Reviewer’s report

Title: Parents' perceptions of reasons for excess weight loss in obese children: a peer researcher approach.

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Reviewer: Stephanie Tierney

Reviewer’s report:

This is a well-written article about involving parents in collecting and analysing data for a study related to childhood obesity. However, it was disappointing that although the parents were involved in data collection and analysis, they have not been included as co-authors. Other comments that I would like to make about its current format include:

The plain English summary

* Be clear what country is being referred to in the first paragraph.

Abstract

* Be clear which country the national child measurement programme refers to.

* In the results it states 5 months were given to recruitment, but in the main text it states 6 months.

* I don't think the (=3) in the results is needed, given the small number of parents who were interviewed.

* Perhaps the results should include some reference to the parent-researcher process.

* Any problems associated with involving parents in data collection and analysis (especially given that it still did not help recruit more people)? This could also be discussed in the main text.

Method (some of the points here may have been better in the results, rather than focusing on the findings from just 4 interviewees)

* Did any parent-researchers draw on additional support outside of the training?

* How did they introduce themselves to parents who were interviewed?
* Was there any sense of why parent-researchers opted to get involved? I would have liked a bit of information about these individuals' demographics and background.

* Was it clear if parent-researchers had any anxieties before or during data collection? How did training address these concerns (or could it have been shaped to do so)?

* Were any concerns raised during debriefing interviews with parent-researchers? How were these addressed (e.g. how did they feel about using recording equipment)?

* Was there any sense that parent-researchers would do this type of work again? Did they get any benefits from doing this (apart from research skills)?

* Page 8 - recruitment - was this in one part of England?

* What else could have been done to increase the recruitment (e.g. snowballing)?

* Were invitations clear that it would be a parent-interviewer?

* Was a lone worker policy in place, given that parents were interviewing people on their own? Any risk assessment?

* What changes were made by parent-researchers to the interview schedule? Did these changes show a more nuanced understanding of the topic?

Results

* Were parents who were interviewed all overweight/obese themselves? They may have had differing views compared to parents who were not themselves overweight/obese.

* How long did interviews last?

* I think that given the small sample, the findings from the interviews could be shorter (e.g. removing some of the quotations, removing the paragraph on page 15 starting - Reflecting the primacy of parental willingness…). More could perhaps have been written in this section about involving parents as researchers - including quality of data.

* Did anything come out about the cost of paying for a child to attend commercial programmes and the appropriateness of advice given there for children?

* In light of only 4 people opting to be interviewed, and the focus of the journal, I wonder whether the results would be better giving more focus to the involvement of parents in the role of data collectors and analysts?

Discussion
* Perhaps the people who were interviewed could have been asked afterwards, by someone else, how they felt being interviewed by another parent.

* Take care about the statements made at the end of page 19 - these are based on only 4 people’s accounts - there therefore needs to be in place this caveat.

* On page 20 - the authors refer to the idea of children 'growing out of it' or dismissing the seriousness of obesity in their child - there are other papers that have reported finding this that need to be referenced.

* On page 20 - the sentence starting - Given that parents could identify many reasons… This was quite difficult to read - I would consider revising it.

* There seem to be some words missing from the sentence on page 21.

Strengths and limitations

* I was a bit confused because I thought all parent-researchers had experience of a child who was obese, but then here it says 'some' were.

* I think some of the points raised here would have been better in the results, where the authors talk about the experience of and learning points from involving parents as researchers.

* Page 22 - the point raised about poor recruitment not reflecting how the team thought it would go was interesting.

* There was quite a bit of effort training the parents for only 4 interviews. Are these parents going to be involved in other studies?

Conclusion

* I think this should start with a focus on involving parents as researchers.

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