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Treatment outcomes of obstetric fistula in low- and middle-income countries: A scoping review

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Introduction : Obstetric fistula is an abnormal opening between the reproductive tract and lower urinary and/or gastrointestinal tract resulting from obstetric complications, affecting nearly two million women worldwide. It imposes physical, economic, social, and mental consequences on the affected women. The treatment outcomes vary, and mostly, surgical treatment results in improved quality of life and successful subsequent pregnancy for survivors. **Objective.** To examine and map the treatment outcomes of obstetric fistula in low- and middle-income countries.

Methods : The data were extracted from primary research, systematic reviews, reports, and any other relevant literature accessed from databases, gray literature, university repositories, and other sources. Included studies reported on the treatment outcomes of women who received obstetric fistula treatment services at health facilities in low- and middle-income countries. Data were summarized using an Excel datasheet and analyzed to map treatment outcomes.

Result : The review examined the full text of 54 studies on the treatment outcomes of obstetric fistula. The findings were grouped into two themes: short-term and long-term outcomes. The short-term outcomes included repair results incontinence, infection, urine retention, hemorrhage, and retained catheter. The long-term outcomes included fistula recurrence, residual incontinence, quality of life, reproductive issues, mental health, family and social support, and financial status.

Conclusion : The treatment outcomes of obstetric fistula can be grouped into short-term and long-term outcomes. Although this review found adequate studies for the analysis, most study designs were poor. Stronger studies are recommended in the future to guide policy and decision-making. We would like to suggest that researchers conduct systematic reviews and meta-analyses independently for short-term and long-term outcomes.

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