Reviewer’s report

Title: Librarians as methodological peer reviewers for systematic reviews: results of an online survey

Version: 0 Date: 09 May 2019

Reviewer: Ksenija Bazdaric

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

I have read your manuscript with great interest. Although the study has several methodological limitations (some of them are mentioned) I think it is worth publishing after major revisions. You may find my comments below. My major objection is that the study is a pilot study (non-representative sample) and that the instrument is not validated. I would be happy to peer review the revised version.

Title:

Librarians as methodological peer reviewers for systematic reviews: results of a survey

- What kind of survey? Cross sectional, a pilot? - please change title accordingly

Keywords: are they listed in any order?

Abstract:

Correct it accordingly after revising the manuscript.

Introduction

The Introduction is logical and sound, leads to the aim of the study.

The EQUATOR network, PRISMA and PRESS have to be introduced as the key concepts.

In the sentence Librarians and informationists with search expertise are uniquely qualified to peer review the methodology …. The word uniquely is confusing. Does it mean that only librarians are qualified or?

After the aim, did you have any hypothesis at the beginning? What were your expectations, could you write them down?
Methods

This section should have subsections: Participants, Questionnaire, Procedure, Statistical analysis, Ethics

Participants:

Describe the participants and the selection of participants, type of the sample. The sample is convenient, as far as I can conclude it is a non-representative snowball sample (To get wide distribution, recipients were encouraged to invite others to respond.) How and why did you choose this sample?

The number of people on the lists is not mentioned. Why did you choose those lists?

A total of 300 respondents completed the survey. - this is a results and belongs to Results section

We were unable to calculate a response rate because respondents were asked to self-identify. - this is the main limitation of this study. You have a convenient sample.

Survey

Describe the survey. Describe the construction in more details, how did you yield with 16 questions. How was the piloting done? How many people were in pilot? Who were they? Was the survey changed after the pilot?

Statistical analysis - did you have any? You state that you have used R but you don't mention tests used. Please describe what measures of tendency have you used for which type of data.

Ethical approval - put the sentence you have already written that there was no need for an approval.

Results:

First of all participants must be described. There were 300 participants (as stated in methods) but in your first sentence in results there are 256, how come? Did you collect any data about their age and gender? If not, please explain why in the discussion and in the limitations.

'how many years have you been a librarian?', the average was 14.1 years, with the range being from seven months to 45 years. - it is clear from this data that the distribution is very wide and possibly not normally distributed. Could you please use the median and percentiles (5,95) instead of average. Or could you test this data with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality and then decide.
When you state Most of the respondents or many librarians did not … it would be nice to state how many in brackets [n(%)].

Report relative frequency (percentages) without decimal places 36.68% = 37% in text.

As q14-15 were the core questions in this article maybe it could be presented as a table or figure.

p. 7, l6-111: We were interested in the types of training for conducting systematic reviews and asked our respondents to identify the types of training in which they had participated. We also invited them to share other methods of training. - delete this text, this belongs to the methods.

Librarian Peer Review Experience

When reporting results in general, please do not repeat the question(s), present the result. As you are native speakers (and I am not) it would be easy for you to formulate something like: Most of the respondents (n=228, 78.4%) did not peer-review a systematic review or metaanalysis manuscript, but if asked….

Explain the abbreviations of journals JAMIA (3), JBI (3), JMLA (3),

p. 7, l 52: Most of the respondents (n=31) knew why they were asked to peer review. - out of 63 this is half, not most and out of 300 it is 1/10.

p.8, l 7: The median number of systematic reviews or metaanalysis manuscripts that any one respondent peer reviewed was four, with the range being anywhere from one to 40 manuscripts. (Q5) - you can calculate and interquartile range also. Please reformulate “with the range being anywhere”.
In order to understand whether librarian peer reviewers were utilizing known standards, the survey included two questions that asked respondents to identify if they used any standards for evaluating both the methods section and search strategy. - to the methods in the explanation of questionnaire construction q6-7: report the total in n and %. In terms of evaluation of manuscripts' methods sections, over half of the respondents (n=41) - so total n was 82.83

The majority (n=24, 55%) had - is it majority or slightly over half? Majority could be more than 75%.

Subsection title Further Analysis has to be deleted and please put an informative title instead

Fisher's exact test can be used only for 2x2 tables. Chi square test cannot be calculated here because there are categories with N<5. You can calculate test of proportions for each line of the table.

Logistical regression model results have to be presented in details. First of all, where the conditions for the regression met in the terms of sample size? Then, Cox &amp; Snell R2 and Nagelkerke R2 has to be presented. And finally, Odds Ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals of the predictor(s).

Please do not use the idiom marginally significant, an insignificant value is insignificant and not interpretable in discussion.

Discussion

L46-57 I would like you to start your discussion with the main finding of your study and to comment it.

The sentences formulated as the literature shows or table shows are to be avoided because nor literature nor tables are alive and able to show anything.

The sentence: We believe that librarians with experience conducting SRs would bring expertise to the peer review process of systematic review manuscript submissions.- I also believe that but this sentence needs to be put into conclusion
We discovered that while many librarians have - It is better to say that many librarians in our study…

Potentially a registry of qualified - librarians could get ORCIDs and make their profiles on Publons for example

I like your suggestions about academic societies to offer some education to librarians in peer review, thank you.

Librarians - and all reviewers - should use these two tools as the gold standard when peer reviewing. - why? Are they the best tools, are they recommended by your societies? librarians can and do serve as invaluable peer reviewers of systematic review manuscripts - this is probably true but you didn't investigate this

Limitations - non-representative sample, small sample, non-validated questionnaire, poor demographic data.

Conclusion - The conclusion has to contain only the results

P 14: l.6-l14 - excellent point for the introduction. The conclusion has to contain only the main results, speculations do not belong here.

Journal editors may not be aware that librarians have this expertise and are willing to take on this role. - this is also true but does not belong into the conclusion

The last paragraph is very interesting but does not belong to the conclusion. Move it into the body text of discussion.

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:

Acceptable

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

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