Reviewer’s report

Title: Gender-based violence among female youths in educational institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic review and Meta-analyses

Version: 1 Date: 05 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Rami Al-Rifai

Reviewer's report:

Editorial Office
Systematic Reviews

Dear Editorial Office,

Thank you for approaching me to re-review the submitted manuscript titled "Gender-based violence among female youths in educational institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic review and meta-analyses" with a reference manuscript ID: SYSR-D-18-00181R1

Please find below my raised points and concerns, for each section of the manuscript, that would rather improve the clarity and readability of the submitted manuscript.

Comments to authors

General comment.

I am not an expert in gender-based violence and its different types. All my comments and suggestions will be related to the methodology of conducting and presenting a systematic review and meta-analysis study following established guidelines to ensure producing a high quality review and evidence-based findings.
Specific comments:

Abstract:

Background:

- Insert a space "violence according"

Method:

- Insert a space "14 and".
- Omit the space in "data bases".
- Cochran's Q (I²) is different from Squared-I (I²). Please clarify how the heterogeneity between the studies was exactly assessed.

Results:

- Replace "with meta-analysis" with "pooled prevalence of". I would suggest to focus on reporting the "pooled prevalence" while reporting the range in brackets. For instance, the pooled prevalence of gender-based violence estimated at 53.0% [95% CI 40.0%-66.0%] (range: 42.30% in Nigeria to 67.70% in Ethiopia).

Conclusions:

- Repeated results! Please focus on providing an overall conclusion of evidence-based public health implication to direct policy makers.

Main body

Introduction:
Consider fine details such as missing spaces between words, across the whole text.

Methods:

- Parag #1, double check the correctness of the provided registration number in PROSEPRO. No records!!
- Replace "was written" with "followed" in "This systematic review was written based on the PRISMA guidelines".

Information sources:

- Please specify the exact databases that were searched.
- "Contacting experts, and searching the reference lists of articles were methods used to identify the studies" needs to be re-written (poor English!). Please elaborate more on which reference lists where searched. Did you search all the reference lists of all full-text screened studies or only reference lists of eligible studies included in your review?

Search strategy:

- The search period was from 22-29thJune 2017. Is this the search period of databases or the period when the research team searched the databases, need clarification?
- Did you have consider consulting a librarian in designing search strategy and searching the databases?.

Main data items:

- Add that you also extracted the number of those sampled and those who were with GBV, as this is very necessary for the meta-analyse.
- Provide a full list of items (variables) that had been extracted as a supplementary table.
- Please elaborate more on which quantitative estimate for the GBV was extracted from each eligible study. In a sense, if a study, for example, reported overall all GBV prevalence as well as age-stratified or school-grade stratified GBV prevalence, which data was extracted and used in meta-analyses, was it the overall or the stratified? If stratified, what was your prioritization algorithm/scheme to extract stratified data?? And why?.
Data synthesis:

- Please elaborate more on your additional analyses (sensitivity and meta-regression analyses), if not why??

Results:

- "The majority(n=15) of studies were categorized as moderate quality (Table 2)". Table 2 presents the meta-regression not the quality of the assessed studies??

Table 1:

- Please edit your table contents to be consistent in removing/adding spaces, decimal points…etc.

Table 2:

- No information provided in the methods sections about the conducted "meta-regression"…??
- Title should be more concise.
- Elaborate more on the included variables in the meta-regression. I recommend to use binary variables.
- Present meta-regression in the form of "Odds ratio" to quantify the magnitude of heterogeneity between the measured characteristics.

Table 3 + 4:

- No information provided in the methods sections about the conducted "Subgroup analyses"…??

Discussion:

- No specific comments other than addressing typos and extra/missing spaces.
Figure 1:

- How many studies were found from searching reference lists?

Forest plots (Figures 2-5):

- I would suggest present data raised to power 2 in order not to confuse reader that the prevalence is <100.
- Please provide footnote for each figure explains the meaning the figures contents. For example, the box and its size, the diamond and its width.

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**Declaration of competing interests**

Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

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Were you mentored through this peer review?

No