Reviewer’s report

Title: Relationships, Love and Sexuality: What the Filipino Youth Think and Feel

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Reviewer: Elisabeth Faxelid

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General comments
1. In the manuscript several concepts are used: youth, young people, adolescents, teens. These concepts reflect different age groups, probably with different needs. It becomes a bit confusing when they are used almost as they were similar. It is a big difference between someone who is 10 (youngest age among adolescents) and 24 (oldest age among youth).

2. Gender differences are not well discussed in the manuscript. Usually boys have more freedom and also more power in decision making than girls. This should be reflected especially when the results are discussed.

3. The authors seem to have a pre-understanding in form of negative attitudes to condoms and young person’s sexuality and a much more positive attitude towards abstinence. Refs supporting abstinence and non-condom use are obviously preferred. I suggest the authors have a more open minded approach and look for and use refs not only from US but also from other countries, which have a more positive and realistic attitude about sexuality among young people. There are several review papers on the effectiveness of programs directed to adolescents that can be used. Abstinence is not very realistic and negative views about condoms can easily make the HIV situation even worse. The authors state that “…adolescent sexual behavior is certainly a growing concern”. Why? I would say that unsafe sexual behavior is a concern and also that there are big difference between someone who is 10 and someone who is 19. Many are married when they are 19 and also in other ways very mature.

4. In several places in the manuscript the authors draw conclusions about e.g. “incorrect knowledge leading to increased sexual initiation”, “early sexual activity compromises youth’s emotional and psychological well-being” (refs needed), “those who falsely perceived condoms as being 100% effective were indeed more frequently sexually experienced”. To draw the conclusion that one thing is leading to the other require a certain research methodology. Often an association can be found but it is not clear what is the “hen” and what is the “egg”. Be careful when drawing conclusions.

Method comments
1. Good that the instrument was pilot tested
2. State the different levels/phrasing in the Likert scale
3. It would be good to have a fig about the different steps in the sampling
strategy. It is a bit difficult to follow it in the text.
4. Otherwise I think the method is well described.

Results comments
1. There is no information about how the views differed between those married and not married.
2. I would have liked to see the result presented in fig 1 divided by sex. There are often different attitudes and norms related to boys/men and girls/women, which is thus reflected in their views and their needs and thus how interventions should be designed to target girls and boys differently. The results about how differently boys and girls appreciate parents’ and friends’ opinions are presented in the text but it is a bit difficult to follow. Maybe there could be two figs. Table 2 need to be separated for boys and girls in order to know what girls and boys respectively need to talk more about.
3. Were the questions related to youths’ knowledge about prevention of STIs and unintended pregnancy also in form of Likert scale? How were they then phrased?
4. In table 3 it is not clear what happened to the middle response in the Likert scale. Isn’t that also important to report?
5. Was the question about future goals an open-ended question? How was it then analysed? This should be dealt with in the method section.

Discussion comments
1. The study results on media as a source of information is not discussed but only ref to other studies. Link your results.
2. The authors state that there is room for further encouraging parents to talk more with their children. Is this accepted in the Philipino culture? In some cultures this is considered a taboo.
3. The differences between boys and girls are not mentioned at all in the discussion. This is certainly needed especially since the authors have this information. Both married and not married are included in the study. Wouldn’t they have different views and needs as well?
4. Abstinence is mentioned here and there in the discussion as something valuable that should be favored before condom use. E.g. “…programs should be abstinence centered when targeting youth”. How realistic is that? See my previous comments. Youth are up to 24.
5. Ref 63 and 67 seem to refer to sexual behavior and not use of seat belt.
6. The statement that “…its large sample size guarantees the internal validity of our analysis” is not correct. You can have an enormous sample but if the questions are wrongly phrased the internal validity is still bad.

Conclusion comments
1. This part includes more than conclusion. The authors also have suggestions here so the heading is misleading.
2. The abstinence views here are very strong. I suggest the authors review the literature and also include some aspects of problems related to realism when promoting abstinence instead of condoms.

**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 have no competing interests.