Author’s response to reviews

Title: Reading and writing difficulties in adolescence and later risk of welfare dependence. A ten year follow up, the HUNT Study, Norway

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,

Thank you for a new review of our manuscript. We have appreciated the comments of the referee, and we have made changes to our manuscript according to these comments (as described in detail in the attachment). We have also made some minor changes in the manuscript and tables in order to increase the consistency regarding the vocabulary and in accordance with BMC formatting standards. The manuscript title has been changed as the former title included the term “adolescent” twice, and according to new standards for correct naming of the HUNT study. If a language editing of our new manuscript is requested we will perform it immediately.

The manuscript has been read and approved by all co-authors in the revised version.

Best regards

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Attachment

The comments from referee Sigrun Olafsdottir are referred in italic. Our comments to these and the changes made to the manuscript are described for each new point.

1. While the paper is overall well written, the transitions between paragraphs are relatively weak and the paper reads a little like a collection of paragraphs, rather than a coherent text that makes an overarching argument. It might be better to begin the background section with the second paragraph on reading and writing difficulties to set the stage for what the problem is and then make the link to the consequences and what the authors are ultimately interested in. The background could also spell out a little clearer what the overarching research question is and why it is important.

Comment/changes: The Background section has been restructured in order to make it more coherent.

2. It is somewhat unclear what the population is and it would be useful to say what the county of Nord-Trøndelag represents (that it is the fourth least populated county in Norway and excludes the largest Norwegian cities).

Comment/changes: We have added some more information about the population in the methods section “Study participants”. Furthermore, we have expanded the cohort description in the first paragraph in the result section.

I would also prefer that the authors stayed away from making generalizations to other European nations or would make the generalization a bit more carefully (which they do in the current version, compared to the previous), but it would be stronger to say something like, that this is likely to be a general relationship as we might expect that such difficulties have a relationship with future outcomes in other contexts, but needs to be tested.

Comment/changes: We have made some changes to the part of the discussion (last part of “Strengths and limitations”) where this is discussed.

3. The discussion of the Norwegian social insurance system and registration appears misplaced, and I wonder if it would make more sense to have it a part of the background section to give the reader an understanding of what the Norwegian context is like and what we should expect within that context.

Comment/changes: We have moved the paragraph in the Methods section explaining the Norwegian program. Some of its contents are now included in the methods section under “Study participants”. As the reviewer suggests, we have also introduced the theme in the background section.
The discussion of measures could also be a little clearer, it might be enough to simply add dependent variable and independent variables to the heading of the sections to make it immediately clear to the reader.

Comment/changes: We have changed the subheading for dependent variable. We have also tried to be more precise when defining our dependent variable. However, we feel that “independent variables” is not a precise epidemiological term, as RWD have a different status in the analyses than the other variables included as adjustment factors. The different covariates are marked in italic, and a more precise description of Model 2 is included in the “Analyses” section.

4. The results could be written up more substantively and help the reader a little more to make sense of the data, what it means and how it relates to the key interests of the paper. The authors also find interesting gender differences, and it seems like some acknowledgement of gender could be made in the background section.

Comment/changes: The results section has been rewritten in order to meet the reviewers’ comments.