

FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN TO UNDERGO INDUCED ABORTION

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The intent of this study was to investigate the factors affecting women to undergo induced abortion in Sri Lanka where any form of abortion is discouraged, socially condemned, and completely illegal, but it is rather tragic that all unconfirmed sources reveal that there are around 1000-2000 induced abortions practiced per day throughout the country.

Data were collected at an undisclosed private abortion clinic, located in a city in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka. A purposive, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual sample of 25 women was selected at the said abortion clinic to understand the magnitude of the problem that has prevailed in our society for a long time. Line-by-line content, contextual and thematic data analyses were performed to investigate the complexity of induced abortion.

The results of the study reveal that women who resorted to induced abortion experienced numerous psychological, social and economic problems from the very moment that they knew the concerned pregnancy was an unwanted one till they rid themselves the fetus at the closest available abortion clinic. Unmarried women were much more likely to terminate their pregnancies than married women, according to the present study. However, for some women, especially unmarried and sexually victimized ones, an unwanted pregnancy, on the one hand, was not only an individual dilemma, but also, became a family matter and a social disgrace.

The findings of the present study reflect that mothers of the women who underwent induced abortion at the particular abortion clinic had played a more important role than their fathers in making the decision either to terminate the pregnancy or continue with the gestation, specifically, when women were not married. Also the study indicates that women had multiple reasons for seeking induced abortion to end pregnancies at the particular abortion clinic. Of them, socio-economic factors showed up in this study as the most important considering what influenced women to resort to induced abortion regardless of post-abortion complications that were likely to result from such unsafe ventures.

Finally, the findings of the study point to the need of a formal and compulsory sex education scheme to combat abortion and reproductive health-related problems in Sri Lankan society in general. It is speculated in this study that existing law and traditional moral values attached to sexuality in Sri Lankan culture should have primary consideration in any changes anticipated in contemporary Sri Lankan society with respect to this grave situation.