

A STUDY ON THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE ON ABORTION AMONG WOMEN IN REPRODUCTIVE AGE GROUP (15-49 YEARS) IN URBAN SLUMS OF GUWAHATI CITY



Community Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Abortion is one of the five leading causes of maternal death in developing world globally. **Objective:** To assess the knowledge, Attitude and Practice on abortion among women in slums of Guwahati City. **Methodology:** Community based cross sectional study on women in reproductive age groups(15-49 years) in slums of Guwahati city, from April to July,2017. A sample size of 230 participants were interviewed for the study,by taking 50% proportion of women in 15-49 years to be selected from the slums. **Results:** Maximum were in the age group of 26-35 years. Knowledge on abortion is 83.47% among the participants,although poor (31.2%) knowledge on legalisation of abortion.While 57% think that abortion is a good practice,37.3% of them would abort the conceptus if unwanted pregnancy occurs. **Conclusion:** Emphasis should be given on improving the knowledge on legal abortion by IEC among the women.

KEYWORDS

Abortion, Reproductive age , Maternal death

INTRODUCTION:World Health Organization (WHO) defines abortion as, termination of pregnancy prior to 20 weeks gestation or a fetus born weighing less than 500 gm¹. Abortion is one of the five leading causes of deaths in developing world. It accounts for 13% of maternal mortality globally². Out of all clinical pregnancies 10-20% end in spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) and 10% are induced². Access to safe abortion services is essential for the good health of women and is one of the important components of Reproductive and Child Health Programmes. In India , abortion was legalised by Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act,1971, even though many of the women are unaware of the legal issues related to abortion and its still an sensitive issue in the society. So it's necessary and timely to study the important issues related to abortion in women in reproductive age group. The study therefore aimed at assessing the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice on abortion in women in reproductive age group. (15-49 years)

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

The study is a Community based cross sectional study, done on women in reproductive age group (15-49 years), residing in Slums of Guwahati city. Study period was 15th April to 15th July, 2017. A predesigned pretested interview schedule was used to collect the data. The sample size was determined by using a single population formula considering the following assumption:Proportion of women selected from the source of population women in the age group of 15-49 years old, and those with no history of serious mental or physical illness to be 50%(p=50%) and margin of error of 7% ,by adding 10% of non response sample size comes out to be 224. By rounding off the sample size was taken to be 230. Taking 9 slums randomly out of 99 notified slums of Guwahati city, A house to house survey was done until we get 25 women (15-49 years) from each slum, to get the required sample size. Informed consent was taken from the participants. Women residing in the slums for more than 6 months were included and those who were severely ill both physically and mentally were excluded. Ethical clearance was taken from institutional ethics committee.

RESULTS:

Out of 230 of the respondents 192 (83.47%) had knowledge on any form of abortion.

FIGURE: 1 Distribution of respondents according to the knowledge on different types of abortion

(A=Spontaneous abortion, B=Medical abortion, C= Surgical abortion, D=All the three types

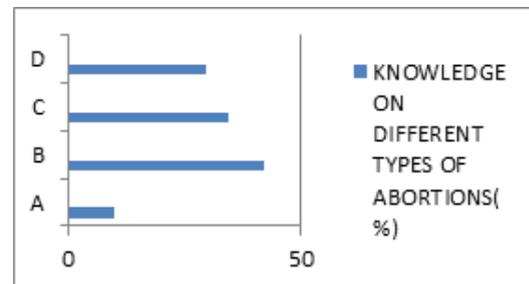


Figure1. Shows that maximum of the respondents i.e. 42.2% had knowledge on medical abortion, very few (10%) of them has knowledge on spontaneous abortion. Relatives of the respondents (71.2%) was found to be the most common source of knowledge on abortion ,followed by health facility (13.7%),social media and friends were found to be sources in 7.5% and 6.8% respectively as a source of knowledge on abortion.

(*Termination of pregnancy on or before 20 weeks of gestation as a response was considered 'knowledge positive' for the respondents)

TABLE1Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents

Age(years)	Number	Percentage
15-25	74	32.1%
26-35	104	45.2%
36-45	52	22.6%
Educational status		
Illiterate	64	28%
Primary	86	37.4%
Middle	64	28%
High school	10	4.3%
HSLC	6	2.6%
Socioeconomic status		
Upper middle	55	24%
Middle	80	34.7%
Lower middle	95	41.3%
Marital status		
Married	180	78.2%
Unmarried	44	19%
Widowed	6	2.6%

