Reviewer’s report

Title: Physical activity, ethnicity and sociodemographic factors. Three year follow-up of 15 year olds in Oslo, Norway

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Reviewer: Wendy Brown

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Physical activity, ethnicity and sociodemographic factors. Three year follow-up of 15 year olds in Oslo, Norway

General

This is an interesting paper, based on data collection from Norwegian youth at age 15 and 18. While the data are sound and interesting, the paper would benefit from 'tightening up' and focusing more clearly and logically on the research aims. At present it reads more like an extract from a student thesis than an academic paper. In my view the paper could be 'set-up' better by proposing three research questions that relate directly to the three tables. The methods and discussion would then follow the three aims logically and in the same order throughout the paper.

I have annotated many changes and questions throughout the manuscript and highlighted the areas where I think the writing could be shortened and more focused.

Background

It is important to provide a clear definition of 'tracking' in this context. Is it 'stability' as in no change in absolute levels of PA, or is it maintenance of a relative position when the data are 'rank ordered'?

I suggest the last paragraph should set up three research questions: (1) to estimate and compare the levels of PA in ethnic Norwegian and ethnic minority youth at age 15 and 18; (2) to examine the associations between sociodemographic factors and these levels of PA in the two groups at 15 and 18 years; and (3) to examine the relationships between sociodemographic factors and three year change in PA in the two groups.

If this is done, then the order of the methods, statistical methods, results and discussion points should be changed to reflect this.

Statistics

I found it difficult to follow some of the statistical methods. Is it possible to make these reflect exactly what is reported in the text (change scores and 95% CIs?) and the tables?
Results

As stated above, I think it would be more logical to report the actual levels of PA first, before looking at the sociodemographic correlates. In terms of 'stability' it would be interesting to know what proportion of boys and girls in each ethnic group were categorized as 'active' or 'inactive' at 15, and then what proportion of those in each group were still active/inactive at 18, and what proportion changed from active to inactive or vice-versa.

Percent agreement and the Kappa statistic could be used here. It is somewhat confusing to look at 'increase/decrease' and 'no change' when baseline PA is unknown. (ie increasing from an already high level is not important, while increasing from a lower start may be).

Discussion

The discussion is much too long. Once any changes are made it should be possible to shorten it to focus on the main points.

Please see the actual paper for further suggestions (attached with track changes on the original pdf - please ask the editors to send this on to you).

In summary I think the paper has interesting data – but would benefit from some changes to the ways the data are analysed and presented.

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'