Reviewer's report

Title: The Modified Dental Anxiety Scale: UK population norms in 2008

Version: 2 Date: 25 June 2009

Reviewer: Jason Armfield

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Major Compulsory Revisions:

The authors have adequately and thoughtfully addressed for the sake of the reviewers issues related to both weighting of data and the low response rate. What they also need to do, however, is to address concerns related to these issues that might be raised in the mind of readers of the paper. The justifications and rationale provided to the reviewers would be acceptable in text. The low response rate, in particular, can not simply continue to be ignored in the Discussion.

Minor Essential Revisions:

In the Abstract, it would be helpful to have the age groups provided parenthetically.

The last sentence of the Abstract seems out of place as expected differences between age groups has not been raised in the Abstract at any place.

p4. Should be: "Conversely, measures...may question and are more suitable..."

p5. "...may have occurred requiring..." does not make sense.

p5. To determine something is not a question to address, it is an action. Some rephrasing required here.

p5. You say "Some reports have indicated that younger adults may show lower dental anxiety..." but then cite only one paper. If you're referring to more than one report you should probably reference more than one paper. I'm sure there are plenty to choose from - I know of some recent work from Australia but there's probably plenty closer to home as well.

p6. Should be: "...between the two instruments..."

p7. A response rate has still not been provided here.

p10. Should be: "To satisfy the first study objective..."

p11. Should it be: "The single factor contained 93% of the explained variance..."?

p12. The sentence "The second objective...was completed though preparation of Table 3..." is not correct. Preparing a table can not complete an objective unless
table preparation was in fact the objective. Just some rephrasing required here.

p16. You can not be introducing new statistical analyses in the Discussion. I'm sure readers would indeed appreciate this information but it should either be part of the Results section or just left as descriptive comparisons in the Discussion. If added to the Results section, you'll need to add an extra aim for the paper which would be to compare the results of the two studies. Given the amount of space you devote to comparing the two studies, this might not be such a bad idea. But up to you...

p17. Reference required for the statement: "The employment of active and sensitive communication skills may enhance this process."

p18. Where does the conclusion about about the MDAS being easy to complete come from? You didn't ask anybody about how easy they found the MDAS to complete so I can only conclude that it comes from the lack of missing information with the participant responses. You might be right, but there's no direct evidence of this and as it's not even touched upon in the remainder of the manuscript you'd do much better just excluding this comment altogether.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.