Reviewer’s report

Title: Few women received a specific explanation of stillbirth - an online survey of women’s perceptions and thoughts about the cause of their baby’s death

Version: 2 Date: 08 Sep 2018

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS: To view the full report from the academic peer reviewer, please see the attached file.

REVIEWER COMMENTS FROM REPORT: * What is your overall impression of the study?

The study is about the online survey on women's perception of getting explanation for stillbirth, causes of still births and role of health care professionals. While it presents interesting results from a population with high literacy and development (i.e. from Sweden); there are some deficiencies in presentation and methods.

With revision and correction of these deficiencies, the article is publishable

* What have the authors have done well?

The authors have not done anything well except tried to present women's perception of getting explanation for stillbirth, causes of still births and role of health care professionals in Sweden.

In what ways does it not meet best practice?

The presentations of sampling process i.e. definition of study population and sample is not clear. How did the authors verify that the women had stillbirths? Has the questions/tool pre-tested or standardised? In the whole method section, authors even do not mention the sample size.

Also the results did not give sample characteristics (background socio demographic) which is so common in most of the articles.

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Need to revise methods and results section in particular (see comments below)

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:
Title need to be revised to incorporate the main objective: whether explanation for stillbirth received or not as well as the women's thought.

Abstract:

Please name the software used in online survey.

What is certain and uncertain explanation?

Please state the exact amount 'many of them….others…and …still others….'

Conclusion needs to be revised with implications. At present, it is no more than repetition of the results.

Background:

Stillbirth needs to be defined in the background and the opening sentence needs to be revised.

Methods:

I do not know whether the journal has the instruction to keep the objectives in Methods. Otherwise, the usual sequence is at the last paragraph of background after having identified the need for investigation.

Better to name the online survey used; and approach of qualitative data gathering.

Sample:

"All women in the sample had experienced stillbirth after 28 weeks of gestation between January 2010 and April 2014." Not clear what authors want to convey: is it how they choose sample or inclusion criteria?

Data collection:

Does this online survey cover all over Sweden? For which period of stillbirths? How did the authors confirm that the women had stillbirths? Any source to validate?

How did the authors compose 87 questions, what is about their validity and realiability? Is it standardised? No mention in the method.
Out of 87 questions, did the authors used only four questions?

Please clarify further what is meant by certain explanation and not a certain explanation. Who decides which is certain and which is uncertain, and how?

It is better to say 'open question' rather than unlimited space for response.

Analysis:

Into how many domains/specific topics the text material was divided? Analysis do not mention about descriptive statistics.

Results:

It makes no sense: Years of the stillbirths ranged from 2010 to 2014 (mean: 2011; median: 2011).

Explanation of cause of death:

Did the 116 women received a certain explanation or an uncertain explanation. Before it was stated that "84 (23.6%) reported receiving a certain explanation, and 99 (27.8%) reported receiving an uncertain explanation."

Women's thoughts on the cause of their baby's death:

"Most women (n = 199, 56%) reported their thoughts on what might have caused their baby’s death", so did it indicate the rest had no thoughts?

Please use inverted comma to state women's own words.

Discussion

It should start by summarising all findings. The opening sentence does not summarise all findings, for example women's thoughts of cause of death.

Conclusion: "A third of women in the sample received an explanation of their baby’s death", is it a certain or uncertain explanation?

Need to include some suggestion based on the findings for the delivery care of Sweden.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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