Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 10 May 2007

Reviewer: Cheryl B Aspy

Reviewer’s report:

General
This article addresses important topics (sexual activity, attitudes, and knowledge) for an out of school population.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
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.
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; (b) a more complete description of the "community-based sex education and reproductive health services study"; (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; (d) there is very little information provided about the instrument development and its psychometric properties - these are essential; (e) The items measuring sexual activities were not described - just the item on sexual intercourse; (f) justification for the grouping of response options to form new categories was not provided; and (g) Although the analytic techniques were listed, no justification was provided for their selection.
3. The reference list is quite 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.
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?.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
1. Table 6 is mislabeled - the relationship is between the various characteristics and having had sexual intercourse.

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.

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

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

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.