

Knowledge and Attitude towards Criminal Abortion among Female Undergraduate Nursing Students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State

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Abstract

Unintended or unplanned pregnancy poses a major health challenge to people of reproductive age. The objective of the study is to assess the knowledge and attitude of female undergraduate nursing students (FUNS) towards abortion in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. Descriptive cross-sectional study was adopted. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A sample of 340 (FUNS) was used for this study. Results showed that majority of the students (66.2%) discussed sexual reproductive matters with family, 76.5% discussed with peers. 87.9% reported having had sex before and out of these only 78.3% had used family planning. Condom (51.7%) was the most FP method used. The majority of the respondents (86.2%) claimed that abortion was illegal in Nigeria, only 13.8% said it was legal. 36.1% had been pregnant before and 41.9% of the pregnancies were aborted, methods used to abort was unsafe with 44.4% with the use of concoctions and herbs. 170 (50%) respondents had abortions conducted within their community. (92%) had negative attitudes towards abortion whilst 8% had positive perception. Majority (92.6%) claimed that abortion was a sin and only 5.6% would not abort if they got pregnant. It is recommended among others that public enlightenment programmes should be organised to create awareness about abortion.

Keywords: Criminal Abortion, Attitude, Knowledge, Nursing students.

Introduction

Unintended or unplanned pregnancy poses a major economical, psychological, social, and/or religious challenge in participants of reproductive age, especially in developing countries. It has been estimated that, of the 210 million pregnancies that occur annually worldwide, about 80 million (38%) are unplanned and 46 million (22%) end in abortion (World Health Organization, 2016). More than 200 million participants in developing countries would like to delay their next pregnancy or even stop bearing children altogether but many of them still rely on traditional and less effective methods of contraception or use no method at all (Peterson, Darmstadt and Bongaarts, 2017). In Nigeria, unintended intercourse is the primary cause of unwanted pregnancies, and many participants with unwanted pregnancies decide to end them by criminal abortion. Since criminal abortion is illegal in Nigeria (unless medically recommended to save a mother's life), many abortions are carried out clandestinely, and often in an unsafe environment (Adinma 2015).

Induced abortion is not only widespread in Nigeria but is also provided and practiced in a number of different settings, from traditional medical practitioners, herbalists, and private practicing clinicians to modern pharmacists. The consequences of these clandestine abortions are grave and can be life-threatening, often leading to maternal death. Criminal abortions account for 20%–40% of maternal deaths in Nigeria (Adinma, 2015). An abortion is said to be unsafe when unintended pregnancy is terminated by unskilled persons and in an environment with no medical standard or both (Singh *et al.*, 2017).

Criminal abortion is a sensitive and frequently stigmatized topic, both politically and socially. The issue is frequently surrounded by secrecy, shame and misconceptions, which can lead to negative health and social consequences (Levandowski, Kalilani-Phiri, & Kachale, 2016). Yet

pregnancy terminations are quite common, and because they are often performed clandestinely or by unskilled providers, most are unsafe (Bankole *et al.*, 2015). Participants are more likely to attempt a clandestine, unsafe procedure if they are unaware that they could legally visit a trained health provider to obtain a safe abortion (Banerjee, Andersen, & Warvadekar, 2016); and may well attempt an abortion regardless of the law. A significant proportion of pregnancies among students in higher educational institution are terminated with induced criminal abortion and is most common among unmarried adolescent girls are more prone to abortion than the married participants and it is more common among 25 to 34 years old participants than woman in other age categories (Mitiku, Demissie, Belayneh, and Meskele, 2015). Abortion is a serious global problem that needs urgent attention. It is one of the leading causes of maternal morbidity and mortality all over the world, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Annually about 20 million abortions are performed, most of which are in the developing countries with restrictive abortion laws (Adinma, 2015).

In Nigeria abortion is a serious problem that significantly contributes (30-40%) to the maternal mortality in the country (Adinma, 2015). Even though there is no official data on abortion due to the restrictive law, however, a significant number of abortions are carried out in the country annually (Adinma, 2015), out of which many participants die as a result of complications (Otoide, Oronsaye & Okonofua 2015). Non-physicians are performing about 60% of the abortions and the majority of those are done in the private health facilities or at home (Adinma, 2015). It is beyond all reasonable doubt that participants often resort to unsafe methods in order to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Due to the fact that abortion is major contributor to maternal deaths its practice is a problem that needs attention. It is for this reason that the study focused on assessing the knowledge and attitudes towards abortion among female nursing students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma been a place of grown up and unmarried ladies.

Methodology

The study assessed knowledge and attitude. Descriptive survey research design that was adopted for this study was a quantitative cross-sectional research design. The population were nursing students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The instrument used for data collection was validated structured self-developed questionnaire. The instrument was validated and it's reliability coefficient of 0.78 with two scales. Two research questions and one hypothesis were raised and tested at 0.05 alpha level. All items in the instruments were closed ended. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collected, coded and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze section A, charts and graphs were used to analyse research questions while inferential statistics of chi-square were used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The data will be entered using Epidata version 3.1 and exported to Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS package) 25th edition for analysis.

