Reviewer’s report

Title: Infant formula feeding practices and the role of advice and support: an exploratory qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 31 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Alison K Ventura

Reviewer's report:

Overall, this manuscript reports on an important topic. Although this is a small, qualitative study with limitations, a rich dataset was gleaned and the authors provide detailed narrative on a number of relevant and useful themes related to Australian mothers' experience with formula-feeding.

However, in general, this manuscript needs a thorough revision to improve the quality of the writing. There are many instances where sentences run-on or have grammatical errors, or necessary commas are omitted. I have highlighted a few issues below, but the authors need to carefully review the manuscript to improve the writing quality. Other specific critiques are as follows:

1. The background section of the abstract is a bit repetitive. The authors need to revise this section to better organize and streamline the key points they are trying to convey.

2. The abstract indicates that the authors interviewed mothers. Therefore, it is incorrect to use the term "parents" in throughout the abstract. Please revise accordingly.

3. Page 4, Lines 16-17: This statement doesn't make sense; do the authors mean to say "The mechanisms underlying ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN the type of milk..."

4. Page 4, Lines 22-23: responsive feeding does not need to appear in quotes, and there is a mismatch between the noun and verb in this sentence: "...responsive feeding...are important considerations..." Please revise.

5. Page 5, Line 9: add a comma after: "such as everyday situations like a holiday or illness"

6. It would be helpful to see the scripted questions or prompts that the interviewer asked in the semi-structured interviews.

7. Page 8, Lines 9-10: Please provide more detail in the text about the feeding definitions. How, specifically, were formula-fed, switched early, switched late, and mixed fed defined? Additionally, a period is needed at the end of this sentence.
8. Within the methods and results section, the authors need to clarify whether mothers (as suggested in the abstract) or both mothers and fathers were included in this study. If just mothers, then use the term "mothers" throughout in place of "parents" or "participants." If the sample was both mothers and fathers, then correct this in the abstract and results should be stratified by mothers and fathers.

9. I don't fully understand the authors choice of some of the theme titles - perhaps something simpler and more straight-forward would be better. For example:

"Choice of formula - Potential power of marketing in an information vacuum" : it seems a minority of the factors discussed actually had to do with marketing, per se (e.g., the infant's response to the formula, where it was made, whether or not it was organic, previous experience, advice from professionals and other parents) and I don't think the authors adequately illustrated that the mothers perceived there was an "information vacuum," - the mothers actually seem to have a lot of information about the formula from a number of different sources...it was more that there was a perceived lack of information that came from health professionals.

10. The supplementary table was helpful for visualizing and better understanding the themes that emerged. However, the table has a lot of text so it doesn't provide an easy visual overview of the relationships between the different constructs. I would suggest the authors add a Figure that illustrates the different themes and subthemes that emerged so the reader has a nice visual overview of the authors' findings. Otherwise, it is easy to get lost in all of the narrative and descriptive text provided in both the results section and the supplementary table.

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.

Unable to assess

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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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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