

STRATHMORE UNIVERSITY

9TH ANNUAL ETHICS CONFERENCE

UNVEILING THE MIND OF
KENYAN
UNDERGRADUATES

MOTIVES FOR ABORTION

Kananu Imathiu
Kiao Emice
Kimari Lucy

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

Abortion has become a highly volatile moral issue in which neutrality proves almost impossible (Novak, 1993). Looking back in time, the concept proves itself not uncommon even to the most primitive societies where feticide for instance, was considered one of the ‘abominations of Egypt’ (Bleich, 1968). For the Kenyan context, this is reflected in what has been termed as ‘female crimes’ whereby abortion accounts for 84% of these crimes by young women aged 16 – 25 years (Njonjo, 2010). With such statistics, it is quite clear why this topic is heavily studied and researched on. It must be highlighted though, that people’s views on abortion reflect their beliefs on fundamentally important issues such as when life begins, when the rights of the fetus become equal to the rights of the mother and whether or not we have complete sovereignty over our own bodies (Gleeson, Forde, Bates, Powell, Jones & Draper, 2008).

Studies on abortion have covered numerous subjects, ranging from the ethics of abortion, its legality, and the reasons why people procure abortions. Research has been done on different contexts, ranging from America and Europe to Africa and Asia.

Studies conducted in Africa have tended to focus on the use of risky methods to procure clandestine abortions and the complications that arise from these (Svanemyr & Sunders 2007). Most research done in Africa is a generalization of the Sub-Saharan circumstance, which does not realistically convey the situation in the different countries.

Why then, it may be asked is the development of this particular research important? What contribution does it hope to advance on previously undertaken studies?

The view of the researchers has been sparked by interests in the area of Freedom. Burke (2010), on a discourse on freedom affirms that many young people today maintain that personal freedom, freedom in personal conduct, is increasing. Man, he goes on to say, is free and responsible because he can choose. Yet it is still wanting that Generation Y misunderstands the true concepts of freedom (Gross, 2012). In the case of the abortion choice, commonly referred to as ‘pro-choice’, young people clearly show what they want to be free from, i.e. responsibility.

But what should they be *free for?*, Burke asks. With less and less capability of seeing any really worthwhile use to put one's freedom into (Burke, 2010), this paper brings to light the motives that justify (undergraduate) students' exercise of freedom with regard to the life of an unborn child.

1.2 Problem statement

Statistics show that the number of clandestine abortions is high, with a report by Guttmacher (2012) estimating it to be at 2.4 million in East Africa.

This research seeks to uncover the underlying reason undergraduate students in Kenya might procure abortions. It also aims at determining the view students have of the unborn child and whether this has any impact on their decision regarding abortion.

1.3 Purpose

We hypothesize that the underlying reason for procuring abortions among Kenyan undergraduate students may be due to the adverse social effect that having a child may have on the lives of the students. This may be in the form of stigma, reputation being tainted, burdens on their relationships, and so on. This paper therefore seeks to establish whether social impact is the main motivation for abortion among undergraduates in Kenyan context.

1.4 Questions

- i. How do undergraduate students in Kenya view the unborn child? (is there life or not?)
- ii. What are the main reasons for abortion among undergraduate students in Kenya?
- iii. Does the view of the students have any impact on the decisions Kenyan undergraduates may make on abortion?

1.5 Objectives

- i. To find out the main reasons for abortion among the undergraduate students in Kenya
- ii. To find out how undergraduate students in Kenya view the unborn child

- iii. To find out if the students' view of the unborn child may affect their decision on abortion

CHAPTER 2

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

When a woman faces an unintended pregnancy, is she justified in choosing to terminate it? The response to this question is not straightforward; rather, it is a complex issue which has sparked a polemic debate over such topics as the right to life, where life begins and the immorality and to others the morality of abortion.

