

IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES OF ABORTION IN CASE OF UNWANTED PREGNANCY

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Abstract: The abortion subject is one of moral, social and legal interest, being regulated differently according to religious beliefs, culture, civilization and tradition. The reality of abortion is increasingly worrying because of both the frequency and the negative effects that follow the procedure. This paper aims to identify the causes of abortion in women with unwanted pregnancy, describing the effect of the relationship with the partner on the decision to abort, to study the effect of the financial situation and highlight the impact of religious beliefs, using a quantitative study.

Keywords: abortion, social work, planning

Introduction

The term *abortion* refers to the termination of pregnancy, from any cause before the fetus is capable of life outside the womb (Pascuț et al, 2001).

Abortion is a heavily debated subject, a classical discussion, causing arguments between those that are "pro" and those "against" (such as euthanasia, cloning, in vitro fertilization, etc.) and is regulated differently, depending on the culture and the legal system of each individual state. In Romania, abortion was liberalized at December 26, 1989 and the law requires that it can be performed up to 14 weeks of pregnancy (or up to 24 if absolutely necessary for therapeutic reasons); parental consent is not necessary for a minor.

Abortion can either be spontaneous or induced (either legally or illegally). When we are discussing an abortion made at the request of the woman, it can be done either with medication or by surgical methods.

There are various options for an abortion provoked by drugs:

- *Mifepristone* (blocks the effects of progesterone)
- *Methotrexat* (stops placental growth)
- *Misoprostol* (produces uterine contractions)
- *Prostaglandines* (causes contractions of the uterus) (Ciochina, Iftimie, 2003)

A surgical abortion can be done by using various methods:

- Aspiration abortion (removes the pregnancy by suction)
- Dilation and evacuation (the pregnancy is removed using a narrow forceps through the cervix) (<https://www.bpas.org/abortion-care/abortion-treatments/surgical-abortion/> accessed in February 2016)

It is widely known that abortion can have various consequences, in terms of physical and emotional wellbeing. The physical effects may include uterine bleeding, uterine perforation, infection, menstrual abnormalities, cervical lesion, infertility or secondary infertility, miscarriage. (Pășcuț, 2001) The emotional effects may include depression, anxiety, sadness, shame, helplessness, guilt, hostility toward self and others, suicidal behavior, sleep disturbances, post-traumatic stress disorder. (Vought, 1991)

The abortion issue can be approached from various points of view: historically, from a legal and sociological point of view, as a subject of psychology, and also cultural and bioethical aspects. Thus, social work can have a role in the counseling and the intervention with a woman facing an unwanted pregnancy, by getting involved in prevention activities, activities for social reintegration, referring the client towards other competent services, etc. An important aspect in the decision on whether to abort is the financial situation. For women that find it hard to enter the labor market, social economy can be a valid solution, gaining wide acceptance because of the economic and social potential for the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. (Goian, Vasiluță-Ștefănescu, 2013). Also, women must generally face more and more difficult family responsibilities than men, the role of mother needing more effort and time than that of father, with a direct influence on career development and opportunities for women. (Vasiluță-Ștefănescu & Vasiluță-Ștefănescu, 2012)

There are two parties when talking about arguments for or against abortion: “pro life” are people that are against abortion while “pro choice” are the ones that support the woman’s right to make the decision.

Alcorn (1992, p. 80) a “pro life” supporter argues that “One person’s right to a preferred lifestyle is not greater than another person’s life”. But here come into play the much discussed question: “Is the human embryo a person?”; “Does the fetus have any rights?” Biology, philosophy, religion will answer these questions differently but the abortion issue is clearly controversial and the conflict of values cannot be easily solved.

Methodology

The present analysis could be linked to the paradigm of social constructionism, attitudes to maternity and family responsibilities, being framed in the structural orientation. (Vasiluță-Ștefănescu & Vasiluță-Ștefănescu, 2012)

The purpose of this study is to identify the causes of abortion in women that face/faced an unwanted pregnancy. The specific objectives of the study are the following:

- To describe the effect of the relationship with their partner on the decision to abort
- To study the effect of the financial situation
- To highlight the impact of religious beliefs.

