Author's response to reviews

Title: Socioeconomic conditions of elderly people in Kosovo: a cross-sectional study

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Response to Reviewers

Manuscript title: “Socioeconomic conditions of elderly people in Kosovo: a cross-sectional study”

We thank the reviewers for their constructive comments which have helped us improve the content of the manuscript, which we hope is now acceptable for publication.

Below we address reviewers’ comments:

Reviewer 1

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. “Abstract: Most of information in the background section is about methodology. There should be more information on background of the study while a section on methods should be separated.”

Response: Point well-taken. In the revised manuscript, we now provide some more information in the Background section and have separated the Methods section.

2. “Page 24: Classification of poverty (extreme poor, poor, moderate, fair, not poor) is confusable. The scale should be described more clearly under the section on data collection in page 6.”

Response: Point well-taken. In the revised manuscript, we have now corrected the wording which in the Albanian language was very clear to all respondents. In the revised manuscript, we now employ consistently the following categories: 1=extremely poor; 2=poor; 3=moderately poor; 4=not poor; 5=not poor at all.

3. “There is still lack of discussion on methodological limitations of the study, especially how stratum sampling affects the distribution of elderly people by socioeconomic factors.”

Response: Point well-taken. In the revised manuscript, in the Discussion section we now provide a separate sub-section on “Study limitations” (page 14).

Minor Essential Revisions

4. “Page 5: Estimation of sample size should described be for sampling method.”

Response: In the revised manuscript, we now elaborate a bit further on the estimated sample size: “The assumed prevalence of self-perceived poverty was set at 50%, the significance level (two-tailed) at 5%, and the power of the study at 80%. Based on these conservative calculations, the required minimal sample size was about 1,500 individuals. We decided to sample 2400 individuals (200 for each of the 12 strata explained above) in order to increase the power of the study.” (page 6, last paragraph, lines 2-6).
5. “Page 22: Presentations on average age and average years of formal schooling are not very appropriate with the format of Table 1.”

Response: In the revised manuscript, we have now completely restructured Table 1 in line also with reviewer’s suggestion.

6. “Page 24: Family finances at end of month should be described under the section on data collection in page 6.”

Response: In the revised manuscript, we now describe this variable in the Methods section: “….family finances at the end of the month (enough vs. not enough to make ends meet)” (page 7, first paragraph, lines 5-6).

Reviewer 2

Major Compulsory Revisions

Background
1. “The authors need to concentrate on how their study is adding to knowledge in this area. Furthermore, a more detailed description of the scope of the study is needed.”

Response: Point well-taken. In the revised manuscript, we have now substantially changed the Abstract and have amended the Introduction where we now make more reference to the scope and relevance of our study.

Methods
2. “Put the first sentence in the Study Population Section.”

Response: Done.

3. “The measurement of “self-perceived poverty” is fundamental, but it was not adequately defined and explained. Define the “self-perceived poverty”. You mentioned a scale ranging from 1 (extremely poor) to 5 (poor). Based on what criteria was this scale constructed and how was someone self-assessed as poor or extremely poor? Describe in detail the criteria (for example if the income level is one of them, indicate the income categories).”

Response: Measurement of self-perceived poverty was based on the following question: “How do you perceive your poverty level: extremely poor (score: 1), poor, moderately poor, not poor; not poor at all (score: 5).” In our study, this single question was used to assess the self-perceived poverty level without making reference to income level or any other socioeconomic indicator. This question is widely employed in different surveys conducted in Albania.

4. “In statistical analysis section, it is reported that binary logistic regression was used to assess the association of self-perceived poverty (not poor vs. poor) with socio-economic characteristics. But as you mentioned before, self-perceived poverty was measured using a scale ranging from extremely poor to poor. How can a value of the dependent variable be
‘not poor’ when it has not been previously measured? There is an inconsistency. Please explain.”

**Response:** We have now adequately reworded the categories of the variable “self-perceived poverty” (which was also asked by the other reviewer) and in the revised manuscript we have now explicitly mentioned in the methods section that: “in the analysis self-perceived poverty was dichotomized into not poor vs. poor” (page 7, first paragraph, lines 6-8).

**Results**

5. “Table 1 contains only socio-demographic and not economic characteristics. Rewrite the first sentence in the 1st line. Furthermore, remove the columns with CIs because they refer to percentages rather than mean values. CIs of the percentage are meaningless. Also add two columns (N and %) concerning the total sample.”

**Response:** In the revised manuscript, we have now rewritten the first line of the first sentence in line with reviewer’s suggestion (page 8, first line of the Results section).

Regarding Table 1: in the revised manuscript, we have now restructured this table (adding the estimates on the total sample, which we did also for Table 2), in line also with one of the points raised by the other reviewer. However, we consider that confidence intervals provide useful information about the upper and lower bounds of point estimates (that is percentages of socio-demographic and socioeconomic characteristics). This is a commonplace procedure in similar epidemiological reports.

6. “Table 2 presents the socio-economic characteristics of the sample. The variable ‘family finance at the end of the month’ should be defined in the methods section. What do the values ‘not enough’ and ‘enough’ correspond to? How much money?”

**Response:** Point well-taken. In the revised manuscript, we now describe this variable in the Methods section: “…family finances at the end of the month (enough vs. not enough to make ends meet)” (page 7, first paragraph, lines 5-6).

7. “In Table 3 the analysis is age-adjusted. What is the purpose in an elderly population 65+years old? I do not think that the age–adjustment is appropriate since the sample concerns only elderly population rather a general population where the age range would be large. A chi-square analysis studying whether the self-perceived poverty differed across socio-demographic characteristics is more appropriate.”

**Response:** We consider that the association of self-perceived poverty with socio-demographic and socioeconomic characteristics maybe confounded by age. Therefore, age-adjustment is an important tool to control for this potential confounding effect.

8. “Rewrite Results and Discussion sections.”

**Response:** In the revised manuscript, we have performed substantial changes in the Results and Discussion sections and have added a new subsection on “Study limitations” (page 14).