Reviewer's report

Title: Validation of the Theoretical Domains Framework for use in behaviour change and implementation research

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Reviewer: Noelle Robertson

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This is a nicely written and interesting paper which develops the TDF with some degree of rigour, via a three step validation process. The process of validation is well described, although given the relative unfamiliarity of DCV and Fuzzy Cluster analysis, I think precedents for their use need to be evident in the method, to enhance justification for their use.

Introduction

This is clear and fluent. In paragraph three, p3 I wonder if theory selection is determined just by theoretical assessment, or whether as in other clinical contexts, this is informed by broader contextual variables such as history of implementation attempts, organisational contingencies etc. perhaps this ought better to be considered a formulation since it is not really just theory-driven. Some mention also needs to be made of how, a priori, we know which theories are relevant or not.

P4 whilst the authors note the framework’s use to date, they should also provide some information on its adequacy in predicting guideline implementation and the targets of behaviour change.

Method

I thought this was very clear and parsimonious in its explanations of what was undertaken. Nothing is mentioned of the adequacy of the sample size and whether this was sufficient. Also how adequate are self-defined ratings of expertise given by the participants?

Results

This was well structured and pretty clear to me as a non-expert in these methods

Discussion

I had a few queries, mainly to do with definition. On p16, first paragraph, what is meant by ‘clarity about each kind of influence’? There is another question of definition in second paragraph, p17. It would be useful to define what is encompassed by ‘Nature of the Behaviours’ to understand better its exclusion.