

## Girl Students' Attitude towards Abortion and Abortion Services in Nepal

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### Abstract

Varieties of social artifacts affect attitudes of adolescent girls towards abortion and abortion services in Nepal. Prevalence of Hindu religious beliefs and traditional socio-cultural norms and values in the existing Nepalese societies, people feel much uncomfortable in the performance of abortion among adolescents. This study explores the attitude of adolescent girl students in our community schools regarding the aforementioned services. The study mainly bases on primary data gained from 250 adolescent girl students of our community schools. It also shows the picture regarding attitude towards abortion and its services of the adolescent's girl students. For such a multi-cultural and religious nation, the traditional values, norms and beliefs have been affecting to perform the services. The result exhibits that almost 61 percent of the respondents trust the existing socio-cultural norms and values that affect the attitude towards abortion and its services, while 57 percent of them believe religious norms and beliefs affect the services. In the same way, only 43 percent of the respondents show confidence in prevailing abortion facilities. This shows that majority of the respondents do not believe on the existing abortion services. A large number of the participants respond that post abortion care is necessary after performing abortion. However, about 74 percent of the respondents believe unnecessary pregnancies should be terminated adopting safety measures rather than letting them to give birth. Resultantly, this study leads us, due to the effects of modernization, globalization and mechanization, adolescent girls in Nepal are in the growing tendency to take abortion performances positively. For this, various activities like awareness campaign, curricula, training and seminar, and media campaign to the marginalized and underprivileged sections work for the decrease of abortion ignorance.

**Keywords:** Adolescent girl, safe abortion, attitude, religion, unintended pregnancy, & abortion service

### Introduction

Globally about 73 million induced abortions are performed throughout the year in 2020. More abortions were performed in developing regions than in developed ones (WHO, 2021). At present, Nepal is not an exception. Though it has been legalized conditionally right from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people are still in debatable position regarding

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abortion and its practices. In Nepal, about 323,000 abortions were performed in 2014. The data exhibit that 42 percent of the abortions were carried out legally in registered institutions while remaining others (58%) performed in unregistered institutions or induced by the pregnant woman herself (GI & CREHPA, 2017).

Adolescents are prone to the risk of 00unintentional pregnancy leading to perform unsafe abortion. In such a situation, the adolescent girls should possess proper information regarding abortion and abortion services. For this they need appropriate method to perform propersexual behavior, pregnancy, abortion, and post abortion care (Vongxay et al., 2020). Aryal (2021) argues that adolescent girls should have right to choose the right way for doing abortion. Nepalese adolescent girls have good knowledge about abortion and abortion services. He adds that Nepalese socio-cultural and religious norms and beliefs significantly influence abortion and its practices. Likewise, O'Gradyet al. (2016) claim that girl students view that abortion was justified where there was a real risk to the life of the mother or in cases of fetal death. They also argue that religious devotion is an important factor of abortion and abortion practices. They further state that the performance of abortion services depends on personal as well as societal attitude and behaviors of adolescent girls.

Engelbert Bain et al. (2020) suggest that participants' attitudes towards abortion and abortion services have been obtained positive. In the same way, midwifery students have been found more positive attitude regarding this than the law and medical students. The study also exhibits that larger number of adolescentgirls wereunintentionallypregnant and they would normally perform abortion. Consequently, such section of adolescent girls had been found suffering from mental stress and social stigma. Similarly, Hendriks et. al.(2020) claim that adolescent girls take abortion and its practices as influenced by their ability to handle the cases of pregnancy and their abortion. Likewise, there was association between less-effective contraceptive use and decreasing tendency of abortion support from the parents and guardians. It was also revealed that the existing contextual socio-cultural and religious environment, and the individual's personal attitude and perception affect the abortion and its practices.

Loi et al. (2019) argue that social stigma related to women's ability in the decision-making regarding the reproductive behavior affects negatively. However, there have been highly stigmatic attitudes and beliefs regarding abortion and abortion services among the adolescent students in Western Kenya. The research also reveals that abortion and its practices got highly stigmatized among the Western Kenyan adolescent students. Munakampe et al. (2018) insist that adolescents had been continuously suffering from early pregnancy and childbirth due to the lack of accessibility and availability of contraceptives devices. Unsafe abortions also occurred due to the failure to prevent unintended pregnancies among Sub-Saharan African adolescent girls. This research also indicates the restrictions in the proper use of contractive devices as well as safe abortion services among the youth. There has been a need for an urgent response for the decreasing of unfulfilled demand of contraceptive devices, abortion information and its practices among this group.

