Reviewer's report

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

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Reviewer: Rodolfo Pacagnella

Reviewer's report:

General considerations.
The paper presents a very interesting work in a very important field. The authors posed a well defined question. The method used to achieve the goals is adequate and the results are presented in a good way. The data sounds well obtained and the writing is acceptable.

The issue of sexual and reproductive education is very strategic for the health sector to be left without quality evaluation. The authors present interesting findings regarding the lack of adequate sexual and reproductive education in a developed and well organized country. And this is a matter of concern that needs to be highlighted.

Therefore I would like to recommend the publication of this manuscript in the Reproductive Health, but first, there are some points that need to be well developed before publication. In general, the methods section need to be described with more details, an ethical concern need to be clarified and the discussion section need to be strengthened. The authors should more deeply discuss the characteristics, weakness and difficulties of providing sexual education in schools. Good arguments can be found in:


Following I present some specific considerations:

1. In the third paragraph of Background, the reference number 11 is a gray literature published in Swedish language. This may be changed for a more accessible one since there are many good reviews on the topic in English.
2. In the first sentence of page 5, reference 17 has a broken web address. The authors should refresh the link. Isn’t there any other reference for the information? See for example:


3. Methods: More information on what is the “Southern Sweden” would be of interest for the readers.

4. Page seven, second paragraph: “of” could be changed for “by” in the sentence “The original instrument was composed of 56 items”.

5. The authors do not provide information on sample size calculation or how they choose the schools to participate in the study. These are important information.

6. Ethical considerations: the authors do not provide information on any informed consent. It is said that: “The class teachers gave spoken information about the study to the students and informed them that participation was completely voluntary and that the school had no interest in whether the students filled in the questionnaire or not and that returned questionnaires would not be read by any of the school’s employees”. Readers cannot be sure if this verbal information was sufficient to fulfill all the ethical requirements. Indeed, the fact that 19 subjects were younger than the inclusion criteria suggests that the information provided was not adequate.

7. Did the Advisory Committee for Research Ethics agree to the waiver of written informed consent? In which terms?

8. Additionally, the authors said that they do not know whether the questionnaire was a sensitive nature to some of the respondents, but was any kind of medical or psychological assistance offered by the authors for those subjects who might felt necessity due to the questionnaire sensitive nature? Was that clear in the information provided?

9. Results: first paragraph: change “were between 18 och 20 years” to “were between 18 and 20 years”

10. In all results section the t and z statistic should be omitted or if really necessary should be in tables.

11. Page 10, third paragraph: delete “was” in “A comparison of answers pertaining to how important future parenthood was showed that female students felt”

12. The phase “Respondents answered how important they considered their own fertility to be on a VAS scale where 0 = “Not at all important” to 10 “Of the greatest importance” is not clear and should be rewritten. VAS should be written out before using the acronym.

13. IVF should be written out before using the acronym.

14. Discussion: in first paragraph, there was no dropout in the study. Of the 28
questionnaires not completed, 22 subjects did not provide any information because they did not fulfill the inclusion criteria. Therefore, there were 6 no respondents, who refuse to participate.

15. Second paragraph: delete the coma after “when”. The written information mentioned is about what and for who it was directed?

16. Third paragraph: “the” instead of “for” in “there was an idea that technology could compensate for age-related reduction in fertility.”

17. Page 13, paragraph 1: is there any reference for the argument of midwifes taking care of sexual education in Sweden? Was there any study on that?

Paragraph 3: “According to the Swedish national bureau for statistics [5], the mean age at birth of the first child was 29 years for women and 31 years for men.” This information has already been given.

18. Page 15, paragraph 1: “A possible reason for this could be that they have, at a younger age, more contacts with youth clinics in order to obtain contraceptive pills and other contraceptive advice” needs a reference. This paragraph is too large, it would be better if it is smaller.

19. Tables:
Table 2 should provide information on statistical difference between groups (women and men)
Table 3 title: A comparison of men and women’s answers to questions regarding fertility using student’s t-test. Correct answers to the questions (Lampic et al., 2005) are given in the right hand column.
The information on statistical analysis and the columns should be at the end of table instead of in the title
Table 4 - The information on the visual analogue scale should be at the end of table instead of in the title
Table 5 title should be simplified and some information should go at the end of the table: Answers to hypothetical questions regarding possible future infertility by women and men.
The authors should think of omitting the t and z statistics. In most cases this is not necessary to understand the data. Providing the p-value and the statistic used is enough.

20. Figure one lacks information on statistical analysis. I think the information on the figure would be better presented in a table format. The histogram does not help to identify any difference.

The comments number 5, 6, 7, 8 and 14 are considered Major Compulsory Revisions. The other comments can be considered as Discretionary Revisions.

**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'