Societal influences on the child health policy: *Agents of the child - children's voice representation*

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Background

Political, economic and social factors are listed as the most influential elements which impact health policy both at national and international level. This affirms the principle that health policy is strongly embedded in environmental frameworks. This exploratory research was aimed at understanding their impact through analysis of the currently perceived influences, as part of the 30 country **MOCHA** study on primary health care for children.

Material & Method

The method was a hybrid qualitative approach linking a data-driven, inductive perspective with elements of deductive coding. The MOCHA project has an experienced child health Country Agent in each of the 30 countries.

A questionnaire designed as a semi-structured survey instrument was formulated by the researchers and validated by an independent Expert Advisory Board. It was sent to the projects child health Country Agents who are experienced contact points in each of the 30 participating countries with the aim to deliver national data for MOCHA. In the questionnaire, Country Agents were asked to identify strong public and professional discussions related to child health services in their countries. Data collection was between July 2016 and mid-December 2016.

Results

Representatives of 22 countries responded; 65 cases of public concerns were described. The key actors were identified as executive actors - agents of the child circulating around in the child's proximal or distal environment.

The proximal environment refers to the direct milieu of the child on the micro level whereas distal refers to indirect surrounding on the mezzo and macro level. The difference between the distal and proximal environment is expressed by the type of relationship.

In the proximal perspective, the agents are capable of constructing the direct relationship whereas the agents of the distal environment are rather acting on the basis of indirect contacts.

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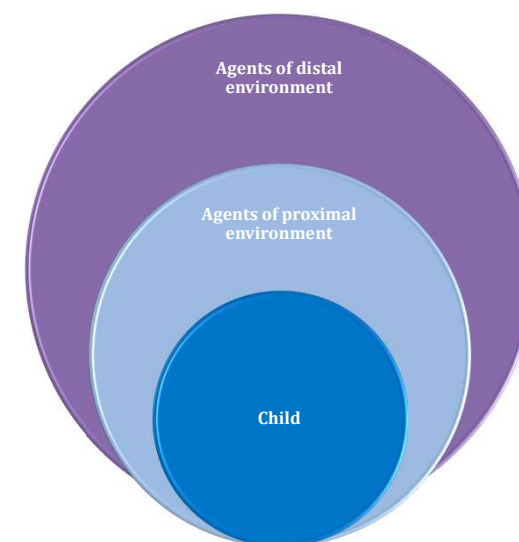
Figure 1. Child as the central actor in the process of shaping child health policy

Conclusions

• **Recognition of the strong public and professional discussions related to child health services in the European countries allows identification of the most influential actors representing the children's voice and their impact on decision makers in the child health policy process.**

• **To understand the child health policy context the identification of children's agents is needed.**

• **Understanding societal influences supports responsiveness to the child health needs.**

• **Societal priorities articulated through active agents may conflict with systemic priorities.**

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Models of Child Health Appraised
(A Study of Primary Healthcare in 30 European countries)