

Systematic reviews are WELL ACCEPTED as master/PhD thesis in Brazilian graduate programs in dentistry

The Problem

Systematic reviews (SRs) are considered an important tool in the healthcare making decision and they are gaining popularity in the last years. However, the acceptance of SRs as master and PhD thesis is questionable in many Post-graduate programs. Considering that, countries that financial support in research is scarce, as Brazil, the acceptance of its study design could be useful to produce relevant evidence with a lower cost comparing to empirical studies.

Methods

- Cross-sectional study**
- Translated structured internet-based questionnaire (Puljak and Sapunar, 2017) applied to all coordinators of Brazilian Post-graduate programs in dentistry (n=101)
- Questions about the rules of the program as:**
 - Number of articles required to publish before defense
 - Quality of the articles included
 - Requirements for defending a Master or PhD thesis
- Questions about use of SRs in:**
 - Whether a SR meets requirements for approval
 - Instructions to use SR as the basis for a master or PhD thesis
 - Number of SR in masters and PhD thesis compared to other study designs
- Questions about reasons or barriers to recognize SR as basis for master or Phd thesis**
- Opinion of coordinators about SRs methodology**

Key Results

- Low Response rate 38/101 (37.6%)
- Half of programs require an article published before the defense
- Most of them require to publish in certain quality journals
- Most programs (95%) reported that the number of master of PhD thesis based on SR is less than other study designs
- 82% of coordinators answered that Empty SRs cannot be used for master and PhD thesis

Table 1: Reasons for not recognizing a SR as the basis for a master dissertation/PhD thesis in Brazilian graduate programs in Dentistry

Items	Agree n (%)	Neither agree nor disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Don't know n (%)
Systematic reviews are not a result of the candidate's independent work since systematic reviews tend to be conducted by a team	10 (26.3%)	4 (10.5%)	23 (60.5%)	1 (2.6%)
Systematic reviews do not produce enough new knowledge for a dissertation	5 (13.2%)	0	32 (84.2%)	1 (2.6%)
Systematic reviews are too easy to perform	0	3 (7.9%)	35 (92.1%)	0
There are no major differences between classical narrative and systematic reviews	2 (5.3%)	0	35 (92.1%)	1 (2.6%)
Lack of expertise among committee members regarding systematic reviews, since they should be experienced in systematic review methodology	28 (73.7%)	2 (5.3%)	8 (21.1%)	0
Lack of adequate training of candidates in methodology of systematic reviews	26 (68.4%)	3 (7.9%)	9 (23.7%)	0
Students are not experienced enough to perform critical analysis of primary studies	11 (29%)	9 (23.7%)	18 (47.4%)	0
Lack of appreciation of systematic review methodology among faculty members	22 (57.9%)	3 (7.9%)	13 (34.2%)	0

Table 2: Coordinators' opinion about literature reviews

Items	Agree n (%)	Neither agree nor disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Don't know n (%)
Narrative or critical/discursive literature reviews preceding clinical studies planned as part of a dissertation should be replaced with scoping reviews	19 (50%)	11 (29%)	4 (10.5%)	4 (10.5%)
Narrative or critical/discursive literature reviews preceding clinical studies planned as part of a dissertation should be replaced with systematic reviews	18 (47.4%)	10 (26.3%)	8 (21.1%)	2 (5.3%)
Narrative or critical/discursive literature reviews preceding basic studies planned as part of a dissertation should be replaced with scoping reviews	20 (52.3%)	9 (23.7%)	5 (13.2%)	4 (10.5%)
Narrative or critical/discursive literature reviews preceding basic studies planned as part of a dissertation should be replaced with systematic reviews	18 (47.4%)	9 (23.7%)	10 (26.3%)	1 (2.6%)

Most of the programs (78%) agreed that SRs, in whole or in a part, meet the criteria for a master of PhD thesis

Acceptance of systematic reviews as master/PhD thesis in Brazilian graduate programs in dentistry

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