Author’s response to reviews

Title: Nursing and midwifery research activity in Arab countries from 1950 to 2017

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Reviewer reports:
Peter Kokol (Reviewer 1):

The paper is well written, and one of the first which analyse the nursing and midwifery research literature production in nursing in Arab countries, but it has some limitations. The use of bibliometric methods is valid however search strategy could be extended with more nursing/midwifery related keywords and subject focused search - nursing is a subject category in Scopus.

Response: The search strategy implemented in the current study was validated (Supplement 1) and showed to have high validity. Nursing subject area was part of the search strategy

The use of VOSViewer and its short description should be added to the Methodology section, with some details of how it has been used - did the authors use default parameters, did they omit common words, how did they obtain most frequent keywords.

Response: See revised methodology lines 153 - 161

I would suggest to omit country names from the Figure 1 and to perform thematic analysis to name the five emerged clusters.

Response: omitting country name created no thematic clusters, Therefore, the map was kept as is.

Authors indicated that the study could support funding bodies, but they did not analyse funding
information which can be found in Scopus.

Response: Please see lines 176 - 177

The implications to the health service research and practice should be made more explicit and limitations and strength of the study made more evident.

Response: see lines 297 - 326

Reviewer 2 (Reviewer 2):

REVIEWER COMMENTS FROM REPORT: This is a comprehensive study of nursing research in Arab nations. The authors appear to have performed a thorough study. I only have a few questions (1) I am slightly dubious about why the authors publish the names of the most prolific researchers; this seems likely to lead to some controversy, and it does make me wonder about potential political implications of this study;

Response: The table for top active authors was used as a validation tool and not to show the most prolific authors. Therefore, the table was moved to supplement and was not included as a result.

(2) In the Discussion, one reason that is offered for the upswing in the number of papers is increased international collaboration, but this is not per se a reason for increase and doesn't answer the question as to WHY there would be more international collaboration that would increase research collaborations.

Response: Please see revised lines 248 - 261

I think the conclusions in both the Abstract and the overall paper are a little skewed. The conclusion in the Abstract states that research in Arab nations is in its infancy, which is hard to assess without a comparator. Indeed in several places, the authors say things like "relatively...", but relative to what? Which countries are they comparing to? The overall Conclusion needs some work. In contrast to the rest of the paper, the English is weak, and it reads more like a list of recommendations than a conclusion based on what went before. I would also like to see some references/examples of, specifically, the authors' claim that nursing research improves practice. This is stated as a given, but in theory at least, the nursing profession could follow evidence-based guidelines and still provide good care without actually performing the research themselves.

Response: Please see conclusions in the abstract and conclusion of the manuscript

Aamir Raoof Memon (Reviewer 3):

Dear authors, I read your manuscript "Nursing and midwifery research activity in Arab countries (1950 - 2017)", with great interest. The manuscripts has some very good points, however, there are some areas that need to be strengthened. Please find my suggestions below:

Abstract:
Line 35: Methodology: Expand this part and include more information to it.
Response: Done. See revised abstract

Introduction:
Line 67-70: This part needs rephrasing to be more comprehensible.
Response: Done. See revised introduction

Line 70-72: Instead of reference #9 and 10, authors should include:
Response: Done.

Line 74-76: In this paragraph, add some historical aspect of the nursing and midwifery research.

Line 88-93: Seems like the authors are stretching it, this part needs to be reduced.
Response: Done. Revised and reduced

Methods (indicators should be mentioned as paragraphs rather than using the bullet points)
Line 97: Give details of the database (Scopus) used.
Response: Done. Indicators were written as paragraphs with more details

Line 101: One of the major problems with Scopus is that its records only go back to 1966 (see Azer et al below). How was this issue addressed in the current paper?
This is true regarding citation analysis and NOT research output. Please double check Azer et al.

Line 103-106: Authors should either mention the names of the 22 countries or include a reference to this point.
Response: Done.

Line 106-108: Why did not the authors use this classification? Please add a relevant reference.

