

Using mixed methods to investigate the weight change, dietary intake and physical activity of Black pregnant women, incorporating a participant and public involvement approach

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Black women in the UK have higher odds of overweight, obesity and adverse outcomes, such as gestational diabetes ⁽¹⁾. Furthermore, black pregnant women are under-represented in weight management and health behaviour studies and have been labelled a ‘hard to engage’ group. So, there is a paucity of data for the dietary intake and physical activity of black pregnant women. This study will aim to use mixed methods to investigate the weight change, dietary intake and physical activity of black pregnant women and to understand the realities of black women during pregnancy. Participant and Public Involvement (PPI) improves research by making it more meaningful and reliable. It can better the understanding of researchers and guide conceptual aspects of the research by refining research methods according to what participants deem relevant ⁽²⁾. Thus, before the main study commenced, preliminary PPI was conducted to elicit the opinions of potential participants about the study’s design and relevance. The PPI was conducted after a monthly meeting at a multicultural community center in Liverpool. Fifteen women consisting of women from ethnic minority groups and white and black women who worked with ethnic minority groups were recruited from the center. Study materials such as the participant information sheet and the study posters were distributed to the participants. While participants looked through the materials, the researcher explained the study’s rationale and the components of the study’s design. Following this, women were asked about their opinions regarding the study and notes were taken throughout by the researcher.

The women acknowledged that the study was important to capture the experiences of black women. That the pains of black women are ignored, and they would be happy to share their experiences. They suggested children centers as potential recruitment locations and they affirmed that working with communities would be a good way to reach the women. However, they urged that the study must be presented in a sensitive manner, to avoid it appearing like the cause of death or illness in pregnancy is shifted to the women. Finally, they commented on the poster and liked that the images of black women were representative of women from different backgrounds and cultures.

This PPI approach further strengthened the study’s design and provided suggestions for recruitment. It emphasised the need for the study to be conducted sensitively, to avoid women feeling blamed for any adverse outcomes. The broader study intends to provide vital information that is culturally specific to black women, which may inform the design of maternity services and behaviour interventions, tailored specifically to improve the pregnancy outcomes of black pregnant women in UK. And this PPI has confirmed that the intended study has great relevance to black women.

References

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