**Reviewer’s report**

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

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 07 Feb 2019

**Reviewer:** Krista Banasiak

**Reviewer's report:**
Report to editors.

The main objective of this work is to explore the contextual determinants of child health policies in relation to the prevailing socio-cultural background. The paper presents a relevant topic related to health inequalities in Europe that still needs to be addressed (e.g. rise of non-communicable diseases, childhood obesity, vaccination schedules, and poor mental health in children). The results are relevant since are based in comparative European data from the project MOCHA. However, although the authors introduce a relevant question in the literature the paper present some problems that should be improved before a possible publication in BMC Public Health.

**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?).

**Methods:**

The sentence "the results were synthesised 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.

**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.

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.

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.

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.

Unable to assess

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

Unable to assess

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.

Not relevant to this manuscript
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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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