Reviewer’s report

Title: Healthy Life Centres participants’ perceptions of changing dietary and activity habits: A qualitative interview study of persons afflicted by overweight or obesity

Version: 0 Date: 13 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Megan McVay

Reviewer's report:

In this study, the authors present the results of a qualitative study conducted on 13 individuals who joined Healthy Lifestyle Centers. The authors propose to explore these individual's "perceptions of changing dietary and activity habits." The most significant weakness of this manuscript is that the proposed purpose of this study is extremely broad and is not well justified by or situated in existing literature. For example, there are statements in the introduction about gaps in the literature which appear to reflect a lack of comprehensive knowledge of the literature. Specifically, the authors write "little is known about how participants afflicted by overweight or obesity perceive changing their dietary and activity habits and which barriers may hinder change." In fact, there is a substantive body of literature on these topic. Although the authors show a broader grasp on this literature in the discussion, it is important to use this literature to help the reader to see what is already known and what their study add. As currently written, it is not clear that this study adds anything to existing literature.

Other comments and concerns:

1. The authors are encouraged to review one of the commonly accepted guidelines for reporting qualitative data to ensure that their reporting is comprehensive.

2. The authors describe their sampling as purposive but do not provide any further description as to how it was purposive. The authors do not appear to give a rationale for their sample size.

3. The process by which individuals joined the study is unclear. How was eligibility assessed? Do the authors have information on how many participants were screened and ineligible (this is in guidelines such as the COREQ)?

4. Some details of the coding process are unclear. The authors describe developing themes with colleagues, then the first author doing the coding. But then also state that there were "discussions" when disagreements arose. It is unclear who all was involved in the coding.
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.

No

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:

Acceptable

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