Reviewer’s report

Title: Reporting in the abstracts presented at the 5th AfriNEAD (African Network for Evidenceto- Action in Disability) Conference in Ghana

Version: 1 Date: 19 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Anke Rohwer

Reviewer's report:

This manuscript describes reporting of abstracts submitted to the AfriNEAD conference in 2017. The authors have addressed many of my previous comments, however, I have a few remaining/additional comments (listed below). The manuscript also needs editing for language and grammar, which I have not addressed below.

1. When describing the importance of having well reported abstracts, authors mention limited time and resources of clinicians (paragraph 1) and how conference delegates make decisions about which sessions to attend (paragraph 2). However, I think one of the most important reasons is missing: Some studies are never published as full journal articles and the only published record of a study might be the abstract in the conference proceedings.

2. Linked to this, I think the first sentence of the 2nd paragraph should be rephrased, as not all studies presented at conferences will be published as full journal articles.

3. The last sentence of the 2nd paragraph of the introduction is unclear. How will poor reporting impact on the findings and conclusions of an abstract?

4. Authors did take my previous comments about the term 'reporting gaps' into consideration and changed it to 'gaps in reporting'. However, I still believe the term is not fitting, as it actually describes the findings of the study i.e. authors found gaps in reporting of conference abstracts. I strongly suggest to omit the phrase 'gaps in reporting' when discussing reporting of abstracts in the introduction, methods and results section. Instead, authors can just refer to 'reporting of conference abstracts' or when they want to describe poor reporting, refer to incomplete/inadequate/poor reporting.

5. I therefore suggest that the aim of the study should be: to assess reporting of abstracts presented at the 5th AfriNEAD conference.

6. In terms of the aims, authors report that they assessed whether the abstracts met "standards of reporting". Please introduce these standards in the introduction.

7. The last sentence of the introduction, linked to the aims of the study, (line 55-58) does not seem to fit here - It reports on how the findings may be used and I think this is something that needs to be addressed in the discussion.
8. I suggest to move the description of AfriNead to the introduction

9. Inclusion criteria: It is still not clear whether abstracts were only included if they had a structured format (i.e. Background, Methods, Results, Conclusion).

10. Please clarify the exclusion criteria: I am unsure what 'presented as narration' means. Does this refer to abstracts that did not have a structured format? What were the requirements to submit an abstract? Could it be either structured or unstructured?

11. Although authors changed the study design to 'descriptive', they still refer to the study as a 'review' throughout the manuscript. Please double check - this should be changed to 'study' throughout

12. Authors report selection of abstracts at the end of the paragraph on data extraction. However, as selection of abstracts would have occurred before data extraction, I suggest to move this description to a separate section 'selection of abstracts'. Please also add how you accessed the abstracts - did you review printed or electronic conference proceedings?

13. In terms of data extraction, it is still not clear what one would expect from a well reported abstract. Please add a table/box with the items that you considered relevant in terms of adequate reporting and that you assessed as part of data extraction (reporting standards).

14. Please add a reference to the data extraction form in the appendix.

15. Please add the total number of included abstracts to the text in the results section (first paragraph).

16. Throughout the results section, where you report percentages, please add the absolute numbers in brackets, as the denominator varies for the percentages.

17. Under 'Characteristics of included abstracts' authors report that 'more than half of all the included abstracts were conducted in Ghana'. It is not clear whether this refers to the study reported in the abstract (was the study conducted in Ghana?) or the origin of the authors. Please rephrase for clarity.

18. Add a reference to table 5, which is a summary of the methods used in included abstracts.

19. Please review subheadings. As per my earlier comments, I suggest to omit 'gaps in reporting' and just refer to it as e.g.: Reporting of methods, reporting of findings etc.

20. I am not sure that Figure 2 adds much value, as all the information is already in the table. Consider removing it.

21. In the discussion, the second sentence (p6, line 58) is not relevant - one would not expect authors to search peer reviewed articles for this type of study.
22. Furthermore, the study aimed to assess reporting of abstracts, therefore it would not be expected to access the full manuscript (and as per my previous comment, conference abstracts are not always published as full journal papers). Therefore I don't think this is a limitation.

23. I do think authors need to elaborate on the actual limitations of the study e.g. they only included abstracts from one of the AfriNead conferences (small sample size). AfriNEAD is probably only one of the conferences in the field of disability and the question is whether this sample is representative of disability research in general.

24. The discussion section is still mainly a summary of the results and repetition of what has already been reported in the introduction. I suggest to highlight the real value of having well reported abstracts as part of the broader picture in terms of disability research and practice. How do these results compare to similar assessments of conference abstracts (in other fields)? What are the implications for scientific committees of conferences (and specifically for AfriNEAD) and delegates that submit abstracts? Etc.

25. Some of the above is briefly reported in the conclusion, but I do think it would be better placed and discussed in the discussion section.

26. In Table 1, does the 'Participant group' refer to the participants of the study reported in the abstract?

27. Why is the total of the 'participant group' 53 and not 54?

28. Suggest to rephrase 'Geographical setting' to 'Geographical setting of study' for clarity.

29. Why were countries listed as part of 'other settings' grouped together?

30. Table 2: Is 'case study' a 'case report'?

31. Table 3: Can one combine the two variables called 'Reporting association' and the two called 'Reporting outcome'?

32. Furthermore, it is not clear what 'Reporting outcome' refers to. Is this whether abstracts reported the results of the primary outcome?

33. I think it would be interesting and useful to know the topics of the included abstracts. Can you add these to table 5, that lists all the abstracts?

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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