Author’s response to reviews

Title: Attitudes toward Fertility and Childbearing Scale (AFCS): An Assessment of a New Instrument for Women Not Yet Mothers in Sweden

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Concerning the manuscript,
Attitudes toward Fertility and Childbearing Scale (AFCS): An Assessment of a New Instrument for Women Not Yet Mothers in Sweden

Dear BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth Editorial Team,

First we want to thank you for the comments, which have helped us improve the manuscript. In the reviewer’s reports below you will find our answers in red. In the manuscript the corrections is written in bold text.

We have made one correction in the last sentence in the background of the abstract; ‘population’ has been changed to ‘sample’. In the ‘keyword’ section we have added ‘explorative’ and ‘principal component analysis’. In the method section the paragraph ‘Development of the instrument’ are now presented in three steps instead of four. The title has also been changed; the word ‘to’ has been replaced with ‘toward’.
The manuscript has been proofread according to British English.

Yours sincerely,

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RN, RM, PhD

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Reviewer's report
Title: Attitudes to Fertility and Childbearing Scale (AFCS): An Assessment of a New Instrument for Women Not Yet Mothers in Sweden
Version: 3 Date: 18 March 2013
Reviewer: Despina Sapountzi-Krepia

Reviewer's report:
MS ID : 3843730448945898

Title : Attitudes to Fertility and Childbearing Scale (AFCS): An Assessment of a New Instrument for Women Not Yet Mothers in Sweden
Authors: Malin Soederberg, Ingela Lundgren, Kyllike Christensson and Ingegerd Hildingsson

An interesting paper, however further work is necessary before publication. Thanks for your comments, which has helped us improve the manuscript. Please, see our answers below and changes in manuscript in bold text.

Your abstract needs rewriting regarding the following:
Methods
Please describe in brief your study design, development of the instrument, sample recruitment, method of data collection, statistical analysis
Answer: In the abstract methods section the text has been rewritten. Information about the sample recruitment has not been added due to limitations in the amount of words in the abstract section. There is a limit of 350 words.

Results
In the first paragraph please erase Component 1 reflects, Component 2 reflects, Component 3 reflects and instead put a), b), c).
Answer: This has been rewritten using 1), 2), 3).

Provide information from the statistical tests used.
Provide information regarding Construct Validity, Internal Consistency and Comparative Validity of the instrument (referred in line 114).
Answer: In the results section information of used statistical tests has been provided. Concerning ’comparative validity’ it has been corrected to ’comparative statistics’.

Regarding other subchapters of the manuscript
Please write clearly and in a separate paragraph the aim of your study and put it after Background and before Methods
Answer: The aim has been rewritten see last paragraph of the Background

Development of the instrument
Lines 135, 136: you report…Two interviews were conducted …. and one by telephone. Why you conducted the interviews in different ways. Please give information about that.
Answer: In the paragraph ’Construction of statements’ line 146-148 information has
been added

Line 152 ..178 women who agreed… at this point write after receiving information about… from the midwife…ect
Answer: In the paragraph ‘Data collection’ this has been added, see line 167-168

Results
I didn’t find the Comparative Validity of the instrument (referred in line 114).
Answers: This should be comparative statistics, it has now been corrected see abstract and the end of methods section.

Discussion
You have to discus your findings from testing the Construct Validity, Internal Consistency and Comparative Validity of the instrument.
Answers: Please see the discussion section. Concerning ‘comparative validity’ it should be ‘comparative statistics’, this has been corrected.

English need to be revised.
Proofreading has been done according to British English

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'

Reviewer's report

Title: Attitudes to Fertility and Childbearing Scale (AFCS): An Assessment of a New Instrument for Women Not Yet Mothers in Sweden
Version: 3 Date: 8 April 2013
Reviewer: Kathrin Stoll

Reviewer's report:
Review for BMC Pregnancy & Birth
Manuscript #: 3843730448945898

Title : Attitudes to Fertility and Childbearing Scale (AFCS): An Assessment of a New Instrument for Women Not Yet Mothers in Sweden

This paper reports on the development and psychometric evaluation of a new scale: The Attitudes to Fertility and Childbearing Scale (AFCS). I speak from experience when I say that instrument development papers are notoriously difficult to get published in non-psychometric journals. That being said, the
instrument fills a gap in the literature, especially in the context of falling fertility rates in high resource countries.

Thanks for your comments, which has helped us improve the manuscript! Please see our answers below and the changes in manuscript in bold text.

Introduction: The introduction was a little bit challenging to read. It is unfocused and at times difficult to follow. I particularly struggled with the first 3 sentences. What do the authors mean when they say ‘the objectified body has become central’? I believe the paper could be strengthened by deleting these sentences or re-writing them.

Answer: The background has been rewritten in whole

The manuscript needs to be edited by a native speaker. The authors are clearly proficient in English, but there a few errors and inappropriate words in the paper. For instance, ‘deadlines for childbearing’. This is an example of a translational issue.

Answer: The manuscript has been proofread again before re-submission according to British English.

