Reviewer’s report

Title: Health status of children left behind in rural areas of Sichuan Province of China: a cross-sectional study

Version: 1 Date: 12 Jul 2018

Reviewer: Yi Zhang

Reviewer's report:

General Remarks:

This manuscript conducts an empirical study on the health status and health behaviour of left-behind children in rural China. Left-behind children are generally more vulnerable because they do not have parents to take good care of them. The situation of left-behind children is to a large extent caused by the household registration system, which makes it difficult for migrant workers to take children with them to urban cities. Therefore, this manuscript deals with an important topic. The research design and the methodology employed in this manuscript are tight enough for arriving at the conclusions.

However, I am not convinced that the results of this manuscript will be of interest to the journal's readership given that the aims and scope of the journal are 'the influence of human rights violations on health' and 'all issues relating to the impact of health policies, programs and practices on human rights', but this manuscript didn't provide sufficient analysis from a human rights perspective. I therefore recommend acceptance, but subject to major revisions. Specific comments follow.

Comment 1:

On page 3 lines 46-51, the authors mentioned the household registration system. Please elaborate a bit more on this system and its (negative) impact. Line 48 please specify its different access to governmental resources or unequal access?

Comment 2:

For readers who are not familiar with empirical research, it would be useful if the authors could briefly explain how the self-administrated questionnaire is developed. For example, the reasons for choosing variables, why such health symptoms are selected than others; why taking sick leave/ the frequency of not going to school due to sickness is relevant for the analysis?
Also, it may be clearer if the authors can differentiate health status and health behaviours on table 2 (pages 7-8).

Comment 3:

This empirical study revealed several significant differences between left-behind children and comparison groups regarding their physical and mental health due to the lack of parental care. However, although the results were correctly analyzed, the analytical parts in the discussion and conclusion sections are not sufficient enough considering the scope of the journal; the results will thereby not advance the field of health and human rights.

Please analyze the findings from a human rights perspective in the last two parts. For example, is the different health status between male and female caused by gender discrimination? Does it constitute a violation of the right to health or the rights of the child by taking a longer leave from school due to sickness or not receiving all free vaccines? What are the human rights implications of the findings?

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I recommend additional statistical review

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published
**Declaration of competing interests**

Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license ([http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.