Peer Review Report

Review Report on Diverse approaches to creating and using causal loop diagrams in public health research: Recommendations from a scoping review

Review, Public Health Rev

Reviewer: Robin van Kessel

EVALUATION

Q 1   Please summarize the main theme of the review.

The article aims to provide a valuable contribution to the public health research literature by determining optimal methods to identify leverage points in local public health systems to strengthen the response to COVID-19. This study particularly focuses on Canada but may be relevant for other health systems of similar design.

Q 2   Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

Strengths
– Scoping reviews are an excellent method for achieving the goal of this study, especially given the nature of the data (heterogeneous, broad, not necessarily focused on a single factor).
– A narrative synthesis is also valued in this instance as it allows for the creation of new models through 'grounded theory.'

Weaknesses
– The biggest weakness of this study is the narrative search strategy. I would recommend the authors to reconsider the search strategy to follow the PRISMA guidelines and use a systematic search. The authors can retain the narrative synthesis, but how they acquire their data needs to be more transparent/reproducible for this study to have substantial merit.
– The authors' habit of using bullet points is also worth revisiting. There are other ways to present enumerations that allow the text to flow better and improve readability.

Q 3   Please provide your detailed review report to the authors, structured in major and minor comments.

Major comments
– As outlined above, I would strongly urge the author to perform a systematic search to gather their data. Adherence to the PRISMA framework will help retain reproducibility and clarity of data collection. As it is a scoping review, the quality assessment may be omitted, but this should be mentioned in the text.
– I would also advise the authors to revisit the structure of their manuscript using the PRISMA checklist and structure it accordingly.
– The results, while valuable content-wise, are difficult to process due to the sheer number of headings and short pieces of text that follow.
– The research aims being grouped into themes should be presented earlier in the text.
– The authors report that 23 articles are included, but – as per my comment above – it is entirely unknown how the authors got to that point.
– The discussion suffers from the use of many sub-headings as well. Perhaps the manuscript suffers from trying to tackle too many things at once and – in trying to address all the elements – it fails to go into sufficient depth into any. Can the different 'themes' be discussed together in some way?

– Based on the introduction, I get the impression that a CLD will be constructed to outline leverage points in local PH systems in Canada. However, the article itself moves a different direction. Perhaps the authors can address this discrepancy in expectations.

Minor comments
– Authors should check their interpunction carefully. For instance, Page 1, line 15, the closing quotation mark is missing after 'loops'.

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4   **Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?**

Yes

Q 5   **Does this manuscript refer only to published data? (unpublished data is not allowed for Reviews)**

Yes.

Q 6   **Does the manuscript cover the issue in an objective and analytical manner**

Yes.

Q 7   **Was a review on the issue published in the past 12 months?**

No.

Q 8   **Does the review have international or global implications?**

Yes. The application of CLDs to health systems is not limited to Canada.

Q 9   **Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?**

I would add one word: 'Exploring diverse approaches to creating and using...'

This removes the ambiguity and expectation that you may construct a CLD yourself.

Q 10   **Are the keywords appropriate?**

Yes

Q 11   **Is the English language of sufficient quality?**

Yes

Q 12   **Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?**

Yes.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 13 Quality of generalization and summary

Q 14 Significance to the field

Q 15 Interest to a general audience

Q 16 Quality of the writing

REVISION LEVEL

Q 17 Please take a decision based on your comments:

Major revisions.