Author’s response to reviews

Title: CONTEXTUAL DETERMINANTS OF CHILDREN’S HEALTH CARE AND POLICY IN EUROPE

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor, Dear Reviewers,

Thank you for your relevant comments and suggestions. All of them were taken into consideration while preparing the revised version of the paper. Below please find detailed responses to the reviewers' suggestions.

Reviewer 1

Background - take more time to set up the project. A short literature review would help, as would taking more time to describe EU Horizon 2020 and MOCHA. This would help readers be more prepared and able to digest the information that follows.

- A short literature review explaining context and systemic factors which determine health care was added.

- MOCHA project was described as well.
Methods - could be tightened up. Try to find a flow in this section where you speak of the methods, data collection, the analysis, etc. Right now, it is a bit jumbled. Also - remove the bullet points and insert the essential information into the reformatted paragraphs.

- Use of the term "mixed methods" is reserved for studies using both quantitative and qualitative analysis (or surveys and interviews). Analysis with 2 or more different techniques does not qualify as mixed-method.
- some clarification is needed (eg. specification the object and area of public concern, identification of the level of discussion - these are unclear to me).

- The Methods section was re-edited
- Bullet points were erased and reformatted into paragraphs
- Term mixed methods is not used any more
- Clarifications referring to specification the object and area of public concern, identification of the level of discussion were done

Results - This section is very detailed, which qualitative research is great for! One issue here is that the examples are so specific (and varied). I worry this section is trying to do too much. By including 30 countries, it is difficult to describe case-by-case examples of their experiences while relating those experiences to the broader themes. Where possible, try to merge themes and examples.

- The results part was shortened where it was possible. However, I would like to stress that not always merging the themes was possible as the country examples justify the categories emergence. In the case of shortening/merging the characteristic of each category, the risk of lack of sufficient "proofs" for each category might happen. I understand the argument that results part contains a large amount of data, however merging and shortening could significantly affect the quality of the paper by not explaining in depth the reasoning of the researchers and bringing the risk of critic that the results are not sufficiently grounded.

Discussion - think of your paper like a story. Especially for qualitative work, this approach helps. What is the conclusion to your story? Describe for us the "arc" of this research and why it is important. This section needs to make clear the contribution to the field. Do include your recommendations as those are important.
- The Discussion part was rewritten taking into account contribution to the field. Recommendations are included here. Extended recommendations are included in the "Practical implications" section of Discussion.

Javier Alvarez-Galvez, PhD (Reviewer 2): Report to editors.

Introduction:

Some clarifications are needed to differentiate the notions of "system" and "context". In particular, the term "context" is unclear (i.e. are the author talking about the environment or social system as a whole - structural factors?).

- The term context was explained.
- The term system was explained by reference to systemic factors.

Methods:

The sentence "the results were synthesized based on the adapted classification of contextual determinants proposed by Leichter (1979) [3,7]" is repeated in this section. I recommend to choose just one of the statements.

- The suggested change was introduced.

Results:

Figure are missing, so I cannot totally assess the document. Results are well described but I think that could be synthesized a little. Of course, we must consider these are the results of a wide European project, so I understand that is hard to integrate everything. In particular, maybe the authors could combine paragraphs where arguments are repeated or cut some long verbatim.
In the section, "structural determinants" the definition of "structural factors" are not very clear… The authors say: "For clarity, we have defined the structural factors as internal and external determinants. The internal determinants are those identified within the structure of health care and policy, and external determinants relate to the elements indirectly correlated with health care and policy." But what are the factors within the structure of health care and policy? And what are the elements indirectly correlated with them? I recommend to add a better definition and maybe some examples. In literature of social determinants of health, structural determinants are those related socio-economic position of individuals in societal hierarchy. The WHO uses the concept structural determinants "to refer specifically to interplay between the socioeconomic-political context, structural mechanisms generating social stratification and the resulting socioeconomic position of individuals." (WHO, 2010), so I think this section need some clarification.