2.1.1 The existence or non-existence of the right to life

On the question on the right to life, there is a general consensus that every human person has the right to life. Alston (1990) states that a majority of international human rights instruments clearly recognize the right to life. The contention only arises when trying to determine whether the unborn child is entitled to this right. Goldenring (1985) maintains that since the brain is the only irreplaceable organ in the body which orchestrates all organ systems, then a human person should be defined by the presence of an active brain. The fetus, according to Goldenring, can be said to have a brain life eight weeks into the gestation period, before which the mass of cells cannot be said to be a human person in the medical sense. The implication of this view would be that the fetus- before it is eight weeks old- is not a *full* human being but a *potential* human being. Goldenring goes further to explain that in the medical perspective, physicians have been required to determine the time of death of a human being. By reversing these premises, one can determine when a human being can be said to exist in utero (in the uterus). Without the brain, all that there is is a mass of organs, or tissues, or cells, which – though functional- are uncoordinated and hence cannot be said to be a human being. A zygote therefore, like a mass of skin cells, has the potential to become a human being (although the probabilities of the two doing so differ) but cannot be called a human being. Using this argument, Goldenring states that it is still possible to choose the Catholic position on abortion, which is that even potential life should be preserved. However, the converse position, which is that abortion “on demand” can be made legal before the fetus is eight weeks old can also be justified.

2.1.2 “Conflicting rights”

Hewson (2001) argues that the issue of abortion concerns the autonomy and dignity of the pregnant woman herself. She views pregnancy as a neutral state which the mother should be free to terminate if she so wishes. In fact, a pregnancy is a life changing event, and because of its potential grave consequences to the life of the mother, she must be allowed to decide whether or not she wants to carry the pregnancy to term. Hewson points out that by prohibiting abortion on the grounds that it is murder, anti-abortionists force pregnant women to suffer, “no matter how distressing, painful and risky it is for them.” This is regardless of whether the women *want* to be pregnant or not. In so doing, this coercion becomes tantamount to punishment. Denying the right to abortion is unfair to a woman carrying the fetus, as she is denied the opportunity to get rid of an invading organism that would otherwise have been rejected by the mother's body were it not for some complex compensating systems in her body. She concludes by saying that what is required is not so much a new ethics of abortion as an inclusive one; a shift from moral dictatorship which is proposed by anti-abortionists who purport to uphold what is “right”.

2.1.3 Reasons for abortion

Though motives for procuring abortions vary among individuals, there are three reasons that are most commonly cited for getting abortions. These are: a negative impact on the mother's life; financial instability; relationship problems (with one's partner) or unwillingness to become a single mother. This list is not exhaustive, and often the reasons why women choose to terminate their pregnancy may sometimes be interplay of a myriad of reasons. Factors such as the mother's health being endangered by the pregnancy have become more commonly accepted as valid reasons to induce abortions and have thus been sanctioned by the laws of several countries.

Agadjanian (1998) and Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) write that in Maputo Mozambique and also in Cote d'Ivoire, abortion is used to delay childbirth in a society where use of contraception is limited. The same reason has been stated by Faúndes et al. (2004), although in this case there was no mention of limited contraception. Amissah & Moyo (2004) are in accord with Agadjanian, and Svanemyr & Sundby in the argument that African women have limited access to contraception. According to Agadjanian, the women with no children who were requesting abortions in the largest hospital in Greater Maputo were found to be younger than women who were having their first babies in the hospital. This maybe proves the role of abortion in delaying

childbirth. In Cote d'Ivoire, the method used to prevent childbirth was mostly periodic abstinence rather than what Svanemyr & Sundby term "modern contraception". The reason for this is the unavailability, high price and ignorance about "modern contraception" coupled with poor partner communication.

In addition to wanting to delay childbirth, some women may want to control their reproductive capacity. This was the case in Brazil as stated by Faúndes et al. (2004). Faúndes found that the women with no children who had aborted had a strong desire to control their reproductive faculties as compared to women who already had one or two children; the latter were more willing to accept an additional child. In Mozambique, Agadjanian (1998) claims that abortions to completely stop childbearing (taking control of reproductive faculties) was not common; rather, the intention was to either delay childbirth or to space children.

Agadjanian (1998) maintains that the most common reason quoted for Sub-Saharan women aborting is financial constraints. This is followed by the desire to continue with one's education. The two reasons were found to be correlated in some instances, but not all. Some of the Mozambique women who aborted did not particularly view abortion as a threat to their education. Even in situations where the pregnant woman was married, Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) state that abortion was sometimes procured to enable the woman to continue with her education as was the case in Cote d'Ivoire. A woman may be married early and still want to complete some level of education. The husband of such a woman may or may not be involved in the decision to abort.

