

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INDUCED ABORTION AMONG WOMEN ATTENDING MARIE STOPES CLINICS IN KATHMANDU VALLEY

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: Though abortion has been legalized in Nepal from September 2002 but it is still a highly stigmatized issue with lots of prevailing misconceptions in the community. In this scenario also each year one lakh abortion are done in Nepal and the number of women seeking abortion services is in increasing trend. Therefore, it is very important to know the reasons behind seeking abortion services by Nepalese women. The overall objective of this study was to assess the factors associated with induced abortion among women attending at Marie Stopes Clinics of Kathmandu Valley

MATERIAL AND METHODS: A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out over a period of two weeks in the Marie Stopes's clinics of Gongabu and Kupondole sites of Kathmandu among 85 purposively selected women. Face-to-face interview was done by using the semi-structured questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed by using simple descriptive statistics like percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviations and presented in the forms of tables and narratives.

RESULTS: The mean age of the respondents with standard deviation was 25.5±5.571 years. Around 88 % of the respondents were literate. Majority (91.8%) were married. Around 75 % of the respondents cited, having enough children and wanting no more child now as the main reason behind having abortion. The decision of undergoing abortion was taken by both partners in 89.4% of the respondents. Exactly 62.4% of the respondents were not aware about the possible effects of abortion. Almost 32% of the respondents had the history of previous abortion. Almost 90 % of the respondents had desired to use contraceptive after abortion. Condoms, pills and Depo-Provera were preferred by 41.3%, 22.7% and 13.3% of the respondents for use after undergoing abortion respectively.

CONCLUSION: It can be concluded from the study that the major reasons behind undergoing abortion were to limit the number of children and desire to postpone the children. About one-third of women have the history of previous abortion and similar proportion has done abortion two to three times. Therefore, this study suggests that long acting FP methods and sterilization services should be made accessible to women so that they could prevent unwanted pregnancy. Also there is need of strengthening counseling services for contraceptive use to women coming for abortion repeatedly.

KEYWORDS: Factors; Induced abortion; Women

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INTRODUCTION

Induced abortion is the deliberate termination of a pregnancy.¹ It is carried out surgically or medically, safely or unsafely.² World Health Organization (WHO) defines unsafe abortion as a procedure for terminating an unwanted pregnancy either by individuals without the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimum medical standards, or both.¹ Each year globally 210 million women become pregnant among them some 130 million pregnancies go on to deliver live-born infants and the remaining 80 million pregnancies end up in stillbirths, spontaneous abortion (miscarriages) and induced abortion. Out of 80 million, 42 million pregnancies are voluntarily terminated each year globally with 22 million abortion occurring safely and 20 million occurring unsafely. Almost 98% of unsafe abortions take place in developing countries. Approximately, one in four women having an unsafe abortion is likely to face severe complication that can lead to death.³ Improving maternal health is one of the eight goals of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) which aims to reduce Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) by two-thirds by the year 2015 with reference to 1990 statistics. However, 13% of all maternal deaths are attributable to deaths arising from complications of unsafe abortions. Making abortion services safe is the crucial part of achieving the MDG.²

Though abortion has been legalized in Nepal from September 2002 but it is still a highly stigmatized issue with lots of prevailing misconceptions in the community. In this scenario also each year one lakh abortion are done in Nepal and the number of women seeking abortion services is in increasing trend.⁴ Therefore, it is very important to know the reasons behind seeking abortion services by Nepalese women. The overall objective of this study was to assess the factors associated with induced abortion among women attending at Marie Stopes Clinics of Kathmandu Valley.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out over a period of two weeks. The study area was Marie Stopes's clinics of Gongabu and Kupondole sites of Kathmandu which was selected purposively. The Marie Stopes's clinics were chosen because 75% of registered abortion services were provided by it in Nepal. The Marie Stopes's clinic of Gongabu and Kupondole provide abortion services to 200 and 125 women per month respectively. A total of 85 women who had undergone abortion were selected purposively for the study. Women who have undergone abortion, were willing to participate and available at the time of data collection were included in the study. The participants were face-to-face interviewed only after obtaining informed verbal consent from

them by using the semi-structured questionnaire. The participants were assured about the privacy and confidentiality of the information generated from them. For that purpose, they were fully convinced about the use of information solely for this study only. But prior to startup of data collection process, ethical clearance was obtained from Research Review Committee of Nepal Institute of Health Sciences (NIHS) and approval was also obtained from Sunaulo Parivar, Nepal. The collected data was checked for its completeness, accuracy and consistency. The coding of the independent as well as dependent variables was done and data was entered into SPSS version 16. The analysis was done by using simple descriptive statistics like percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviations. The analyzed data was presented in tables and narrative forms.