- In accordance with the Author's guidance figures were added to the manuscript as separate files, what was done at the submission stage. While submitting the revised version of the manuscript I have added them again. I hope that they will be possible to read now.
- The results part was shortened where possible by cutting some long verbatim and eliminating (where possible) repetitions. However, I would like to stress that repetitions were the consequence of the fact that some codes were included in various categories and classified under different headings as categories were not mutually exclusive. It is important to add that not always synthesis was possible as the country examples justify the categories emergence. In the case of shortening the characteristic of each category the risk of lack of sufficient "proofs" for each category might happen. I understand the argument that results part contains a large amount of data, however synthesizing could significantly affect the quality of the paper by not explaining in depth the reasoning of the researchers and bringing the risk of critic that the results are not sufficiently grounded.
- The structural factors concept was explained better, examples were added.

Discussion:

I recommend to modify the word "determine" in the second paragraph (sentence: "this research demonstrates how contextual factors determine regulatory function"). This word is not appropriate since the effect of contextual factors on child health policy was not measured. In the same paragraph, the authors point to the need to "prompt the introduction of structural changes", but we should be more cautious with this kind of assumptions. Structural determinants of health and health policies are linked to individual/intermediate determinants, so how can you be sure that a contextual change might vary individual practices (i.e. patients, parents, professionals...)? Health outcomes and health inequalities are linked to both health policies and social policies
(even to educational one), so from these general statements is difficult to assess which are the recommendation, the health care priorities or the possible action plans.

The references to the concepts "contextual determinants", "situational context"… could be more specific in this section since researchers and policy makers need to know which are the factors to be improved or modified.

- The word "determine" was exchanged for "play"
- The phrase " prompt the introduction of structural changes " refers to the multiple voices of society, not to the contextual determinants.
- The concepts of contextual determinants and situational context are now better explained in the "Background" section so the reader has no doubts how to interpret the basic terms used across the papers.

Minor mistakes:

In page 11: divide the words "and inherited"

In all the doc: use the word "socio-economic" with or without the dash. Use only one form.

- The suggested changes were introduced.

Adam Fushieni, PhD (Reviewer 3)

Firstly, the major objective of the study should be consistent with the title of the paper. Authors stated the objective of the study as: "The main objective of this study was to explore the contextual determinants of child health policies in relation to the prevailing socio-cultural background". But the title is: Contextual Determinants of Children's Health Care and Policy in Europe". Socio-cultural background is just one of the contextual factors.

- The main objective was edited.
Methodology

Lines 14-19: Authors need to specify whether the semi-structured questionnaires were administered face-to-face or by some other means. How were the data collection coordinated? Were the semi-structured interviews/surveys recorded and transcribed? Authors also have to be clear whether it was a survey or interview. The use of Nvivo seems to suggest it was not a survey.

Lines 46-50: How was the coding done and how many of the research team members were involved in the coding? Was it done individually or as a team? What procedures guided the coding process?

Lines 52-60: Was the categorization of data done in each country and how did authors arrive at the themes that informed the findings and discussions of the study?

- The "Method" section was re-edited. We clarified that the questionnaires were sent by email and respondents responded in the text form (Microsoft Word file). The text was incorporated into Nvivo, which helped to organize and analyze the qualitative data. The process of data collection coordination was explained more in detail in the "Methods" section.
- The process of coding is characterized in the manuscript. It followed the recommendation of Charmaz methodology, what is stated in the manuscript. The stages were as followed: pre-reviewing the data (text obtained in Microsoft Word), incorporating the data into Nvivo, coding the text phrase by phrase (generating codes), merging codes under an umbrella theme - category (categorization), constructing the scheme of identified processes and elements (as shown in Figure 1).
- The tasks performed by each researcher are characterized in section "Authors' contributions". To not to extend the main text they were not characterized in "Methods" section again.
- The categorization of data was done across all the countries. We included such note in Abstract.
- The themes emerged as a consequence of the analytical process and constant comparison approach usage. We added such comment in the "Methods" section.

Results

My initial observation is that the results section is too long. Some of the issues could be summarized or moved to the discussion section, which is rather very light. We understand authors wanted to present all the evidence but this has resulted in repetitions across the various areas of the section.
Lines 21-37: are all methodological issues and would be more relevant in the methods section.