## **Justification of the Study**

The study provides attitude of adolescent girl students of community schools towards abortion and abortion services. This study also offers perceptions about the safety abortion and its services in Nepalese society. The research work will remain worthy for the adolescent girls, their guardians, booklovers and concerned experts. The study also explores how our existing social, cultural and religious norms and values continuously affect the attitude regarding abortion and abortion services. This research justifies the need for appropriate knowledge, skills to the adolescent girls to perform the safe behaviors of abortion and abortion practices in Nepalese society. Hence, the citizens including civil society, political leaders, lawyers, bureaucrats, educationists and stakeholders need to play positive and creative roles in minimizing unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortion practices.

## **Objectives**

The study has been to explore the attitude of adolescent girl students of community schools in terms of abortion and abortion services. The research also examines the effects of socio-cultural norms and values in them along with the shift in personal and societal attitudes in modern society.

## **Data and Methodology**

This research work depends on primary sources. The researcher also uses secondary data to carry out the study. The nature of this research bases on descriptive design that applies quantitative method. The researcher employs responses from 250 secondary level adolescent girl students of the selected community schools in Kathmandu District of Nepal.

## **Interpretation and Analysis of the Data**

### **Attitude towards Abortion and Abortion Services**

Among the developing countries like Nepal, where there is growing tendency towards the use of modern technology, skills, and knowledge, abortion and abortion practices which are changing as the passage of time, and personal and societal perception and behaviors. The social factors like globalization, modernization, international migration, and women empowerment, favorable government policies regarding abortion also contribute to bringing change in the attitudes towards abortion and its practices. The practice of abortion though performed legally more after its legalization, has been affected by socio-cultural and religious norms and values of Nepalese society.

In Nepalese society, there is still a debate on the appropriateness of abortion practices. Though it is accepted by abortion law of Nepal, its stakeholders have mixed feelings in this regard. Abortion services and its practices, when they are performed properly, do not make any harmful effects adolescent women. However, if conducted such practices improperly, a number of bad results we are likely to go through. And, the performers and their relations will be the sufferer. This research paper centers around the observation of the representative respondents from the study area. They were asked a set of questions for their responses about the appropriateness of practice of abortion facilities in our society. Nearly 58 percent of the adolescent girl students responded that the performance of abortion and abortion services are suitable in our society while for others (42%) those

practices are not appropriate (Table-1). It shows a significant number of girl students at community schools still lack awareness about abortion and abortion services.

Table-1: Distribution of respondents' opinion on appropriateness of abortion practice in the Nepalese society, 2021

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	144	57.6
No	106	42.4
Total	250	100.0

*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

As a multi-cultural and multi-religious country, Nepal accepts social-cultural variations. Based on this concept, the researcher interrogated the participants regarding whether socio-cultural values, norms and beliefs affect abortion practices or not. The response shows that majority of the participants viewed our existing socio-culture norms and values influence abortion and its services, while around 39 percent of them responded of not having any effects of socio-cultural norms and values to such practices. This shows that there is necessary to aware the remaining others about the effects of social norms and values to abortion and its practices (Table-2).

Table-2: Distribution of respondents' opinion regarding the effects of socio-cultural norms and values towards the abortion and abortion services, 2021

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	153	61.2
No	97	38.8
Total	250	100.0

*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

Rich in cultural heritage, Nepal possesses diverse ethnic groups. They have got their unique features in terms of language, caste/ethnicity, religion, locality, and geographical situation. This certainly matters their personal and societal behaviors. Abortion and its practices cannot be an exception. In other words, socio-cultural, religious norms, beliefs, and values affect performances in terms of abortion and its practices. Characterized with multi religiosity, Nepalese societies get affected in the matter of abortion and its practices due to different religious beliefs. The researcher requested participants in this regard. They were asked whether religious norms and values influence abortion and its services or not. The result exhibits that about 57 percent of the participants accept the Nepalese religious norms and values affect abortion and its services while 43 percent of them denied of having any effect of religious norms and values in those matters (Table-3). Majority of the participants agreed that religious beliefs affect abortion and its services.