To better appreciate education as a reason for abortion, we need to consider the case of an African family that has struggled to educate a child so that the child may contribute to the family's economic needs in future. Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) interviewed a similar case in their study. They concluded that if such a woman can complete at least her high school education, the chances of her getting a decently paid work and a husband with a certain socio-economic status increase, and in turn she will be able to support her family. If the woman chose to keep the child, the most likely result would be that she would have to assist her parents in whatever small venture they were doing, or she would have to find a job that is not very well paying, based on her level of education. This thwarts both her dream to be independent, as she

would have to rely on her parents' help, and, her parents' dream of being supported by their daughter in future.

Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) from their study in Ivory Coast assert that whereas in other parts of the world, demographically increased levels education and standard of living has led to increased use of contraception, in Africa, the economic and social conditions have stagnated or deteriorated while the use of contraception has increased. Therefore in Africa contraception is crisis-led, meaning that the hard times in Africa that make it hard to feed and educate children have made more and more people turn to abortion as a way to resolve this difficulty.

Closely related to the motive of financial constraints- or person as an extension of that argument, is the fact that a woman from a humble background may be more motivated to abort her child in order to continue with her education in the hope of getting a good form of employment after school and thus improving her standard of living as well as that of her family. Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) reveal that according to a narrative by one of the respondents they interviewed, the decision to keep the pregnancy was likely to culminate in the girl's education being terminated and the girl being sent home to work to support her baby. Without completing a certain level of education, the only kind of employment one can get is a low-paying one, thus proliferating the vicious cycle of poor socio-economic conditions.

Perhaps this is the reason why some women quoted various undesirable social effects as their reasons for aborting unwanted pregnancies. Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) write that some girls want to avoid disappointing their parents. Others abort because the sexual relationships they engage in are not meant to last in the first place. In Ivory Coast, a good number of women who either work for their families or come from low- income earning families engage in relationships that are unlikely to last. These relationships are motivated by the desire to have some company, or to obtain some financial support.

Parents role: Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) bring out an important factor in the decision to procure an abortion: the role of parents (guardians). According to them, abortions in Cote d'Ivoire are sometimes procured as a result of fear of parents'/ guardians' reactions to the news that their child is pregnant. Another other reason could be because young women do not envision their parents being able to support their children financially. However, an interesting point is that parents sometimes are the ones who advocate for their children to procure abortions. Parents in

Ivory Coast, according to Svanemyr & Sundby are said to threaten to expel their children from their houses and/or families if they fail to get abortions. Svanemyr & Sundby state that parents' attitudes are frequently "direct and indirect motivators of abortion", because either they force their children to have abortions, or, they are so conservative that their children are afraid of the parents finding out that the children are pregnant.

Another interesting motive that has not been considered in most studies of abortion in Africa is that there is a culture shift in Africa between the traditional African culture and the modern African culture. Young educated women often find themselves caught on one side between new ideals, references and ambitions, and on the other side their husbands' and family's more traditional way of thinking. Therefore in Cote d'Ivoire women tend to get married early, although they still have ambitions of completing their studies, or other similar ambitions. When such women get pregnant, they prefer getting an abortion to having the baby as the latter option would hamper their plans. Abortion is thus chosen as a way to compromise between the old traditions held by the family, and the more "progressive" values of the woman.

Other factors may not directly be motives behind the decision to terminate a pregnancy, but they may influence the decision to do so. Religion for example may be an important factor considered in some situations. A study done in Brazil by Faúndes et al. (2004) points out that there was a clear correlation between the importance of religion to respondents and their response when confronted with abortion. The study which was conducted on obstetricians and gynecologists revealed that twice as many physicians with no religious beliefs were ready to help patients procure abortions than physicians with some religious beliefs. Nevertheless, when it came to terminating unwanted pregnancies, even those highly influenced by religion and moral values resorted to abortion.

Among the physicians tested, there was progressive acceptance of abortion the closer the physician was to the person seeking an abortion. Twice as many physicians accepted that abortion was necessary when the unwanted pregnancy was their own as when it was a patient's. Although they may be opposed to abortions in general, when the situation is closer to them, a person may realize that there seems to be no alternative, and so they could view their case as exceptional and abort. Even then for some of these people, after procuring abortions they still view it as unacceptable. Others however become more understanding to the predicament of other women.

