

Obstetrician’s concerns regarding termination of pregnancy

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Objective

To assess the beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of obstetricians regarding termination of pregnancy (TOP).

Methods

This cross-sectional observational study included Lebanese obstetricians who had been practicing for more than one year, from different regions. After obtaining written consent, they completed an anonymous 27-item questionnaire. It included socio-demographic characteristics, personal opinions and practices regarding TOP, detailed opinions on medical, legal, religious, and ethical aspects of TOP, and feelings of security when facing TOP situations. Some responses were assessed on a Likert scale, while others allowed for open-ended responses.

Results

There were 110 questionnaires submitted with a 91% response rate. Only 4% of physicians feel comfortable in managing themselves TOP cases. Two-thirds of physicians estimate the annual prevalence of congenital malformations to be 3% or higher. While 59% routinely offer anomaly screening, 64% believe that improved diagnostic techniques have significantly influenced pregnancy management. TOP included concerns about legal (63%), religious (53%), and ethical (60%) aspects, and less commonly about medical issues (39%). In the absence of approval from an Ethics Committee, 47% of physicians still perform TOP, mainly in a hospital setting, and 36% of the physicians report using feticide at some point during their practice. Physicians advocate improving the country's legal framework (90%) and the centralization of TOP management (34%).

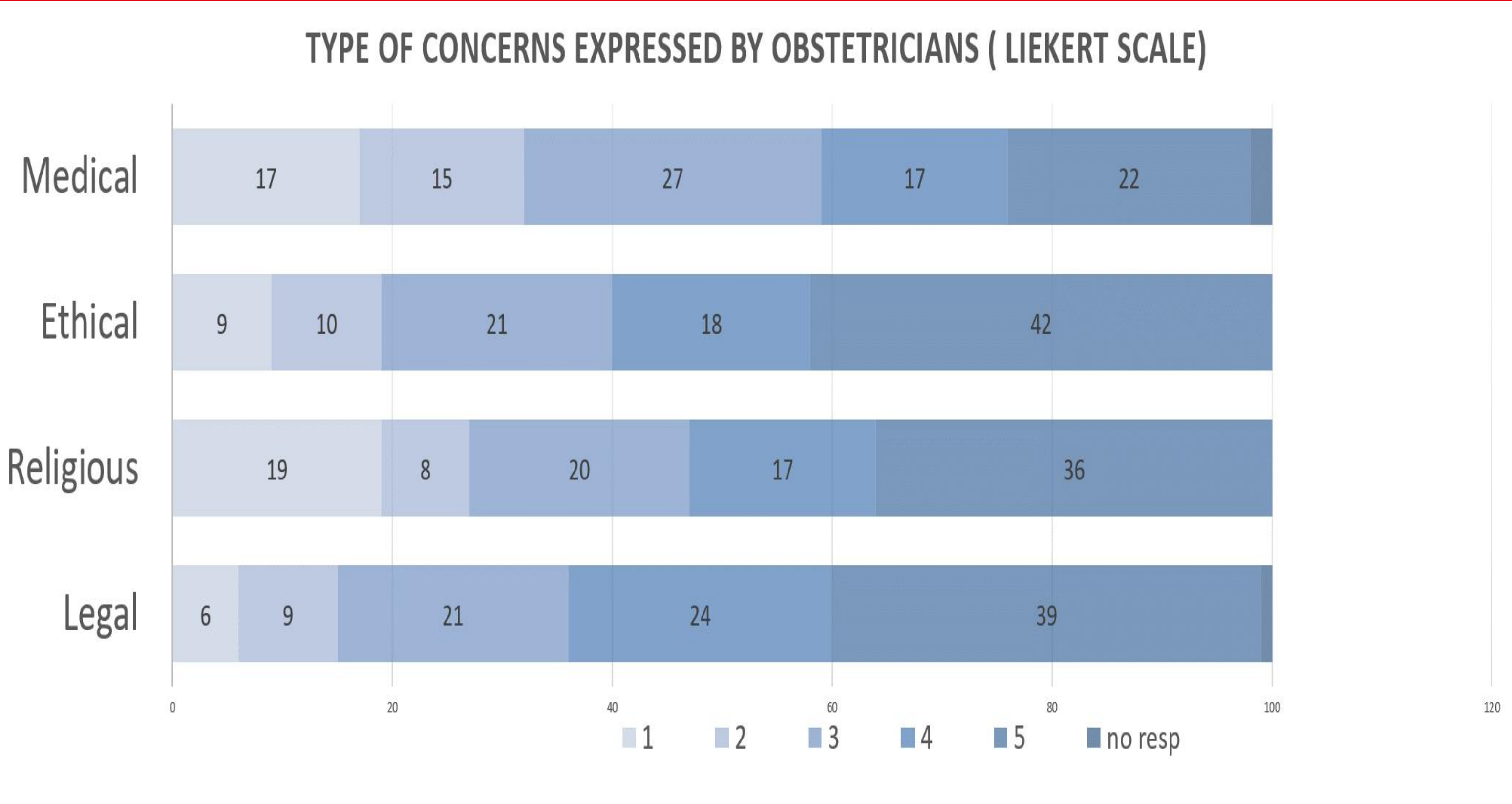


Figure represents the concerns expressed by obstetricians regarding termination of pregnancy

Conclusion

The ethical, medical, and particularly legal and religious frameworks fail to optimize TOP management in a multicultural community. A paradox seems to emerge between a society’s needs and a comprehensive framework to relieve the physician’s concerns.

