Author’s response to reviews

Title: Implementation effectiveness of health interventions for Indigenous communities: a systematic review

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Editor and Reviewers:

Once again, thank you for your comments and suggestions on the revised version of our article. You have highlighted specific areas that we have overlooked and needed to be further explained for clarification and a better understanding of our interpretation of the elements of HPW. The changes you have suggested have been made and this letter provides a point-by-point explanation of the changes made and identifies a location in the clean copy of the manuscript. We have also provided a track changes version of the manuscript for your review as well. We have left your original comments and then provided our response below each point.

Kind regards,

The Authors
Reviewer #1:

1. The authors have thoroughly considered the comments of both reviewers, and the manuscript is considerably clearer and improved. It is now clearer that this mainly is an effort to determine the degree to which the HPW Framework has been used in studies of indigenous peoples. As I understand it, the authors make no imputation that the framework is effective in producing better outcomes. Accordingly, care should be taken not to imply this throughout, especially in the conclusion which suggests that better outcomes will follow if the framework is diligently applied.

Authors’ response: Thank you for your positive feedback and advice. We have made changes throughout the document, mainly in the implications (see page 16) and the conclusion (page 17) to ensure that we do not imply that by following the HPW framework the health interventions will achieve higher incomes.

2. I now realize that I don't have the same understanding of "systems thinking" as the authors, and some readers may be confused as well. The authors are mainly looking at levels of whole systems and how they are engaged in change, plus some "feedback loops." I am thinking more about complex dynamic systems and how implementation accounts for this complexity. I also would assume that the reliability of system performance is key. Can the authors unpack this for the readers and say more clearly what systems thinking means for them, and what it does not mean.

Authors’ response: Thank you for your comments as you raise a good point here. We have added a couple of sentences to further unpack the paragraph on ST on page 6. Specifically, we acknowledge the multiple perspectives and also note that there aren’t clear guidelines (something noted by Reviewer 2 as well, #10). We are explicit about what the HPW includes at the end of this paragraph and hopefully this clarifies the operationalisation of ST from this framework.

3. A minor point, but in many quarters people refer to American Indian (which is somewhat back in vogue), so I wonder if publications may have been missed with the term, Native American.

Authors’ response: This is a good point and one that we acknowledge in the limitations (page 17, as part of the 2nd limitation.
Reviewer #2:

I found this paper much improved. Particularly the reporting of the results and conclusions. I think it's perfectly appropriate to apply a theoretically-based framework post-hoc as the authors have done. I think that the purpose of the paper, therefore, is to examine the extent to which these key principles for implementation in Indigenous communities are reported/reflected in existing studies. By doing so, the authors are providing 'baseline' insights into how key principles are currently implemented in interventions in Indigenous communities. This is an area that is severely understudied, yet crucial given the expanding health inequities faced by Indigenous peoples. The information provided in this article is useful to strengthening reporting and implementation.

Authors’ response: Thanks for your positive feedback about the manuscript and the importance of the study.

1. Although the authors clearly state their purpose on page 6 lines 52-58, there are a few places in the text where the language contradicts or confuses this. Therefore, clarifying a few points and streamlining the language is my main recommendation. I'll point out a few confusing points below in my response, with a few other minor points to consider.

1.1. Abstract. Background section. I think the HPW is a framework that provides/recommends a foundation for implementation in Indigenous communities - as it's not an intervention, I don't think 'demonstrates' is the right word.

Authors’ response: Thank you for your careful review of this article. We have made the change and have used provides per your suggestion.

1.2. Methods. Explain here that you used qualitative synthesis (or thick description as stated in your response to the reviewer). Also, I think you mean data were 'extracted' from studies, not 'collected'

Authors’ response: We changed the term ‘collected’ to ‘extracted’ as per your advice. Also, we added a final sentence to the methods that explained that we did qualitative synthesis for the data analysis.
1.3. Conclusions: Suggest rewriting this. The current conclusion focuses too much on health outcomes and effectiveness, both of which played a relatively minor role in your reporting of the study findings. Rather, observations about lack of reporting on ST and IKM are more poignant.

Authors’ response: Thank you for your comment. The effectiveness that the framework highlights is in the principles of implementation the health intervention rather than the health outcomes and as you point out, we didn’t look directly at outcomes. The conclusion has been edited to provide more emphasis on the current findings without discussing the outcomes (Page 3)

2. Check consistent capitalisation of 'Indigenous' (ie, line 43 pg 4)

Authors’ response: Thank you, capitalisation has been corrected throughout.

3. Page 5 line 6 - I think the He Pikinga Waiora framework provides principles, or as supported by in line 16 'practices', but not processes for implementation.

