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Peer Review

# Review of: "Environmental Health Risks, Community Experiences, and Healthcare Access in Oil-Producing Low- and Middle-Income countries: A Scoping Review Protocol"

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Dear Penuel et al.,

Thank you for submitting your manuscript. I recommend substantial revisions to your manuscript. The comments are provided below and are typically focused on the search strategy. Please respond to the comments and revise your manuscript accordingly.

Comments:

The rationale for this scoping review is well constructed. However, the aim of the overarching research question is not sufficiently clear after reviewing the search strategy, and the sub-questions may conflict with it. I advise a major revision to either the research and sub-research questions or the search strategy to ensure the clarity, robustness, and reproducibility of the work.

1. Firstly, please introduce the concept term (first, second, third, and fourth terms) so that it is easy for others to follow.

An example for your search strategy could be (but this is just a guideline)—

First concept term (or concept 1): [oil-related term] AND

Second concept term (or concept 2): ([health risk/outcome related terms] OR

[community/lived experience related terms]) AND

Third concept term (or concept 3): [healthcare-related terms] AND



doi.org/10.32388/LG4Q4J

Fourth concept term (or concept 4): [LMICs].

2. The overarching research question is “What is known from existing literature about the environmental health risks (concept 1), lived experiences (concept 2), health outcomes (concept 1), and healthcare access (concept 3) of people living in localities affected by oil pollution in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) (concept 4)”. If the overarching research question is revised to “What is known about studies that **simultaneously** examine environmental health risks, lived experiences, health outcomes, and healthcare access in oil-polluted LMIC communities”, then the existing restrictive Boolean structure accurately reflects this overarching research question.

The above search strategy would, however, deflate the number of articles retrieved for the overarching research question if the authors imply that such concepts are not necessarily co-occurring within the same study or do not have the mandatory simultaneous coverage, but still sufficiently address the sub-questions.

For example, sub-question 1 is “What environmental health risks and health outcomes have been documented among people living in localities affected by oil pollution in LMICs?”. This sub-question 1 does not include concept 3. Restricting the search strategy for concept 3 by using “AND” would unlikely retrieve articles that do not mention healthcare-related terms but are still relevant to sub-question 1. In other words, if the aim of sub-question 1 is to retrieve all articles related to environmental health risks and health outcomes among people living in localities affected by oil pollution in LMICs, regardless of whether healthcare access, interventions, or policies are studied, the existing Boolean structure would compromise the search.

My preferred approach is to revise the search strategy as follows:

Concept 1: [oil-related terms] AND

Concept 2: ([health risk/outcome related terms] OR [community/lived experience related terms] OR [healthcare-related terms] OR [intervention/policies/framework related terms]) AND

Concept 3: [LMICs]

This revised search strategy will retrieve more articles related to the overall research question and all the listed sub-questions. This structure effectively says, “Retrieve studies about oil pollution in LMICs that address at least one of the domains listed in concept 2 related to the review objectives”.

3. The applied keywords to each concept term may be too restrictive. For example, other oil-related terms, such as hydrocarbons and petrochemicals, are omitted. Other keywords to consider include extraction,

drilling, refining, exploration, production, spill, contamination, leakage, discharge, and degradation. Furthermore, wildcards are not applied to each keyword, though this was mentioned (a full and exhaustive search strategy should be provided in the protocol for peer review, i.e., the provided search strategy is not reproducible). The same comment applies to other concept terms. I recommend using generative AI to scope for relevant keywords.

4. Similarly, concept terms related to health risks or outcomes may be too restrictive. Please refer to https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2026.110232 for the comprehensive list.

5. Lived experiences. This term is not well-defined, which may constrain our understanding of what the search strategy is designed to search for.

6. Please refer to https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2026.110232 for the human filter and editorials and opinion pieces.

7. Please provide the search strategy for each database in an Excel format. You may find an example of this at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2026.110232. Although the PRISMA-ScR Compliance Checklist requires at least one, there are nuances in the structure of each database.

8. Please find the comprehensive list of grey literature sources from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2026.110232.

9. Please consider providing a list of benchmark articles to evaluate the search strategy.

10. Please consider forward and backward citation searches.

## Declarations

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.