Reviewer's report

Title: Factors associated with the rejection of active euthanasia: A survey among the general public in Austria.

Version: 2 Date: 26 February 2013

Reviewer: Marc Roelands

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Minor issues not for publication

* Methods section – 3rd para: “Age was divided into six categories: 16-25, 25-34,…” should be “16-24”?
* Data analysis: “All regression models were calculated adjusted by sex and age” or “adjusted FOR sex and age”?
* Table 1: “Femal” should be “female”. Age category “16-25” should be “16-24”.
* Results – par 5: The phrase “there are clues” could be substituted by “there is a trend”.
* Results of multivariable analyses – 4th para: the phrasing about marital status is not completely correct when compared with the results presented in table 2.
* Discussion – para 2: It is common to note “[19, 20]” instead of “(e.g. in [19] or [20])”.
* Discussion – para 2: “problem formulations”?

- Discretionary Revisions

None.

- Minor Essential Revisions

* Abstract - Results section: 68,8% and 28,8% don’t add up to 100%. (see table 1)
* Methods section – 1st paragraph: In the sentence “This procedure ensures access to private/secret telephone numbers that are not included in telephone directories” do you mean “telephone directories in paper format” or “telephone directories that are available to the general public”? The difference with electronic directories, mentioned in the sentence before, is not clear to me.
* Methods section – 4th para: The sentence “First the interviewees were asked about their attitude toward active euthanasia” is not appropriate as both formulations regard this attitude; it should refer to the abstract problem formulation.
* Table 1: Can you indicate whether the response categories are (“very good, “good”,) “moderate AND very poor” or “moderate TO very poor”, so including also
“poor”?
* Table 1: The title should mention “bivariate analyses” instead of “univariate analyses” as all but the first line are bivariate.
* Table 1: The title “Attitudes towards active euthanasia by problem formulation and socio-cultural ideology” could be more informative by wording “Attitudes towards active euthanasia by socio-demographic characteristics”.
* Table 2: Please consider presenting 95% CI in the format “(0.50 - 1.50)”.
* Table 2: Reference is missing regarding “Care of terminally-ill”.
* Table 2: Because age group and sex were not significantly related to the dependent variables in bivariate analysis, and therefore were not confounders, including them in the logistic regression analyses was not necessary. Discussion in the section “Results of multivariable analyses” is also unnecessary.
* Table 2: OR that were not significant should not be in bold, I guess.
* Results – 1st para: Apart from the first sentence, the paragraph regards bivariate analyses.
* Results – 2nd para: The Cochrane Q-test is not mentioned in the para about statistical analysis.
* Discussion – para 3: this paragraph is not clear.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

* Abstract - Results section- second and fourth sentence: The results mentioned about “experience with care of terminally ill persons” in the second sentence and “experiences with care of terminally ill patients” in the fourth sentence seem to be in contradiction.
* Abstract - Conclusion- first sentence: This sentence is not valid; the results mentioned higher clearly state otherwise as ‘political orientation’ is presented as not being an independent factor and ‘experience with care of terminally ill persons’ is presented as being a factor in regression analysis.
* Abstract - Conclusion – 2nd sent.: I doubt whether “increasing number of adults and children in the household” (results section) equals to or is a good operationalisation of “being part of primary social networks”?
* Methods – first paragraph: Could you mention whether portable telephones are included in the electronic directory?
* Methods – Variables section: It would be informative to readers if the wording would be presented of the items regarding attitudes toward euthanasia, political orientation and socio-cultural ideology, personal experiences with the care of seriously ill patients and with terminal care, and self-rated health. The source of the items should be added, too.
* Methods – 3rd para: It is not clear why adjusted income values below 300 euros should be substituted by the mean, as stated, and not being into a specific category of their own. This will seriously effect results of statistical analysis!
* Methods section – 4th para: the literal question should be mentioned as it is key to the article being one of the two dependent variables. Additionally, the following response categories are stated: “accept/approve”, “agree”, “undecided” and “don’t know”. Should this be “disagree” instead of “agree”?

* Methods section: Information is lacking about the extent of the non-response. How many persons were contacted?

* Methods section: Information is lacking about the selection of the person who replied to the questions. Was it the one who answered the phone call, the person within a specific age range or with specific gender, with a specific position (head of family)?

* Table 1: In the current context of the article presenting socio-cultural ideology by socio-demographic characteristics is distracting and unnecessary. It is not a dependent variable and should be removed.

* Multivariable results – para 4: The text describes the results different compared to the one presented in table 2: according to the OR there is no significant difference between 3 or more persons in the household and living alone; there is also no significant difference between 1 child and no child in the household. This regards the abstract formulation, in the vignette measure both variables were even not retained in the backward logistic regression analysis. The text repeats bivariate results and mixes them with multivariable results, suggesting linear relationships which are not supported by the results described in both tables. We suggest to describe the results in this paragraph differently.

* Multivariable results – para 5: The text describes the results different compared to the one presented in table 2: the statement “…, the higher income groups show lower rejection rates than the lower income groups” is only valid regarding the abstract measure, therefore this should be added to this sentence.

* Discussion – para 2: The effect of “factors that refer to the interpersonal living situation” is clearly overstated and should be re-evaluated, as has been mentioned already above.

* Discussion – para 3: The sentence “We were able to prove a strong link between increasing family income and decreasing rejection of euthanasia” is clearly an overstatement as a relationship was only found with the abstract measure and it was not linear at all. It should be worded closer to the results.

* The fact that the presence of pain or any physical symptoms was not mentioned in the abstract formulation but was part of the vignette, could be included in the discussion.

* The conclusion should reflect the changes in the other sections suggested above.

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

**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.