Line 109: "The field of nursing was defined as……" is it a typo? Please rewrite this clearly.
Response: Done. Corrected

Line 113: "nursing-related keyword in the title and at least one of…” should be revised as "nursing-related keyword in the title, with at least one of…”
Response: Done. Corrected
Line 114: "include nursing, nurse, midwife, midwives,….." Please enclose these words in an inverted comma
Response: Done. Corrected

Line 115: What was the starting month? When was the search performed? Was it done on a single day or many?
Response: Done. See line 128 - 129

Line 118: Authors have cited all the papers published by them; they should cite the work of others too.
Response: Done. Corrected

Line 123: Is "X.Y." a typo? Should it be "X, Y"?
Response: Done. Corrected

Line 125: "Interclass correlation coefficient" or "Intraclass"?
Response: Interclass is the correct term here

Line 126: The cited papers did not clearly report details of the ICC that the authors used, please specify.
Response: The ICC used here was developed by the authors. The ICC is a statistical test available in SPSS

Line 127: The ICC is represented like 95% or 0.95? Please correct this.
Response: We used the percentage. Corrected

Line 129: Discuss whether inter-rater reliability was measured or not? If no, why?
Response: No need for such test because two investigators checked the data for validity and whenever disagreement was present, the lead author made the final judgment. Lines 142 – 143.

Line 135: If there was a formula used for any of the indicators, authors should explicitly mention it here.
Response: No formulas were used except for dividing research output over GDP (line 149). All indicators were extracted from Scopus immediately

Line 151: What about the size of the circle? Authors should add details about it.
Response: See line 146 - 157

Line 157: Why did not authors use the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) for ranking journals?
JCR is not inclusive of all journals in Scopus and that is why we used the indicator (SCImago J. Ranking) because it is inclusive of all journals indexed in Scopus.

Results:
Line 164: This should be reported as a Table instead or should be merged with the previous sub-section i.e. Research output.
Response: merged

Line 167: conference papers were full-length papers or abstracts? Please explain the 'unknown type'
and why did it happen?
Response: Conf papers are full length papers. Undefined are papers that were not classified by Scopus at the time of analysis but will be classified with time.

Line 168-170: Probably there is an error in the calculation. The total number of papers as it appears here is 2969 and the percentage is 101.1%?
Response: No error. There is a slight overlap, which made the total higher than 100%

Line 177: Authors should mention the color of fifth cluster.
Response: see line 190 - 191

Line 180: 20107 should be changed to 20,107.
Response: see line 193

Line 209: Expand this section as the line for UK, Australia and other Arab countries is also important. Also, mention the link strength values here.
Response: See lines 221 - 224

Line 219: Did authors of the current manuscript exclude self-citations while ranking authors? If not, it should be explicitly reported. How was the issue of multiple author affiliations dealt with, if it occurred.
Response: see line 163. None of the active authors had multiple affiliations

Line 231: Mention the name of the university in italics.
Response: Done. Corrected. See lines 237 - 245

Discussion:
Line 236: Instead of writing this, authors should use a broad statement about the findings of the current study.
Response: Done. Corrected. See lines 247 - 248

Line 252: Relatively low as compared to what?
Line 263-265: How? Please expand this part and substantiate it with appropriate reference(s).
Line 265-266: Why? Please expand this part and substantiate it with appropriate reference(s).
Line 266-267: Why? Please expand this part and substantiate it with appropriate reference(s).
Line 269-271: This sentence does not make sense here. Authors are suggested to explain and strengthen this complete paragraph.
Line 274: the term "neglected" should be enclosed into inverted comma
Line 278-281: This part should be re-written clearly.
Line 281: 1900 should be 1900s and "in Jordan is considered…" should be changed to "in Jordan, it is considered…"

Response: the whole part was re-written, corrected, and strengthened by new references

Line 282-284: Did this conflict have any negative effects overall such as brain drain etc.?
Response: I do not think so given that Jordan, Lebanon, and KSA did not have civil wars since more than 20 years.
Strengths and limitations of the study should be written in a separate paragraph. Authors should also consider mentioning other limitations discussed earlier in my comments. 
Response: Please see line 296 and the paragraph pertaining to limitation

"countries is in the rise and..." should be changed to "countries is on rise and..."
Response: Please see line 307

"topic" should be corrected to "topics" and "their role" should be explicitly written as to whose role?
Response: Please see line 316 - 317

Journal's requirements:
Other abbreviations used in the manuscript should also be mentioned.
Response: Done. See line 324

Authors should mention these details in the methods section of the manuscript as well.
Response: Done. See line 128 - 130

One of the authors of the current manuscript is one of the top authors in nursing (according to the findings of this study). This should be disclosed and authors should disclose his/her influence on the study findings.
Response: Done. See lines 344 - 348

Please see this paper for more details:

References:
Name of the journal in all references (where applicable) should be abbreviated according to the journal's (BMC HSR) guidelines.
Done

