

Response to Reviewer 1 Comments

1. Summary

Thank you very much for taking the time to review this manuscript and for your detailed and constructive feedback. I really appreciate your close attention to the use of references and the scientific support behind many of the statements made throughout the paper.

In response to your comments, I have carefully revised the manuscript to ensure that all assertions are appropriately supported by relevant and accurate peer-reviewed sources. This included adding missing references, replacing non-primary sources (such as policy documents or news articles) with original studies, and strengthening the overall evidence base where needed.

I also made several edits to improve clarity and precision in language, including moderating statements that were previously too strong and refining terminology to better align with scientific standards. Additional clarifications were incorporated into the Methods and Discussion sections to improve transparency, particularly regarding study procedures, confounder selection, and limitations.

Your feedback was extremely helpful in strengthening the overall rigor and credibility of this manuscript. Thank you again for taking the time to assist in my manuscript. Please find detailed, point-by-point responses below, with all revisions clearly indicated using track changes in the resubmitted files.

2. Questions for General Evaluation

Reviewer's Evaluation

Is the work a significant contribution to the field?

This is an important paper that adds to the body of literature around an important topic. There are minor changes needed, mainly that the paper needs references for many of the assertions the author makes.

Does the introduction provide sufficient background and include all relevant references?

Must be improved

Is the research design appropriate?

Yes

Are the methods adequately described? Yes

Are the results clearly presented? Yes

Are the conclusions supported by the results? Yes

Are all figures and tables clear and well-presented? Yes

3. Point-by-point response to Comments and Suggestions for Authors

Comment 1:

Line 67 re: recycling often performed without PPE, emissions that contaminate nearby communities – are there studies with ambient air or drinking water levels? This assertion needs some kind of reference beyond a general overview document.

Response 1:

Thank you for pointing this out. The information was directly taken from citation number 3 and needed to be added to the appropriate line. This change has been made, and we appreciate your detailed attention.

Comment 2:

Line 92 makes a bold statement with only one exposure study as evidence.

Response 2:

Thank you for this helpful comment. We agree that the original phrasing was too strong given that its relief on a single exposure study. In response, we have revised the sentence to adopt a more cautious and evidence-aligned tone. Specifically, we changed “poses a grave risk to human health and violates fundamental environmental health rights” to “may pose significant risks to human health and raises concerns regarding environmental health protections.” We feel this revision better reflects the current level of evidence while still conveying the potential importance of the issue without overstating the certainty of the findings. These edits were made on page 3, lines 92 and 93.

Comment 3:

Line 109 – ref is a policy paper, but the statement is about exposure.

Response 3:

Thank you for this comment. We agree that the original reference was a policy paper and did not directly support the statement regarding exposure. We have revised this section by replacing the citation with a peer-reviewed study that directly assesses heavy metal exposure. This ensures that all claims about exposure are now supported by empirical evidence. The citation was adjusted for citation 10 on page 3, line 110.

Comment 4:

Line 116 – the ref is a news article. Need to ref the actual study.

Response 4:

Thank you for highlighting this inconsistency. The original news article citation has been removed and replaced with a citation to the original peer-reviewed study referenced in the article. This ensures that the statement is supported by the primary scientific evidence. This

revision was applied on page 3 for lines 116 as well as line 128.

Comment 5:

Line 184 – conducted the search on only one day. Its hard to fathom that the entire search was limited to just one day. Need to make that clear.

Response 5:

Thank you for this suggestion, we completely understand why this would be unclear. We have added clarification to the Methods section specifying that, following the database search in PubMed and Scopus on September 23, 2025, all articles were downloaded for abstract and full-text screening, which was conducted through November 1, 2025. Th exact line that was added on page 4, line 185 and states “Following the database search conducted, all retrieved records were downloaded and prepared for abstract and full-text screening. The screening process was conducted through November 1, 2025.”

Comment 6:

Lines 232-233 – need some type of statement about how these variables affect neonatal health outcomes, even a general phrase like: “all known to potentially affect birth outcomes.”

Response 6:

Thank you for this suggestion. We have revised the text to include a clarifying statement noting that these confounders were pre-specified in the study protocol due to their well-established potential to influence pregnancy and neonatal outcomes. We have done so but deleting line 234, page 6, that originally stated, “The confounders were collectively identified in my protocol for inclusion” and replaced it with “These confounders were pre-specified in the study protocol due to their well-established potential to influence pregnancy and neonatal outcomes.” This addition strengthens the rationale for their inclusion in the cofounding domain assessment. With this addition do you feel it is necessary to cite this claim.