Ethical Consideration: The consent of the unit head was taken before administration of questionnaire to respondents. All pieces of information were treated confidential. The study followed the ethical principles guiding the use of human participants in research.

Results

Section A: Socio demographic Characteristics of Students

Table 1

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
15-19	113	33.2
20-24	144	42.4
25-29	51	15.0
30-34	27	7.9

35-39	5	1.5
Total	340	100

Year of Study

100	102	30.0
200	56	16.5
300	95	27.9
400	50	14.7
500	37	10.9
Total	340	100

Ethnicity

Esan	89	26.2
Bini	54	15.9
Yoruba	58	17.1
Igbo	44	12.9
Other	95	27.9
Total	340	100

Religion

Christians	301	88.5
Muslims	30	8.8
Africa Traditional Religion	9	2.7
Total	340	100

The age of the respondents ranged from 16-39 years old with a mean age of 22.1 years. Most of 144(42.4%) of the respondents were within the age range of 20-24, while only 5(1.5%). (5) 1.5% of the respondents were aged between 35-39 years this could be attributed to the fact that 15-19 are the usual ages for getting admission into the University, hence before the age of 25 one should have graduated. Majority of the respondents 102(30.0%) were in year I and only 37(10.9%) of the respondents were in year V, this could be attributed to the fact that majority of the students in the hostels are usually year I students.

Section B: Knowledge of Abortion among students

Table 2:

Variable	Frequenc y	Percentage (%)
Have you heard abortion		
No	2	0.59
Yes	338	99.41
Total	340	100
Abortion is the deliberate termination of a human Pregnancy		
No	155	45.59
Yes	185	54.41
Total	340	100
Is it done by a non-professional?		
No		90.00
Yes		10.00
Total	340	100

Is abortion safe?

No	293	86.18
Yes	47	13.82
Total	340	100.00

**Will you be able to have children after
having an
abortion?**

No	18	5.29
Yes	322	94.71
Total	340	100

**Do you know the types of
abortion?**

No	314	92.35
Yes	26	7.65
Total	340	100

Is abortion legal in Nigeria?

No	298	87.65
Yes	42	12.35
Total	340	100

How did you hear about abortion?

Through media	53	15.6
Through peer group	224	65.8
Through family	63	18.5
Total	340	100
Good knowledge	296	87.1
Poor knowledge	44	12.9
Total	340	100

Results in Table 4 shows that majority 296 (87.1%) of the respondents had good knowledge on abortion. Almost all the 338 (99.4%) of the respondents had heard about abortion. 185(54.41%) of the respondents indicated that abortion is the deliberate termination of a human pregnancy, while 155(45.59%) of the respondents disagreed. 306 (90%) of the participants disagreed with the notion that abortion is done by a non-professional. Moreover, over eighty percent 293(86.18%) of the participant disputed that abortion is safe. Although majority of the participant 322(94.71%) embraced the proposition that an individual would be able to have children after having an abortion. Only 26(7.65%) of the participants know the types of abortion, majority 314(92.35%) of the participants do not. The majority of the respondents (86.2%) said that abortion in Nigeria was illegal whilst only 13.8% said it was legal. 300 (88.2%) of the respondents had information regarding the definition of an abortion.

Table 2: Respondents knowledge about consequences of abortion

Variable responses		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Can lead to severe bleeding	No	129	37.9
	Yes	211	62.1
Total		340	100
Can lead to infertility	No	176	51.8
	Yes	164	48.2
Total		340	100
Can lead to infection	No	231	67.9
	Yes	109	32.1
Total		340	100
Can lead to death	No	57	16.8
	Yes	283	83.2
Total		340	100

Table 2 shows that the majority of the respondents (83.2%) accepted that abortion could lead to death. The least known complication of abortion was it leading to infection has only 32.1% mentioned infection as a consequence of an abortion. Over sixty percent 211(62.1%) of the respondents indicated that abortion could lead to severe bleeding. However, only 164(48.2%) of the respondents indicated that abortion can lead to infertility. More than sixty five percent 231(67.9%) of the

participant disagreed with the proposition that abortion can lead to infection.

Section C: Attitudes towards abortion

Table 3: Attitudes of Respondents towards Abortion

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abortion is a sin		
No	25	7.4
Yes	315	92.6
Total	340	100
Would you abort if pregnant		
No	251	94.4
Yes	19	5.6
Total	340	100
Would you encourage colleague to abort		
No	302	88.8
Yes	38	11.2
Total	340	100
No	301	88.5
Yes	39	11.5
Total	340	100
Abortion providers are evil		
No	43	12.6
Yes	297	87.4
Total	340	100

Do you consider abortion morally right?		
No	321	94.4
Yes	19	5.6
Total	340	100

Do you think abortion is a murder?		
No	25	7.4
Yes	315	92.6
Total	340	100

Would you feel guilty after an abortion?		
No	43	2.4
Yes	332	97.6
Total	340	100

Abortion should be illegal?		
No	43	12.6
Yes	297	87.4
Total	340	100

Table 3 shows responses to various questions on attitudes towards abortion. Majority of the respondents (92.6%) felt that abortion was sin and only 5.6% would not abort if they got pregnant. Very few of the students (11.2%) would encourage a colleague to abort. Despite the majority of the respondents not being in support of abortion 88.5% would not report a friend who had aborted. Majority of the students 297 (87.4%) consider abortion morally right. More than ninety percent (90%) 315 (92.6%) of the participant think abortion is a murder. Also 332 (97.6%) of the participant would you feel guilty after an abortion.