The conclusion that could be drawn from the Brazil research is that the closer the proximity of a person to an unwanted pregnancy, the more likely the person is to choose an abortion. When a person is actually faced with the dilemma of an unwanted pregnancy, they may put aside their cognitive reasoning and instead reason affectively, that is, based on their feelings. The proof of this is the dissonance between what a person views as right, and the action that the person goes on to take.

2.1.4 Defending the Defenseless

The arguments against abortion, the decision to be pro life, move away from the view that fetal life has little or no value (Mannien, 2012). Surveys have shown that religion is one of the most significant demographic factors affecting attitudes towards abortion based on the arguments about when life begins (Gleeson, Forde, Bates, Powell, Jones & Draper, 2008). The Catholic position is that life begins when the spiritual soul is infused into the human subject which is at fertilization whereas Muslim scholars believe that ensoulment of the fetus doesn't occur until the 4th month of pregnancy (after 120 days). This is based on the Koran as well as narrations from the Prophet Mohammed. The prophet states: 'Each of you possess his own formation within his mother's womb, 1st as a drop of matter for 40 days, then as a blood clot for 40 days, then as a blob for 40 days, and then the angel is sent to breathe life into him'. However, other Muslims believe the 'hanging embryo stage' starts about 6 days after fertilization when the embryo attaches itself to the inner lining of the uterus. With regard to Buddhism, apart from other conditions stipulating when life begins, the spirit of the being seeking rebirth must be at hand. Jewish laws recognize the presence of a life only when the embryo is implanted. Scientific views offer more room for debate stating that development of life is a continuum arguing that there is an increment of respect due to a human embryo at 14 days as from this stage it is no longer legal to carry out research on human embryos. Other scientists require the recognition of intellectual ability, capacity or brain function. The existence of a 'person' has also been linked to the existence of 'morally relevant entities' i.e. 20 weeks of fetal gestation when consciousness begins (Cameron & Williamson, 2003).

Following these different views on when life begins, we then go on to defend the right to uphold this life as opposed to the choice to abort. The fetus has been viewed as more than simply

‘clumps of cells’ but as entities that possess value (Mannien, 2012) and that the destruction of the embryo is a violation of the right to life (Dunn, 1996) and such an action to germinating life kills a man (Wogaman & Strong, 1996) . Abortion then leads to the loss of something valuable in its own right (Little, 2002 as cited in Mannien, 2012) as the fetus is deprived of a future of value (Savulescu, 2002).

A relatively higher coincidence of abortion and regret is thought by some to add weight to the argument against the moral justification of abortion, mirroring the relevance of regret to any other more mundane, decision in life. It has also been found that women who choose to complete their pregnancy are virtually all glad that they did not have an abortion including those who initially wished for one (Greasley, 2012). Kazcor (2011, as cited in Greasley, 2012) highlights the gravity of the situation in these words:

‘What woman mourns the anniversary of her child’s birth? But how many women mourn usually in silence the anniversary of an abortion? What woman looks at her child and says “If only I had aborted her?” But how many women consider in the quiet of their hearts, “If I hadn’t had the abortion...?” No group calls itself “Women Exploited by Giving Birth” or “Women Victimized by Giving Life.” Yet many groups exist to comfort women hurt by abortion such as “Women Exploited by Abortion” or “Women Victimized by Abortion”, organisations with thousands of members. No books are published to console women who gave birth rather than aborted. But how many books are published, from both pro-choice and pro-life perspectives, to help women with post-abortion grief?’

The presence of pre counseling and post counseling for abortion serve as evidence for its adverse effects, deemed to be contrary to natural law. Such services elucidate the fact that the individual's mind is not entirely settled and is usually under pressure to make a decision which normal problem solving mechanisms are unable to assist in (Carey & Newell, 2007).

Don Marquis (1989) supported the pro-life decision based on the fact that fetuses can be victims of abortion in exactly the same way as adults and children can be victims of murder. He argued that what is needed for the wrong of killing is an *individual* who is *deprived* of a future of value (Kuflik, 2007). A fetus' future includes everything that is in an adult's future given that fetuses naturally develop into adults. Therefore it is right to conclude that killing a fetus, abortion, deprives it of the same sort of valuable future that an adult is deprived of (Strong, 2008).

