

Perception of Abortion and Abortion Services among Girl Students in Nepal

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Abstract

This research examines the perception of secondary level girl students on abortion and abortion services in the context of Nepal. This study employs primary data obtained from 250 adolescent girl students of community schools and bases on descriptive research design using quantitative method. The result reveals that 90 percent of the girl students possess the information of abortion and abortion services while only 80 percent of them have its legal knowledge. Nearly 87 percent of girl students of community schools show their awareness on safe abortion services while remaining others do not have any information about it. The major factors which cause adolescent girls to perform abortion include health of mother, poverty and undesirability of children. The data also exhibits that 72 percent of the respondents chose doctors as the best service providers followed by health assistants (19.2%) in Nepalese societies. It again shows that the skillful health workers are the choices for those who want to get abortion service. Likewise, majority of the respondents show their belief in government hospitals as safer places for this service. Since it came into legal practice in Nepal, many adolescent girls have been performing abortion practices regardless of using proper knowledge, counselling and professional skills. Observed as a sinful act in our community in the previous years, abortion has been taken as a common practice, today.

Keywords: Awareness, legality, cause, center, procedure & safe abortion.

Introduction

Merriam-Webster dictionary states abortion as the termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus such as spontaneous expulsion of a human fetus during the first 12 weeks of gestation – miscarriage, induced expulsion of a human fetus (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Similarly, World Health Organization defines abortion as the termination of pregnancy before birth, resulting into the death of a fetus or an embryo (WHO, 2006). Abortion services term as the registered institutions – either governmental or non-governmental – where abortions are performed by trained professionals for pregnant women. Abortion

has been performed widely by the adolescent girls and women across the nation, however, they still require proper skill and knowledge to conduct such acts safely.

The evidence reveals that majority of women face unwanted pregnancy due to the limited access of information about contraceptive devices and services. Women having no access of safe abortion services timely are at high risk of developing complications due to unsafe abortion. In Nepal, abortion rate among women of reproductive age is 42 per 1000 women (DoHS, 2020). Studies have shown most of the unsafe abortions are conducted in the developing countries like Nepal where about 323,000 abortions were performed in 2014. The study also reveals that 58 percent of the abortion performed in the year were considered clandestine procedures, provided by untrained or unregistered service providers or self-included (GI & CREHPA, 2017). The incidence of abortion is elevating in Nepal despite the availability of contraceptive devices. The study shows that the incidence of unsafe abortion is higher than its successful rate. The significant reasons behind this include social stigma, shamefulness, and social barriers. The result also shows that abortion has its close association with age, education, and knowledge on legal abortion and abortion services, and place to perform abortions (Yogi et al., 2018).

Statement of the Problem

After legalization of abortion, it has been in practice conditionally in Nepal. It is common for those pregnant women who have many children, mothers at risk, rape victims and incest to perform abortion under the legal process of the nation. However, in Nepali societies, many young girls and women have been performing unsafe abortion practices neglecting the existing rules, personal health and social norms. A large number of girls and women are out of access of safe abortion and abortion services in Nepal, due to lack of trained and experienced service providers, performing abortions in unregistered institutions, social stigma. It is a controversial issue in Nepalese societies. It affects moral, ethical, practical, and political power.

Justification of the Study

The study presents perception of abortion and abortion services in girl students of community schools in Kathmandu district. This study also disseminates factual legal knowledge of abortion and abortion services in adolescent girl students of the study area that represents the awareness in adolescent girls throughout the nation. This study offers perception on the matters concerning the issues of abortion in our society. It is equally essential not only for the young girls but also for their parents, guardians, readers and concerned authorities. As unsafe abortion causes for the increment of morbidity and mortality of women, effective implementation of abortion and abortion services should be conducted in the developing counties like Nepal.

Objectives

The major objective of this research is to examine the perception towards abortion and abortion services in secondary level girl students of community schools in Kathmandu

district. The specific objectives are to find out the knowledge on abortion and abortion services among the girl students, and to analyze the association between socio-economic variables and perception of abortion.

Data and Methodology

This study employs primary data as its tools for collecting information. It also uses secondary sources of data as a supporting for this study. This research based on descriptive design uses numerical data using frequency table, and percentile. This study was carried out in senior secondary level girl students of community schools in Kathmandu District of Nepal.