RESULTS

The age of the respondents ranged from 16 to 38 years. The mean age of the respondents with standard deviation was 25.5±5.571 years. Almost one-third should be used (30.6%) of the respondents belonged to 20-25 years. Around 88 % of the respondents were literate. Out of literate respondents, majority (93.3%) had secondary, higher secondary and above education. Majority (91.8%) was married, 7.0% was single and the remaining 1.2% was divorcee/separated. Around 62% of the respondents had one to two living children and 28.2% had no children. Among the respondents having children, 69% had children of more than two years (Table 1).

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Age of the respondents (n=85)		
15-20 years	15	17.6
20-25 years	26	30.6
25-30 years	25	29.4
30-35 years	15	17.7
35-40 years	4	4.7
Mean age ± SD	25.5±5.571 years	
Age range	16-38 years	
Literacy status (n=85)		
Illiterate	10	11.8
Literate	75	88.2
Educational status (n=75)		
Primary	5	6.7
Secondary	32	42.7
Higher Secondary	17	22.6
Bachelor and above	21	28.0
Marital Status (n=85)		
Married	78	91.8
Single	6	7.0
Divorced/Separated	1	1.2
Number of living children (n=85)		
None	24	28.2
One to two	53	62.4
Three to four	7	8.2
More than four	1	1.2
Age of the youngest child (n=61)		
6-12 months	9	15.0
12-24 months	10	16.0
>24 months	42	69.0

Almost 57% of women were using some kind of contraceptives prior to this conception. Among the contraceptive users, 43.8%, 29.1%, 16.7% and 10.4% were using condoms, withdrawal method, pills and Depo-Provera respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Use of contraceptive prior to this conception

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Use of contraceptives (n=85)		
Yes	48	56.5
No	37	43.5
Type of contraceptives used (n=48)		
Condom	21	43.8
Withdrawal method	14	29.1
Pills	8	16.7
Depo-Provera	5	10.4

While asking reasons behind undergoing abortions, 75.2% of the respondents responded that they had enough children and want no child now. The decision of undergoing abortion was taken by both partners in 89.4% of the respondents. About 37.6% of the respondents were aware about the possible effects of abortion. Weakness, bleeding, abdominal pain, uterus problem, infertility, incomplete abortion, backache/limb ache and cannot be able to lift heavy objects were perceived as the possible effects of abortion by 43.8%, 21.9%, 34.4%, 25.0%, 12.5%, 6.3%, 3.1% and 3.1% of the respondents respectively (Table 3).

Table 3: Reasons, decisions and knowledge on possible effects of undergoing abortion

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Reasons of undergoing abortion (n=85)		
Have enough children	35	41.1
Do not want child now	29	34.1
Economic reason	6	7.1
Contraceptive failure	3	3.5
Going abroad	5	5.9
Being unmarried	6	7.1
Rape	1	1.2
Decision of undergoing abortion (n=85)		
By self	4	4.7
Husband	4	4.7
By both husband and wife	76	89.4
Family members	1	1.2
Knowledge on effects of abortion (n=85)		
Yes	32	37.6
No	53	62.4
Possible effects of abortion (n=32)		Percent of cases
Weakness	14	43.8
Bleeding	7	21.9
Abdominal Pain	11	34.4
Uterus problem	8	25.0
Incomplete abortion	2	6.3
Infertility	4	12.5
Backache/Limb ache	1	3.1
Should not lift heavy object	1	3.1

Almost 32% of the respondents had the history of previous abortion (have sought abortion before). Among women who had undergone abortion before, majority (66.7%) had done abortion only one time and 14.8%, 14.8% and 3.7% had done abortion two, three and four times respectively. About three fifth (59.2%) women had undergone previous abortion in less than a year back with 22.2% respondents having abortion just before six months (Table 4).

Table 4: History of previous abortion

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Undergone abortion before (n=85)		
Yes	27	31.8
No	58	68.2
Number of abortion done before (n=27)		
One	18	66.7
Two	4	14.8
Three	4	14.8
Four	1	3.7
Time of recent abortion (n=27)		
Six months back	6	22.2
6-12 months back	10	37.0
12-24 months back	5	18.6
>24 months back	6	22.2

Out of 85 respondents, only 83 respondents were asked about their preferred contraceptive to be used after undergoing abortion because one was rape case and one was forceful abortion by mother due to eloped marriage. Out of 83 respondents, 90.4% have desire to use contraceptive after abortion. Among them the most preferred contraceptive was condom followed by pills and depo with 41.3%, 22.7% and 13.3% respectively and their least prioritized contraceptive was Norplant, with only 1.3% giving preference to it (Table 5).