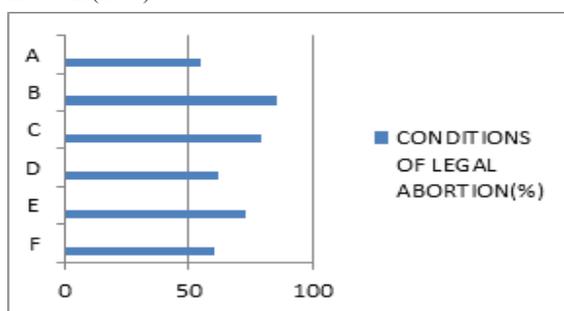
Table1. Shows out of 230 respondents maximum i.e. 104 (45.2%) are in the age group of 26-35 years. Percentage of illiterate is 28 %, and maximum (37%) has completed primary education. The respondents mostly (41.3%) belongs to class IV socioeconomic status according to B.G. Prasad socioeconomic status classification. Out of the 230 respondents 180, i.e. 78.2% are married.

TABLE2. Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge on abortion

Characters	Present	Absent
1. Legalization of abortion(n=192)	60 (31.2%)	132 (68.7%)
2. Safe abortion practices(n=192)	87 (45.3%)	105 (54.6%)
3. Complications of unsafe abortion(n=192)	77 (40.1%)	115 (60%)

Table 2. Shows that out of those who have knowledge on abortion, only 31.2% know that abortion is legalised, 45.3% knows on unsafe abortion practices such as terminating unwanted pregnancy either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment lacking the minimum medical standards or both. (WHO), and 40.1% had knowledge on complications of unsafe abortion.

FIGURE: 2 Bar diagram showing distribution of respondents according to their knowledge on conditions under which legal abortion can be done(n=60)



A- She is financially unable to support the child, B-If pregnancy endangers the life of the mother or foetus, C-She doesn't want the child, D-For mother who are physically and psychologically unprepared to rise the child (if she a minor), E-Pregnancy resulted from rape, F-For all women upto 12 weeks of pregnancy irrespective of their reason From the figure it has been observed that maximum 85% think that if pregnancy endangers life of mother or fetus, legal abortion is done(B), followed by 79% that if she doesn't want the child(C) and 73% any women upto 12 weeks irrespective of reason (E).

TABLE3. Distribution of respondents according to their attitude on abortion

1. Is abortion a Good practice?(n=192)		
Yes	No	Don't know
110(57%)	72(37.55)	10(5.2%)

2. Whether safe abortion practices reduces risk of women in reproductive health problem?(n=87)		
Yes	No	Don't know
82(94.2%)	59(30.7%)	0

3. Is legalization done on abortion a good thing?(n=60)		
Yes	No	Don't know
50(83.3%)	8(4.1%)	2(3.35)

Table 3. Shows that out of 192 respondents who has knowledge on abortion, 52% think that abortion is a good practice whereas 37.5% thinks that it's a harmful practice. Out of the 87 respondents who knew

about unsafe abortion 94.2% thinks that safe abortion practices reduces risk of reproductive health problems, and 83.3% thinks that legalization of abortion is good, out of those who knew about legal abortion.

Out of the 230 respondents 180(78.2%) were married. Out of the 180 married women 10 had experience abortion of any form in the period of marriage. In all of the cases termination occurred before 12 weeks of gestation, spontaneous abortion in 8, surgical abortion in Govt. Hospital in 2

TABLE4. Distribution of respondents according to their practice 1. If you have unwanted pregnancy, what would you do? (n=182)

	Number	Percent
Abort	68	37.3%
Continue pregnancy	40	22%
Don't know	74	40%

If the answer to above question is abortion, then

2. Where will you go for abortion (n=68)

	Number	Percentage
Govt hospital or Govt health facility	52	76.4%
Private hospital	7	10.3%
Private clinic	9	13.2%

Out of the 192 women who had knowledge on abortion 10 had experienced abortion previously, Out of the rest 182 women 37.3% of them would have aborted unwanted pregnancy while 40% of them are not sure what they would have done.

The place for abortion they would chosen is Government Hospital in 76.4% of the women

TABLE5. Association of knowledge on abortion and socio-economic characteristics

Characteristics according to knowledge	yes	no	P value/ χ^2
Age(years)			0.001*10.8
15-25	64	10	
26-35	96	8	
36-45	32	20	
Educational status			0.001*16
illiterate	44	64	
Primary school	72	14	
Middle school	60	4	
High school	10	0	
HSLC	6	0	
Socioeconomic status			0.29 1.07
Upper middle	42	13	
middle	70	10	
Lower middle	80	15	

Table 5 Shows a significant association between the knowledge of the respondents and their Age and Educational status, but no association was found between the socioeconomic status and knowledge on abortion.

