

Public perception towards ABORTION- As a fundamental Right for Women

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Abstract

Abortion is the termination of pregnancy which is one of the most controversial issues worldwide which talks about moral, Ethical and legal frameworks. Abortion should be a fundamental right for women, particularly in situations where continuing the pregnancy poses a serious risk to the woman's life. At the same time, abortion raises moral concerns, as terminating an unborn foetus can be viewed as morally wrong. Therefore, abortion presents a complex ethical issue that requires balancing a woman's right to life and health with the moral value of unborn life. Abortion has become the common topic in modern world, which contains the purposely aborting because of economic and other ideologies and other side abortion happens due to unhealthy conditions and food habits. This study investigates public perception towards abortion as a fundamental right for women which mainly focuses on social viewpoints, the extent of public awareness and the community attitudes. Reproductive autonomy which is a fundamental human right to have women their own fertility, sexuality and reproductive health. A mixed-method combining survey data and case analysis was implemented, The findings reveal mixed opinions, abortion should be a fundamental right for women, particularly when the pregnancy poses a risk to the woman's life; however, others believe that abortion is morally wrong because it involves the killing of an unborn foetus.

1. Introduction

The abortion is the controversial intense subject which includes ethical, legal frameworks, cultural and religious norms and health concerns. Abortion is expulsion of products of conception: the fertilized ovum or developing foetus of any womb age prematurely. Abortion is of types that contains- Accidental, Spontaneous, and Induced. Particularly induced are those which are caused by human effort involves medical and criminal types. The main concern that we discuss here is that abortion should be a fundamental right for women or not, abortion also have linked with reproductive autonomy and gender equality. Womb Interference is infallible method, It is the ultimate resort of the criminal abortionist. Regardless of legal

sections and also reforms public perception matters, societal reactions strongly influence abortion in social, psychological, and legal ways. When society stigmatizes abortion, women feel shame, fear, and social isolation, which can discourage them from seeking safe medical care during pregnancy, societal attitudes towards abortion are influenced by many factors such as religious and cultural norms and social expectations of motherhood. Religious values have a strong influence on view toward abortion, shaping moral beliefs. Many religions view life as sacred from conception, which leads followers to oppose abortion on moral grounds. These beliefs can create social pressure on women to take decision and continue pregnancies and contribute to stigma surrounding abortion. Understanding of public perception thus essential and very necessary for effective law-making and protection of women's reproductive rights. Cultural norms strongly affect behaviour toward abortion by shaping beliefs about gender roles, family expectations, and morality. In cultures where motherhood is highly valued and women are expected to prioritize family over personal choice, abortion is often discouraged. This can pressure women to continue unwanted pregnancies or seek unsafe abortions in secret. But in liberal cultures personal choice is prioritise over cultural norms. Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) act 1971 which gives restricted right for women to abortion. The act helps women to abort pregnancy as a result of rape and even when to avoid handicapped baby where pregnancies are terminated for safe and secure abortions.

Theoretical Framework

According to Human right perspective, declining to legal abortion may violate women's fundamental freedom but there is a difference towards the acceptability of abortion, the moral and ethical side of foetus and which leads to legal and ethical conflicts. The issue of abortion can be understood through multiple theoretical perspectives, including feminist theory, ethical theory, sociocultural theory, and religious theory. **Feminist theory** views abortion as a matter of women's bodily autonomy and reproductive rights. It emphasizes a woman's right to make decisions about their own body, health. **Ethical theories** present differing views. From a utilitarian perspective, abortion may be justified if it reduces suffering or prevents harm, especially when a woman's life or health is at risk. **Sociocultural theory** explains how cultural norms, social stigma, and societal expectations influence attitudes toward abortion. Social pressure, gender roles, and community values can affect women's decisions and access to abortion services. **Religious theory** frames abortion based on spiritual beliefs about the sanctity of life. Many religions oppose abortion, viewing life as sacred from conception, while some allow it in exceptional cases, such as to save the woman's life. The fundamental right that are violating while denying of abortion are Right to life and personal liberty (article 21), Right to privacy, Right to Health-(Fundamental Human Right), Right to dignity and rule of law

2. Literature review

According to Miriam Wayne "Burying abortion in stigma: The fundamental right no one wants to discuss" this case study shows religious morality and weak feminism, political and media influence results in restrictions and reproductive injustice for women and also talks about ignoring the real legal, economic and structural barriers Women face in accessing abortion as a fundamental right.

In another study- Rachel Rebouchi- social and legal studies "abortion rights as human rights" talked about how human have contributed to the recognition of abortion rights for women to access health care.

According to Ann Furedi- “Wrong but the right thing to do: Public Opinion on Abortion”- Public opinion on abortion is ambivalent views it as regrettable but unavoidable political issue.

The New Indian Express (E-paper) - Kerala recorded a 76.43% rise in abortion cases over nine years, increasing from 17,025 in 2014–15 to 30,037 in 2023–24, according to HMIS data.

A 2015 report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) found that between 2007 and 2011, 67% of abortions in India were classified as unsafe, varying from 45% to 78% across states. Unsafe abortions remain a major concern, especially in regions with limited access to medical facilities.

Other studies highlight religion and cultural norms which influences opposition to abortion and gender differences have also been noted. However literature reveals a gap in understanding how public perception influences the abortion laws.

3. Objectives

1. To examine societal attitude towards abortion as a fundamental right
2. To assess public awareness regarding abortion laws and women’s reproductive autonomy
3. To examine relation between demographic differences and public perception

4. Methodology

A Mixed- method was adopted, a survey-based quantitative analysis was done by using structured questionnaire. A Total of 120 participants from various background is participated. While quantitative study was done using case studies and data were analysed using percentage analysis and simple statistical tools.

Result

The results indicate that the respondents were predominantly young adults, with 89.6% aged between 21 and 30 years, and a relatively balanced gender distribution (54.8% male and 43.5% female). More than half of the respondents (53%) perceived abortion as a fundamental right for women, while 21% expressed conditional support. Awareness of the legal framework was moderate, as 49.6% of respondents were aware that abortion is legally permitted under specific conditions under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act. A majority (67%) agreed that women should have the right to make decisions regarding their own reproductive health; however, overall public support for abortion rights remained neutral, reflecting ambivalence in societal attitudes. Support for abortion varied by context, with 45.1% endorsing it in cases of severe fetal abnormality and a higher proportion (70%) supporting it in instances of rape or incest. Slightly over half of the respondents (52.7%) believed that existing abortion laws adequately protect women’s rights, while 75.2% felt that both parents should have a role in abortion-related decision-making. Notably, an overwhelming majority (92%) believed that increased reproductive health awareness could significantly influence and potentially transform public attitudes toward abortion.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study reveal that public perception toward abortion as a fundamental right for women is moderately supportive but largely ambivalent. While a majority of respondents recognized women's autonomy in reproductive decision-making and supported abortion under specific circumstances such as rape, incest, or severe fetal abnormality, unconditional acceptance of abortion as a fundamental right was not universal. Awareness of legal provisions under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act was only moderate, indicating the need for improved dissemination of legal and health-related information. The belief that both parents should participate in abortion decisions reflects the continued influence of familial and societal norms on individual reproductive choices. Importantly, the overwhelming agreement that reproductive health awareness can change public attitudes underscores the critical role of education and awareness programs in shaping informed and supportive perspectives. Overall, the study concludes that although there is growing recognition of women's reproductive rights, persistent neutrality and conditional acceptance highlight the need for targeted policy initiatives, legal awareness campaigns, and public education to strengthen societal support for abortion as a fundamental right for women.

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