

Global Production of Systematic Reviews on Population Health Issues in the Middle East and North Africa: Preliminary Results of a Systematic Overview and Bibliometric Analysis, 2008-2016

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Abstract : We aimed to assess the production of systematic reviews (SRs) that synthesize observational studies discussing population health issues in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Two independent reviewers systematically searched MEDLINE through PubMed. Between 2008-2016, 5,747 articles (reviews, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses) were identified. Following a multi-stage screening process, 387 SRs (with or without meta-analysis) on population health issues in the MENA were included in our overview. Citation numbers for each SR were retrieved from Google Scholar. Impact factor of the journal during the publication year for the included SRs was retrieved from the Institute of Scientific Information's Journal Citation Report. We conducted linear regression analysis to assess time trends of number of publications according to SRs' characteristics. We characterized a linear statistically significant increase in the annual numbers of SRs that summarize observational studies on the MENA population health (p -value <0.0001 , $R^2=0.95$), from 15 in 2008 to 81 in 2016. Our analysis reveals also linear statistically significant increases in numbers of SRs published by authors affiliated to institutions located inside MENA and/or neighboring countries ($N=113$, p -value < 0.0001 , $R^2=0.90$), by authors located outside MENA ($N=155$, p -value $=0.0007$, $R^2=0.82$), and by collaborating authors affiliated to institutions located outside MENA and inside the region and/or in MENA's neighboring countries (total number of SRs (N)= 119, p -value $=0.0004$, $R^2=0.85$). Furthermore, these SRs were published in journals with an IF ranging from 0 to 47.8 (median=2.1). Linear statistically significant increases in numbers of published SRs were demonstrated in journals' impact factor (IF) categories (IF=[0-2[: $R^2=0.79$, p -value $=0.0012$; IF=[2-4[: $R^2=0.86$, p -value $=0.0003$; and IF=[4-6[: $R^2=0.53$, p -value $=0.026$). Additionally, annual numbers of citations to the SRs varied between 0 and 471 (median=7). While each year, a couple of SRs were getting more than 50 annual citations, there were linear statistically significant increases in numbers of published SRs with an annual number of citations at [0-10[($R^2=0.89$, p -value $=0.00014$) and at [10-50[($R^2=0.76$, p -value $=0.0021$). Between 2008-2016, increasingly SRs that summarize observational studies on population health issues in the MENA were published. Authors of these SRs were located inside and/or outside the MENA region and an increasing number of collaborations were seen. Increasing numbers of SRs were predominantly observed in journals with an IF between zero and six. Interestingly, SRs covering MENA region countries were being increasingly cited, indicating an escalation of interest in this region's population health issues.

Keywords : bibliometric, citation, impact factor, Middle East and North Africa, population health, systematic review

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