Reviewer’s report

Title: Satisfaction with childbirth in Belgium and the Netherlands

Version: 1 Date: 13 March 2007

Reviewer: Jennifer Fenwick

Reviewer's report:

General
For Authors: Wendy & Piet
The article is well written from the point of view of level for this journal and readability. I enjoyed reading it. The question posed by the research is well defined. The literature presented is appropriate, relevant and current. Discussion and conclusions are balanced and adequately supported by the data. Limitations are addressed.

Well done and I hope this feedback will be helpful in strengthening your manuscript.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

Method
The method is appropriate however the paper would be strengthened by stating and justifying the approach taken (For example … The study modelled the relationships between these constructs and childbirth satisfaction using data collected from a self-reported survey…) and by more clearly detailing how the study was conducted.

The following are suggestions on how the manuscript could be strengthened;

Sample size
Page 5 – phrase ‘.. since population of pregnancy women unknown’.. I’m not sure what you mean here. Surely you must have some idea of the numbers of birthing women in each setting? You can also use the national birthing figures to make some comparisons to your sample and make some judgement as to the representative nature or otherwise.

There needs to be some discussion on the numbers needed to power the study

Recruitment and data collection
When did the women receive the postnatal questionnaire? Was this sent out with the antenatal questionnaire? Was their a package? How did women know what to do? For example letter with package? Information sheet? Was their a self addressed prepaid envelope? What I’m trying to get at is that you need to detail what you did so that someone else could replicate the work – there isn’t sufficient detail at present to know exactly how you went about recruiting the women and collecting the data.

Antenatal questionnaire – what did this consist of? Was this another study? Is this when you collected demographic data? What demographic data did you collect? (I know this is stated later but should be clear up front)

Why 30 weeks?
Why 2 weeks for postnatal? – you need to take into consideration the literature that says if you ask women about their childbirth experience in the early postpartum period likely to get a more positive response as ‘glad over’ – and / or ‘grateful to staff’ - women at this stage have not had time to reflect on the experience.. OK just read in limitations.

State response rates in % as well as n=
Page 6 – second paragraph commencing with ‘We are to rely on the goodwill ….’ This whole paragraph is confusing and I’m unsure what you’re trying to say.

Why was a written consent necessary when you did not collect any identifying or personal details?

Measurements
Pilot on dependent variable (satisfaction with childbirth) work mentioned – great. You might like to make a comment on the internal consistency reliability coefficients (measured using cronbach alpha) and what they mean. For example .. ’pilot testing demonstrated that instrument was valid for the birthing population in both Belgium and the Netherlands’.

Visual Analogue scales (VAS) – a brief comment on the use of these for measuring childbirth labour pain is needed. Who else has used them and how in the childbirth population? In other words you need to demonstrate to reader that this was a reliable and acceptable way to measure pain in the childbearing woman. There is literature that would argue the opposite.

W-DEQ – was developed by who and for what? (I actually know but from what you’ve written your reader will not). This questionnaire (W-DEQA & B) was designed to measure expectations and experiences – why not use entire scale etc. In other words you need to justify the use of the three personal control items?

Self-efficacy measure – Fairly old? example of questions? Results of pilot testing? When translated and tested did results indicate valid and reliable in your birthing population?

Discussion
Page 14 – 3rd paragraph 3rd last sentence… I’m not sure what you mean by the statement ‘The ambivalent Dutch maternity care…. etc’ and the conclusions you draw. This needs a little more explanation. Any implications for practice?

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Spacing
Attention to formatting needs addressing
Some track change markings are still apparent in the document

Grammar
Minor editing is needed. When writing you should use ‘past tense’.
Use numerals when 20 and over – below that use words ie., six

References
Reference in 2nd paragraph in Background – ‘personal communication’ needs a name and also should have number assigned.

Abstract
An abstract is needed.

Title
The authors may like to consider reworking the title to better reflect the nature of the study… there is nothing new about childbirth satisfaction but there is in modelling the four social psychological determinants they have selected and taking a cross cultural perspective …. Would be worth title reflecting these to some degree. Alternatively you can use the results in the title.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
Presentation

Structure
The authors may like to consider reorganising the heading to assist flow of the paper– for example;
• Aim / objectives
• Setting
• Sample size
• Recruitment and data collection
• Measures / Instruments
• Data analysis
• Ethical consideration
What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

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.