Original Article

Legality of Induced Abortion

Knowledge about Legality of Induced Abortions in Rural Area of Wahga

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To identify prevalence of Ill-legally induced Abortions in ever-married women of reproductive age group residing.

Study Design: Descriptive / cross sectional study

Place and Duration of Study: This study was conducted at Diyal Village, Wahga Town Lahore from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

Materials and Methods: Women who had abortion during the last five years were enrolled for the study. A semi-structured questionnaire with open and close-ended questions was used to gather the information for abortions.

Results: Among the 746 houses in the village eighty six women experienced 402 pregnancies during their reproductive span. Among these 402 pregnancies, number of abortions was 127/402 (31.6%). Out of 127 abortions included per inclusion criterion 70/120 (58.3%) induced abortions were reported. While 50/120 (41.7%) were spontaneous. Looking into legality of abortions, 66/120 (55%) were illegal while 54/120 (45%) were legal abortions. Out of 70 induced abortions 66/70 (94.28%) were illegally induced while 4/70 (5.71%) were induced on legal grounds.

Conclusions: High number of Induced abortions due to Ill-legality status is demanding for increased attention of policy makers and planners regarding abortion laws.

Key Words: Legality, Prevalence, Induced abortions.

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INTRODUCTION

An "abortus" is defined "as a fetus or embryo removed or expelled from the uterus during the first half of gestation - 20 weeks or less, or in the absence of accurate dating criteria, born weighing <500 g".[1] Abortion caused purposely is known as induced abortion, or less frequently, induced miscarriage. Mostly this term is considered as induced abortions. Late termination of pregnancy is a process similar to abortion but performed at a stage when the fetus can possibly survive after delivery.[2] Globally countries with varying religious and moral values have different policies and practices related to abortion. But now as support for women's independence has enhanced globally, abortion is more seriously being considered and discussed for useful abortion policy's implementation. Continuous working across the globe from time to time at various places. 20th century is the era when bans on abortion were cancelled in most of and uniform implementation of policies is required.[3]

Abortion laws and their implementation has varied the western countries. This was achieved as a result of efforts made by social campaigners, women's rights groups and doctors. But it has faced a continuous resistance as the legality status of abortion in the west was regularly confronted by anti-abortion groups.[4] Globally huge variation observed in practice of abortion laws due to difference in religious values, social and cultural characteristics.[5] In countries where abortion is opposed, is based on the fact that an embryo or fetus is a human with a right to life and conducting an abortion is equivalent to murder.[6,7] At places where abortion is favored it is based on the fact that every woman has got a right to take decision about her body.[8] An abortion allowed on medical grounds for saving the life of a pregnant woman having medical problems, and continuation of pregnancy can end up in deterioration of health both physically and mentally then it is called therapeutic abortion.[9] Although controversial and sensitive issue due to religious values and legality status in Pakistan, still it was important considering the wellbeing of females. So the present study was designed to focus the abortions based on legality whether induced or spontaneous in a community setting. The findings of the present study could be the base for the future research for increasing awareness among females regarding abortion Laws in Pakistan.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in reproductive age group females with abortion during last five years in Diyal village near Wahga Town Lahore from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. All 746 houses were surveyed and it was observed that 139 women had abortion during the last five years so they were enrolled but only 86 gave consent for sharing information. A semi-structured questionnaire with open and close-ended questions was used to gather the information for abortion. These women had 127 abortions out of which 120 abortions during the last five years were included. Data entry was done on SPSS version 20. Age groups, marital status education, income, total pregnancies, live births, still births, abortions and current pregnancies presented by frequencies and percentages. Total pregnancies, abortions, live births, still births, abortions were also presented by mean, minimum and maximum number also.

RESULTS

Table No.1: Socio-demographic information of women

Variable	No.	%
Education		
Can't read or write her name in Urdu	15	17.4
Between 1-5 grade education	28	32.6
Between 6-10th grade education	25	29.1
>10th grade education	18	20.9
Family Income		
<10,000	16	18.6
10,000-25,000	38	44.2
>25,000	32	37.2
Marital status		
Husband lives with wife	73	84.9
Husband lives else were	5	5.8
Separated	6	7
Widow	1	1.2
Divorced	1	1.2
Age		
≤25	28	32.6
26-35	51	59.3
≥36	7	8.1

Among 86 females, 28 (32.6%) were <25 years and only 7 (8.1%) were of age 36 years or above. There were 18 (20.9%) with education above 10th standard, 15 (17.6%) completely illiterate and rest had education either 1-5th standard or 6-10th standard. Majority 38 (44.2%) belong to families with income 10–25 thousand, and 16 (17.6%) had family income less than 10 thousands. Most 73 (84.9%) were found between socio-demographic variables and different abortion varieties (Table 1). Total pregnancies experienced by 86 women were 402. Live births were 222 (55.22%), still births 46 (11.44%), abortions 127 (31.59%) and 7(1.74%) were currently pregnant (Table 2). Live births/woman with abortion found to be 2.58, still births/woman with abortion is 0.53 and abortions/women with abortion found to be 1.48. The ratio of live births/abortions is 1.74, live births/still births 4.82 (Table 3). Out of 120 abortions included per inclusion criterion70/120 (58.3%) induced abortions were reported. While 50/120 (41.7%) were spontaneous. Looking into legality of abortions, 66/120 (55%) were illegal while 54/120 (45%) were legal abortions. Out of 70 induced abortions 66/70 (94.28%) were illegally induced while 4/70 (5.71%) were induced on legal grounds (Table 4).

Table No.2: Obstetric history of 86 women

Pregnancies	No.	%
Live births	222	55.22
Still births	46	11.44
Abortions	127	31.6
Current pregnancy	7	1.74
Total	402	100

Table No.3: Descriptive measures for the obstetric history

	Total Pregnancies	Live Births	Still Births	Abortions
Mean	4.67	2.58	0.53	1.48
Minimum	1	0	0	1
Maximum	11	9	3	4

Table No.4: Abortion status by legality

	Ill-legal		Legal	
	n	%	n	%
Induced	66	100	4	7.4
Spontaneous	0	0	50	92.6
Total	66	100	54	100

DISCUSSION

Eighty six women had 402 pregnancies. Among these 402 pregnancies, number of abortions was 127, which is 31.6% of the total much higher than 16.66% according to a review study stating, an estimated one pregnancy out of six ends in abortion[10] and 20% according to another study stating, an estimated one pregnancy out of five ends in abortion.[11] This high rate could be attributed to the availability of private tertiary care hospital close to this village. Out of 120 abortion cases included per study criterion, according to legality status 55% were ill-legal abortions. These results are surprising rather alarming for a community where abortion is legal on therapeutic basis otherwise considered criminal if its induced. In Pakistan abortion is legal only on therapeutic grounds but we still have high illegal abortion rate.[12-14] Globally almost 67% of abortions are performed in relatively legitimate

circumstances[10], which is much higher than 45% legal abortion status of our present study.

CONCLUSION

One of the most important Identified factor behind increased number of Induced abortions is Legality status, demanding for increased attention of policy makers and planners regarding Abortion Law and availability of services for abortions in Pakistan in spite of all restrictions about abortions.

Conflict of Interest: The study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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