Reviewer's report

Title: Perceptions on healthy eating, physical activity and lifestyle advice: opportunities for adapting lifestyle interventions to individuals with low socioeconomic status

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Reviewer: Emma Everson-Hock

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Peer review of MS: 1349640529133912 for BMC Public Health: Perceptions on healthy eating, physical activity and lifestyle advice: opportunities for adapting lifestyle interventions to individuals with low socioeconomic status

Comments to the authors

Is the question posed original, important and well defined?
Yes. The research questions are original in terms of a practical focus on lifestyle change alongside seeking to gain an understanding of participants' current eating and physical activity and also consideration of socioeconomic differences. It is important as the findings have implications for the design of physical activity and dietary interventions in people from differing socioeconomic groups. Research questions are well-defined and suggest that answers would usefully inform intervention.

Are the data sound and well controlled?
In my opinion the data are sound. Sufficient focus groups have been conducted to have been able to capture suitable depth and breadth of data to answer the research questions. Having high socioeconomic status (SES) participants gives a basis with which to compare the views of low SES participants.

Is the interpretation (discussion and conclusion) well balanced and supported by the data?
Yes, the discussion and conclusion are well balanced and supported by the data. All the findings mentioned in the findings are considered in the discussion and conclusion. Appropriate references have been made to relevant previous literature to place the findings into context.

Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to allow others to evaluate and/or replicate the work?
The methods are appropriate for answering the research questions and are described in sufficient detail to allow evaluation of the research and reporting. Other methods may also have been suitable, and the authors discuss the implications of using the methods they selected and other alternative methods in the discussion section, which is helpful and shows thoroughness.
Minor essential revision

The only thing that would prevent others from replicating the work in another context (which would be helpful future research) is that the authors have not appended their interview guide. Doing so (in an appendix or supplementary file) would enable complete transparency.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methods?

The strengths are that data from a variety of pre-existing groups was gathered in focus group form (so participants were already comfortable talking in each other’s presence) from high and low SES participants in two provinces. In qualitative research every decision taken could impact on findings, but the authors acknowledge and discuss the potential impact of using focus groups and also using pre-existing groups in the discussion section, as I would have expected.

Minor essential revision

Something I think the authors could do to improve the paper is to more closely align the title and aims with the research questions throughout the manuscript. The title and aims talk about SES and in particular low SES and the importance of examining it, however this is not carried through into the research questions. Throughout the paper the link with SES is more tenuous than explicit (possibly as a result of the research questions). I would ideally like to see SES mentioned in the research questions and then the results presented with this more in mind, as at the moment SES creeps into the results occasionally, rather than being explicitly considered in the way the results are presented (yet this is something that the authors flag up as being important). It would be particularly useful if the findings could be organised by SES group, although I appreciate the authors may have in mind a more useful way of presenting the findings according to SES.

Can the writing, organisation, tables and figures be improved?

The quality of the writing is excellent overall, and the table and figure are clear and usefully complement the text.

Minor essential revisions

I only have two revisions to suggest regarding the writing:

1. On p.21, line 505, “being physical active” should be changed to “being physically active”

2. In the footnote to Table 1, do the authors mean SES or do they instead mean educational level?