Author's response to reviews

Title: Bridging knowledge translation gap in health in developing countries: visibility, impact and publishing standards in journals from the Eastern Mediterranean

Authors:

Ana Utroobicic (ana.utroobicic@mefst.hr)
Nauman Chaudhry (corvinusx@gmail.com)
Abdul Ghaffar (ghaffara@who.int)
Ana Marusic (ana.marusic@mefst.hr)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr Henderson,

Please find enclosed the revised version of our manuscript. Thank you for very useful reviewers’ comments and your editorial instructions – we followed them closely and revised our manuscript accordingly. Below are our answers to the reviewers’ comments. All major changes are underlined in the revised manuscript. Changes in the tables were not highlighted as they were not really legible with underlined changes. We also corrected the style of the language (a native speaker checked the manuscript); these changes are not indicated as they were all over the manuscript, mostly in the parts that were revised according to the reviewers’ comments. The manuscript has also been formatted according to BMC guidelines.

We hope that our manuscript is now suitable for assessment and publication in the journals.

Sincerely, Ana Marusic

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Reviewer: Farrokh Habibzadeh

Comment #1

_In this manuscript, Dr. Marusic, et al, using data collected from IMEMR, study the editorial quality and visibility of biomedical journals published in EMR. They report that many people around the globe are interested in articles with local relevance published in these journals, that many of the journals have sub-standard quality, and considering their importance in bridging the know-do gap, they should receive more attentions.

The IMEMR is really far from complete, is probably not representative for all journals published in the region and if the authors had access to more accurate data sources, say direct contact with journal offices in the region, they would have come to different results. Furthermore, as the authors state in their manuscript, there were many missing or ambiguous unclear items mainly for journals published in Arabic or Persian language. And, if the authors asked for help with one who knew these languages they may have found somewhat different findings. This also underlines the insufficiency of IMEMR in archiving the regional journals._
However, considering that the results of this manuscript is very well presented and discussed, and that access to data in a way other than that the authors did is very cumbersome, this study could be treated as a preliminary report to be followed by more complete studies. The authors appreciate their limitations and describe them well in the Discussion section.

**Answer:** We thank the reviewer for the comments. We are aware of the limitations of the study, but even with the limitations, it shows the magnitude and importance of publishing efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean.

**Comment #2**
**Minor Essential Revisions:**
All parts of the manuscript are well-written and logically structured. The only problem I found is in the Discussion where the authors mention that “this was the reason why we re-checked the indexing again in June 2010, to make sure that the data for 2009 are as complete as possible.” This section (a sensitivity analysis) should not be first mentioned in Discussion; the authors should first mention it in the Methods: present the findings in the Results and discuss the findings in Discussion.

**Answer:** This point is now described in the Methods section (page #4).

**Comment #3**
**Discretionary Revisions:**
I could not access Reference 17; perhaps it is only for INASP users. If possible, provide an open access reference instead.

**Answer:** The document is not available any more at the INASP site (and the indicated URL) because of the site reconstruction. The document is now provided as the attachment to the manuscript (Additional material 1).

**Comment #4**
**Discretionary Revisions:**
I think for reporting non-normally distributed variables along with median, instead of reporting range as an index of dispersion, it would be better to report “interquartile range (75%ile-25%ile)” or “25%ile and 75%ile.”

**Answer:** Medians are now reported with interquartile ranges throughout the text (pages #7 and 8) and the tables.

**Comment #5**
**Discretionary Revisions:**
Table S3: It would be better to include another column reporting number (%) of ambiguous/unclear items.

**Answer:** This column was added to Table 5 in the manuscript as we think the information was important and complementary to the main findings.

**Comment #6**
**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published
**Answer:** We thank the reviewer for the comment and we hope that we have improved the language of the revised manuscript.
Reviewer: Ritu Sadana

Comment#1
General compulsory revisions
- The paper documents an important effort to look at the journals in the region. Encourage authors to revise the paper taking on board these comments, and focus on communicating the essential or main findings.
- Needs editing for English, some sentences are incomplete or missing words.
- Visibility vs. impact has been defined in different ways. Please clarify in the introduction what this means and within the methods section, how it is measured. For example, is it visibility as referenced in a database, or as referenced in another journal, or if the list of authors includes people from different disciplines, different institutions within the country, or from across the region, or from outside of the region. Is impact the same as referenced by others (data bases or researchers) or is it how the research has influenced policies or practices? There are also additional metrics, “ready made”, metrics used. How do these fit in within the concept of visibility or impact?
- The paper would benefit from organizing results and discussions on the different issues that are being considered, e.g. perhaps on one hand in reaching the mainstream scientific community (would be good to define if this is within the region, outside of the region, or something else), and on the other, to those who can use the information within the region to make a difference to policy and programs (whether other researchers, health practitioners, policy makers, journalists, etc.).
- How was it established what was of regional or local relevance? To what extent are these areas of relevance expected or not? Are these based on burden of disease, health system challenges, or some other kind of criteria?

