

Peer Review

Review of: "Approaches for Measuring Socioeconomic Status in Health Studies in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Scoping Review"

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I am a health sciences librarian specializing in evidence synthesis methods, so my comments will be mostly restricted to suggestions for improving your methods, specifically your search strategy.

1. The methods described in your paper deviate significantly from those outlined in your OSF protocol. While scoping review methodology allows for some flexibility and iteration, you should explain any decisions that were made to deviate from your planned method. For example, the final manuscript limits publication dates to 2012–2024, as opposed to no date restriction as indicated in the protocol. I would guess that this was because you discovered there were far too many abstracts to screen without indicating a date limit; if true, that should be described. Another major difference is that the protocol specifies that the focus of the review will be on only validation studies, while there is no mention of this criterion in the final paper. Did you expand your scope after initial searches revealed a lack of validation studies? If so, explain that to your reader, as that is also a useful finding.
2. Your research question does not have to follow the PICO framework; it seems better suited, perhaps, to PCC or Population (Sub-Saharan African countries), Concept (SES), and Context (validation studies or measurement tools).
3. The terms listed under “Population” should be removed from the search, as they do not directly relate to your research question and may erroneously exclude relevant literature. Instead, I would redo the search as follows: (Country terms) AND (SES terms) AND (index or measurement terms).

4. If you find that your search produces too many results without the population terms, I suggest improving search precision by removing extremely broad terms, such as “methods” and “factor,” and replacing them with more specific terms such as “validation,” “instrument,” etc.
5. Was the search in the protocol the one that you ultimately executed? If so, include that complete search for all databases. This can be a supplementary file or appendix.
6. The search in your protocol includes only MeSH terms and title fields. Best practice is to also search abstracts, as an SES term may appear there but not in the title. Each concept in your search should be reflected by a combination of controlled vocabulary terms (MeSH, Emtree, CINAHL Subject Headings) and title/abstract terms. This will help capture literature that is not yet indexed with controlled vocabulary as well as records that have been incorrectly indexed.
7. Follow [PRISMA-S guidelines](#) for reporting your search strategy to ensure your methods are transparent and reproducible.
8. You indicate that guideline reports were included, but grey literature was excluded. Some may consider guideline reports to be grey literature, so explain how and why you made this distinction. Similarly, why did you include editorials but exclude case reports and letters?
9. As a reader, I would prefer to see a complete list of all studies that were included in the review, independent of the comprehensive list of references at the end of the paper, so that one could see all 65 studies that met inclusion criteria without necessitating any cross-referencing between the reference list and Table 3. A single table that includes each of the 65 studies in its own row and shows the extracted variables in corresponding columns would be most useful. This could be a replacement for the existing tables, or an additional file, e.g., CSV. The tables as they exist currently are much too long, and this might be an efficient way to condense the information.
10. It is incorrect to say that scoping reviews have “no data available.” On page 14, you even describe your “robust dataset.” The information that you extracted from the 65 studies is your data. Can you make your data extraction files, or a table as described above, available in OSF?
11. Strengths and Limitations section: the “limitations” that you list are standard characteristics of scoping reviews and therefore are not limitations. I would include here that the date restriction of 2012–2024 likely excluded relevant literature from your analysis.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.