Reviewer’s report

Title: Including mixed method research in systematic reviews: examples from qualitative syntheses in TB and malaria control

Version: 2  Date: 26 November 2011

Reviewer: Pierre Pluye

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions

Authors did a convincing job in their document “answer to reviewers”, and took reviewers’ comments into consideration with rigor and transparency. Thank you. However, the revised text is still not consistent with regards to the following issue. Authors clearly state in the method section that they assessed the quality of the reporting of studies, while the methodological quality of the research study processes was not appraised: “To assess rigour in this comparative analysis, we chose to combine four items to provide a „composite# score of how well the research conduct was reported in the papers.”

Therefore, as mentioned in “major compulsory revisions” from previous reviewers’ reports, this must be clear throughout the paper. In the revised version, there are still too many misleading sentences (including in the abstract) that suggest there was a quality appraisal of the methodological quality of the research study processes, which was not the case (this usually requiring contacts with authors when criteria are not met and the collection of companion papers). See examples below. The list below may be not exhaustive, so authors must carefully re-revise their manuscript to be consistent from the abstract to the conclusion.

ABSTRACT

Replace “This article examines the quality of studies”
By “This article examines the quality of the reporting of studies”

Replace “Mixed method studies are more likely to be rated poor quality”
By “The reporting of mixed method studies are more likely to be rated poor quality”

Replace “both mixed methods and studies using only qualitative research methods”
By “the reporting of both mixed methods and studies using only qualitative research methods”

Replace “Both qualitative and mixed method studies infrequently identified areas”
By “Articles reporting qualitative and mixed method studies infrequently identified
areas"

Replace “Through our careful analysis of the quality of mixed method and standalone qualitative research”
By “Through our careful analysis of the quality of the reporting of mixed method and standalone qualitative research”

BACKGROUND

Replace “The aim of this exploratory research was to examine how the quality, rigour and contribution of mixed methods studies included in systematic reviews compares with the quality, rigour and contribution of studies using qualitative methods only.”

By “The aim of this exploratory research was to examine how the quality of the reporting, rigour and contribution of mixed methods studies included in systematic reviews compares with the quality of the reporting, rigour and contribution of studies using qualitative methods only.”

RE: “Both reviews used specific criteria to assess the quality of included studies.” The term “both” is unclear (2 reviews? 2 types of reviews?). Please, clarify. There is a similar issue next paragraph in “we compared the quality criteria used in both reviews.”

RESULTS

Replace “Overall, the qualitative studies included in the two reviews consistently fared better in quality appraisal when compared with mixed methods studies”

By “Overall, the reporting of qualitative studies included in the two reviews consistently fared better in quality assessment when compared with the reporting of mixed methods studies”

Replace “overall 65% of qualitative studies and 32% of mixed method papers were rated „credible”
By “overall 65% of the articles reporting qualitative studies and 32% of those reporting mixed method papers were rated “credible”

In contrast to the above, almost all sentences in the paragraph starting with “Overall, studies included in the reviews did not report on research conduct well. Four mixed method studies scored the highest possible rating, “4” for rigour, compared with eight qualitative articles” are clear. Only the last sentence needs revision:

Replace “Overall 15 qualitative studies achieved a rigour score of 3, compared with 12 mixed method studies.”
By “Overall 15 articles on qualitative studies achieved a rigour score of 3, compared with 12 articles on mixed methods studies.”

Replace “Overall 15 qualitative studies achieved a rigour score of 3, compared with 12 mixed method studies.”
By “Overall 15 articles on qualitative studies achieved a rigour score of 3, compared with 12 on mixed method studies.”

DISCUSSION

Replace “O’Cathain [8] provides a first attempt at key questions to assess and improve the quality of mixed methods studies”

By “O’Cathain [8] provides a first attempt at key questions to assess and improve the quality of the reporting of mixed methods studies”

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Finally, there is an editing issue: Search and replace “mixed method” by “mixed methods”.

**Level of interest:** An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests