

What outcomes are important to families following a stillbirth?

A qualitative systematic review



References

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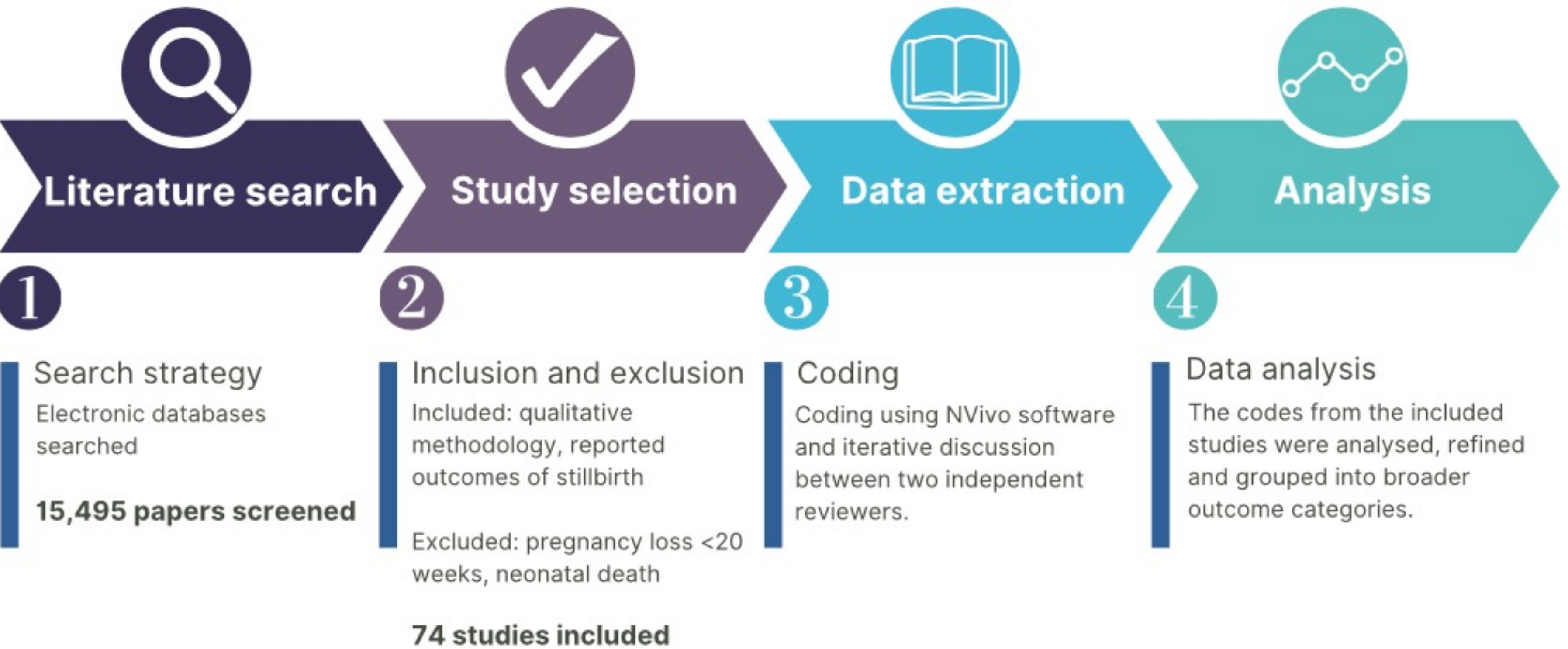
Introduction

Estimates suggest that each year, stillbirth affects 2 million families worldwide (1,2). Studies have demonstrated that the care families receive following stillbirth is inadequate and is often variable between care settings (3). This is perhaps because interventions offered to families who are affected by stillbirth have a limited evidence base (4).

Objective:

To use qualitative research to identify what outcomes related to care are important families with a lived experience of stillbirth. This can then inform the development of a core outcome set for future stillbirth care research.

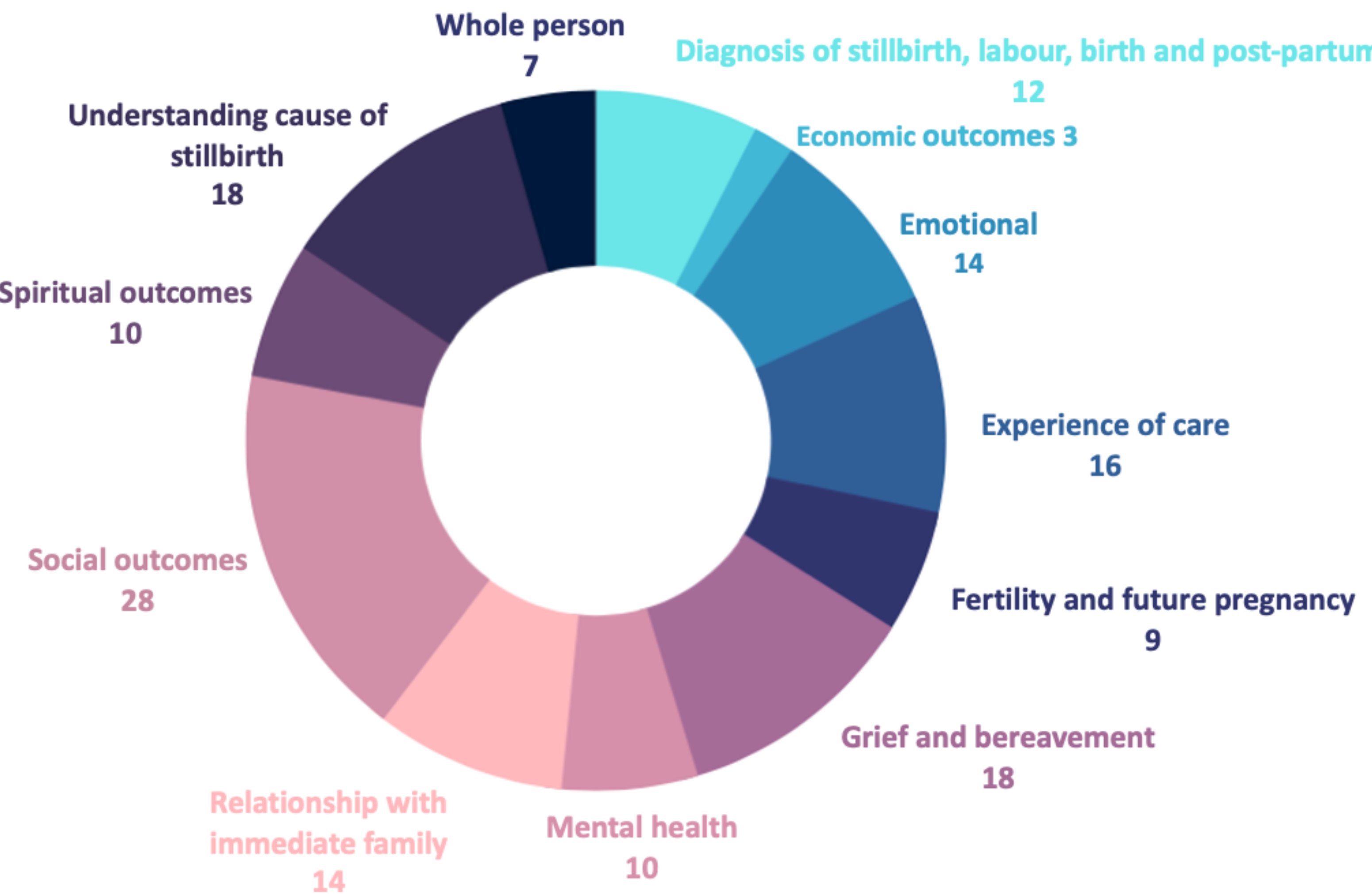
Methodology



Results

- 15,495 titles and abstracts screened
- 74 studies included
- 14 studies from low-middle income countries, 60 from high income countries
- 4,000 parents were represented (majority mothers)
- 159 outcomes identified, which were then arranged into 12 broader outcome categories (as outlined below in Figure 1)

Figure.1: Outcome categories and the associated number of discrete outcomes



Discussion



Spending time and making memories with baby

This was the most frequently reported individual outcome. This included taking photographs of the baby, having skin-skin contact and naming the baby.

Grief and bereavement

The most frequently reported outcome category by parents was grief and bereavement outcomes by parents, including acknowledging loss and respecting baby, processing grief, ability to talk of loss.



Spiritual impact

Spiritual outcomes were new findings in comparison to previous studies. Outcome reporting in this category were more prevalent in the low-middle income countries.

Conclusion

Using qualitative research, we have identified a wide range of important outcomes related to stillbirth care. These outcomes have been used to develop a core outcome set to inform future stillbirth research and allow future interventions to be measured. This will undoubtedly translate into high-quality care and improved outcomes for bereaved families.

Future research should explore in depth low- and middle- income settings as well as the views of fathers so that every parent voice can be heard and acted upon.