Reviewer’s report

Title: Mental health related determinants of parenting stress among urban mothers of young children - results from a birth-cohort study in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire

Version: 1 Date: 28 April 2014

Reviewer: Heide Glaesmer

Reviewer’s report:

There are major critical points in the methods and results … and in its consequence in the discussion. These points need to be addressed in a possible revision.

1. Introduction, 1st para.: What is about mental health and attachment in the children with mothers reporting PS?

2. Introduction: 2nd page, middle: please compare the findings with prevalence rates from western countries (source 22-25).

3. Introduction, last para.: Did you assess perinatal depression and anxiety???

4. The internal consistencies of PHQ-9 and the GAD-7 are not very high. Please compare it with the findings in the original English version. This could be based on several problems with translation or cultural issues. Please have a closer look at the psychometric properties (unidimensionality? Which item does not fit well?). Include a more precise discussion of this problem …

5. Did you assess the sick child visits via self-report of the mothers or from charts?

6. Statistical analysis: Which cut-off-score did you use for the PHQ-9?

7. Results:
   a. Figure 1: second box right “.. exclusion criteria”
   b. Figure 1 and text: please include response rates (%) at the different assessments and some more information about those participants lost to follow up (you can make some analysis with the baseline characteristics)
   c. Table 1: please discuss the inclusion and exclusion criteria … the table does not fit with figure 1 .. you have a baseline (t0) N of 1030 and later at t1 of 719, but only 659 were really assessed at t1 … please revise tabe 1 and figure 1 respectively .. and give comprehensive information (e.g. in a footnote) about exclusion criteria …Discuss the differences between included an excluded women.
   d. Table 2. Please include N's and give information about the used cut-off-scores in a footnote
   e. MAJOR: .. There are no information about the stability of the mental disorders assessed in the study .. We do not know if these are chronic conditions across
the time points or if there are remissions and new cases. Please analyse the trajectories of depression and anxiety and include these information in table 2.

f. Table 3 a and b: The mothers are divided into depressed vs. non-depressed etc. … is this based on the t0-assessment?? What is about the assessments of t1, t2 and t3?? It would be of interest to get more information about that! Please don’t use the term “total score” # entire sample would be nice ..; please highlight the significant findings.

g. Table 4: The mothers are divided into depressed vs. non-depressed etc. … is this based on the t0-assessment?

h. Table 5. Please provide the N’s for the both samples. Give comprehensive information about the different variables in the analysis (Cut-off scores for depression, anxiety; what means postnatal depression # t1?; what is about t2 and t3??, age of mother; what means time?? Which assessment of parenting stress is the one used in this analysis (T1 .. or t3??; Why? )

i. Discussion: 1st para.: what means “healthy infant”?; 2nd para: please compare the findings with data from western countries ..

j. Page 17: “According to our longitudinal data …” # this seems to be the major problem of the paper .. it’s a longitudinal study .. this is great!! But (as far as I understand) you made no analyses about trajectories .. for depression, anxiety or parenting stress!!!! This is very important to make these analyses, otherwise we don’t know if the problems are stable and the same mothers are burdened across the 24month or not!

k. Please discuss the number of participants lost to follow up and the psychometric “problems”

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

no competing interests