More arguments such as utilitarian thinking which propose that an unborn human is unaware of their being a person and thus morally justifying abortion have been opposed by the likeness of the same argument to the sleeping adult human who is also unaware/ unconscious to their being persons and hence we can conclusively debate the killing of a human being as not being murder (Cox, 2011).

All in all, pro-lifers stand by the fact that abortion is *prima facie* seriously wrong just as killing an adult is *prima facie* seriously wrong (Strong, 2008) and that directly willed and procured abortion even for therapeutic reasons, is to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth (Pope Paul IV, 1968).

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Research Methodology

3.1.1 Research design

The researchers used explanatory and descriptive research designs. The research sought to find out the reasons why the undergraduate students procure abortion and analyse the most prevalent reasons.

3.1.2 Population and sampling

Population refers the sum total of all elements (people) sharing the same characteristics. The population of the research was composed of male and female undergraduate students of Strathmore University and the University of Nairobi. The sampling technique used was the non-probability sampling which is based on the researcher's judgement. Convenient sampling was also used. This is where the researchers select the sample based on the ease of accessibility and convenience. The sample size for the focus group was 10 people and for the questionnaire was a sum total of 200 respondents. 100 respondents from each university.

3.1.3 Data collection

3.1.3.1 Focus Group

An interview guide was used for the focus group.

Three types of questions were used were used in the interview guide. The engagement questions that were used to introduce the sample to the topic and make them comfortable with the discussion topic; exploration questions were used to get deeper insights on the topic; exit questions were used to see if there was anything that was left out or omitted during the discussion.

3.1.3.2 Questionnaire

A semi open ended questionnaire was used to collect data for the descriptive research and to bring out the most prevalent reasons.

3.1.4 Type of data

3.1.4.1 Primary data

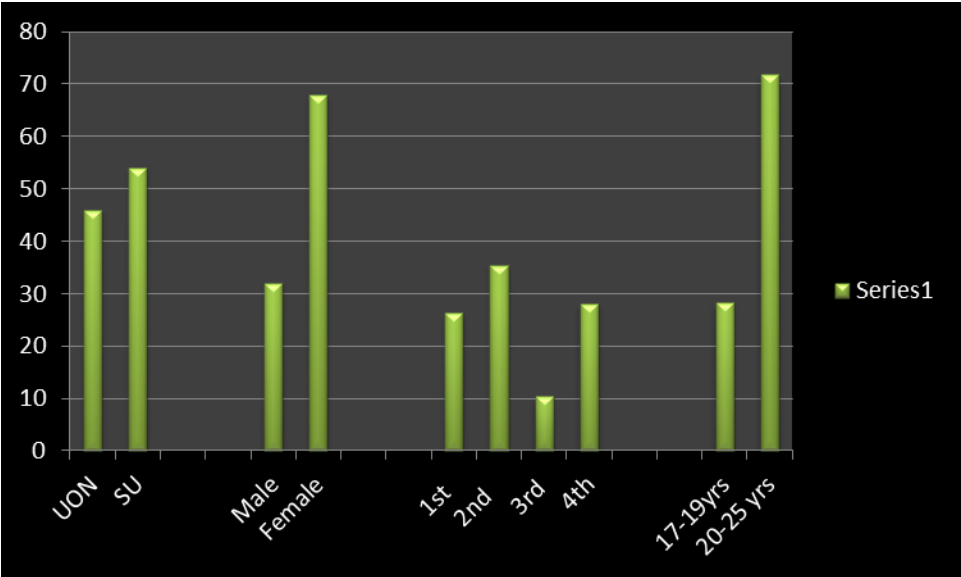
Male and female undergraduate students of Strathmore University and The University of Nairobi who formed the sample group were the primary sources of the data.

CHAPTER 4

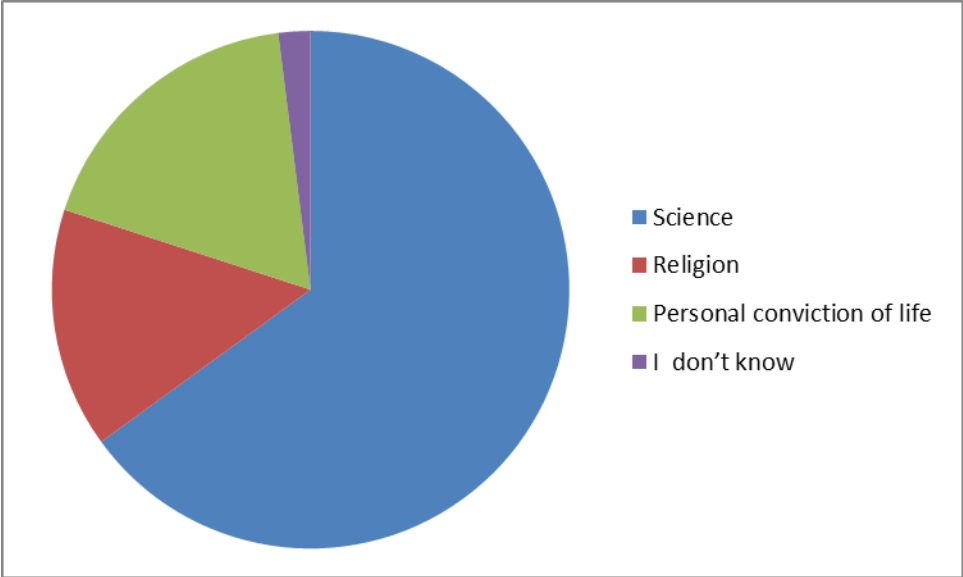
4.1 DESCRIPTION

The research paper involved a sample of two Kenyan universities. A private university (Strathmore) and public university (University Of Nairobi) .The sample size for Strathmore University was 54% and the sample size for university of Nairobi was 46%. Sample was composed of both the male and the female .The male respondents were 32% and the female respondents formed 68% of the sample size. The response rate was 84%.The respondents were from all the 4 years in undergraduate study.1st year had a percentage of 26.22% respondents.2nd year had a percentage of 35.37 respondents,3rd year had a percentage of 10.37 and the fourth year had a percentage of 28.05.Most of the respondents age range was between 19 years and 24 years.

Sample Characteristics in Percentage

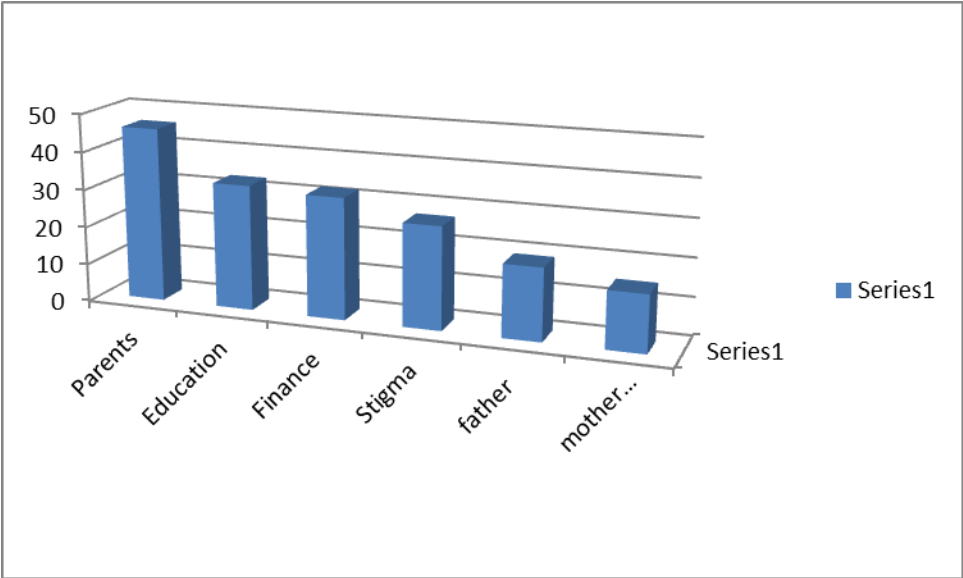


99% of the respondents said that a woman who is three months pregnant is carrying a life in them. This was attributed to either a fact of science or religion. Other factors e.g. personal convictions on when life begins had minimal influence.



Motives for abortion were rated individually with heavy weights being assigned being assigned to fear of parents. Others factors followed closely: the need to complete ones education, financial constraints, stigma, the father of the child denying the baby and not being ready to be a mother respectively.

Motives for abortion Ratings



4.2 DISCUSSION

4.2.1 The Picture Painted of Africa

The literature on abortions in Africa has mainly censured socio-economic factors as the reasons why African women procure abortions. The most common reasons cited have been financial/economic difficulties; reluctance to interrupt education or career plans; the mother not being ready to care for a child (or another child) as well as challenges in accessing contraception. The picture painted of the economic challenges is of a poverty that is so austere that a woman cannot support an extra child. In some cases, this is because the woman already has many other children to take care of. The reasons given by a majority of the literature are a gross generalization of the African situation. The demographics of Kenya alone are quite diverse, so much so that the situation in an urban town/city like Nairobi can scarcely be generalized to represent the situation in a more rural town like, say, Kwale. The findings of this research point out some of these differences, and they also bring in other reasons that may not have been brought out in most literature.

4.2.2 The Kenyan Context – The Case of Undergraduates

The results of the survey reveal that Kenyan undergraduate students have a somewhat pro-life ideology, even though they gave reasons for why they believed an undergraduate may procure an abortion. The general attitude that the sample held was that life in the womb should be preserved, even though there may be some challenges to keeping the pregnancy. From the questionnaire, a majority of the respondents when asked what they would do if their friend had an unplanned pregnancy, replied that they would give the friend moral support and advise her to keep the baby. This was in contrast to those who would advise and help the girl to get an abortion or those who would do nothing about the situation. This shows that the sample generally held a view that abortion was wrong and they disapprove it.

The sample believes that a woman who is three months pregnant is carrying life. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents also claimed that life begins at conception. This dispels any notion that Kenyan undergraduate students may have abortions because they believe there is absence of life in the womb. Therefore in cases where a Kenyan undergraduate student procures an abortion she most probably does so with the full knowledge that she is terminating a human life. Abortion among Kenyan undergraduate students is rarely viewed as a matter of control over one's body as

has been reported in some literature (such as by Barbara Hewson). More often, the choice is seen as a lesser evil that is chosen because the pregnant woman feels that she has no way out. This can be deduced from the reasons that were given for why a woman may procure an abortion.

In a question on why the respondents held their beliefs about when life begins, most of the respondents attributed their beliefs to science rather than religion, 65% against 15%. This manifested itself in some of the reasons that the sample allowed for abortion, such as for the sake of the mother's health, and in cases where the pregnancy was a result of violence, that is, rape. In such circumstances, the sample held that it was morally acceptable to procure an abortion. This is very interesting considering that for the majority of undergraduates procuring abortions, what they termed as acceptable reasons are more likely to be exceptional cases rather than the norm.

At first glance from the questionnaire, the most prevalent reason for procuring abortions seems to be due to fear of parents' reaction. This was followed by the need to complete one's education and then very closely trailed by financial reasons. Fourth came stigma. The last two reasons were the girl not being ready to be a mother, and the father of the baby denying responsibility for the child respectively.

The focus group in this research however revealed that the decision to abort is sparked by a myriad of reasons, usually closely interlinked. Stigma, or fear of what people may say as a result of a girl getting pregnant at a time that was not socially acceptable came out as the major reason from the depth interviews and focus group. In fact, stigma seemed to pervade most of the other reasons, and appeared to be the main motivation behind induced abortions among Kenyan undergraduates. The sample seemed to be concerned with what people would think of them if they got pregnant.

On the need to complete one's education, the possibility of having the baby and then coming back to school a year later was posed. This was compared with a situation where a person had to take a study leave for a year to do an internship. In both situations, an academic year would have been lost. To this question, responses such as "People will know," and "When you come back people will always look at you as the girl who left school because she got a baby," were given. This indicates that the underlying concern is what people will think about the pregnant girl, even though at first glance education seems to be the issue. However, a few respondents pointed out

that even after the child was born, they would still have to take care of the child, and would not be very comfortable making someone else raise their child for them exclusively; they felt that if they had a child they would have to take care of it.

