Author’s response to reviews

Title: Doctoral Level Research and Training Capacity in the Social Determinants of Health at universities and higher education institutions in India, China, Oman and Vietnam: A survey of needs

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor,

I have responded to all the comments of the reviewer. Below mentioned you will find point to point responses. I also attaching the response as a separate attachment.

Thanks and regards
farhad
Reviewer response:

Reviewer #1: Paper title: Doctoral level research and training capacity in the Social Determinants of Health in ARCADE RSDH partner institutions in India, china, Oman and Vietnam: A survey of needs

I found the paper much easier to read this time around and I have some comments that need to be addressed, I do not foresee that they will require much work on the part of the authors, rather just some additional information. I feel though as if this is the first time I can provide high level comments as the paper is now well worked through.

My opinion is I think the paper can be published after these comments have been addressed:

Thank you.

Comment 1 : Recommendation and action:

Table 1 has words missing in the PhD students block 'suggestions to improve the XXXX?
Response: In the revised Table the issue is resolved. The missing words are included in the table. I am also uploading the table in the online submission system.

Comment 2:

Recommendation and action:

Please include the number of participants and respondents for both the qualitative and quantitative components under 'data collection and sampling'. It is only mentioned in the abstract
and in the Table 1. Please tabulate in the methodology section for the Reader, the Reader shouldn't need to tabulate for themselves.

Response: This is mentioned under ‘participants’ in methodology but as suggested I am moving this under ‘data collection and sampling’. The suggestion has been incorporated and highlighted. Please see page 7.

Comment 3: Please provide clarity for the Reader

Is it is the case that all partner 'institutions' are universities. I suspect not all partner 'institutions' surveyed were universities hence the use of the term ‘institution’? Either way I think it would be good to make this clear to the reader. Also please note to the Reader if the partner is in fact a Specific Faculty in the University or a Specific Department, for example 'College of Medicine' is used in on the quotes.

Response: This has been included and highlighted.

Recommendation and action:

- Please see the paper titled "Assessment of capacity for Health Policy and Systems Research and Analysis in seven African universities: results from the CHEPSAA project" by Mirzoev et al. (2017) Health Policy and Planning (29). See under the methods section, just above Figure 1. how this author described each partner that was a participant in the research. I think you could easily describe each of your partners in this way too.

Please do so. If you sampled the whole University then please make this clear.

Response: Thank you. I have made similar changes and highlighted it in page 6.

- Please note that the conclusion that is written in your abstract says the research will be relevant for other universities - from this I would infer that all partners are universities? Please ensure conclusion words match rest of text.
Response: We have now changed this to universities and institutions of research and higher education in the manuscript and highlighted it. We have also included an explanatory statement in the methodology section under ‘participants’ on page 6.

- Please check that the title of your paper is then consistent with how you decide to describe the 'institutions'.

Rationale:
- This helps to situate the findings for the Reader - at the moment I can't really situate the findings within a broader context, institutions set up only for research are quite different from universities in needs and assets available.

Response: We have changed the title.

Comment 4: In the discussion section it is mentioned that BNU is the only university that offers Social Sciences - this again raises the question for me if you sampled a specific Faculty for this work or you mean that across all Faculties in all universities nobody except BNU offers social sciences? I suspect you sampled particular faculties? Although it is not clear to me.

Response: We have included a table to detail where data were sampled. Please see the table on page 7.

- Library facilities, lack of internet, inadequate reading material? As major challenges raises a contextual question for me - are these under resourced universities? Or are these problems particular to research 'institutions’?

Recommendation and action:
- Please provide 1 or 2 sentences giving some contextual information that allows the Reader to understand why lack of reading material or lack of internet might be a problem - things in the context you may consider to be relevant.

- You may want to include these sentences under participants or rather add them in the findings section so the Reader can situate the findings directly.
Response: Thank you for the suggestion, we have now included it in the discussion section of the manuscript and highlighting it. Please see page 17.

Comment 5: It is not clear to me why you refer to participants as male student or female student before a quote in the findings section? You did not as I understand it apply a gender lens during tool development and data collection? Sometimes the terms are used and other times it is not, consistency is needed and one needs to decide whether the use of male and female is relevant in this paper.

- I do however recognise the one quote about parents and respect for children study was mentioned by many females and supported by a PI so that comment is usefully shown to be predominantly female, the others are not qualified in this way.

- Recommendation and action:

Discuss within your team whether labelling quotes as male / female has any value within the context of your paper.

Response: we realized during the work that challenges faced by female researchers are far more complex as they have to overcome social and cultural issues pertaining to stepping out from home, staying alone and supporting family and kids. As mention earlier also this issue may not be specific to SDH related research and PhD training but a challenge most of the women face in this part of the world who aspire to pursue higher studies and research in any subject. Having such an experience we decided to highlight this in this manuscript.

Comment 6: A suggestion to think about - no need to action.

In the discussion section you give ideas for increasing the availability of courses for SDH students - would it not also be possible to draw courses from other faculties within the same university and/or to draw on courses from other local universities to supplement and support SDH training? And if not all partners are universities then research institutions that only do research could possibly collaborate with local (or northern) universities.
Recommendation:

This is just food for thought and a suggestion

Response: Thank you for the interesting idea. The experience is that the course that other departments and/or local universities run are not necessarily in the right context hence contextualization and adaptation would be required so that it suit to the requirements of the SDH researchers. Another challenge is related to coordination mechanisms as these universities and department often work as independent parallel institutions. But having said this, the idea is worth trying. What is probably needed is a response from Universities associations and Ministry of Science Technology and higher education.