Reviewer's report

Title: Factors affecting Study Efficiency and Item Non-response in Health Surveys in Developing Countries: The Jamaica National Healthy Lifestyle Survey

Version: Date: 15 November 2006

Reviewer: hendriek C boshuizen

Reviewer's report:

General

The paper reads better than the previous version

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The manuscript should be shortened considerably and be more focussed.

The manuscript still uses "willing to respond" or "reluctance to respond" or "systematic refusal to answer" in cases where the failure to respond might also be due to lack of knowledge of the right answer, and not to not being willing.

In the discussion it is mentioned that there are differences in the proportion "don't know" between income and sexual activity questions, but I could not find any data on this in the paper. (which question had more "don't knows"? Income"?)

Would the fact that you persons failed to respond to the income question not simply be due to the fact that the interview asks for "household income", which might be earned mainly by their parent(s) and thus they simply do not know what that income is? This looks a much more likely explanation to me that young people being less trusty. This explanation could also explain the higher non-response on the income question in the unemployed (who are not earning the household income themselves)

The conclusion still reads that the efficiency of interview is effected by the fact that interviewing older persons requires a longer time, while this finding is only of borderline significant (disappears after adjustment for education) and is only 3 minutes on a total interview time of 45 minutes.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Both in the abstract and the method section results on inter-observer reliability are mentioned. It is unclear where these results come from? Was there a study in which the same persons were interviewed twice by different interviewers? If yes, what was the sample size of this study?

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests