

Relationship between pregnancy intention and infant health



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The topic of abortion has been an ongoing and significant contributor to large public debate. In general, there are two opposing viewpoints on the morality of abortion: " pro-life" and " pro-choice". Supporters of " pro-life" argue that it is the responsibility of the government to protect all human life regardless of intention, ability to live, or standard-of-living concerns. " Pro-choice" supporters assert that people have the right of independence regarding their own reproductive systems, if they do not violate the independence of others. In the case that a woman is raped and becomes pregnant, " pro-life" states that the baby is innocent and should not be killed for the crime of another individual. On the other hand, " pro-choice" declares that the woman should be allowed an abortion in the act of sympathy. In response to this perplexing topic, I decided to pose the following question: To what extent does denial of abortion affect children of unwanted pregnancies?

To begin, I wanted to determine whether a correlation existed between pregnancy intention and infant health. I found Kathryn Kost and Laura Lindberg's 2015 article " Pregnancy Intentions, Maternal Behaviors, and Infant Health: Investigating Relationships With New Measures and Propensity Score Analysis," which I located in the journal *Demography* using the *Academic Search Complete* database. In this article, I encountered prior studies with research focusing on the consequences of unwanted childbirth. One study performed in Sweden, consisted of a 21-year follow-up of 120 births that were " denied abortions and matched control births born at the same hospital on the same day" (88). Researchers deduced that " an <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-between-pregnancy-intention-and-infant-health/>

unwanted child is 'born into a worse situation' than other children and 'runs a risk of having to surmount greater social and mental handicaps than its peers'" (88). Another study was performed in Czechoslovakia, in which 220 births were denied an abortion twice and matched with control births. Researchers in the study concluded that "unwanted births faced significantly more disadvantages on health and school performance measures" (89).

This article established the fact that there was indeed a correlation between pregnancy intention and infant health. However, Kost and Lindberg did not provide any evidence to support the claims. These statements alone would not convince "pro-life" supporters that the denial of an abortion negatively impacts unwanted children. I realized that the information presented was too broad and that I needed to find actual statistics to serve as valuable evidence.

At this point, I decided to explore and find more data on these previous studies of unwanted pregnancy and infant health. I came across Nancy Russo's 2014 article "Abortion, Unwanted Childbearing, and Mental Health," which I located in the journal *Salud Mental* by using the *Academic Search Complete* database. Both studies in Sweden and Czechoslovakia were mentioned in the article. The Sweden study found that "being unwanted during pregnancy was associated with higher risk for schizophrenia, even when confounding variables were controlled" (290). Another discovery was that "the proportion of alexithymia has been found to be nearly double in unwanted individuals (11.6% vs. 6.9%)" (290). From the Czechoslovakia study, I discovered that in adulthood, "being unwanted was linked to higher <https://assignbuster.com/relationship-between-pregnancy-intention-and-infant-health/>

likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior, being on welfare, having an unstable marriage, and receiving psychiatric services" (290). Data from the study also suggests that children of the " unwanted group" were likely to have negative consequences, implying that these problems can be transferred to future generations.

Overall, I found Russo's points to be very convincing, even though the data could've been more specific to better persuade " pro-life" supporters. Her statement about the association of unwanted pregnancy and schizophrenia is an excellent point to include. This may open the eyes of " pro-life" advocates, since schizophrenia is a chronic and severe mental disorder. I was also particularly confused about the meaning of alexithymia, and due to the extent of impact from unwanted pregnancy, I needed clarification.

I then did a Google search of the term " alexithymia" to understand its meaning. I found an article from the NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information), which explained that alexithymia refers to a " personality trait that affects the way people experience and express emotion."

Characteristics of alexithymia include the struggle to recognize and discuss feelings, as well as the struggle to differentiate between feelings and physical sensations.

I came across some more significant information in Russo's article. Studies have found that an unwanted pregnancy may result in many negative outcomes for the child, such as " deficits in cognitive, emotional, and social processes" (289-290). Unwanted children also are at greater risk of " premature birth, low birth weight, and fetal malformation" (290), as well as

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long-term consequences in adulthood. Unwanted children have also been found to be at an increased risk for severe mental disorders.

These points continued to highlight the negative impacts of unwanted pregnancy on a child. Not only the psychological effects, but the physical effects as well. I was still convinced that there was an association between pregnancy intention and infant health. However, I reminded myself that these points didn't provide enough concrete evidence that could convince the " pro-life" supporters. I wanted to find out the actual statistics of low birth weight in unwanted children to further enhance the argument.

I decided to look deeper into the correlation of unwanted pregnancy and low birth weight. In Kathryn Kost and Laura Lindberg's article, " Births in the lowest desire category were significantly more likely to be low birth weight than births in the highest category (10 % vs. 5 %)" (101). I found this data to be very valuable to the idea that pregnancy intention and infant health are correlated. In the case of unwanted pregnancy, it provided statistical evidence of a significant increase in the number of low birth weight infants.

Looking back over my research, I think there is a clear correlation between pregnancy intention and infant health. Many studies have shown that negative consequences have arose in children of mothers denied an abortion. The extent to which denial of abortion affects children of unwanted pregnancies is significant and cannot be overlooked.

Works Cited

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