Reviewer’s report

Title: Psychosocial Support for Parents of Extremely Preterm Infants in Neonatal Intensive Care: A Qualitative Interview Study

Version: 0 Date: 28 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Margarida Custódio

Reviewer's report:

The study aimed to explore the needs of psychological support of parent’s while in NICU after the birth of their extremely premature infants, and to assess their perceptions on how NICU staff meets or fails to address these needs. Authors used a qualitative methodological approach.

Although not innovative, studies on support for parents when the onset of parenting occurs in a dramatic situation should be encouraged. This study presents contributions for the practice of health professionals. However, there are weaknesses that should address by the authors.

Without doubt the paper would need shortening. It may also be helpful for authors to work with a native speaker of English to review some use of language.

Some comments and suggestions:

Background
While the introduction is generally adequate, it could be improved by being more concise and focused on the review of literature on the emotional needs and preferences of parents of premature and extreme premature child while they are in NICU.

Aim
Research questions
148 - It is not clear what you mean by "forms of psychological support". Could you clarify?
The structure of the sentence of first research question should be review.

Methods
-Participants
159 - remove "from"
164 -167 - I suppose you are referring to the newborns in the sample, but it isn't explicit in the text; consider gathering all the information about the newborns by moving the lines 174 to 177 to begin in line 167
170 - Consider change "did not know Swedish" to "were not fluent in Swedish language"
171-173 - As these lines do not contain information about the participants consider moving to "Procedures"

It would be interesting to know more information about the 27 participants: mean age; socio-economic level; academic level
194-195 - About the interview, it not explicit what you mean by "appropriate questions" in follow-up. Was there a frame with dimensions coming from your research questions (aims)?

Data analyses

209-211- In the text you wrote that themes emerge from "capturing the meaning and implications of the categories in relation to the research questions". Could you be more explicit? Were there predefined dimensions? You have two research questions. Did you identify parental needs, and afterword's explore their perceptions on how health professionals, and NICU as an organization, meet these needs?

Results

This part of your text should be review. You have interesting results but the way you structured your themes and subthemes is confusing. It is too long, with some subthemes including information that do not relate to the Theme. There must be internal coherence within each of the themes. Furthermore, quotes are too long and some of them are not clear.

Some examples and suggestions:

233 - Theme 1 - "Emotional Support" - Consider describing the themes before presenting the subthemes

235 - Subtheme: "Empathic treatment by staff" - Consider changing to "Empathic attitudes from de staff".

In this subtheme you include, in a confusing way, parental needs and desires; parental views of sources of support; parental perceptions on health professionals' attitudes; and recommendations for health professionals.

I recommend restructuring and clearly distinguish between parental needs (e.g. need for emotional comfort, hope and honesty by the staff; need to be heard; need to be respected on their preferences) and parental perceptions on how the staff meets these needs. Recommendations for health professionals should be remove and include in Discussion or in Conclusions.

344 - Subtheme "Other parents as a unique source of understanding" - Consider changing to "Other parents as a unique source of support"

This is a subtheme on sources of emotional support and should be describe like that.

379 - Subtheme "Unclear roles of the various professionals"

This is a subtheme on sources of support. It should be completely restructured. Mixing e.g. "the role of the contact person" and "overburden staff less capable of offering emotional support" in
the same subtheme is very confusing. Indeed, some of the information should be remove to Discussion or even to Conclusions.

521 - "Feeling able to trust the health care provider"

This theme should be described, and its coherence with the research questions (i.e., the needs for psychological support and how professionals meet these) must be explained.

635 - "Support in balancing time spend with the infant and other responsibilities"

This is an important theme and it is coherent with your research aims. Nevertheless, you should consider restructuring and clearly distinguish between parental needs of this subject and parental perception on how health professionals meet their needs. Your thoughts or considerations on parental perceptions and their implications on health professional attitudes, should be included in Discussion or in Implications for practice.

711 - Subtheme Privacy and solitude - Consider changing to "Emotional privacy" or just "Privacy"

Again, in this subtheme you include information on parental needs and desires mixed with e.g., "being affected by exposure to other families' problems" which is not a category on its own but one of the reasons for parental need for privacy. I recommend restructuring.

Discussion and Conclusions

The discussion is far too long as currently written. There is too much reiteration of the results. Consider being less descriptive as the results are already very explicit. I suggest you to focused on answering your research questions in a concise way after reflecting on the main results, then link to the broader literature, and discuss the implications for practice, and future research.

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.

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

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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