Reviewer’s report

Title: Examining the correlates of meal skipping in Australian young adults

Version: 0 Date: 20 Jan 2019

Reviewer: Frøydis Vik

Reviewer’s report:

The paper is well written and examines an interesting and important field in Nutrition, meal skipping and correlates of meal skipping in young adults. The method used with real time registration via an app for cell phones represents a promising way to do this kind of research - because how to measure food intake in a population in a way that is both reliable and represents a low burden to both participant and researcher is a difficult task.

I have a few points for considerations regarding the revision of the paper.

Abstract:

I recommend including the findings on education also in the conclusion of the abstract, not only in the conclusion in the manuscript.

Background:

Page 4, line 51: Is meal skipping, in particular breakfast skipping, associated with lower intake of total energy? In the context it its used here, it can create misunderstanding. Lower intake of total energy could lead to less obesity in the long run, and therefore skipping of breakfast may be interpreted as a healthy behavior - which I think the authors do not mean to anticipate.

Could it be that you mean higher intake of total energy? If not, this sentence need to be rephrased to make more sense to the reader.

Many overweight-obese people seem to think that skipping of meals is a way of loosing weight in the long run. Is there any evidence that this might be true? It would be good if the current evidence base in this can be stated in the background section.

Page 4, line 64-65: if the overall range was 5-83%, how come that breakfast was ranged 14-89%?

Methods:
Page 6, line 117: Recruitment was done e.g. via Facebook. But in the limitation section, the authors suggest that targeted recruitment should be considered. But is not FB used as a targeted recruitment in your study? To my knowledge, you can tailor messages to a certain population in FB, but it costs money. Considering your sample that were not very varied - did you try to recruit low SES and men via FB?

Page 7, line 121: out of curiosity: is it common to pay each participant e.g. $25 in Australia to participate in research? In some parts of the world, this would be considered as creating a bias.

Measures:

Page 9, line 176: I know from other studies, that even 1-2 yrs in university may be of importance when health literacy is in question, even if you don't finish a degree (minimum of 3 years - bachelor). So it seems to me that your categories are a bit "wide", and that the cut off : finishing a university degree is quite strict. This should be addressed in the limitation section.

Page 9, line 180: I find it hard to understand why you categorise smoking as never smoked in one category, and ex-smokers, occasionally smokers and regular smoker in one category. What is the rationale for when it comes to meal skipping, that an ex-smoker (maybe someone in your sample smoked for 2 yrs from 18-20, and is now 30=ex-smoker) are analysed together with a regular smoker, and not with "never smoked"? To me, that would make a lot more sense. Also , if occasionally could mean 1-2 times per month, it could make sense to categorise them with never smoked? Please make a rationale for why your way of categorizing makes sense, or consider to re-categorize this variable.

Discussion:

Page 16, line 343: Persons who were current smokers were more likely to be breakfast skippers ….
But I think you mean: ex-smokers, occasionally smokers and regular smokers….

See my comment above. It is not quite correct to limit this category to referring to them as regular smokers. Please adjust accordingly. The whole paragraph (until line 360), must be adjusted accordingly, because it does not make sense when it includes ex-smokers, and when there is no definition of what an ex-smoker is.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:
Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal