Reviewer’s report

Title: Experiences of abortion: a narrative review of qualitative studies

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Reviewer: Øivind Ekeberg

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Mabel LS Lie et al.: Experiences of abortion: A narrative review of qualitative studies

The authors write that because of emphasis on medical versus surgical termination of pregnancy (TOP), less attention has been paid to women’s experiences of the two methods. Therefore, the aim of the study is to study women’s experiences of the two methods by providing a narrative review. Four studies compared surgical and medical methods, and 14 studies using either method were identified.

Studies of women’s experiences from TOP are important. There are, however, several limitations of the present study.

Major concerns

1. The introduction is very sparse. There is no information about previous results from studies of surgical or medical TOP methods. Neither are there sufficient arguments for using a qualitative method rather than quantitative.

2. It is not clear how the inclusion and exclusion criteria were, how many studies that were found initially, how many were excluded, and whether assessment of each study were made by more than one person.

3. It is not clear why a systematic review was not made (page 4).

4. Accordingly, evaluations of the methodological quality were not used (page 4). This is a critical limitation.

5. Nine of 18 included studies acknowledged study limitations and recruitment biases. The authors do not discuss how this may influence the results.

6. There were three main results, about choices, experiences and environment. It is very difficult, however to see what are the main topics in each of these areas. Accordingly, it is not clear how the authors get from rather diverging experiences to the four main conclusions.

7. There is no discussion of main results, methodology and generalizability.

8. Is it necessary to conduct a qualitative review to arrive at e.g. the first conclusion that “women’s choices are related to negotiating finite household and psychosocial resources”?

9. The tables show study populations, but no main results.

Minor concerns
10. The results section of the abstract is very unspecific, possibly reflecting the problems of arriving at specific main findings. Somewhat more specific (and new information) appears in the conclusion.

11. It is not clear to this reviewer what differs between a narrative review and a plain review of qualitative studies.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests