

Peer Review

Review of: "Protocol: A Systematic Review of Multi-Sectoral Coordination during the COVID-19 Pandemic—Practices, Challenges, and Recommendations for Future Preparedness"

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Strengths:

- The protocol clearly identifies its focus on multi-sectoral coordination during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in LMICs such as Kenya.
- Objectives are specific, actionable, and aligned with global public health priorities.
- Adherence to PRISMA-P guidelines ensures transparency and reproducibility.
- Comprehensive risk of bias assessments (using CASP, ROBINS-I, GRADE, and CERQual) enhance the validity of findings.
- The use of robust inclusion and exclusion criteria ensures relevance and methodological rigor.
- The protocol includes a thorough and detailed search strategy with multiple databases and gray literature sources.
- Boolean operators and keyword combinations are explicitly outlined for reproducibility.
- The emphasis on LMICs, particularly Nairobi County, fills a critical research gap and provides context-specific insights that are globally relevant.
- The distinction between qualitative narrative synthesis and quantitative meta-analysis (where feasible) ensures appropriate data integration.

- Subgroup and sensitivity analyses enhance the robustness of findings and provide context-specific recommendations.
- The protocol is ethically sound, with approvals obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and NACOSTI.
- Ethical dissemination strategies, including open-access publication, ensure accessibility and transparency.
- The dissemination strategy effectively targets academic, policy, and public health stakeholders at local, regional, and global levels.

Weaknesses:

- The inclusion of diverse study designs and methodologies may complicate data synthesis and limit the feasibility of quantitative meta-analysis.
- Reliance on publicly available sources and databases might exclude unpublished studies, particularly from LMICs.

Areas for improvement:

- Enhance efforts to identify and include unpublished data or conference proceedings to reduce reliance on publicly available sources.
- Include a strategy for integrating feedback from local stakeholders, especially in LMICs, to contextualize findings and recommendations.
- Consider non-academic dissemination platforms, such as policy briefs or community forums, to engage non-specialist audiences.
- Clearly outline strategies for handling heterogeneity, such as subgroup analyses or sensitivity tests, to enhance interpretability.

Overall outlook:

The protocol is methodologically robust, addressing a significant research gap in multi-sectoral coordination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing the outlined limitations would enhance its comprehensiveness and impact.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.