Author's response to reviews

Title: Did we describe what you meant? Findings and methodological discussion of an empirical validation study for a systematic review of reasons

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear reviewers,

Dear editors,

we are very thankful again for the constructive reviews:

**Minor essential revisions**

**Reviewer:** “Spelling mistake: Line 95 (methods section, second line) – ‘were’ should be ‘where’?”

**Author’s response:** We corrected this.

**Discretionary revisions**

**Reviewer:** “The discussion still does not make enough of the distinction between the a) findings of the study with regard to the study’s actual results, and b) the findings of the study with regard to the limitations of the methodology used. Lines 217-218 state that the discussion questions are ‘relevant not only to the particular review of reasons assess in this study, but also for further comparable studies’. This is the distinction I refer to, and I think the difference between these two things should be explicitly clear throughout the discussion. Unfortunately, however, the four discussion points are not split into these two points. Point 1 seems clearly relevant to the first point, 2) to both, and points 3) and 4) to the second. I think the whole discussion should be cleaved in two to make this very clear. […]”

**Author’s response:** We inserted three new subheadings in the background section in order to make this difference a bit more perceptible. Also, we changed the text at the end of the background section as following: “Owing to the low response rate and the inherent methodological challenges we found in the course of this first validation study of reason-codings, our discussion focuses on these issues – not only in regard to our study, but also with a view to future validation studies of SRRs” (p. 6).

Furthermore, we inserted a new introductory sentence in the method section (“This section describes the method used in conducting the validation study”, p. 6), as well as another introductory sentence in the results section (“In this section, we present the results of the validation study”, p. 8).

In the discussion section, a new subheading “Validation study and open methodological questions” (p. 11) was included, and the section now begins with: “The results above present the findings of a first attempt to validate the core results of an SRR (published elsewhere) by means of a structured author check.” The first subchapter ends with: “Questions 1) and 2) are crucial to the particular review of reasons assessed in the validation study. All questions are relevant to further similar studies, however, and for that reason, we want to focus on these aspects in the following subsections” (p. 12).

Finally, the conclusion sections ends now with: “Even though the response rate was low, this validation study gave some validity to the SRR about PTA, and triggered methodological
reflection about such validation studies in general. Further means of providing evaluation and validation of SRRs should be sought” (p. 18-19).

Reviewer: “The section on epistemological authority/interpretation is a good addition and this discussion/problem is worth acknowledging, but it probably needs its own subsection to really mark it out. It may be worth having this discussion upfront in the background section, so that it’s clear to the reader that the focus of this paper isn’t on this wider epistemological problem - I worry that it may be distracting if it’s presented in the discussion section like this, as it doesn’t constitute a major part of the discussion.”

Author’s response: We integrated this section as proposed into the background section.

Reviewer: “Regarding this discussion, could you detail what would constitute an ‘outlandish’ interpretation of a coding, so that your method would be a bit more accountable/tractable?”

Author’s response: We inserted a short remark on p. 18: “[…] when the interpretation seemed too implausible to them (e.g. not plausible on logical or hermeneutical grounds against the backdrop of the argumentation given in the paper)".

Reviewer: “The sentence ‘…worked out what their papers actually say’ is a bit unusual as it suggests that the authors don’t know what their papers say. You might want to change it to ‘and re-familiarise themselves with what their papers actually say’.”

Author’s response: We changed the wording accordingly (also in table 4).

Reviewer: “Minor issues not for publication – Line 281 – subheading ‘validness of the analysed SSR’ – should be “validity”, not “validness”? line 247 (section: Reasons for a coding to be deemed incorrect)– the tenses in this sentence don’t quite match. This could probably be sorted out by changing ‘worked’ to ‘work’ (but see point 4 above for another suggested change to this sentence) Line 266 – (same subheading as before) – ‘best one can pragmatically do is trying’ should be ‘try’. Line 279 (just before subheading ‘validness of the analysed SRR’) – ‘the question if’ should be ‘the question of whether”

Author’s response: We corrected the said issues. Also, the manuscript was again proof-read by a native speaker.

Author’s remark: We altered some details in the abstract on the basis of the revision.