And 297(87.4%) of the participants indicated that abortion should be illegal.

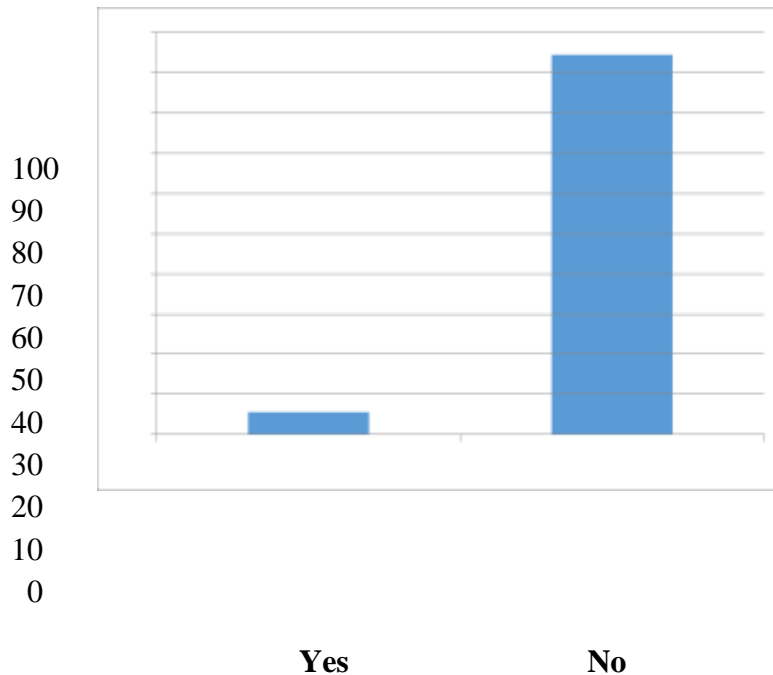


Figure 1: Respondents overall attitudes towards abortion, would you abort if pregnant, would you encourage colleague to abort and do you consider abortion morally right. Figure 1 shows that majority of the respondents, that is over ninety percent disagreed with questions like would you abort if pregnant, would you encourage colleague to abort and do you consider abortion morally right. This implied a positive attitude towards abortion.

Discussion

This paper assessed students knowledge and attitude on abortion, findings, most of the students discussed sexual reproduction matters with their family and with their peers, abortion and family planning were the least discussed topics. Major source of information on abortion was from friends. In Nigeria, and most African countries, socio-cultural factors forbid the open discussion of sexuality, including abortion.

Ninety nine percent of the respondents had heard about abortion. More than half of the respondents indicated that abortion is the deliberate termination of a human pregnancy. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents disagreed with the notion that abortion is done by a non-professional. Moreover, over eighty percent of the participant disputed that abortion is safe. Although majority of the participant 322 (94.71%) embraced the proposition that an individual would be able to have children after having an abortion.

Only seven percent of the participants know the types of abortion, majority of the participants do not. Eighty six percent of the participants said that abortion in Nigeria was illegal. Eighty eight percent of the respondents had information regarding the definition of an abortion. Majority of the respondents accepted that abortion could lead to death. Over sixty percent of the respondents indicated that abortion could lead to severe bleeding. However, only 164(48.2%) of the respondents indicated that abortion can lead to infertility. More than sixty five percent 231(67.9%) of the participant disagreed with the proposition that abortion can lead to infection. Majority of the respondents in this study had a negative attitude towards abortion, this is in line with the study of Vongxay, et al., 2020 which states that 93% of their study had negative attitude towards criminal abortion. Although majority of the respondents had negative attitudes towards abortion a few of them said they would abort if they become pregnant. These findings contradict with a study that was done on knowledge and attitude on consequences of abortion among students in Amassoma community, Bayelsa State in Nigeria which revealed that half of the students would abort if they become pregnant, (Olayinka, 2017). A study conducted in Uganda on knowledge and attitudes on induced abortion among female youths revealed that only 14% of the respondents would abort if they fell pregnant, (Paluku, 2017), revealing a slightly lower Percentage (%) that the one in this study.

Conclusion

The level of knowledge of the respondents on abortion was high similarly; the respondents had negative attitudes towards abortion. The study reported that the respondents discuss sex and reproductive health matters with peers and family though this was considerably low.

Recommendations

1. It is of importance that parents and girls in general are educated on the ills of abortion as they may present a good source of information on abortion and its dangers.
2. Public enlightenment programmes is recommended to create awareness on the menace of abortion.
3. Also, access to and information about a broad range of effective contraceptive methods.
4. Where abortion is an option people should have access to safe and appropriate services with fully trained providers, Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) Community-based Organizations (CBOs) should embark on behavioural change programmes.

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