Reviewer’s report

Title: Exploring women’s experiences and decision making about physical activity during pregnancy and following birth: A qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 21 Aug 2019

Reviewer: Megan Teychenne

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Review for BMC Pregnancy and childbirth

August 2019

General comments
This was a well-written qualitative study, which investigated an interesting research topic. The description of qualitative analyses (Table 2) was excellent, and it is clear the analysis was done thoroughly and thoughtfully. Minor comments below to help strengthen the paper for the next version.

Specific comments
1. Abstract - In the results section of the abstract, it states that the decisions to engage in PA and understanding of PA risk can be explained in three ways (1)(2)(3). It is not clear whether these are sub-themes - and unclear how they are linked to the overarching themes. Can this be re-framed as such?
2. Abstract - The conclusion should be more specific to explaining the results or how these findings will inform future intervention development/strategies. Simply stating that "These findings are important insights..." is quite vague.
4. Background - page 3, Line 15. Remove word "respectively"
5. Background - page 3, Line 43. Change "ceased" to "cease"
6. Background - page 5, line 4. 'misplaced confidence' - what does this mean? Please describe or reword.
7. Background: The limitations to the evidence-base are not overly clear. E.g. on page 4 the barriers are identified via a systematic review - but were the studies limited in quality or quantity? If so, state this. Providing a little extra information of the current gaps and limitations of the evidence base will help strengthen the rationale for why you have conducted this study.
8. Methods - page 6, line 20. Remove the word "or"
9. Methods - page 6, line 49. What is a "high street voucher"? Store gift card?
10. Results - page 8. When reporting qualitative results, it is suggested that authors provide an indication of how many women reported sub-themes/categories - without giving an actual quantitative number. For example, using phrases such as "Most women", "about half", "a few", "a couple" helps the reader understand how 'key' each sub-theme was. Please provide this information throughout.
11. Results - It would be good to know upfront how active these women were to help put into context. If they were all highly active - then this may need to be acknowledged in the discussion/limitations section.
12. Results page 10. Line 48. "Most of the time these expectations were more positive, however, come women had more negative experiences". Unsure what it means by the expectations being more positive. Please clarify.
13. Results - When presenting quotes in qualitative results, it is best to weave these in after the concept
has been explained. For example the quote on page 11 (line 37-43) about feeling guilty would fit better after line 24-26, where social media is described as creating pressure for women. The results section should be tweaked to ensure this flow (rather than placing two comments at the end of each paragraph).

14. Results - Suggest including a figure that depicts the overarching and sub-themes. This will help guide the reader through these concepts.

15. Results - page 13, line 6. Suggest removing the word "irrational" as it suggests a form of opinion from the authors.

16. Results - page 13, line 40. It is unclear how the information women received was 'conflicting'. Suggest providing some examples.

17. Discussion. Page 14. As per my comment in the abstract, it is unclear where (1) perceptions of …; (2) perceived vulnerability; (3) how sufficiently informed… these concepts are derived from. Are these sub-themes? Perhaps this will become clearer once the diagram is developed - but currently it needs to be clarified.

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

Yes

**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.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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