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 additional constructive comments which have helped us further improve the content and format of the manuscript, which we hope is now acceptable for publication.

Below we address reviewers’ comments:

Reviewer 1

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. “Page 7: The revised classification of poverty is not described fully. How to dichotomize as ‘poor’ and ‘non-poor’ from the revised classification?”

Response: Point well-taken. In the revised manuscript, we now make explicit reference to the dichotomization of self-perceived poverty: “....in the analysis, self-perceived poverty was dichotomized into poor (1-3) vs. not poor (4-5)” (page 7, first paragraph, lines 8-9).

2. “Page 24: the revised classification (extremely poor, poor, moderately poor, not poor, not poor at all) in Table 1 is still confusable, particularly between: ‘poor’ and ‘moderately poor’ (which status is better?); ‘not poor’ and ‘not poor at all’ (These terms seem to be overlapped). In addition, is “moderate” changed as “moderately poor”? If yes, this term “moderate” should be difficult to understand as “a moderate level of poor” for interviewees in data collection! Is a more meaningful classification of poverty such as, extremely poor = 1; poor = 2; moderate = 3; not poor = 4; fair = 5 suitable to the nature of this research data?”

Response: We thank the reviewer for the input! Actually, as mentioned in our previous response to reviewers, the categories of self-perceived poverty level were clearly distinguished in the Albanian language. However, we faced difficulties with the proper translation into English. In the revised manuscript, we have now reworded the categories of self-perceived poverty in line with reviewer’s suggestion: 1=extremely poor; 2=poor; 3=moderate; 4=not poor; 5=fair (please see the respective row in Table 2).

Reviewer 2

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. “Add in the Method section the explanation you gave in the Cover Letter namely that self-perceived poverty level was based on the question “how do you perceive your poverty level.”

Response: Done (page 7, first paragraph, lines 6-7).
2. “Tables 1 and 2: Columns with the CI of the percentages concerning categorical variables should be removed. As I reported in my previous review, CIs refer to mean values (as in numerical variables, table 1) and not to percentages of frequencies. As it is shown in table 1 par example, the total number (frequency) of your sample that attended no school (have 0 years of education) is 836 out of 1890 subjects or the 33.4% based on the distribution of the sample according to the education. I cannot understand how the frequency 836 out of 1890 subjects could range as a percentage between 33.16% and 33.66%.”

Response: Point well-taken. We understand the confusion related to the presentation of data in Tables 1-2. In the revised manuscript, we have now reconstructed Table 1 and Table 2 making explicit reference to “sample estimates” vs. “standardized estimates” for both mean (±SD) values and frequency distributions (i.e. numbers and their respective percentages). We believe these tables are clear now.

3. “In table 1, as a foot note you claimed that religion and ethnicity were not further considered since they showed no discriminatory power. How is this demonstrated?”

Response: In the revised manuscript, we now elaborate on this point: “The sample was quite homogenous in terms of ethnicity or religion with 90% being Albanians and 92% of Muslim affiliation, respectively (Table 1). As a matter of fact, ethnicity and religion did not reveal any discriminatory power as they were equally distributed among the socio-economic groups in the study sample; therefore, given also the small numbers in the non-Albanian and non-Muslim categories, these variables were excluded from further analysis.” (page 8, last 6 lines).

4. “The scope of the table 3 is not very clear to me. Including age in your model will adjust for that variable. By including all the determinants (and age) in the multiple regression model (table 4), the effect of the predictor variables on self-perceived poverty adjusting or controlling for age was assessed. What does table 3 add to the statistical analysis?”

Response: Table 4 presents the multivariable-adjusted estimates only for the variables which were retained into the backward stepwise logistic regression models. Conversely, Table 3 presents the age-adjusted estimates for each covariate. From this point of view, we believe that Table 3 informs the reader about the association of each covariate with the outcome of interest (namely self-perceived poverty level). Therefore, we would prefer keeping this table in the revised manuscript. However, we leave this decision at the editor’s discretion.