

A Response to “A Critical Appraisal of the Review Study to Improve Its Reporting Quality”

Dear Editor,

Our paper on “Challenges of Family Caregivers of Patients with Mental Disorders in Iran: A Narrative Review”^[1] has recently been published in the Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research. This is a response to concerns raised about methodology of our paper.

In the context of the first concern of the appropriateness of using the term of “systematic review” for our study, it is worth noting that the first point of distinction between systematic and traditional narrative review goes back to the research question. A systematic literature review starts with a well-formulated research question that helps researcher to decide and determine which articles to include in the review. Another point of differences is about data analysis in which included studies are grouped together based on their methodological similarities^[2] and concerns about measuring the strength of the relationship between two variables and the magnitude of the intervention effect.^[3] Nonetheless, in our study, we have been mainly concerned with whether the included studies focused on the challenge or problem in Iranian family caregivers of mental health disorders rather than focusing on methodological similarities or not.

The second point is about the “search period.” There is no rule of thumb in this regard. Regarding the author’s point about the analysis and synthesis method, we first refer to the meaning of matrix approach as a means to organize the review, to ensure that a review is not a subjective process that supports one’s point of view, while ignoring contrary views.^[4] Steps of review through adopting matrix pattern has already been shown in Figure 1 the published paper. Concerning the fourth point on the method of quality appraisal, it is noteworthy emphasizing on the differences between systematic and narrative review such that in narrative review quality assessment is included in studies that are presented implicitly. However, in systematic review critical appraisal is applied explicitly using specific quality criteria and tools.^[5] The fifth recommendation by the author (s) is based on their taste, which is respected. The sixth concern about systematically covering all accessible databases is consistent with the systematic review rather than narrative one.^[5] Although the narrative review is also a review, it is different from the systematic review, especially in terms of goals and overall process.

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Conflicts of interest

Nothing to declare.

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