

Individual, institutional, and scientific environment factors associated with questionable research practices in the reporting of messages and conclusions in scientific health services research publications

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Abstract	<p>Background Health Services Research findings (HSR) reported in scientific publications may become part of the decision-making process on healthcare. This study aimed to explore associations between researcher's individual, institutional, and scientific environment factors and the occurrence of questionable research practices (QRPs) in the reporting of messages and conclusions in scientific HSR publications. Methods We employed a mixed-methods study design. We identified factors possibly contributing to QRPs in the reporting of messages and conclusions through a literature review, 14 semi-structured interviews with HSR institutional leaders, and 13 focus-groups amongst researchers. A survey corresponding with these factors was developed and shared with 172 authors of 116 scientific HSR publications produced by Dutch research institutes in 2016. We assessed the included publications for the occurrence of QRPs. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify factors within individual, institutional, and environmental domains. Next, we conducted bivariate analyses using simple Poisson regression to explore factors' association with the number of QRPs in the assessed HSR publications. Factors related to QRPs with p-value $< .30$ were included in four multivariate models tested through a multiple Poisson regression. Results In total, 78 (45%) participants completed the survey (51.3% first authors and 48.7% last authors). Twelve factors were included in the multivariate analyses. In all four multivariate models, a higher score of "pressure to create societal impact" (Exp B = 1.28, 95% CI [1.11, 1.47]), was associated with higher number of QRPs. Higher scores on "specific training" (Exp B = 0.85, 95% CI [0.77-0.94]) and "co-author conflict of interest" (Exp B = 0.85, 95% CI [0.75-0.97]) factors were associated with a lower number of QRPs. Stratification between first and last authors indicated different factors were related to the occurrence of QRPs for these groups. Conclusion Experienced pressure to create societal impact is associated with more QRPs in the reporting of messages and conclusions in HSR publications. Specific training in reporting messages and conclusions and awareness of co-author conflict of interests are related to fewer QRPs. Our results should stimulate awareness within the field of HSR internationally on opportunities to better support reporting in scientific HSR publications.</p>
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