Table-3: Distribution of respondents' opinion regarding the effects of religious norms and values towards the abortion and abortion services, 2021

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	142	56.8
No	108	43.2
Total	250	100.0

*Source: Field Survey, 2021*

In Nepal, the prevalence of unwanted pregnancies occurs widely. There might be several causes. In this regard, the researcher requested the participants for their opinion regarding unnecessary pregnancy of a woman whether to terminate in safe place or not. The result shows that majority of the participant (73.6%) responded abortion of unwanted pregnancies should be conducted in the safe place rather than giving birth, while just more than 26 percent of them viewed against performing abortion (Table-4).

Table-4: Distribution of respondents' opinion regarding whether unwanted pregnancy should be aborted in safe place or to perform birth, 2021

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	184	73.6
No	66	26.4
Total	250	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Upon the query to the respondents, whether post abortion care is necessary, they responded differently. Majority of them (70.8%) responded that post abortion care is necessary after performing the abortion. On the other hand, about 29 percent of them responded that there's not necessary of post abortion care after termination of a pregnancy (Table-5). It is, thus, adolescent girl students of community schools have good information regarding post abortion care services. Remaining others, however, proper knowledge of post abortion care is needed. Despite suffering complications after most recent abortions, Aryal (2013) claims that less number of Nepalese women use post-abortion care services. A number of causes are behind this. They are social stigma, poverty, religious belief, gender discrimination, geographical difficulties, and lack of skillful manpower. This shows for the need to formulate and implement appropriate plans and policies to address post abortion care services. For this there needs to be healthy coordination among three layers of government.

Table-5: Distribution of respondents' opinion regarding the necessity of post abortion care,

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	177	70.8
No	73	29.2
Total	250	100.0

2021

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Abortion is considered safe when it is performed in accordance with World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and standards, and only when it is performed by a trained and experienced health worker in a registered institution (Ghimire et al., 2021). Different authorized institutions in Nepal include government hospitals, private hospitals, non-government institutions, Marie Stopes and many others. In our context, government hospitals and Marie Stopes centers bear more common places to terminate pregnancies in comparisons to other institutions. However, some adolescent and youth pregnant girls are

still found to be performing abortion practices illegally and unsafe places. Due to this, they are more victimized by abortion related health problems. They are also prone to be suffering from social stigma. In our societies, besides skillful abortion service provider like doctors, nurses, midwives, and health assistants, private medicals, friends and relatives as well as individual herself are found performing abortion. Due to such situation abortion performers are found to be victimized.

The participants were requested for their opinion regarding the prevailing safe abortion services in the society. They responded that only 43 percent of the participants satisfied with the existing abortion services while nearly 57 percent of the respondents did not believe on the abortion and abortion services (Table-6). Therefore, concerned authority should be aware regarding the existing abortion services as well as to uplift the public trust up on them.

Table-6: Distribution of respondents' opinion towards existing safe abortion service in Nepal, 2021

Responses	Number	Percent
Yes	108	43.2
No	142	56.8
Total	250	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2021

### Conclusion

After the legalization of abortion in Nepalese society, adolescent girls and women have been performing abortion practices more legally. Based on the primary data obtained from 250 adolescent girl students in the selected community schools, the article presents the participants' responses in terms of their attitude towards abortion and abortion services in Nepal. The study has revealed that abortion practices are guided by religious and traditional socio-cultural structure of the Nepalese society. The existing religious norms and values of the society affect attitude regarding abortion and its services. The result shows that majority of the participants prefer to abort the unwanted pregnancies in the safer places rather than letting them to give birth. Regarding the prevailing safe abortion services, comparatively less number of respondents are found to be satisfied with the existing abortion services while nearly 57 percent of the respondents hardly believe on those services. Upon the query to the respondents, whether post abortion care is necessary, the respondents have different opinions. Majority of them believe that post abortion care after performing the abortion is quite essential while about one fourth of them don't see the need for care after the termination of a pregnancy. This reveals that adolescent girl students of community schools have good information regarding post abortion care. The study shows that all the levels of government bodies and other stakeholders should perform effective roles to reduce misconceptions about abortion and its practices in Nepal.

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