Interpretation and Analysis of the Data

Knowledge on Abortion and Abortion Services

The result exhibits that 90 percent of the girl students have knowledge on abortion and abortion services while the remaining of the respondents (10%) responded the absence of the knowledge. In the same way, 88.5 percent of the girls belonging to the age group of 15-19 years responded as having the knowledge of abortion while remaining others (11.5 %) of the same age group did not have any knowledge of abortion and abortion services. Similarly, nearly 98 percent girl students of the age group of 20-24 possessed knowledge of abortion and abortion services while remaining others (2.5%) expressed having absence of the knowledge. The data summarizes with the increasing trend of level of awareness of abortion and abortion service as per the increase in the age of the respondents (Table 1).

Table-1: Distribution of the respondents who have knowledge on abortion and abortion services, Nepal, 2021

Age Group	Knowledge on abortion and abortion services			
	Yes	No	Total	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Number
15-19	88.5	11.5	100.0	209
20-24	97.5	2.5	100.0	41
Total	90.0	10.0	100.0	250

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Knowledge on the Legality of Abortion and Abortion Services

Report of NDHS 2011 shows 38 percent of the Nepalese women possess the legal knowledge of abortion. This report also exhibits about two-thirds of the SLC and above graduate women were aware with the legality of abortion in comparison to the 20 percent of illiterate women. In the same way, nearly 60 percent of women were conscious of a safe place to get abortion and abortion service (NDHS, 2011). Likewise, the study of the NDHS 2016 revealed that 41 percent of the Nepalese women belonging to the age group of 15-49 were mindful of the legitimacy of abortion in Nepal. Women in the urban areas comprising 43 percent were more aware of the legality of abortion than those residing in the rural areas comprising 36 percent (NDHS, 2016).

Table-2: Distribution of the respondents who have knowledge on legality of abortion and abortion service, Nepal, 2021

Age Group	Legal knowledge on abortion and abortion services		Total	
	Yes	No		
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Number
15-19	80.1	19.9	100.0	191
20-24	80.0	20.0	100.0	40
Total	80.1	19.9	100.0	231

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The data illustrates 80.1 percent of the respondents considered abortion is legal in Nepal while 19.9 percent of them had not information regarding the matter. Slightly more than 80.1 percent of the respondents in the age group of 15-19 believed that abortion is legally permitted whereas nearly 20 percent of them did not aware of it. Likewise, 80 percent of the respondents belonging to age group 20-24 expressed they had information on abortion and abortion services while remaining 20 percent of them denied of having information regarding it. The result concludes with the tendency of raising the level of awareness in the legal knowledge of abortion and abortion services along with the increment of their ages.

Awareness of Safe Abortion Services

Two decades after legalizing abortion, the government of Nepal has highlighted the nationwide safe abortion program through several government and non-governmental institutions: Marie Stopes International, Family Planning Association of Nepal, hospitals and clinics. These institutions are offering safe abortion facilities across the nation with surgical and medical abortion processes. Safe abortion service using manual vacuum aspiration began in 2004 after two years of its legalization. The government permitted medical abortion in 2009 as an alternative safe option to the Nepalese women (Aryal, 2013). However, safe abortion services are available in all districts of Nepal. Currently, there are more than 2,000 trained service providers, and from 2011 to 2016, over 400,000 abortions were performed from certified service sites (Wu et al., 2017).

The result shows that nearly 87 percent of girl students of community schools had knowledge on safe abortion services while remaining 13.2 percent did not possess the idea about it. This study concludes that the majority of adolescent girl students of community schools have good information on safe abortion (Table-3).

Table-3: Distribution of the respondents who responded on awareness of safe abortion services, Nepal, 2021

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	217	86.8
No	33	13.2
Total	250	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Causes of Abortion

After its legalization, the practice of abortion has been frequently performed by the Nepalese women. There are a number of causes behind the practice of abortion in Nepalese societies. In the course of this research, the respondents were asked for their responses on various causes of abortion in the societies. The result shows that the main cause of performing abortion is health of mother (84.8%). Similarly, the factors of economic problems and unwanted children are equally responsible which make pregnant women to abort their pregnancies. Each of them contribute 74.9 percent of the causes of doing abortion. In the same way, another cause for abortion is due to denial of husband to bear a baby (57.1%), which is followed by birth spacing (36.4%), counselling of doctors/nurses to terminate pregnancy (33.8%) and other causes which contribute to abortion are of only 18.6 percent (Table-4).