Answer: We thank the reviewer for the comments which helped us in revising all sections of the manuscript. We now clearly describe how visibility and impact were measured. Also, we have condensed the discussion and outlined major issues. All changes are underlined and specific comments are addressed below. We hope we have corrected all language mistakes and improved the language style.

Comment #2
Compulsory and essential revisions
Introduction:
1. Please clarify logic in this sentence:
“We used the availability of the World Health Organization (WHO) regional indexes of health materials to study journals in the Eastern Mediterranean, the region where current social and political changes across the countries [13] provide local health information with global relevance.”

Answer: This sentence is now rewritten for clarity (page #3) and explained in the context of the comment #3.

Comment#3
2. Kindly connect the assessment proposed and the analysis conducted, more clearly, perhaps framed as objectives of the study. “To assess the presence of health-related research from the Eastern Mediterranean in the global scientific community, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of indexing of IMEMR journals in major bibliographical databases, citations to published items in these journals in major global citation databases Web of Science and SCOPUS [16], and adherence to editorial and publishing standards in these journals [17].”

Answer: This part of the Introduction is now rewritten for clarity (page #3).

Comment #4
Methods:
3. To what extent did indexing and citation analysis concur or disagree, as noted in the sentences below?

“Indexing and citation analysis was performed by one of the authors (AU) and independently checked by another (AM); disagreements were discussed and resolved to reach consensus. The assessment of publication standards was performed by one of the authors who had access to journals in the WHO EMRO library (NC). The data from the checklists were entered in a database and independently verified by another author (AM) and all inconsistencies were discussed to reach consensus.”

Answer: The indexing and citations cannot overlap as they are different indices (of visibility and impact). This section is now rewritten to clarify how disagreements about indexing OR citations were handled (page #4).

Comment #5
4. What are the limitations in the results, and how do these influence the interpretation of the results, given the citation analysis was limited to 172 journals with table of contents, less than half of the 419 journals listed in IMEMR. Or that only the first author’s name was used?

Later on page 10 in the manuscript, the limitation is noted, yet not clear on what this implies. “As most of the missing data were from small, local journals, the results presented may be an overestimation of the full IMEMR and present only the visibility of the higher-quality journals in IMEMR.”

Answer: This issue is now addressed in the Methods section (page #4 and 5). As IMEMR often had interrupted indexing or significant delay, we could not use the database as a source, but only print issues available, as citations to individual articles of journals that are not index in citation databases can be searches only by the names of authors (usually the first author). For this it is necessary to have tables of contents of the journals. Web sites of the journals were also not always reliable and we could not use them for the analysis.

Comment #6
5. In terms of being able to reproduce the methods used, for example in 2 years, is there any more information on the methods, given the following sentence: “Because of problems in indexing of Arabic names, other bibliographical items, such as journal name and words from the title were used in many cases.”
Answer: We have now rewritten this section for clarification: we used the name of the first author in the initial search, and if the search retrieved more items, we narrowed the search by using the journal title and/or article title (page #5).

Comment #7

Results
6. The sections starting on page 7 – page 9 would benefit from clearer presentation of the results, starting with the most important and then adding the details. One approach is to refer to the tables for greater detail, e.g. focus the reporting of results in the areas that are significant to the three assessment areas.

Answer: This section was rewritten for clarity and ordered by importance (pages #6 and 7). As our study generated a large amount of data, it was not always easy to synthesize and condense them in a small number of tables. This is the reason why some results are emphasized in the text, and comparisons are presented in tables.

Comment #8

Discussion
7. It is unclear if the purpose was to determine the visibility of journals within the country and region – given the citations to the Guindon et al., and Lavis et al. – or to the global (outside of the region?) research community. If both, it would be useful to address each issue separately. For example, the following statement might be good for the global visibility, at the potential detriment of regional or country visibility: “Publishing in the English language (80% of the journals) certainly contribute to more effective communication of research to the global scientific community.”

Answer: This part of the discussion section was rewritten to clarify the issues of local importance and global outreach (page #9 and 10).

Comment #9

8. Some of the text at the end of page 10 and beginning of page 11 may be more suited for the methods section. Suggest to focus on the essentials. The discussion section would benefit from being more concise, and structured along the lines of the study’s objectives.

Answer: This part of the Discussion section was condensed to illustrate the most important limitations and problems in identifying Eastern Mediterranean journals and their articles in databases (pages #10 and 11).

Comment #10

9. Given the sentence below, it would be good to list what are the geographical and cultural specificities of journals for the Eastern Med. Region, covering 22 countries that have different development levels, health challenges, and with several different languages.

“At the international level, producers of indexing databases should be aware of the geographical and cultural specificities of journals they receive and formulate their own standards for indexing specific terms.”

Answer: This is now addressed in the Discussion section, pages #11 to 12.