The following hypotheses underpin the study:

- A supportive partner means a lower chance to choose an abortion
- The lack of a stable partner will influence the decision to adopt
- If the financial status is poor, the risk to choose an abortion is higher
- If the woman has strong spiritual/religious beliefs, the risk to abort is lower

The working method of this study is quantitative, based on a structured questionnaire with 16 questions: 5 demographic items (age, rural/urban environment, level of education, professional status, ethnicity) and also items about the relationship status, financial situation, religious/spiritual beliefs and practices, among with a question on actually having an abortion and also a question on the number of abortions until the completion of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were applied in the maternity ward of the Drobeta Turnu Severin Emergency County Hospital in March 2017.

The sample consists of 55 women from rural and urban areas, aged between 13 and 45 years. Due to the sensitivity of the chosen subject, the sample is small, this being one of the limitations of this study. The questionnaire was anonymous.

For analysing, storing and interpreting the data, the program SPSS(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 20 was used.

Results and discussions

The distribution by age is as follows: 4 women are between 12-18 years; 22 between 18-30; 21 are between 30-40 years and 8 are between 40-45 years. The level of education: 4 - primary school, 5- lower secondary school, 24 – highschool, 8 – post secondary education, 11 – Bachelor degree, 3 – Masters degree.

For this sample, the number of abortions in each case is ranging between 1 and 11 procedures.

The first assumption was that a poor financial situation will be a strong factor influencing the decision to abort the pregnancy and for these women it has proven to be true as one respondent (1.8%) has no income, one respondent (1.8%) has an income of less than 500 RON / month, 30 (54.5%) have an income between 500 and 1000 RON / month, and 11 (20%) have incomes between 1000 and 1500 RON / month. Also, when asked if they evaluate their own income as sufficient for a decent living, 42 respondents (76,4%) stated that their income is not enough. All of these women had at least one abortion. So, for this sample we can say that if the income is small, then the chances of an abortion increase significantly.

Regarding the lack of a stable partner as an influence on the decision to abort, we mention that 48 respondents (representing 87.27%) had a stable partner when they decided to abort. Thus, these women choose to give up the pregnancy even if they had a stable life partner.

Also, the respondents stated that in 32 (58,2%) of the cases, their partner agreed and even advised them to abort and in 13 cases (23,6%) the partner was not against abortion and let the woman decide what to do.

Concerning the religious conviction, 21 (38.2%) of the respondents answered that abortion is a serious sin although they already had at least one abortion. On the other hand, 20 (36 4%) of the respondents said that abortion is not a sin as grave as the church supports.

Although abortion is not accepted among the religious cults, the respondents did not seem to take this necessarily into account as 8 (14,54%) respondents answered that they frequently participate to religious services and rituals but also aborted at least once.

Conclusions

As Mihaela Gavrilă-Ardelean states (2008), abortion remains widely used in Romania, largely due to ignorance and lack of education.

Family planning is a fundamental right for persons to decide when to have children. Multiple types of contraceptives exist, classified differently; although it cannot be said that an ideal contraceptive exists, there are a few characteristics that can describe an ideal contraceptive: it is 100% efficient and safe, with no adverse effects, it does not interfere with sexual activity, fertility is reversible, it is easy to administer, easy to be produced and managed, it is user dependent and accepted from ethnic, political and religious points of view. (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2007)

It is worth mentioning that 4 women that took part in this study are between 12 and 18 years old. Teen pregnancy and abortions are a difficult reality that needs to be changed with the help of education, prevention services and strong social policies for families.

Likewise, the number of abortions in the case of the respondents is also alarming as most of them had at least one procedure, showing that their attitudes and behaviours don't change even after their first experience.

This research showed that the most important factor in the decision to abort is a difficult financial situation. Also, if the pregnant woman's partner agrees and encourages abortion, then the chances for women to abort increase (58.2% of respondents were advised by the partner to give up the pregnancy). The lack of a stable partner didn't prove to be an important factor, 87.27% of the respondents had a stable partner when they aborted. Regarding the relationship between religious convictions and abortion the situation is (apparently?) paradoxical.

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