The aforementioned statement ties closely with readiness to be a mother. Another possibility was posed to the sample: that of adoption. Majority of the sample were unaware that adoption laws in Kenya are very stringent. Only two of the people interviewed were aware of this fact, and they said that because of the difficulty surrounding adoption, it was not really an option and the pregnant girl would still be left with the responsibility of caring for a child when she was ill prepared for such a commitment. The rest of the sample considered adoption as a possibility and when this was posed to them, statements to the tune of: unless you can hide the pregnant girl until she delivers her baby and then enable her to continue with her life without anyone knowing about her pregnancy, adoption would not be a suitable option. Again, the concern here is with what people would think about a girl who is pregnant, and to hide the fact that the girl got pregnant.

In a research done in Abidjan, Svanemyr & Sundby (2007) point out that the role of parents in the decision to procure an abortion has often been left out in most literature on abortion; yet in their research, this seemed to be a major factor. The situation among Kenyan undergraduates seems to confirm this. On further inquiry in the focus group and depth interviews, the respondents pointed out that most times parents were unaware that their children were sexually active. A pregnancy would expose the undergraduates' actions to their parents. Why was this a grave factor? The responses disclosed that the undergraduates and their parents still held a somewhat conservative ideology which views sex outside marriage as a morally wrong thing. Even though the undergraduates engage in pre marital relations, they do not want their parents to know about it. Some of the respondents felt that parents would be disappointed and ashamed that their children had gotten pregnant at a socially inappropriate time. Here, fear of parents was linked to the stigma that both the pregnant girl and her parents would face: the girl for behaving inappropriately, and the parents for failing in raising their child to behave in a socially acceptable way.

Moreover, fear of parents is also linked in some cases to the question of finances. Part of the sample stated that the fact that their parents had paid a lot of money for their tuition fees would

deter them from wanting to keep the pregnancy to term. This was especially true for the students in the private university Strathmore. Having a child while still in campus was viewed as a deterrent to completing their education after their parents had “Spent so much money to pay the school fees.” In Nairobi University, fear of parents seemed less significant as the respondents claimed that it was possible to conceal the baby from the parents until the day of the graduation. In essence, for Strathmore University, the presence of parents seemed to be more prevalent than in Nairobi University. The students of Nairobi University claimed that their parents viewed them as independent adults who should fend for themselves. For this reason, they seemed to have more autonomy over how they lived. By contrast Strathmore students seemed to be more dependent on their parents for their upkeep, and they had more parental control over their lives.

From the above it is interesting to note the financial dimension that is mentioned. Although finances are mentioned as a challenge to keeping the child, the way in which it is brought out differs from most literature. The fact that the respondents were in university, especially in the case of the private university Strathmore indicates that the respondents did not come from humble backgrounds. Yet financial difficulties were listed as one of the reasons. On probing the students about this factor, the students in Nairobi University stated that finances were not a very major problem and that this should not be a factor to abort. They said that it was possible to work part time in order to support the child. They also said that some girls would get sponsors who would give them money for upkeep with which they could support both themselves and their baby. Strathmore students however viewed finances as a relatively important factor. This was ironic since a majority of the Strathmore students come from comfortable backgrounds. Strathmore students were concerned that if the pregnant girl had to have her child, since she still depended on her parents for upkeep, then this would be an extra financial burden that she would be adding to them. Couple this with the high tuition fees already being paid, the girl would probably prefer to abort than to impose an extra financial obligation to their parents.

4.3 Conclusion

From the research, an interesting phenomenon emerged: that of the modern Kenyan individual. In as much as the urban individual views herself as more progressive, she is still maintains a conservative view about sex and is therefore concerned about what society will think of her

when it finds out she is pregnant. Therefore the two ideologies result in a complexity where the girl wants to be liberal in her sexuality yet she is not ready to face up to whatever consequences this liberality results in. Equally, the modern family tries to be more nuclear and independent of communal ties, but is simultaneously anxious about what the same community it has been separating itself from will think about one of the family members getting pregnant at what is termed a socially unacceptable time.

All in all, the general sentiment of the sample was that abortion is morally wrong. However, Patel and Myeni (2008) affirm that to classify people as either pro-choice or pro-life would be an oversimplification of a complex issue as most people are ambivalent about the decision to procure an abortion depending on the situation. In another research done in Brazil (Faundes et al.), it was found that the closer a person is to the person who wants to abort, the more likely he or she would be to understand the persons reasons to abort. This is because the case is usually viewed as an exceptional one.

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