Author’s response to reviews

Title: The Range and Nature of Reproductive Health Research in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: A Scoping Review

Authors:

Aisha Shalash (aashalash@birzeit.edu)
Hasan Al Salman (hasan_alsalman@yahoo.com)
Alaa Hamed (dr.alaa89.ah@gmail.com)
Mai Abu Helo (maiheilo8@gmail.com)
Rula Ghandour (rghandour@birzeit.edu)
Loai Albargouni (lnb6des@daad-alumni.de)
Niveen Abu Rmeileh (nrmeileh@birzeit.edu)

Version: 1 Date: 19 Feb 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

We would like to thank the reviewers for their comments. Below we have addressed most of the comments and responded to the ones that needed clarifications.

Reviewer One Comments

Response

1. The aims are clearly stated with the need for some grammatical revision.

   Grammar was revised.

2. How will the knowledge of subthemes collected through this scoping review advance the field of sexual and reproductive health?

   The area of reproductive health is very wide and includes several subfields. We tried to extract the subthemes that were studied and the discussion we have highlighted the missing subfields that need to be studied. Throughout the paper, we tried to identify gaps in reproductive health research in Palestine either in general or specific fields.
3. While the outcomes are clearly justified, the inclusion criteria each need clear and detailed justification. You mention that the life course is part of the global strategy, but your criteria are for women over the age of 15.

Our inclusion criteria stated in line 115 states participants over the age of 15. We chose over 15 because reproductive age is defined for women as 15-49 and men 15+. Further, the life course was newly introduced approach looking at health care services which includes (pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, the neonatal period, infancy and childhood, adolescence, and into the post-reproductive stage) that focus mostly on the post-reproductive age only.

I will make this clear in the introduction.

4. It is unclear to me what you date limit is. You did not include your search strategy. For repeatability of the study, it is important to include what key search words, MeSH terms, and phrases you used, and the date on which you searched. Did you consult with a health sciences librarian?

Line 104 states that the dates were from conception-June 2017. Meaning no date restriction was placed.

Also, additional file 1 has an example of PubMed search strategy terms.

A health science librarian was not consulted because we do not have one, but the authors are well trained in searching databases.

5. Why did you not choose to search the grey literature? You give two reasons: both that you were interested in published scientific articles and that it was difficult to access, I think that it is best to have one reason and also to mention them the first time you mention grey literature.

Thank you for your comment. We have revised the text in Line 119

6. I would like to see a discussion of the subthemes and how they will contribute to the scientific knowledge and progress of sexual and reproductive health in the Palestinian territory. The conclusion needs to be more consistent with the results and to discuss how the findings will benefit the community.

Thank you for your comment. We have provided a detailed presentation of the results to be useful for all research. We also would like to discuss each of the subthemes. However, we have selected to discuss the most important findings which would have direct effect on the production of new research. Our main discussion points that we thought would inform future research were:

1. The increase in RH research.

2. The type of study, the size of the target population are limited. Very few clinical research or implementation research.
3. Most studied areas: Maternal health care is the most studied topic but with limited focus on describing the situation. Quality and system research were lacking.

4. Least studies areas: Adolescents sexual and reproductive health and menopause topics were least studied.

5. Conducted research is not matching with health system priority and need.

7. In Table 2, I don't think that the region of Journal Article section is necessary as it is not meaningful to most people. If you are going to leave it, explain why it is important.

Thank you, it was a wrong labelling. The region refers to the study population covered in the study.

8. Please consider inserting an appendix with a table including the names of the papers, the author, and the themes, or something of that nature.

Additional file 2 includes all papers included in the review with year, journal, author, title, and type of study.

9. This is a lot of work. However, your paper fails to be convincing that anything meaningful came out of this. I would like to see your discussion broken up into sections by themes and to there, discuss not just the findings but how you see your work impacting the field of sexual and reproductive health and the impact of the work that has been done and the trajectory of that work. In your conclusion, convince me of the innovation of your paper.

We have revised the discussion based on the main points mentioned above. We hope it is clearer and convincing.

Reviewer 2 Comments

1. As a scoping review, this manuscript mapped well the range and nature of reproductive health research in the occupied Palestinian territory among the defined population. Based on their inclusion criteria (Participants over the age of 15 years), more caution in extrapolating the result to population of adolescents is suggested.

Thank you very much for your comments. We tried to be inclusive in our search. However, one of our finding is the limited number of articles addressing adolescent’s reproductive health.

We have modified the methods and added that age of participants started at 15 because reproductive age for females and males start at the age of 15.

2. I expected to read more about the background in introduction.
Thank you very much. It was a little bit challenging to write the background to cover such a wide range of topics.

We have revised the introduction to include a strong background to help clarify the purpose of the paper.

3. Also, some concepts need more clarity, such as in line 84: who are the stakeholders? Or in line 95: What percent of male/female death is caused by reproductive issues? There are few errors, such as in line 139: the mentioned numbers do not add up to 29. After addressing these issues, I would recommend giving a positive consideration to this article.

We have revised the text so that concepts have been cleared.

Numbers have been checked so they add up.