Reviewer’s report

Title: Effects of pre-notification, invitation length, questionnaire length and reminder on participation rate: a quasi-randomised controlled trial

Version: 0 Date: 30 Aug 2017

Reviewer: Lila Finney Rutten

Reviewer's report:

While the study reported has potential to contribute to the evidence base around increasing response rates to surveys, in its current form, this manuscript is not suitable for publication. A summary below of issues to be addressed to strengthen the manuscript is offered.

1. The literature review appears somewhat dated. An effort to include more recent literature around survey response rates would strengthen the rational. This is particularly important within the rapidly evolving communication landscape, which has an evolving impact on survey response rates.

2. Given the survey under consideration was a web survey, it would be useful to describe more fully the known evidence related to web surveys. The current introduction, while inclusive of a couple of references regarding web surveys, is largely focused on mailed surveys.

3. Consider offering up your study as an incremental contribution to the literature within a rapidly changing field rather than filling a gap (e.g. "Given the lack of methodological studies looking at invitation and survey design factors, and their impact on participation in more complex settings...." Your work builds on considerable prior research, which should not be dismissed or overlooked.

4. The Methods section is challenging to follow. Throughout the methods and results I was somewhat unclear as to whether your study was embedded in the trial or in the pilot study. I did not reach clarity on this until the discussion section. It would be helpful to discuss the pilot and the trial separately and explicitly state that your experiment was embedded in the pilot.

5. It is unclear whether participants were informed of the number of items in the web questionnaire or had any other indication of the length of the survey upon initially deciding whether to participate or not. If this information was included in the cover letter...
or conveyed at the outset of the survey itself, that should be described. If the information was not readily available, that is a serious limitation that should be (at a minimum) discussed.

6. The discussion section does not provide a clear message of generalizable new information. Consider the same approach that I suggested for your introduction and highlight the need for continued and ongoing studies of the impact of factors known to influence response rates in the context of a rapidly evolving communication landscape with implications for reaching and engaging populations in research.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published
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