Tables
Table 5: Authors should mention details about the SMJ in the text of the manuscript, as this journal, apart from the Jordan Medical Journal, is one of the top journals publishing papers from nursing sciences.
See lines 234 - 235
Reviewer: Ibrahim S. Al-Busaidi

Reviewer's report:

Comments:

Abstract:
1. Results section: Does the reported number of authors (i.e., 10,573) represent the number of 'unique' or 'total' authors?
Response: It represents total number of authors. See line 43

Background:
Page 3, Lines 67-701; The following statement "Despite that the number of qualified nursing staff in healthcare facilities is extremely important in providing adequate healthcare services, the research output remains the true indicator of the progress in nursing profession and the quality of healthcare services in any country." should be referenced. Please provide reference(s) that support this statement or paraphrase the sentence to better convey your message.
Response: The whole paragraph was rephrased. See lines 63 - 70

2. Page 3, Lines 71-72; It seems excessive using multiple references [6-10] to support the definition and cite the common use of bibliometric studies.
Response: references were changed

3. Page 3, Lines 75-76; Please reference this statement "Literature review indicated that no bibliometric analysis of nursing and midwifery research in Arab countries had been published."
Response: the sentence was rephrased. Please see line 80

4. Page 4, Lines 84-93; This part (from "This study was carried out using .... extent of research evidence." is related to the methods and should be moved from the Methods section. It could be argued that these sentences do not provide additional relevant information, and thus can be removed from the manuscript.
Response: the sentences were removed

5. The introduction is general and broad. It needs to be expanded with points relevant to the main purpose of the paper. Important studies that examined nursing and midwifery research activity outside of the Arab World should be cited.
Response: Please see lines 73 - 80

Search strategy, Page 4, Line 103: Please reference this sentence. In addition, it would be prudent to report the 22 Arab countries which are included in the study (perhaps at the end of the manuscript).
Response: Please see lines 109 - 117

2. Search strategy, Page 5, Lines 112-115: Please clearly state the basis for choosing the specific 'nursing-related keywords' reported in the manuscript.
3. The validity of the search strategy, Page 5, Line 128: The authors reported the interclass correlation as '0.97%'. This is clearly a typographical error, which should be corrected.  
Response: corrected. See line 143

4. The validity of the search strategy, Page 6, Line 129-131: Please report the number of false positive studies/abstracts.  
Response: see line 131

Response: see lines 166 - 173

Results
Research output, Page 7, Lines 161-162: Please state the 'exact' number of nursing and midwifery publications produced worldwide instead an approximate figure.  
Response: see line 177

The ten most cited documents, Page 8, Line 185: Please correct the sentence to "The 10 most cited articles were published … "  
Response: corrected. See line 201

I suggest reporting the mean/median number of authors (whatever is more suitable) and range of authors per document as this gives an indication of the degree collaboration  
Response: Please see line 238 - 239

Discussion
This section should be re-written and statements ought to be supported by evidence/references.

1. Page 11, Lines, 263-264: Please provide supporting references to back the claim that the reason behind the low number of RCTs in Arab countries is 'cultural and legal issues.'  
2. Page 11, Lines 265-267: It is difficult to accept these statements as facts unless supported by evidence.  
Response: Please see lines 251 – 266 and lines 276 - 286

3. Page 12, Lines 274: Please mention in full the countries that are part of the 'Arab Gulf' (Oman, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, KSA, and Kuwait). It should be assumed that readers are not familiar with this group of nations that share common socio-demographic and economic characteristics.  
Response: see line 289

4. Page 12, Lines 272-284: Many of the statements reported in this paragraph lack supporting evidence.  
Response: see revised lines 267 - 284

Conclusion
Please differentiate between conclusions drawn from the results and recommendations/implications for future research and clinical practice. It is of utmost importance to highlight the main findings which
include 1) nursing research output has dramatically increased especially over the past five years, 2) despite this, nursing research is still in its infancy, lagging in quantity and quality.

Response: See revised conclusion section line 308

Some of the suggestions/conclusions advanced by the authors are not necessarily informed by the study's results. For example, the sentence (Lines 307-310) "Despite that nursing is an independent and well recognized profession, nursing research in Arab countries need to get other medical professions being involved in nursing research. Such research collaboration with other medical specialties helps in better integration of medical professions as one unit." Is not supported by the data presented in this study.

Response: these sentences were deleted

Tables and Figures:
Nil.