Reviewer’s report

Title: Valuing breastfeeding: A qualitative study of women's experiences of a financial incentive scheme for breastfeeding.

Version: 0 Date: 14 Oct 2017

Reviewer: Rosalind Haddrill

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for asking me to review this interesting paper. Whilst the paper is generally well structured and well written I have a number of comments. These relate to the superficial nature of some of the description and discussion.

Background:

- The use of the phrase 'unnecessary use of healthcare resources' (line 9, p4) is highly subjective - such a word is not actually used in the Cochrane review you cite and seems a poor choice. It also seems strange to cite it as a 'risk' of not breastfeeding. Also, there is a more recent Cochrane review on this topic, published in February 2017.

Methods:

- The paper seems to lack detail in lots of places, in both methodology and methods (and discussion). For example, why do a qualitative study (why not a questionnaire?)? See the COREQ checklist - many of these criteria/questions are unanswered, which would be unacceptable for many journals. This may be appropriate for a pragmatic, health services research project, however the paper definitely seems quite superficial in places, with detail glossed over, which impact on its 'trustworthiness'. What about interview length and location? Data saturation? Reflexivity? Participant checking?

- Table 1 is the women you interviewed, not your sampling frame - it's not completely clear what your inclusion/exclusion criteria were. And why did you include women who were eligible for the scheme rather than those who actually participated (or not)? This needs some clarification, as it seems very much like a convenience sample, rather than purposive.

- It would have been good to see the topic guide/list of questions/prompts you used in the interviews. Did you explicitly ask women about the concept of 'bribery' (you say in your conclusions that interviews gave no credence to this claim)?
- It would also be good if you had showed your framework, or at least some of it, or presented your themes and subthemes in a diagrammatic/table form, to support your narrative. The discussion reads more like a list of topics you want to discuss rather than having coming from the interviews themselves - i.e. inductive; which is a criticism of the Framework approach.

Results:

- Some of the quotations don't seem to support what you are saying. For example p8, line 45, you talk about how 'some women reported that they were able to ignore these potential influences' but the quote doesn't show this, which is a shame as it is an important concept. You use the word 'could' a lot, e.g. page 9, line 22, as if you are uncertain - this reads as a bit vague. Other statements/quotations seem similarly underexplored, such as p11, lines 2-9 'the decision was taken away from her' - meaning?

- What were the views of the 8 women who didn't participate/claim the vouchers? You only really mention that one had a previous negative experience breastfeeding which influenced her decision not to breastfeed. The views of these women are as important as those who did participate, perhaps even more so, and you made a point of including them in your recruitment, and explicitly including them in your aims, so where are their voices?

- The statement on page 14, lines 53-58, is incorrect, as Healthy Start vouchers are available for all low income women, whether breast or artificially feeding, so there is an 'equivalent' way to reward women. This was the whole purpose of the vouchers, which replaced artificial milk tokens.

Discussion:

- In terms of the discussion, there's little/no discussion around non-participation in the scheme. This whole section seems particularly thin, with only 3 non-statistical references to support it, one of which is from Canada. Given the wealth of research from the UK about women's experiences of breastfeeding and their decision-making around this, this seems a weakness. A more detailed, nuanced discussion here would strengthen your paper.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No
Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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