Author’s response to reviews

Title: Are women and men well informed about fertility? Childbearing intentions, fertility knowledge and information-gathering sources in Portugal

Authors:

Teresa Almeida Santos (anateresasantos.tas@gmail.com)
Cláudia Melo (claudiasmelosilva@gmail.com)
Ana Macedo (amacedo@grupokeypoint.pt)
Mariana Moura-Ramos (marianamramos@gmail.com; marianamr@fpce.uc.pt)

Version: 1 Date: 06 Jul 2017

Author’s response to reviews:

Dear reviewers

Thank you for thoughtful review of our manuscript entitled “Are women and men well informed about fertility? Childbearing intentions, fertility knowledge and information-gathering sources in Portugal”.

We appreciated all comment and suggestions we have received. We have revised the manuscript, attending to all the issues raised. The responses to the reviewers are below. In the manuscript file, all changes in the text in blue colour.

We hope the revised manuscript meets your satisfaction.

Kind regards

The corresponding author
Reviewer #1: This article focused on 'Are women and men well informed about fertility?' based on a random-route domiciliary investigation in a representative national sample. A sample of 2404 individuals was enrolled, ranged in age from 18 to 45, to complete a structured questionnaire regarding fertility, childbearing intentions and socio-demographic characteristics.

It was found that most of the individuals desired to have children in the future and that two children were the desire for them to have. There was a discrepancy between the numbers of planned and desired children which was higher in men, in participants with lower education levels, in professionally active participants and in the unemployed participants. Relationship stability seemed more important in influencing childbearing decisions than financial stability or family support. Participants' knowledge on fertility was poor. There was a discrepancy as well on the level of fertility knowledge, in which women, the participants who were older than 25, the participants with longer education and the participants with higher income shown a higher levels. Also, there existed an overestimation in participants on both the chances of spontaneous pregnancy and the success rates of assisted reproduction techniques. Websites were the main information sources on the knowledge of fertility used by the participants and only 18.0% of the participants had the related information from their doctors.

It was concluded that, although Portuguese reported the desire to have children in the future, their knowledge regarding fertility and infertility risk was poor. There is a real need to work with general practitioners to empower them to provide adequate fertility information to every childless couple.

The article overcomes lots of limitations of previous relative online studies or mainly university student investigations in method and scale. It provides a large-scale study assessing fertility knowledge in a representative national sample. The findings provided indicate the lack of important fertility knowledge in couples with childhood desires, particularly in those at a state of parenthood postponement. These findings are really informative, comprehensive and practical for the related public health care services to take measures to improve their relative service frameworks in the accessibility and user acceptability to fertility.

The quality of written English is acceptable. My recommendation for this manuscript is to accept it with 6 'Minor Essential Revisions' as follows to make the article clearly described:

Thank you very much for your comments to the paper
Minor Essential Revision-1 on the description of 'Figure-4' at Page-12 in line 298, 299 and 301: please consider the revision of "Figure-4" into the real "Figure-5".

This issue was corrected.

Minor Essential Revision-2 on Figure-1 of Page-21:

Please consider the revision of Figure-1 (Discrepancy between the number of desired and number of planned children) into 4 desire-plan paired subgroups, like no children, 1 child, 2 children and 3 or more children with 2 legends of desired & planned.

Please add the name of data analysis method and the relative P value of significance level for each subgroup as well.

We revised Figure 1 accordingly.

Minor Essential Revision-3 on Figure-2 of Page-22: Please consider the revision of Figure-2 (Motivations for parenthood for men and women) with 2 legends of men & women and the explanation of coordinate axis value, plus the name of data analysis method and the relative P value of significance level for each subgroup.

We revised Figure 2 accordingly.

Minor Essential Revision-4 on Figure-3 of Page-23: Please consider the revision of Figure-3 (Factors valued by the participants regarding childbearing decision among men and women) with the explanation of coordinate axis value plus the name of data analysis method.

We revised Figure 3 accordingly.

Minor Essential Revision-5 on Figure-4 of Page-24: Please consider the revision of Figure-4 (Number of correct answers per subgroup according to age, education, professional status and
monthly income) with adding the name of data analysis method and the relative P value of significance level for each subgroup.

We revised Figure 4 accordingly.

Minor Essential Revision-6 on Figure-5 of Page-25: Please consider the revision of Figure-5 (Information sources typically used by the participants and their perceived usefulness regarding fertility/reproductive health) by listing the dark columns according to the descending percentage of participants who perceived usefulness for gathering information, and changing the light grey columns with brackets plus the inner percentage of participants who actually used to gather information.

Regarding this Figure, we understood that the bar graphic was confusing and misleading. We acknowledged the reviewer suggestion but we aim to develop a graph/figure that visually clarified the difference between participants perceived usefulness and actual use of each source. Therefore, we present a new figure that in our opinion best clarifies this issue.

Reviewer #2:

Congratulations on reaching the final stages of your project. The paper is well written with good description of the problem and rationale. The results and appropriately described and discussed. There are however issues that need your attention.

1. Please provide more description of sampling methodology and its impact on the results of the survey. It is unclear how the random-route sampling was achieved and how it could have influenced the findings of your survey.

Here are some examples of published research on random-route sampling and its impact on the results:


Please note that these are just examples and do not necessarily provide a comprehensive overview of the method.

The reviewer has highlighted an important issue. We have included more information on random route sampling in the methods section (procedures) and discussed its use (implications) in the discussion section.

2. The sample was stratified into male and female respondents. There is however no description on the reasons for this stratification and how this was achieved. Did the sample size calculation take this into consideration?

We have included more information on stratification by gender in the methods section (procedures)

3. Page 11 line 299, 299 and 301 should be figure 5 as per the description and labeling of the figures provided.

The Figure numbering was incorrect and we corrected it. Please see response to Reviewer 1 first comment.

4. Figure 4 provided is not referenced in the text; please see the comment above for confusion between figure 4 and 5.

We have corrected the Figure numbering.
5. Figure 2: Legend and p-value missing.

We have corrected Figure 2 legend

6. Review the language, some minor corrections e.g. third line in abstract "Previous research has revealed that childless people but not well informed regarding fertility" should read "Previous research has revealed that childless people are not well informed regarding fertility" or similar.

We have reviewed all the manuscript for correcting minor issues and language.