childcare centres? An explanation of what a 'preschool' is in the included countries would be beneficial as this differs between countries and regions. Was attendance time at preschools similar across countries - i.e. are the children in attendance for roughly the same number of hours each week and if not would this make a difference to parental behaviours/perceptions/recruitment?

Data analysis (p10)

* more detail re "qualitative content analysis" is necessary: what was the correspondence between countries? did only one person do the analysis for each country? was there cross-coder agreement tested at all?

* "two researchers analyzed and summarized the available information" - was this the themes from the transcripts or the full transcripts or the "written down in English" bits (which needs much greater clarification) from the preceding paragraph?
Results

* Include a brief summary of the data from table 1 with the first para

* Where are the quotes? The best thing about qual work is the inclusion of quotes and they are also the data from which your conclusions are drawn. The authors must include quotes to support their assessments.

* page 12 top: "living in a rural area" - did any of the participants live in a rural area? What specifically about living in a rural area supported PA?

* the discussion in the results section seems to jump around a lot - try structuring it more along the lines of the data presented in the table for ease of reading & flow & clarity

* some parts of the results are repetitive and restructuring as per above suggestion will help minimize this. For instance, issues around playground availability/connection etc. are raised in several places as different things which really are just the same - barrier of major roads, playground close by. The authors may wish to revisit their themes and ensure that they are as parsimonious as possible.

* p13, para 2: more low SES parents compared to high SES parents ... present the split of low vs high SES in tables so that the reader knows how many were in each group

* last line of that para is not clear

* p22: Bulgarian teachers thought their kids were not active enough while others thought they were - the authors here should draw on published quantitative evidence to show differences between PA in Bulgaria to other countries. This would help elucidate the teachers' perceptions as to whether or not they were accurate.

* p22: are there differences in policies between countries that would result in differences in drink consumption? Could this potentially explain such differences or be investigated for potential targets for interventions?

* Table 2: it's not clear why Environmental factors is separate to facilitators/barriers as factors within the environment would act as either facilitators or barriers and therefore should be included with those themes. This may also help minimise some of the repetitiveness within the results section.

* Table 3: Beverages - parents - not necessary to decrease - any evidence to show current levels of consumption within countries which could support this perception - that is, is consumption really low enough or is it just a perception?

Minor essential revisions

* Participants (p8): what does "strenuous recruitment" mean?
* Procedure (p9): "the co-moderator handled the logistics" - such as what?

* Results PA (p11): last line: too many organised activities? rather than too many things?

* p12 first sentence should read: Two OTHER environmental

* p13: "letting children participate in organized activities" - such as what - chess? PA? music?

* facilitators: a scientist providing information - this is not clear?

* TEACHERS: Belgium & Spain - and what about other countries?

* 2nd para under teachers: teachers reported to "know" - do you mean believe?

* p18 - promote healthy drinks - what do they consider constitutes healthy drinks?

* Discussion: first para: aside from drinking behaviours there is nothing about nutrition in the paper so the authors should refer specifically to drinking behaviour rather than nutrition despite it being a component of that.

* Table 1: final column of total participants is not useful

* include mean numbers of participants, ages, etc.

* the number of children in centres seems to be small - are there other centres which would have more children than this and if so would that make a difference to the results?

**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