Table-4: Distribution of respondents' opinion on causes of performing abortion, Nepal, 2021

Responses	Number	Percent*
Health of mother	196	84.8
Economic problems	199	74.9
Unwanted children	173	74.9
Counselling of doctors/nurses to terminate pregnancy	78	33.8
Denial of husband to bear a baby	132	57.1
Birth spacing	84	36.4
Others	43	18.6
Total	905	391.8

Source: Field Survey, 2021, *Multiple responses

Service Providers of Abortion

In Nepal, abortion has been legalized in some cases from 2002 and came into practice after two years. Now, there are various kinds of service providers such as doctors, nurses, health assistants, and others. While conducting this research among the adolescent girl students in community schools of Kathmandu district, the researcher received their different responses regarding the service providers. The data exhibits that highly acclaimed service providers of abortion are doctors (72%). The health assistants/workers are chosen only by the 19.2 percent of the respondents. Likewise, 6 percent of them chose nurses/midwives while other 2 percent preferred relatives/friends. Very small percentage of the respondents (0.8%) liked others as the service providers of abortion. Thus, majority of the respondents responded that doctors are the best service providers for them (Table-5).

Table-5: Distribution of the respondent's opinions towards abortion service providers, Nepal, 2021

Service providers	Number	Percent
Doctors	180	72.0
Nurses/midwives	15	6.0
Health assistants/workers	48	19.2
Relatives/friends	5	2.0
Others	2	0.8

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Abortion Service Centers

Since its legalization, abortion service has been delivered from different government and non-government organizations which are registered institutions according to the existing legal provision of Nepal. The result reveals slightly more than fifty percent of the respondents believed that government hospitals are more preferred places to perform abortion services. Likewise, nearly 24 percent of the respondents chose Marie Stopes as the better place to conduct abortion. Similarly, 9.2 percent of the respondent preferred private hospitals while 8.4 percent chose non-government institutions for this purpose. About only 8 percent of the participants preferred other places to perform abortion (Table-6).

Table-6: Distribution of the respondent's opinion on places of abortion service, Nepal, 2021

Places of abortion service	Number	Percent
Government hospitals	128	51.2
Non-government institutions	21	8.4
Private hospitals	23	9.2
Marie Stops	59	23.6
Others	19	7.6
Total	250	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Procedures for Abortion

In the course of this research, only the respondents possessing the information of abortion procedures were asked about their appropriateness in terminating pregnancy. The data reveals that 62.7 percent of the girl students responded medical abortion procedure is suitable procedure to terminate pregnancy. Nearly 13 percent of the respondents regarded dilation and curettage as appropriate abortion procedure. In the same way, 8.2 percent of the respondents preferred injection while 6.1 percent chose manual vacuum aspiration. About 10 percent of the respondents preferred others procedures (Table-7).

Table-7: Distribution of the respondent's responses towards abortion procedures, Nepal, 2021

Procedures for abortion	Number	Percent
Medical abortion	123	62.7
Manual vacuum aspiration (MVA)	12	6.1
Injection	16	8.2
Dilation & curettage	25	12.8
Others	20	10.2
Total	196	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Conclusion

After the legalization of abortion in Nepal, many adolescent girls and women have been performing abortion practices across the nation. Though the contraceptive devices are easily available in the society, a significant number of Nepalese young girls and women chose abortion as an alternative method of family planning. Conducted repeatedly without the medical consultants, it has created sterility in the women. In such a situation, the government of Nepal has emphasized the safe abortion program across the nation through various agencies.

Majority of the girl students showed the possession of information about abortion and abortion services. In the same way, 80 percent of adolescent girl students of community schools were aware of legality of abortion. This demands the concerned authority to emphasize on the remaining others to provide appropriate legal knowledge regarding this matter. The major reasons to perform abortion include poor health of mother, poverty, undesirability of children, and child spacing. Similarly, a large number of respondents regarded doctors as the best service providers. For more than fifty percent of the respondents, government hospitals were more preferred places to perform abortion while nearly one-fourth of the respondents chose Marie Stopes as better place. In the same way, nearly two-third of the participants responded medical abortion as a suitable procedure to terminate pregnancy.

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