Reviewer’s report

Title: Supported and valued? A survey of Early Career Researchers’ experiences and perceptions of youth and adult involvement in mental health, self-harm and suicide research

Version: 0 Date: 22 Nov 2018

Reviewer: M. Isabela Troya

Reviewer's report:

The authors present a useful and valuable addition to the literature on Patient Involvement as well as Mental Health and Self-harm research.

The authors may wish to consider the following:

On a more general note, results from the survey show that the majority of respondents (n=25; 61%) answered the questions reflecting on their involvement on mental health research. Self-harm and suicide research were reported less frequently. Therefore, the title of the manuscript is misleading, and I believe Mental Health should come prior to self-harm and suicide given that the majority of reflections and answers from participants came from mental health research.

Similarly, results from the survey report participants reflecting primarily on public involvement rather than youth involvement. Therefore, the title should be amended to reflect which concept is being predominantly reported.

The title could be changed to this: 'Supported and valued? A survey of ECR experiences and perceptions of public and youth involvement in mental health, self-harm, and suicide research'

In the Introduction (page 5), the authors define Patient and Public Involvement and briefly touch on how there are other terms used interchangeably when referring to Engagement. The emphasis on Engagement is not strong, as well as the clarification made. I would suggest the authors consider re-visiting the term Public Engagement (knowledge disseminated) and apply this to their results so that their study reports on the entire NIHR cycle of Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement.

Despite reading the manuscript several times, I struggled to understand why youth and public involvement were presented separately in the introduction. Once reading the results, it became clearer why the authors separated the concepts given that participants reported differences in involvement with youth and the public. I am not sure whether these two concepts should be
separated from the introduction or rather from the presentation of results. Also defining the age criteria for public involvement to be considered youth involvement would be helpful (e.g. 16-25).

The authors draw on terms such as self-stigma (introduction page 6). It would be useful for them to include a definition of self-stigma (as opposed to enacted stigma for instance).

Participants: The authors state the study was designed for ECRs researching mental health, self-harm and suicide. There is no mention of geographical location of ECR’s and if this was a UK based study or was open worldwide to ECRs in the field. The authors do argue that because of the relatively small research field, no further information was requested from participants such as gender, institution, age. However as mentioned, inclusion criteria with regards to geographical location is missing and I believe this is important to give the reader context when interpreting results given that some countries prioritise PPIE more than others (e.g. funding for PPIE). Also, if this is a worldwide survey, despite agreeing with the authors that this is a small research field, more participants would have needed to be included.

Despite the authors stating participants included came from a convenience sample, the authors fail to report how many people were invited and how many participated in the study. Knowing the participation rate is essential when judging study's methodological quality.

Once again, this study is a valuable contribution to the literature on PPIE and mental health and suicidal behaviour research. Findings could be better reported taken into consideration the above suggestions.

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