Author's response to reviews

Title: Sexual Attitudes, Pattern of Communication, and Sexual behavior Among Unmarried Out-of-School Youth in China

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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The BioMed Central Editorial Team

Re: Revision Manuscript (2033772719137396)

Dear Editor:

Thank you for your email dated May 22, 2007. My collaborators and I read through the reviewer’s comments and your letter carefully and agreed with all of the recommended changes. We appreciate both the reviewer’s and your constructive and insightful comments. We made all the suggested revisions and closely edited our paper,

Enclosed please find a copy of our revised manuscript entitled “Sexual Attitudes, Pattern of Communication, and Sexual Behavior Among Unmarried Out-of-School Youth in China” and our detailed response to you and the reviewers. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration of our manuscript.

Sincerely yours,

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Response to the editor’s comments:

1. We would like you to clarify the type of consent (written or verbal) obtained for your study, within the 'Methods' section. Please provide a statement detailing the contributions made by all authors and any competing interests.

Response: We agree with the editor and have clarified participants’ consent on page 7 (Line: 16-17). Written consent was obtained from all study participants. All the authors made contributions to this work; and there is no competing interest (page 2, paragraph 2).

BW participated in the design of the study and acquisition of data, performed data analysis, and drafted the manuscript. XL, BS, and VK helped to draft the manuscript, and made contributions to this response. SN, IS, and RT participated in data analysis and critically read the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

2. Could you also please go through the manuscript formatting checklist, the link to which is provided at the bottom of this e-mail, and ensure that your revised manuscript conforms to all of the points. It is important that your files are correctly formatted.

Response: We read through the manuscript formatting checklist and made changes to bring the manuscript in line with the journal formatting guidelines.
**Response to Reviewer 1:**

1. Major Compulsory Revisions: It may be better to include the proportion of sexually experienced youth by variable in table 6.

**Response:** As stated in analysis section, the dependent variable was whether the youth had ever engaged in sexual intercourse (no/yes). Youth premarital sexual experience have already included in the model as a dependent variable. Logistic regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between various characteristics and having had sexual intercourse.

**Response to Reviewer 2:**

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The research questions are confusing in that several of them are compound statements and the analyses do not correspond to these questions as stated.

**Response:** We agree with the reviewer and have refined our three research questions based on our analysis: (a) What are out-of-school youth’s attitudes towards premarital sex and pregnancy, and their level of sex-related knowledge (answered by Table 2)? (b) Do male and female out-of-school youth communicate with their parents and peers on sex-related matters (answered by Table 3)? (c) How prevalent are premarital sexual behaviors and contraceptive use among out-of-school youth (answered by Tables 4 and 5)? (d) What are the factors that associated with premarital sexual intercourse among out of school youth (answered by Table 6)? Please see page 6 (line: 8-13).

2. The methodology section lacks specificity on several issues related to the project design. These include:
   
   a) the process and authority by which all youth aged 15-24 were identified, thereby providing an accurate denominator of eligible participants (note that the results list youth aged 16-14);

**Response:** We agree with the reviewer and have clarified the recruitment procedure on page 7 (line: 5-8; 14-15). Participants were 15-24 years old at the baseline. However, the analysis is limited to out-of-school youth; and the youngest out-of-school youth was 16 years old at the baseline.

   b) a more complete description of the "community-based sex education and reproductive health services study";

**Response:** We agree with the reviewer and have added a description of our study on pages 6 (line: 21-22) and 7 (line: 1-3). This sex education program provided unmarried youth with knowledge about sexual health, contraception, and HIV/AIDS prevention; it also included the distribution of free contraceptives in the intervention town.

   c) While 2,227 of 2,362 eligible in-school and out-of-school youth participated, we are not provided a denominator of eligible out-of-school youth to determine the response rate the 1,304 out-of-school youth represent;
Response: We included this information on page 7 (line 9). Initially, there are 1,392 eligible out-of-school youth.

   d) there is very little information provided about the instrument development and its psychometric properties – these are essential;

Response: We agree with the reviewer and included the instrument development information on page 7 (line: 17-18). The internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) was calculated and included on page 9 (line: 12-14).

   e) The items measuring sexual activities were not described - just the item on sexual intercourse;

Response: We agree with the reviewer and have included hugging, kissing, fondling on page 8 (line: 20-21). They were coded as a dichotomous variable-yes/no.

   f) justification for the grouping of response options to form new categories was not provided;

Response: We justified the grouping of the responses of parent’s discipline, education, and occupation on page 8 (line: 12-15). Due to low frequency in some response options, the responses to parental discipline, education, and occupation were combined into two, three, and four categories in statistical analysis, respectively (See Table 1).

   g) Although the analytic techniques were listed, no justification was provided for their selection.

Response: We agree with the reviewer and have justified the selection of statistical methods (page 11, line 1-3). The gender differences of these variables were tested using Pearson’s $\chi^2$, Cochran-Mantel-Haenszel $\chi^2$ test (ordinal variables), and Fisher’s exact test (when expected values for one or more cells were less than 5) for categorical variables, and ANOVA for continuous variables.

3. The reference list is quit old in that the average age of the articles is 6.75 years (SD = 4.3) and 56% of them are older than 5 years. These should be updated to reflect more recent findings.

Response: We updated several important references. Please see page 19, references 13, 15, and 16; page 20, reference 19. We also deleted some old reference (i.e., reference 31).

4. The breakdown of age groups in Table 1 is confusing. Why were these used? Do they correspond to developmental transitions such as school completion? Why not use 3 groups: 16-18; 19-21; and 22-24?

Response: We agree with the reviewer and have made the suggested changes (See Table 1, page 22).

Minor Essential Revisions: 1. Table 6 is mislabeled - the relationship is between the various characteristics and having had sexual intercourse.
Response: We agree with the reviewer and have made the suggested changes (See Table 6). Association between Various Characteristics and Premarital Sexual Intercourse among Out-of-School Youth.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
1. It would be helpful to have the breakdown of sexual intercourse by age group since we know that the likelihood of sexual activity increases with age.

Response: We agree that the likelihood of having premarital sex increases with age and have controlled age in the logistic regression to take the development trend into consideration in the analysis.