

Young People's Awareness on Induced Abortion and Abortion Law: A Community Based Study in Colombo City of Sri Lanka.

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Abortion is legally permitted in Sri Lanka, only if it is performed in order to save the mother's life. Although Sri Lanka has a very restrictive law on abortion, it is estimated that 125,000 to 175,000 induced abortions take place annually. In the year 2014, of maternal mortality, 12.5% was related to abortion which made it the third most common cause of maternal deaths. The young people's awareness on induced abortion and abortion law can influence individual decision making on both prevention and outcome of unwanted pregnancies. This study aims to understand the young people's awareness of induced abortion and abortion law in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Six Grama Niladhari Divisions (GNDs) and five to eight housing clusters from each GND were selected from Thimbirigasyaya Divisional Secretariat Division using multi stage stratified random sampling technique. 50 households were systematically selected from each GND. An interview schedule was administered among 267 residents between 19 to 25 years of age after receiving written informed consent.

Only 58% of youth knew that there are specific days in menstrual cycle in which the chance to become pregnant is relatively high. One out of two respondents (53%) believed that Intercrural intercourse without insertion in to vagina will not result in a pregnancy. Only 52% of respondents knew that a girl has a chance to become pregnant after a sexual act even before the first menstruation. Only 53% of respondents demonstrated correct knowledge on contraceptives. Awareness on

emergency contraceptives was even less (40%). While 85% of respondents was of the view that since abortion is illegal, it is not happening in Sri Lanka, 16% thought abortion is a risk free procedure. Only 9% of the respondents knew the circumstances in which the abortion is legal in Sri Lanka. Around 80% of respondents believed provision of treatment for a woman who has undergone an illegal abortion is an offence as per the current law on abortion.

Study concludes that respondents demonstrate a low level of awareness on prevention of unwanted pregnancies, induced abortion and abortion law, which highlights the importance of a national Comprehensive Sexuality Education for in-school and out of school youth.

Key words: - *Youth, Induced abortion, Abortion Law, Awareness.*