Reviewer’s report

Title: The feasibility of gathering opinion leader data for a tailored implementation intervention in a secondary healthcare setting: a comparison of response rates to alternative data collection techniques

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Reviewer: Reza Yousefi-Nooraie

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Major compulsory revisions:

There is a conceptual inaccuracy in how the authors outlined the study objectives, defined the study arms, and subsequently interpreted the findings. Social network analysis is a perspective to understand the interpersonal relationships in communities. In social network analysis, the social relations could be measured by a variety of techniques, including surveys. Both techniques that are compared in this study are two sociometric methods to identify social networks. In other words, this study is not about comparing social network analysis with surveys, but about comparing the feasibility of measuring two alternative definitions of social relations in “name generator” surveys. One questionnaire collected information about “advice-seeking” ties among actors, and the other asked about “perceived influence”.

The authors assumed that the “perceived influence” social ties should be less burdensome to the respondents to retrieve from memory than the “advice seeking” ties. This assumption is questionable, because notion of social influence is a more conceptually complex construct compared to advice-seeking that refers to daily interactions. Moreover, the association between these two social network types and the concept of opinion leadership is not discussed in the manuscript.

The other difference between the two techniques is the application of “name interpreters” in the network analysis questionnaire. In the detailed questionnaire, in addition to enlisting the names of the peers with whom they discussed, the respondents scored the frequency of interactions with the alters, as a surrogate for the strength of social ties. But the brief questionnaire was a simple open-ended name generator, in which the respondents only enlisted some names. Although it is not mentioned anywhere how the name interpreters were used in the analysis.

The authors observed a higher list size in the group who answered to the detailed questionnaire compared to the brief one. This could be explained by the fact that in the detailed questionnaire the respondent was explicitly expected to provide four separate names, but the brief questionnaire only provided a space for all names that the respondent would like to provide.
Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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