Author's response to reviews

Title: Swedish high school students' knowledge and attitudes regarding fertility and family building

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Author's response to reviews:

Point by point responses to Mary Redmayne

Thank you for your careful review of our article. We have made adjustments and also attempted to shorten the text.

We agree that a comparison between the results of the two schools would have been interesting. However, this was not part of the aim of our study. The reason why we chose one school providing practical and one providing theoretical courses was to give us a broad sample that might be representative of students in general and not just a sample from theoretical or practical schools.

In order to carry out a statistical comparison of fertility knowledge and plans for future family building we would have had to change the possible responses in the questionnaire in order to allow this kind of analysis. As the material is now, such an analysis is not feasible.

It is correct that Lampic et al., (2006) have carried out pilot tests to validate their instrument. These pilot studies are reported in the reference we have given and have not been published separately.

We agree with the reviewer that the word “once” should have been included in the question regarding the chance/risk of pregnancy and have addressed this in the discussion on page 13.

It would be more correct to cite the original material from which Lampic obtained the “correct answers”. However, Lampic has not provided the references for the “correct answers” that are used the construction of the instrument. The wording given in Lampics study is “The category that contains the correct answer according to published data”. Since we have used Lampic's instrument we must also use her set of “correct answers”.

We have clarified how information was given and how participant queries were to be dealt with on page 8.
Some details of the town where the material was collected have been given on page 8. We have clarified that we used a convenience sample. (The material was collected by post-graduate students who had limited time). We have added a sentence to the discussion regarding generalizability.

The institution at Lund University where the post-graduate students were studying has its own board of ethics that provides ethical guidance. This is the reason for this wording “The Advisory Committee for Research Ethics in Health Education at Lund University gave an advisory statement about the study (DR 75-10)”.

1. We are unsure what the reviewer requires us to do with tables 3 and 5. The means and standard deviations of the variables are given in separate columns for men and women. The headings “Mean (SD)” are given at the top of the columns. All the figures we present are figures from our data.

We agree that it would have been interesting to compare men’s and women’s results with the correct answers. However, the answers are for the most, given in ranges. This makes statistical comparison unfeasible since our data is in means.

As we have mentioned above, the aim of this study was not to compare schools. We collected data from two schools in order to improve the breadth of our material.

We have removed Table 4, re-checked our statistics and written the results in the text.

* We are very grateful for the comment regarding the strange standard deviations in what previously was Table 5 (now Table 4). We have now spring-cleaned our data set and re-checked analyses. The new results are now in Table 4.

The question about religion was included in case there might be an over-representation of religions in which questions of fertility and sexuality are seldom voiced. This was not the case and therefore we have provided the numbers and percentages so that the reader can see this for him/herself. It was not felt necessary to comment on this.

We have adjusted the tables so that the men/women columns are now in the same order. We have written “Mean (SD)” under both “Men” and “Women”. We have provided, in Table 4, the number of men and women who answered each separate question. We are unsure what the reviewer means that we need an extra column. We are also unsure why we should write “SD of data”. All our results come from our own data.

On page 11 the results reported in Figure one are presented to the reader. We feel that it is not within the scope of this paper to review the literature regarding the extent of each risk factor on fertility.

We have carried out correlation tests between the age at which men and women wished to start their family and their willingness to consider IVF. The results are
given on page 12.

We have re-worded the section in the discussion about the question that was open to misinterpretation.

We have written the methods discussion first, followed by the results discussion. If the journal requires this to be changed we will be pleased to oblige.

We have no scientific literature for the changes in sex education in Sweden and have therefore not delved deeper into the subject.

The word “insufficient” has been removed.

We have removed a sentence from the third paragraph in the discussion and adjusted the wording.

We have removed the sentence about “work with the guidance of young people”.

We have re-phrased the sentence about when young people wish to start their families.

The comment about political awareness has been removed and a comment about potential governmental savings has been added.

References have been provided for the cost to individuals and societies.

We have no scientific literature for the fact that sex education in Sweden was previously carried out by midwives and has now been changed. It was one of those changes that happened gradually and without any noticeable governmental (local) decisions. We ask that our honesty in this question be trusted.

We have moved sentences in the background as suggested.

Point by point responses to reviewer Rodolfo Pacagnella.

Thank you for the careful review of our paper.

1. We have provided more references to add to the Waldenström reference.

2. We have retained reference 17 since it is a direct reference to official Swedish statistics. We have refreshed the link.

3. More information about the region has been provided.

4. We believe that “composed of” is correct English.

5. The study was based on a convenience sample since the material was collected by post-graduate students at Lund University who had a time limit for their data collection. We have included a sentence about convenience.

6. We have revised the section about information on page 8 and explained that students were given written information as well as oral and that completion of the questionnaire was considered as informed consent. Please see our comments on page 13 regarding the fact that a few students decided to fill in the questionnaire even though they had not had their 18th birthday.
7. See point 6. Completion of the questionnaire after being given written and verbal information was considered as consent. This was acceptable to the ethical review board.

8. We have clarified on page 8 that the students and teachers were given contact details in case anyone felt the need to discuss any of the issues in the questionnaire.

9. “och” is Swedish for “and”. We have now changed this.

10. We have removed t and Z values from the text.

11. This sentence has been re-phrased.

12. These points have been attended to.

13. This has been included.

14. We do not claim that there was no drop-out, just that the drop-out rate was low, which we consider to be correct since we had a 90% response rate.

15. Comma deleted. Written information has been clarified on pages 8 and 13.

16. Changed.

17. Midwives in Sweden had, during a 15 year period, responsibility for sex education in schools. This was in an era when care research was still emerging and we cannot provide a scientific reference for this. We have re-phrased our referral to statistics that we gave in the background.

18. We have removed this section from the discussion.

19. Tables:
   Table 2 does not contain the results of comparisons because we have already given these results in the text. The table contains detailed results of the questionnaire and the text contains comparisons made between the groups at large.
   Table 3. Text moved to the bottom of the table.
   Table 4. Text moved to the bottom of the table.
   Table 5. Text moved, column with t-values removed.

20. We feel that figure 1 gives the reader a picture of the results of comparisons which we have presented in the text on page 11.