Author's response to reviews

Title: Satisfaction with life during pregnancy and early motherhood in first-time mothers of advanced age: a population-based longitudinal study

Authors:

Vigdis VAa Aasheim (vaa@hib.no)
Ulla UW Waldenstrom (ulla.waldenstrom@ki.se)
Svein SR Rasmussen (Svein.Rasmussen@k2.uib.no)
Birgitte BE Espehaug (Birgitte.Espehaug@hib.no)
Erica ES Schytt (Erica.Schytt@ki.se)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We are grateful for the valuable comments and suggestions on the manuscript entitled ‘Satisfaction with life during pregnancy and early motherhood in first-time mothers of advanced age: a population-based longitudinal study’ (MS: 1073369581071449)

Please find our comments below.

Referee 1  Anne H Salonen

Currently, the background section does not give a strong rationale for the study.

The background section has been revised

The concept SWL is defined shortly; however, since previous research seems to be scarce, it might be useful to define how the concept SWL relates to similar concepts (the happiness, the quality of life, personal satisfaction etc.) OK. and possibly refer to those studies OK.

Since SWL is measured during pregnancy and early motherhood, it would also be essential to broaden the literature review into early interaction theory and to clarify how SWL is associated with parenting experience. Expanding the background section with parenting literature might also give new ideas to strengthen the discussion section. For example, could more negative SWL perceptions be explained by the fact that older parents have often higher expectations or demands, at least for their parenting and for their parenting support.

We have inserted a paragraph in the discussion section about becoming a mother.

The aims/objectives of the study are unclear and confusing. In the background section, a current version of the hypothesis is expressed using a complicated sentence, which is longer than six rows. Please consider rephrasing your aims without including the references. Clearer and more specific aims might
also help to strengthen the rationale, to modify the structure of the manuscript (background, methods, results, discussion) and to proceed more logically.

The aim has been clarified

Consider adding more reference to support the statement that the reliability and the validity of the SWL scale is well established. We have added one more reference.

In addition, please consider describing the instruments/measures (explanatory variable, confounders) more thoroughly.

We find that the explanatory variable age has been described sufficiently. The text has been revised accordingly concerning confounders.

The results and discussion sections would benefit from restructuring. It is confusing that the first two chapters are not actual results. The first chapter has been moved to Method section. The second chapter of the results includes variables that are not mentioned in the background or in the methods. This has been clarified.

Several covariates were used, but it is unclear what was actually the impact of these covariates in the analysis. The impact of the covariates are described in Table 2 where we have adjusted stepwise for 1) timepoint and 2) a block of sociodemographic variables. To show the OR for each confounder was not possible according to the agreement with MoBa who deals with problems of overlapping studies.

In addition, the presence of the covariates does not come clear from the abstract or from the conclusions. ‘when controlling for some potential socio-demographic factors’ is added to the abstract

Strengthening the rationale and clarifying the aims might also help restructuring the results and discussion sections. It would also be interesting to read more discussion about what do these results really mean in practise, and especially from the perspective parenting experience and parenting support. Before the manuscript is published, also please consider editing the language and check the consistency of the use of the terms. For example, currently the same variables are referred to using the terms adverse pregnancy outcomes, confounders and independent factors. The perspective of becoming a mother has been added to the discussion.
Referee 2  Deirdre O'Malley

No revisions to suggest

Comments from Associate Editor
Reviewer: Valerie Smith

Major Revisions

The opening background section sets the topic in context, however, the rationale for the study is lacking. It would be helpful if the authors could add something on the potential impact that lower SWL may have on mothers in general and even more-so for mothers of advancing age. It is one thing to suggest that reduced SWL may occur but, where it does, what impact might this have. Essentially, the ‘so-what’ of the study (and thus rationale for its conduct) is missing. The background section has been revised including potential impact of low SWL.

Statistical analysis section; paragraph 2, line 3: factor ‘time’; please clarify what you mean by time (i.e. time to something/gestational age/weeks postpartum?) OK

Discussion section: implications of results need to be addressed, rather than simply exploring reasons for the results; e.g. the ‘so what’ of the results, what does it mean for pregnancy and childbearing, any suggestions for what might be done to address this to improve older first-time mothers’ SWL, any recommendations for further research to confirm your findings and perhaps allow for international comparisons; attending to these would considerably enhance the authors discussion.

It is not easy to describe the implications of these results because the age differences are small and because there are not sufficient literature to guide us. But we have added a sentence on implications in the discussion, and we have also illuminated this lack of knowledge.

Reference list does not appear to be as per Journal style as follows: i) article titles should be in bold and ii) Journal titles should be in Italics and abbreviated. This is corrected
Minor discretionary revisions

The definition for SWL, provided by the authors, in the opening paragraph would benefit from greater detail, expansion and further explanation; for example,...explain further global evaluation and cognitive judgment (i.e. who’s judgement.....self-report or based on clinician/other report and/or judgement/objective versus subjective judgements, etc.) The definition of SWL is now expanded.