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to know the Knowledge Attitude and Practice of women residing in urban slums, because knowledge on abortion will improve their practices towards safe abortion practices, which will further reduce the incidences of maternal mortality and morbidity due to complications of unsafe abortion.

In the present study the maximum of the respondents are found in the age group of 26-35 years Guleria.K.et.al(2006)⁴ and Bahadur.et.al.(2008), Namrata.S.et.al.(2015)^{5,6} in their studies also observed maximum respondents among 20-30 years age group supporting ours observation.

In contrast to study conducted by Prakirti Khanal et al¹¹ and Addis Adera et al⁹ where the educational status of the respondents was good mostly literate and of mostly post high school status 47% and 84% respectively, our study shows 34.7% have completed only primary school and 28% are illiterate.

Majority (41.3%) of the respondents belonged to lower middle class (34.7%) followed by middle class according B.G. Prasad socioeconomic status classification. In study conducted by B.C. Shivkumar et al¹⁷ women of lower socioeconomic status constituted 74% followed by middle class 26%. Bahadur et al¹⁵ also observed higher incidence (53.4%) of women belonged to the lower middle class and lower class. Roychowdhury et al¹⁸ also recorded highest incidence (48.89%) in low income group. Study participants were mostly married 78.2% similar to study done by Shrivastava et al¹⁶ which is 97.62%.

Overall knowledge on abortion is good in our study respondents i.e. 83.47%, similar to study done by Addis Adera et al 2015¹⁹, where overall knowledge was 76%. But it's in contrast to Prakriti Khanal et al¹¹. Good knowledge on abortion in the respondents might be due to adequate amount of awareness provided by their relatives (71.2%) as a source of knowledge on abortion. Out of the different types of abortions 42.2% and 34.8% had knowledge on medical abortion and surgical abortion respectively, but only 10% of them knew about spontaneous abortion.

Although the overall knowledge on abortion is good among the respondents, only 31.2% has knowledge on legalization of abortion and the knowledge on safe abortion practices is also poor (45.3%), and most of them are unaware of the complications of unsafe abortion (40%), similar to a study conducted by Jenny.A, Cresswell et al, 2016¹⁰. In contrast to our study, more than half (59.0%) of respondents knew that abortion is legal, in a study in Nepal done by Prakriti Khanal et al¹¹. The low level of knowledge on legal and safe abortion practices and complications of unsafe abortion might be due to health facility as a poor source of knowledge on abortion (13.7%)

As we compare the knowledge on the conditions under which abortion can be done it has been observed that maximum 85% think if pregnancy endangers life of mother or fetus and 79% think if she doesn't want the child, which is similar to study conducted by Addis Adera et al¹⁶.

The study by Prakriti Khanal et al showed that (74.17%) of respondents had positive attitude towards safe abortion and 25.23% said safe abortion is necessary to save the life of the mothers. But Study done by Addis Adera et al the attitude towards safe abortion is 34.7%. In our study positive attitude can be observed among women; according to 52% abortion is a good practice, 94.2% think safe abortion practices can reduce reproductive health problems and 83.3% think legalization of abortion is a good thing.

The prevalence of self reported abortion among the study population is only 5.5% which is very low (80% had spontaneous abortion and 20% had surgical abortion and all had termination before 12 weeks in govt. Hospital) in contrast to the prevalence of self-reported abortion among the group of Nepali women (44.7%). Out of the women who have not experienced abortion, 40% are found to be uncertain what they would have done if unwanted pregnancy occurs, and 76.4% of the women who would have aborted, will choose Government health facility for abortion, which would be a good practice towards safe abortion practices.

By comparing the various socioeconomic conditions with their knowledge it has been found that statistical significant association was found between their age ($p=0.001$) and education ($p=0.002$).

CONCLUSION

Programmes concerning with Abortion should focus on Knowledge on legal issues of abortion, safe abortion practice, complications with unsafe abortion practice, since most of the women has good knowledge on abortion with respect to the gestational period upto which it is defined, but the knowledge on safe and legal abortion practices is poor. The present study cannot be generalized because

these were based on modest sample size and the responses regarding safe abortion practices may vary according to availability of health facility nearby. Also there might be under reporting of prevalence of abortion, because abortion is a taboo in our society. More systematic research on abortion knowledge and practice among other groups of women is needed in the studied area.

LIMITATIONS

Because of low prevalence of abortion in the present study area, the practice could not be measured properly.

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