Author’s response to reviews

Title: Research Priority-Setting: Reproductive Health in the occupied Palestinian territory

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Author’s response to reviews:

We would like to thank the reviewers for their supportive comments. We have responded to each comment and the text has been modified accordingly.

Reviewer 1

1. It’s a very interesting article and deals with a very important issue in a country with limited resources

Thank you very much for your comment. It is, in fact, very much needed

2. The results could be better organized in three broad subs-sections based on categorization in terms of 1. priority area i.e. system, community or individual; 2. reproductive health topic i.e. maternal health, adolescent health, menopause, gender based violence etc. and 3. respondents i.e. government staff, gynaecologists, academia etc.

It appears that questions cutting across these categorizations are the ones that constitute a major portion of the top 50 questions.

The results were already categorized in the suggested format. We have added a subtitle for each section to make it clear.

3. Lines 79-80: Introduction section: I wonder if citation alone -either locally or internationally, should be considered as the critical indicator of importance of research topic. If systemic
problems are identified the changes in policies and programmatic interventions may not get reflected in citations but maybe equally critical evidence of importance and use of research on a topic.

We agree with your point. The problem might be in translating evidence into policy and programme change. However, we could not find a local reference supporting such explanation. We have modified the last sentence to make it less judgmental.

4. Line 238 priority setting was in reproductive health (as per topic and findings too). The sentence says priority setting in maternal health. Some such minor corrections are required.

Noted with thanks. We have corrected the sentence.

Reviewer 3

ABSTRACT: The first sentence is not clear ie, page 2 lines 44-45

The sentence has been modified to reflect that research in the Palestinian territory or similar settings should be rationalized and follow national research priority agenda

INTRODUCTION AND METHOD: some grammatical errors

Checked and corrected.

REFERENCES; No 5 does not seem to have any page number. The reference was checked an updated.


Reviewer 4

The authors did a very good job. But the article needs editorial revision as there are some unnecessary repetitions of words. Thank you very much.

The text has been reviewed by a native English speaker and modified accordingly.
Methods
- The authors mentioned there were three phases in the prioritization exercise. However, there is no specific date when these phases of activities were carried out. I recommend the authors to specify when these activities were carried out. No time was mentioned to explain when the study was started and end.

Thanks for drawing our attention to this point. We have added the time-frame for each phase.

Line 32 - 34, the authors mentioned that there were 'do not know' and 'not applicable' options when scoring. It is good if they mentioned how these options were finally scored, that is how they were analyzed. What value was given to these scores? was it 0, 1, or 5?

Thanks, this is really important.

Do not know and not applicable were treated as missing and the valid percent was calculated. That is, the average was based on available scores. This has been clarified in the revised manuscript.

- Results
- The authors listed the top 50 research problems. The reason why 50 was not justified either in the methods or result section

We have added the following sentence:

“The top 50 research question with a total score of 85 + were reported in the results section.”

Discussion
- Line 206 -2020 - the author emphasized on the selection of participants and the whole process of prioritization exercise. This better taken to the method section. The authors compared their exercise process (response rate) with other studies. This is not important. Still it can be taken to the methods section. Generally, most ideas in this section better included in the methods section.

Thank you for your comments. However, we believe that if such exercise is to be repeated in other low and middle-income countries, the researchers might face similar challenges. We thought that reporting the challenges in this study would be useful and relevant in other countries.
We have modified the text to reflect challenges and lessons learned.

- The discussion is shallow. The results are not interpreted and discussed well. For example, service providers and the academia identified different questions. The reason for this should be explained.

We have slightly modified the text. There is not enough literature discussing the reasons for such variations between respondents. A more useful way will be to conduct a focus group discussion with different respondent and try to understand the reason for such variation. However, this is beyond the focus of this paper.