Reviewer’s report

Title: Why do they take the risk? A systematic review of the qualitative literature on informal sector abortions in settings where abortion is legal

Version: 0 Date: 10 Oct 2018

Reviewer: Rachel Jones

Reviewer's report:

This study has the potential to make a contribution to the literature but it needs some work before it is ready for publication.

First, I think the framework needs to be reconfigured. The authors seem to equate informal sector abortions with unsafe abortions, but increasingly that is not the case. Use of misoprostol and even mifepristone accessed via the internet mean that many ISAs are safe, or at least not unsafe. The introduction devotes too much text to unsafe abortion in highly restricted settings. Instead you should provide background information about the (limited) provision of abortion care in countries where many folks may not be aware it is legal: Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, etc.

The information on lines 32-40 (page 3) belong in the intro/background and are not part of the methods section.

Why did the authors not include the search terms "self-abortion" "self-induced abortion" or "self-managed abortion"? Similarly, I was surprised that none of Abigail Aiken's research made the cut.

What does snowball sampling mean in this context? (line 40, page 6)

Table 2 needs to be revised to include country and sample size/n of interviews, perhaps year of publication and journal. Having 8 categories of reasons for 13 studies is too much information for readers to process and can be described in the text. Alternately, you could have another tables that lists the reasons and the N of studies where it was found to be a motivating factor.

The US and Hong Kong are "outliers" in this context insofar as they are relatively wealthy and have more advanced health care systems. Seeking ISAs in this context has a very different meaning than in the other countries and the authors should relate when these two countries are relevant. (Did women in the US indicate all 8 reasons or just cost and knowledge?)

The Discussion largely repeats the findings. It would be more useful to synthesize them: ISA occurs in less developed and more developed countries, and for a variety of reasons. What are the similarities and differences across studies? What are the implications for ISA given that it is increasingly safer do to miso and the availability of mife on the internet?
Similarly, the first paragraph of Conclusions is just repeating the findings and the Discussion and needs to be deleted.

More niggling issues.
Abstract: last sentence of methods and first sentence of findings are redundant.

Intro: many of the citations are dated and the authors do not seem aware of more recent research and statements. For example, Singh et al. (Lancet Global Health, 2018) estimated that 75% of abortions in India were medication abortions performed outside of a health care facility, a lower percentage than citation [2].

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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

Yes

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

Unable to assess

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
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