Author’s response to reviews

Title: Barriers and Facilitators to Healthcare Access for Children with Disabilities in Low and Middle Income Sub-Saharan African Countries: A Scoping Review

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Reviewers,

Thank you much for your comments and suggestions. We believe that the changes we made to the paper based on your comments have made the paper stronger. Please, see added notes and corrections using the tracking changes. Also, we have read the articles that you have suggested and added some sections such as study selection and data analysis, strengths of our study, and implications for policy and practice.

We have attached a compared file that shows the changes between the original and revised paper.

Review 1

Abstract: Page 1, line 13-14: Some of the articles used for this scoping review come from countries outside the east African subregion, e.g. Cote D'Ivoire and Nigeria (refer to line 27-36 under the Results section). Kindly revise this sentence.
Ans.: We had used the term ‘east African region’ mistakenly. Hence, we have corrected our scope to low and middle income Sub-Saharan African countries (see p1; Objective section).

Methods
Page 3, line 41-49: The selection of only countries in the region that spend less than $50 per capita defeats the purpose of the study or pre-empt the outcome because that itself is a barrier to access to healthcare not for CwDs but also the population. Inclusion of CwDs papers/articles from all the countries in the region would have provided a comprehensive view of the issue being studied. I kindly invite the authors to remove the inclusion criteria and broaden the scope of the review to cover other CwDs articles in the continent.
Ans.: African countries significantly vary in terms of their socioeconomic status. Thus, our review focuses on countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that allocated less than $50 per person to healthcare.

Results
I suggest that the authors move the main results of the study from Appendix to the Results section. I humbly request the authors to also refer to the article below for guidance on their presentation of the results.

Ans.: We have check the suggested article and modified our paper including data source and search, study selection and screening, and data abstraction (see p4; Method section).

The authors should discuss the results section in a coherent manner. The current presentation with too many subheadings of barriers and facilitators makes it repetitive and boring. I suggest they limit the subheadings to the 7 identified themes and describe the barriers and facilitators within them in an essay form.

Ans.: We have limited the themes to four and discussed them along with a limited number of subheadings briefly (see pp6-12; Result section).

Discussion
Page 15, line 55-59 and page 16, line 4-13: The authors discuss maternal and child health in general. Although they admitted in the paragraph, I suggest they focus their discussion mainly on CwDs.

Ans.: We have removed maternal health and focus on CwDs’ access to healthcare services.

Discussion on the facilitators is very limited. The authors can elaborate more on this.

Ans.: The reviewed papers shows differences in barriers and facilitators and they reported more barriers than facilitators. We rely on the findings of the reviewed studies.

The policy implications of the study findings are not clearly articulated. I invite the authors to clearly bring this out in the discussion or conclusion section.

Ans.: We have added implications for policy and practice in a separate section (see p14).

Minor comments
The authors are kindly requested to review the entire manuscript for language. There are a number of omissions and grammatical errors, some of which are listed below:

Ans.: We have done thorough proofreading of the entire manuscript.

Review 2

Different terms with the same meaning can be used in different setting by different scholars. However, in this manuscript, the authors did not clearly state how they searched for evidences, and what terms they used.

Ans.: We have used different search terms that are listed in the methods section. We have also demonstrated our limitations (see p4: Data sources and search).

Abstract

The objective in the abstract section does not go with what was written in the background. In the background, the main focus seems Ethiopia. Here, the focus seems selected low to middle income East African countries. This is also no in line with sub-Saharan countries described in the method and result section.

Ans.: We have made corrections (see p1&amp;2: Abstract and Background sections). We have demonstrated more examples from Ethiopia as we have gained more papers from the country.

Background

The authors tried to convince the readers by stating some of the issues related to children with disabilities. However, the argument lacks synthesis of evidences. The authors reported the findings of individual study. It would have been better if they had search for more evidences, comprehended, and synthesized them.
Ans.: We have presented the findings i.e., the overarching themes generated from all the selected studies (see pp6-12: Results section). We have also synthesized major points in the results section and the discussion section. We agree that with this change based on your comment, the paper reads better and provides better synthesis of the results. However, it mean that the paper is significantly changed from the original submission.

Methods:
1. How did you conduct the scoping review? Did you standard manual such as the Joanna Briggs Methods Manual for Scoping Reviews?
2. Did you use a protocol? If so, please specify it.
3. Did you use PRISMA? If so, how?
Ans.: Yes, we used standardized procedures and protocols including Arksey and O’Malley framework and the PRISMA tree (see p4: Method section).
4. The authors could use the following sub-headings under the methods section:
   - Data sources and search
   - Study selection: inclusion criteria
   - Study selection: screening
   - Data abstraction
   - Data charting and collation
Ans.: We have checked the suggested article and rewritten our paper using the aforementioned sub-headings (see p4: Method section).

Results
1. In reporting the results, it would have been good if the authors had reported all the facilitators or barriers. The presentation of facilitators and barriers for each theme may not be attractive for readers.
Ans.: We have revised our paper results section and tried to make it brief and attractive. (see pp6-12; Results section).