Review article: Feasibility and acceptability pilot study of an online weight loss program in rural, underserved communities

Thank you for the opportunity to revise this manuscript.

This pilot study seeks to understand the effectiveness of an online weight loss program (called EMPOWER) over a 12-month intervention period in rural and underserved populations. The study has three primary objectives: 1) To implement the EMPOWER program in this population to address the limited accessibility to healthcare systems; 2) To evaluate the program's feasibility and accessibility; and 3) To identify specific barriers to adherence to the EMPOWER program. The study enrolled a small sample of participants (n=16, mean age 47 years, predominantly female) with various cardio-metabolic characteristics. The study is interesting due to the long intervention period and the breadth of outcomes assessed. My comments are listed below:

Abstract:
The abstract is clear; however, I recommend revising the conclusion, as it currently appears too strong given the small sample size. Instead of "demonstrated," use "showed" and include a sentence indicating that "future studies are required...."

Introduction:
The introduction is fine, though slightly lengthy. Please include: The hypothesis of the study.
A clear statement of the primary outcome, followed by a list of secondary outcomes.

Materials and Methods:
Lines 122-123: Specify which outcomes required repeated measures analysis.
Lines 240-255: Indicate who performed the anthropometric measurements.
Provide a detailed description of what is meant by "lifestyle coaching/education."
Lines 278-288: Specify how data were reported (e.g., mean and SD). Also, include the test used to assess data normality (I assume all data were non-normally distributed since the Wilcoxon analysis was used).
Line 283: Clarify what is meant by "different time points." Readers should know which outcomes were measured only at pre- (T0) and post-intervention (12 months) and which were analyzed at more than two time points. For analyses involving more than two time points, use an appropriate statistical method other than the Wilcoxon test, which only compares two time points. Make everything clear.
Include and calculate the effect size. The p-value is important, but it's beneficial to understand the magnitude of the effect.

Results:
Lines 291-295: Add the dropout percentage.
Lines 301-303: Include the BMI classification in the table (i.e., the percentage of participants with Class I, II, and III obesity).
Line 322: Specify if feasibility is the primary outcome and label it under "primary or secondary outcomes."

Figures and Tables:

Table 1: Indicate the physical activity levels of participants if this information was collected. Also, note the limitation that only one man participated in the intervention, which could bias the results. Include a comment on this.
Figure 2: Improve the figure by adding SD to the histograms and indicating the unit of measure on the y-axis (e.g., score).

Additional Details:
Line 369: The "Appendix F" is missing. Please provide it.
Lines 363-369: Add the p-values for these results.
Line 370: Indicate where readers can find these results. Specify if the analysis was conducted pre- and post-intervention (12 months) or also at 6 months. This should be added to the statistical methods. Note that if the analysis was done at three time points, a repeated measures ANOVA is required.
Lines 397-406: Reiterate the main hypothesis and state whether it was confirmed.
In the discussion, address additional important points such as sex disparities and the fact that the intervention primarily attracted middle-aged individuals, not older adults.
Lines 425-444: Include other crucial limitations, such as the generalizability of the study, the predominance of female participants, and the limited applicability of conclusions to older populations.