Authors’ response: Thank you. We have changed the word ‘processes’ to ‘principles’ (page 5, 4th line)

4. Page 6, line 39-43. This paper doesn’t really focus on barriers/implementers at all. I think your question reported on page 6, lines 52-58 more accurately represents what you are aiming to do here. The sentence on line 39 may be more accurately restated as: "Systematically reviewing the literature will provide insights regarding how the previously described principles (or, HPW principles) are currently being implemented and reported in Indigenous community-based health interventions. This study applies the HPW framework …"

Authors’ response: We agree with your comment and have followed your suggestions (page 6, paragraph just before method heading).
5. Page 7 line 10-16. This explanation is confusing - especially since you are not using the HPW framework in the same way in this paper. As it currently reads it sounds like the HPW framework was associated with health outcomes. I think you mean to say that the "HPW framework, previously applied in a post-hoc manner, provided insights demonstrating associations between the implementation of framework principles and health outcomes.

Authors’ response: Thank you for your suggestion; we have made this change and adopted your suggestion (page 7, sentence before Inclusion Exclusion Criteria heading)

6. Page 9, Data Synthesis. Since you are applying HPW post-hoc, would be helpful to include a sentence explaining whether you coding content based on the authors self-reporting these concepts reported, or whether you are using your coding scheme to recognise concepts that may or may not be identified/labelled as such by the authors. This is particularly relevant in the case of systems thinking.

Authors’ response: Thank you for this clarification. We have included a sentence explaining what the coding was based on. On page 9 you will find this sentence “The coding scheme was used to recognise key HPW concepts even if they were not directly labelled as such by the study authors (i.e., current authors’ interpretation of whether HPW elements were used)” which aims to provide clarity around the point you have raised here. (page 9, 3rd sentence under Data Synthesis).

7. Page 13- I’m confused by the “feedback loops” reported here. Was this something that was self-reported in these studies or part of your coding scheme?

Author’s response: The feedback loops were based on the coding scheme and not necessarily reported by the study authors. We didn’t make a change on this page since the explanation on page 9 covers this point.

8. Very important points made on page 15 line 6-12 about the use CHWs is not necessarily sufficient to ensuring community engagement (no action needed)

Authors’ response: We appreciate your recognition of this important point.
9. Line 21 - Statement beginning 'more studies included systems perspectives…' is confusing. Relates back to my point 6 above - to what extent were you unable to recognise that ST principles were evident in the study (based on your coding scheme), vs did very few studies explicitly report these ST principles?

Authors’ response: We have made two changes here. First, on page 15, 4th line after Systems Thinking… heading, we added “information reflecting” in that same sentence you note to be consistent with the fact that we are coding and interpreting whether they had systems perspectives. Second, we have highlighted in the limitations (pages 17-18, sentences just before the Conclusion section) that the conclusions we make from our coding is based on what the author reported and that they may have unreported information as they were not reporting based on the HPW scheme. “Finally, we acknowledge that our findings and conclusions are based on the data each publication has provided even if they did not label the information as a particular HPW element. The lack of data regarding ST and IKT does not necessarily mean that they did not consider those elements as page limits may limit reporting of some information. However, we encourage researchers to report on all four HPW elements when describing implementation of health interventions with Indigenous communities to enable knowledge consolidation about these topics, and advance thinking about how best.”

10. Re Systems thinking - may be worth noting that although systems thinking is frequently used concept, it is relatively new and lacks clear guidelines for implementation in practice and reporting in the literature. Some helpful citations include:


Authors’ response: Thank you for your suggestions. We looked into the articles you have provided and found that they had highlighted some areas of reference point for our study. On page 6 in the descriptions of ST, you will find we have added a sentence referencing both of these articles. We believe this addition addresses the concern of ST lacking clear guidelines and being interpreted differently from study to study (relates to reviewer 1’s 2nd point as well).
11. Another limitation is that studies may have included these elements but not reported on them (again, links to my point 6 above). This is particularly the case for ST which is relatively new in practice and lacks consistency/guidelines for reporting.

- I suggest that HPW provides a useful framework to guide what kind of information needs to be reported about Indigenous community-based health programs to enable knowledge consolidation about these topics, and advance thinking about how best to apply these principles for improved implementation and maximum impact.

Authors’ response: Pages 17-18 under the heading limitations, the last point made addresses the point you have raised here and have used some of your language. We have identified that we are making our conclusions based on the information that was reported in the articles. That is not to say that those articles did not have any outcomes in the ST and IKT areas, it is simply not highlighted in their report/article. Our own hypothesis is that people do more CE and CCA and less ST and IKT (based on experience and reporting). However, it may be that authors simply report more on the CE and CCA elements because of the perceived importance of these elements while ST and IKT are relatively new and lack clear definition and hence it is hard to report on specific components.

12. Conclusions. I encourage you to use active voice where you can. The passive language is causing a few confusing statements, like the opening sentence - Are you saying the HPW framework recommends/posits that these things are needed? Also, the sentence that reads 'Indigenous communities will support what they help to create' - what is the what? Programs? Interventions?

Author’s response: We have revised the conclusion so that the opening sentence is more clear—specifically, that HPW posits these elements are important for health improvement and equity. Also, we edited the sentence about what is being created, i.e., health interventions. Finally, we deleted a sentence about positive outcomes of health interventions since we don’t have the data directly in the study. (page 18)