Line 57: Figures are mentioned but not included in the manuscript or attched.

- The results part was shortened where possible by cutting some long verbatim and eliminating (where possible) repetitions. Were possible the summarized issues were moved to the discussion section. However, I would like to stress that repetitions were the consequence of the fact that some codes were included in various categories and classified under different headings as categories were not mutually exclusive. It is important to add that not always synthesis was possible as the country examples justify the categories emergence. In the case of shortening the characteristic of each category the risk of lack of sufficient "proofs" for each category might happen. I understand the argument that results part contains a large amount of data, however synthesizing could significantly affect the quality of the paper by not explaining in depth the reasoning of the researchers and bringing the risk of critic that the results are not sufficiently grounded.

- Methodological issues which referred to the characteristic of respondents were moved to the "Methods" section

- In accordance with the Author's guidance figures were added to the manuscript as separate files, what was done at the submission stage. While submitting the revised version of the manuscript we have added them again. We hope that they will be possible to read now.

Revisons Required

1. Authors could present the results in sub-headings, for instance, under socio-cultural determinants, you could have sub-headings such as: Societal activation, awareness, communication, trust etc

Authors could then indicate that socio-cultur al determinants come in several forms and dimensions such as mass activation, individual activism, awareness of the issue or problem….. This would ensure authors summarise the issues and make it more focused than it is now. The reader gets drowned and lost in the process.

This should be done for all the other determinants such as structural and specific situational.
- The suggested changes referring to the introduction of sub-headings were performed.
- The recommendation which refers to summarizing the issues before detailed characteristic was performed. However, we tried to keep it short to not to make the paper longer.

2. Summarise some of the issues in the results section to reduce the length and cut out repetition. e.g. "The global humanitarian crisis and the plight of unaccompanied asylum seekers was prominently discussed mainly in the UK and Finland; and the situation of migrant families worsened in countries affected by the economic crisis". Statements like this have been repeated several times in the manuscript.

- As I mentioned before - the results part was shortened where possible by cutting some long verbatim and eliminating (where possible) repetitions. Were possible the summarized issues were moved to the discussion section. However, I would like to stress that repetitions were the consequence of the fact that some codes were included in various categories and classified under different headings as categories were not mutually exclusive. It is important to add that not always synthesis was possible as the country examples justify the categories emergence. In the case of shortening the characteristic of each category the risk of lack of sufficient "proofs" for each category might happen. I understand the argument that results part contains a large amount of data, however synthesizing could significantly affect the quality of the paper by not explaining in depth the reasoning of the researchers and bringing the risk of critic that the results are not sufficiently grounded.

The manuscript also needs strong editing. e.g. Line 60: infectious diseases (especially tuberculosis and vaccinations); "Vaccinations" cannot be infectious diseases.

- Recommended change was introduced. The article was corrected by native speakers.

Lines 31-33: "As in most of these cases, the impact of past policies and inherited traditions". This is an incomplete sentence and also there should be space between "policies and inherited". There are several of these in the manuscript.

- Recommended change was introduced.

Discussion

The discussion needs to be strengthened in light of the results. The first part of the discussion is not particularly focused on child health care and policies. Given the comprehensive results
section, the discussion should naturally follow from the main issues raised under each contextual determinant.

For instance. Lines 55-60: "Our classification of structural determinants was divided into two groups: 1) internal determinants, which comprise of interdependent health care and policy processes such as access to care, provision of care. Sensitivity to structural determinants reflects the socio-economic problems across Europe; and 2) external determinants which relate to elements indirectly correlated with health care services and policy, such as policy and politics, economy and finance". This has already been stated and I expected a further discussion of this based on your results.

The specific-situational contextual determinant is only mentioned in the last paragraph of the discussion (Lines 38-40) without any discussion of it. This is because most of the discussion has been done in the results section.

I recommend authors look at the results section to move some of the discussions to this section

- The Discussion section was re-edited and strengthened in light of the results. The first part of the discussion was erased and the second part which referred to results was extended.
- The repetition was erased and the content was shaped in a different manner.
- The situational contextual determinant is now wider discussed.
- Some parts of the results section were moved to the Discussion.