Comment 7:

Line 312 – the term “incorrect” is not the best one. Choose something else such as “non-relevant”

Response 7:

Thank you for this suggestion. We completely agree the term “incorrect” is not the best option and therefore replaced it to “non-relevant” to better reflect the intended meaning and improve clarity. This revision as done on line 312 on page 8.

Comment 8:

Line 393 – the statement about the major drivers for exposure needs a reference as do the assertions in the following two sentences.

Response 8:

Thank you for this comment. We have added relevant peer-reviewed references to support the statement regarding the major drivers of exposure and the subsequent assertions. Citations were added on line 395 as well as line 397 and 399, all on page 20. This revision ensures that all statements are appropriately supported by scientific literature.

Comment 9:

Lines 403-408 – are there any references for these suggestions?

Response 9:

Thank you for calling attention to the lack of references included. The references were added appropriately and represent citations 3, 6, 7 and 9.

Comment 10:

Line 419 – needs references

Response 10:

Thank you for highlighting this missed citation. I have added the appropriate citation that was previously used in the document and where this information was extracted from. Line 419 has been edited to add citation number 10.

Comment 11:

Line 424 – the word “guaranteeing” is too strong and is inaccurate. Consider something like “helping to assure” or “increasing confidence.”

Response 11:

Thank you for this suggestion. The term “guaranteeing” has been replaced with “increasing confidence” on line 424 to provide a more accurate and appropriately cautious interpretation of the findings.

Comment 12:

Line 431 – the phrase “I found to be true” should be removed.

Response 12:

Thank you for this suggestion. The phrase “I found to be true” has been removed, and the sentence has been revised on line 431 to “Another limitation of this review was the lack of additional reviewers, which deviates from the standard practice in scientific literature reviews of having at least two individuals independently screen and assess studies.” This corrected sentence improves clarity and maintains a more formal academic tone.

Comment 13:

Line 431-433 – Should include a reflection on what the use of only one reviewer might mean for this analysis. Do you feel your findings are sound despite using only one reviewer or do you think the review should be repeated using a reviewer group?

Response 13:

Thank you for this important comment. We have added the statement on line 433, page 20, that reads “While only one reviewer conducted the screening and assessment, the findings are considered robust, as the process was closely guided and reviewed throughout each stage requiring structured submission and oversight to ensure methodological rigor and consistency.” This line adds important clarity that we believe the findings remain robust despite this limitation.

Comment 14:

Lines 473-486 – Are there any references to support your recommendations?

Response 14:

Thank you for calling attention to the lack of references for supporting the recommendations. Reference 29 has been added to the document and placed correctly within the suggested location.

Comment 15:

Line 489 – use of the word “valid” is incorrect in this context. Also, the statement that research

should be done to agree with my findings (“to ensure that further research agrees with this conclusion”) is not correct. Research should be done to assess whether your findings are confirmed, have external validity and are generalizable.

Response 15:

Thank you for this important comment. We have revised the sentence to remove the term “valid” and to clarify that future research is needed to assess the consistency, external validity, and generalizability of the findings, rather than to ensure agreement with the current conclusions. The line on 489, page 22, now reads “However, given the current state of epidemiological evidence and the limited data available from communities outside of Guiyu, China, additional studies are needed to further assess the impacts of e-waste exposure on pregnant women and neonates, and to evaluate the consistency, external validity, and generalizability of these findings across diverse populations.”

4. Response to Comments on the Quality of English Language

Point 1: *The English is fine and does not require any improvement.*

Response 1: Thank you for stating that the quality of the English Language is fine and does not need any improvements.

5. Additional clarifications

With the addition of two co-authors, the language has been revised throughout the manuscript to reflect appropriate authorship. Specifically, singular pronouns have been updated to plural where applicable to ensure consistency.

In addition, edits were made across multiple sections to improve overall clarity, flow, and alignment with scientific writing conventions. These revisions were implemented broadly, rather than in isolated sections, to maintain consistency in tone and structure throughout the manuscript.

If further clarification on any specific changes is needed, I would be happy to provide additional detail.