Since item generation was informed by 2 qualitative studies (which is a strength), the reader needs to know a little bit about these studies. When were they conducted, with whom, what about?

Answer: This has been added in the last paragraph of the background, before the aim.

Methods: Was the original scale in Swedish or always in English? I am asking because other researchers may want to use this scale with English speaking women. If the original scale was not in English, you need to say so in the paper and let readers know that a forward/backward translation was not done. There are certain best practice guidelines around translating instruments. You just need to be transparent about what was done.

Answer: This has been added in the ‘Method’ line 132-133 and in the ‘Discussion’, the third paragraph, the last two sentences.

I liked the fact that the 68 items were derived from qualitative studies (with the same target population I assume). I have not used the read aloud/think aloud approach, but it seems to be another way of pilot testing the scale. Please state how many women participated in this phase of the scale development process and explain the approach in some more detail.

Answer: See the last paragraph of the section ‘Development of the instrument’ Step 1: Construction of statements, concerning how many women participated and information about the approach.

Location of recruitment: What kind of sample may be recruited from antenatal and youth clinics? Please explain the clientele these clinics serve? High risk youth? Any women? Why antenatal clinics since only childless women were recruited.
Answer: In Sweden antenatal clinics have contraceptive units for all women. Youth clinics serve all youths up to 23 years of age. Please see added information in the method section, ‘data collection’ second to third line.

Data analysis: The sample size of 138 is generally too low for factor analysis. I am quite certain that a sample size of 300 would have yielded quite different results. This limitation must be discussed, whether the authors computed Bartlett’s test or not.
Answer: Please see discussion, the fourth paragraph.

What do you mean by communality values. Item to total correlations (ITTC) ?
Typically, ITTC and factor loadings are reported for new scales.
Answer: Concerning communality values, that is the amount of variance the item and factor share in common. Item total correlation is the correlation between the item and the total scale score.

What do you mean by ‘Six statements that were linguistically too similar and loaded > .8 in the correlation matrix were dropped [31].’ (line 183). Don’t use the term ‘loaded’ (as this term usually refers to factor loadings derived from factor analysis). It would be better to refer to the high collinerarity of these items.
Answer: Agree, see first paragraph of the results section

Reverse scoring of items: Are the 3 subscales meant to be combined to create one full scale? If so, you should include instructions for reverse scoring items and decide what construct the overall scale measures.
Answer: At this early stage of development of the instrument it is not clear whether the subscale will form a total score or not.
What do high scores mean?
Answer: High scores indicate higher agreement of the statements included in the subscales.
How do these three subscales ‘fit together’?
Answer: This has to be tested further in a larger study
How do your findings (i.e., 3 subscales that measure x,y,z) fit into findings from the qualitative research that underpinned scale development?
Answer: This has been commented in the discussion section, please see last line in the second paragraph.

While the assigned labels for subscales 1 & 2 give the reader an idea about the meaning of high scores, subscale 3 does not. What do high scores on the social identity subscale mean? Why do you think the social identity coefficients are all negative? Please discuss.
Answer: According to Pallant (2010) the negative coefficient’s are not a problem using principal component analysis as long as all items in a component are all negative or positive. Therefore high score in component three are 0.774, 0.667, and 0.626. If a single coefficient is negative, that statement might not fit well with the other statements in the component and should be removed. One explanation to this could be that the women do not agree to the same extent to the items that constitutes
component three as they do in the other components.

Results: Results are interesting and as expected. Why are no analyses for the social identity subscale reported? Also, you may want to include a sentence that outlines how to interpret eta squared. Cohen’s d is often used as a measure of effect size; readers may not know how to interpret the magnitude of eta squared. Answer: A sentence why no analyses are reported for component 3 has been added last in the results section. Information about eta square has been added in the methods section, last part of ‘Data analysis’.

Table 1: Title refers to four, not three factors. Answer: corrected

Overall, I found the paper interesting, but am uncertain whether it would be a good fit for BMC Pregnancy & Birth.

My main concerns with the paper are as follows:

1) If the scale is in Swedish and items were informally translated into English (without proper forward backward translation and expert review) the scale is not really validated for an English speaking population. Publishing the scale in BMC Pregnancy and Birth may give readers the impression that the scale can be used ‘as is’ with English speaking youth. Answer: It is important to remember that this is a new instrument analysed using explorative factor analysis to give us an idea about the underlying components of the construct. The instrument should be tested and further developed and a forward backward translation can then be made. This has been added in the end of the fourth paragraph of the discussion.

2) I think the authors may want to look at their social identity subscale again. The coefficient’s are all negative, which is surprising. Answer: According to Pallant (2010) the negative coefficients are not a problem using principal component analysis. If a single coefficient is negative that statement might not fit well with the other statements in the component and should be removed.

Please consider my suggested revisions as ’major compulsory'.
Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review your paper.
All the best,
Kathrin Stoll

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.
Declaration of competing interests: I have no conflict of interest/competing interests to declare.