

## PEER-REVIEW REPORT

**Name of journal:** World Journal of Methodology

**Manuscript NO:** 62475

**Title:** DELPHI METHODOLOGY IN HEALTHCARE RESEARCH: HOW TO DECIDE THE APPROPRIATENESS

**Reviewer's code:** 02489737

**Position:** Peer Reviewer

**Academic degree:** MD

**Professional title:** Doctor

**Reviewer's Country/Territory:** Germany

**Author's Country/Territory:** United Arab Emirates

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**Reviewer chosen by:** Jin-Lei Wang

**Reviewer accepted review:** 2021-01-18 07:50

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|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Scientific quality</b>       | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Very good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade C: Good<br><input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Grade E: Do not publish            |
| <b>Language quality</b>         | <input type="checkbox"/> Grade A: Priority publishing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade B: Minor language polishing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Grade C: A great deal of language polishing <input type="checkbox"/> Grade D: Rejection |
| <b>Conclusion</b>               | <input type="checkbox"/> Accept (High priority) <input type="checkbox"/> Accept (General priority)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Minor revision <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major revision <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection             |
| <b>Re-review</b>                | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No   |
| <b>Peer-reviewer statements</b> | Peer-Review: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Anonymous <input type="checkbox"/> Onymous<br>Conflicts-of-Interest: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No   |



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## **SPECIFIC COMMENTS TO AUTHORS**

The authors raise an important issue with regard to the quality of Delphi studies. Apparently, there is no consistency in the methodology of Delphi studies and reporting is often insufficient making it difficult for readers to assess the quality of the study. The manuscript does not provide any empirical data of its own. It remains questionable if it shall be an original research paper, an invited lecture or an extended editorial. As mentioned in the article, attempts have been made in the past to develop best practice guidances for the conduct and reporting of studies using the Delphi technique (e.g. Jünger et al. 2017; Boulkedid et al. 2011). Though the topic clearly requires more attention, it is difficult to understand how the article provides additional assistance to evaluate the study quality, particularly in relation to previous efforts, such as the CREDES guidance. I don't think that it is sufficient just to state that 'There have been attempts to identify quality parameters to conduct and evaluate Delphi studies[10-12]. As these tools are not adequately tested and may not be explicit in the manuscript, readers cannot systematically evaluate the published studies' quality.'. A more in-depth discussion of relevant articles regarding their strengths and weaknesses would be beneficial. A more detailed analysis of published Delphi-papers could illuminate the difficulties of decision making, the necessity to accept compromises between pure scientific strength and practicability – the need to take low numbers of experts or other difficulties for unbiased research into account. A clean epistemic workflow despite of prospective empirical data sets is challenging and needs an algorithm. The paper helps to understand the core strategy and potential pitfalls but remains a bit unspecific – far from real science decision making. Furthermore, the recommendations for the reader of Delphi studies are sometimes hard to understand and remain vague, e.g. 'Evaluation point: The good Delphi survey's foundation is based on iterative discussions' robust

process, controlled feedback while maintaining strict anonymity.’ What exactly are the points, the reader should critically check when assessing the study’s quality? What might be the core criterium? The focus on ex-ante definitions, unbiased processes and a clear and transparent process is good – but absolutely the same as in any scientific procedure. This aspect even offers bridging aspects: patient protection, predefined analysis plans, “blinded” unbiased evaluation, data and process quality – everything in DELPHI as necessary as in other fields of medical research. Therefor such processes are not science light but science requiring a high grade of methodological reflection. Readers might understand it easier and learn more if examples of strong and weak procedures in existing Delphi-studies might be reported? Figure 2 is difficult to understand and requires more explanation in the figure legend and/or redesign. In addition, I think that the article would benefit from linguistic editing to improve readability. Minor corrections: • Please correct author names in reference 1: Linstone HA, Turoff M. The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications-- (Eds.)—1975 [Internet];chp:1. Available from: <https://web.njit.edu/~turoff/pubs/delphibook/ch1.html> • Please explain the abbreviation ARDS • In-text reference to figures should be consistent (Figure vs. Fig.)