Table 5: Preferred contraceptive to be used after abortion

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Desire to use contraceptive after abortion (n=83)		
Yes	75	90.4
No	8	9.6
Preferred contraceptive to be used after abortion (n=75)		
Condom	31	41.3
Pills	17	22.7
Depo	10	13.3
Norplant	1	1.3
IUCD	6	8.0
Vasectomy	5	6.7
Minilap	5	6.7

DISCUSSION

This study showed that 60% of respondents belonged to 20-30 years which is consistent with the findings (57.8% of women belonging to age groups 20-29 years) Amatya (2011).⁵ Similarly, a study conducted by Centre for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA) in 2006 found that 59.2% of women seeking abortion services belonged to 20-29 years.⁶ As per this study, almost 18% of girls below 20 years have sought abortion services and majority of the respondents were married (91.8%). The probable reason behind this might be in Nepal more teenage girls (29%) aged 15-19 years are already in formal marriage and Nepalese women generally initiate sexual intercourse at the time of their first marriage. Most importantly use of contraceptive is lower among younger women than older women in Nepal.⁷

Majority (88.2%) of the respondents were literate, out of which 42.7% had secondary, 22.6% had higher secondary and 28 % had Bachelor and above education. Literate women are seeking more abortion services than illiterate women; this might be due to the fact that educated women are more aware about the abortion related information. Moreover the study is conducted in urban settings. Out of 85 respondents, 91.8% were married which is supported by the findings of 96% and 97% married women receiving abortion services from different health facilities of Nepal.^{5,6}

Around 62% of the respondents had one to two living children, is consistent with the findings of CREHPA (2006), (62.7% had one to two living children) and 69 % had children of more than two years which indicates that there is need of counseling to couples about utilization of temporary family planning methods and discouraging the utilization of abortion services as substitute of family planning methods. Almost 57% of women were using some kind of contraceptives prior to this conception, which is consistent with the results of Amatya (2011) and CREHPA (2006), where 58.9% and 59.4% women had used some form of contraceptives prior to this pregnancy.^{5,6} However, even after contraceptive use also the conception might have occurred because of condom failure, forgetting to use the oral pills regularly and late in taking Depo-Provera.⁷ The main reason cited for seeking abortion was having enough children by 41.1% that is similar with the results of Amatya (2011), 44.4% referring the attainment of desired family size as the main reason for the termination of pregnancy.⁵ However, Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2011) have mentioned that the main reason for undergoing abortion among 20% women was not wanting any more children.⁷ This indicates the urgent need of focusing on promotion of permanent family planning methods among Nepalese women.

The final decision to seek an abortion was made jointly by most husbands and wives (89.4%) are similar with 82% of women taking decision along with their husbands.⁶ About 37.6% of the respondents were aware about the possible effects of abortion. Weakness, bleeding, abdominal pain, uterus problem, infertility, incomplete abortion, backache/ limb ache and cannot be able to lift heavy objects were perceived as the possible effects of abortion by the respondents.

Three out of ten (31.8%) women had a previous history of induced abortion, which is similar to the studies conducted in Sri-Lanka, where 29% had done induced abortion before.⁸

Total 90.4% of women expressed their desire to use contraceptive after terminating their pregnancy among which all preferred modern family planning methods. But not all women having desire to use contraceptive, will finally use the contraceptive as 27% of currently married women have an unmet need of family planning in Nepal.⁷ Exactly same percent women preferred to use contraceptive after seeking abortion but 95% chose modern contraceptives methods.⁵

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the study that the major reasons behind undergoing abortion were to limit the number of children and desire to postpone the children. Almost nine out of ten women replied of undertaking decisions of undergoing abortion by both partners. About one-third of women have the history of previous abortion and similar proportion has done abortion two to three times. So, some women seem to be using abortion services as an alternative to family planning services. Therefore, this study suggests that long acting family planning methods and sterilization services should be made accessible to women so that they could prevent unwanted pregnancy. Also there is need of strengthening counseling services for contraceptive use to women coming for abortion repeatedly so that they will not use abortion as an alternative means to family planning services.

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