

Introduction of  
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endeavored to



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## **Introduction**

From a historical point of view, abortion has found use as one of the ways to prevent births in the society. It was only in mid-nineteenth century that the United States legally prohibited the practice.

Until the 1960s, no one appeared to challenge the laws that had been enacted to prohibit the procurement of abortion. However, during the 1960s, the abortion laws were successfully challenged by an abortion reform movement. This led to the modification of a number of the state laws to allow physicians to procure abortions, but on the basis of the specific cases at hand (Lamanna & Reidmann, p. 286).

This has effectively culminated in a heated debate between on the one hand, pro-life activities and on the other hand, their pro-choice counterparts. As such, abortion remains a major political, religious and social issue.

Throughout the various cultures and historical periods, there has been a variation in the societal attitudes regarding the issue of abortion. Many researchers have endeavored to undertake the attitudes and views of the various groups of individuals within the society on the issue of abortion.

A majority of these surveys are in the form of opinion polls, and the study respondents differ in terms of geographical regions, race, gender, religious backgrounds, and age, among other variables. In light of this, the research paper shall endeavor to discuss the various views and attitudes held by the diverse members of the society regarding the issue of abortion. Further, the paper shall also attempt to identify an approach of finding a common round on the problem at hand.

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## **Societal attitudes and views on abortion**

### **Attitudes and views of medical professionals**

Societal attitudes and views on abortion differ on the basis of professionalism, gender, age, and geographical region, among other variations. For example, a study on the attitudes of medical students in the UK on abortion that was carried out by Gleeson et al (2008) revealed that only limited research has been carried out into the attitudes of doctors and medical students regarding the issue of abortion. This is despite the fact that policy makers need to be fully informed about the views of the health care professionals who are involved directly in the provision of abortion services. As such, a change in the views of these professionals could in fact have practical consequences in as far as the provision of abortion services is concerned, in the days ahead.

In their study, Gleeson et al (2008) surveyed a total of 300 medical students regarding their views and attitudes on abortions. In addition, the medical students were also interviewed about their beliefs regarding the rights of the mother, the status of the fetus. The researchers also sought to assess the attitudes of the medical students towards the laws of abortion in the UK, along with their willingness to partake in the procurement of abortion, once they had qualified as medical doctors. Of the 300 medical students interviewed, 63 % of them were pro-choice. The willingness of the students to partake in the procurement of abortion was significantly correlated with the views that they held regarding the issue of abortion, the extent to which they would be required to participate in abortion provision, pregnancy stage, and circumstances surrounding the pregnancy (Gleeson et al 2008). The

study findings helps to reveal that even among the general practitioners, there is still a wide division between pro-choice and pro-life in as far as their views and attitudes on the issue of abortion are concerned.

### **Social attitudes on abortion among the U.**

#### **S public**

A 2003 Gallup poll conducted in the U. S revealed that most Americans were of the opinion that the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973 by the Supreme Court to legalize abortion should still remain as the recognized law of abortion in the United States. The survey revealed that 85% of the Americans would support the procurement of abortion if the life of a mother is in danger. In addition, 46 percent of the study's respondents revealed that they would choose pro-life in the event of an abortion, with an equal number (46 percent) choosing the pro-life label. Public opinion approval regarding abortion varies tremendously depending on the various trimesters of pregnancy.

For example, two-thirds of the respondents to the opinion poll said that they would approve for abortion during the first-trimester. On the other hand, over two-thirds of the respondents disapproved later-stage abortions. There is also an apparent decline in the approval of abortion among young people. For example, a national survey that was carried out by UCLA on college freshmen revealed that 55 percent were pro-choice, in comparison with 10 years earlier, when the number of pro-choice respondents was 64 percent. This is an indication of a widening shift towards pro-life among the American youths.

**Attitudes and views of the public on abortion**

In their population Matters program, RAND undertook a study that was directed at the American public to assess their view regarding family planning, and its connection with abortion. Some 1, 500 Americans were involved in this survey.

The research findings of this survey helped to reveal that the attitudes of the public on the issue of abortion only avert a trivial amount of influence in as far as shaping of the public attitude of Americans toward family planning. On the question of whether family planning means abortion, 52 percent of the responded answered that abortion was not part of family planning (Patterson & Adamson 1999). In addition, a further 46 percent of the responded were of the opinion that family planning also included abortion.

The survey also reveals a sharp divide on public views regarding abortion. For example, the study had twenty-two percent of the respondents saying that under any circumstances, abortion ought to be legal. On the other hand, a further 62 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that abortion only needs to be legalized under certain circumstances. The other 15% of the study's respondents were of the pinion that under no circumstances should abortion be legalized. It is important to note that for nearly 3decades now, there has been only a slight change on these percentages.

The survey also helped to reveal a sharp divide among the respondents on the role of the government in funding for overseas voluntary abortions. For example, 46 percent of the Americans are opposed to the involvement of the U. S. government in helping to fund the procurement of voluntary abortions

in the developing economies, upon request. However, 32 percent of the respondents said that they would support the provision of funds to support family planning in these developing economies by the U. S government.

What these research findings appears to indicate is that in contradiction to conventional wisdom, the attitudes of the American public on the issues of family planning and abortion seems less closely linked. In particular, opposition to family planning is not an indication of an opposition to abortion.

### **Attitudes and views of Danes on abortion**

In another study that was undertaken by Norup (1997) to investigate the attitudes of the Danish population on the issue of abortion, 85 percent of the study's respondents fully supported the Danish Abortion Act. According to this Act, an abortion may be legally procured up to the 12 week of pregnancy. On the other hand, 13 percent of the respondents to the study said that under all situations, they would accept abortion, while 2.

4 percent said that they would not accept abortion under any circumstances. There was also a strong correlation between on the one hand, religious confession and how attached the respondents were to their practiced faith and on the other hand, their levels of acceptance of the Danish Abortion Act (Norup, 1997). There was also a strong link between the level of education and the level of acceptance of the Danish Abortion Act. For example, ninety-five percent of the study's respondents who had a high school education and above were in support of the Abortion Act. Age of the respondents also had a significant influence on the decision to either support or opposes abortion.

For example, a majority of the respondents between the ages of 36 and 45 years were pro-choice (Norup, 1997).

Political affiliations and sex also had an impact on the decision to support or opposes abortion. For example, liberal males were more likely to support right wing parties and were also likely to oppose abortion.

### **Attitudes of women on abortion**

In their study, Faria, Barrett and Goodman (1985) sought to explore the social networks, attitudes and decision making of women seeking for abortion services in 1 family planning agency and 2 outpatient abortion clinics located in South Central Kansas. According to the findings of the study, the women interviewed did not demonstrate difficulties in reaching on a decision to seek for abortion provision. However, women who were non-protestants, non-white, had less- educated, less income, were deficient in terms of a supportive social network and likely to be young were at a higher risk of being faced with exceedingly several conflicts on the pathway to deciding on if they should procure an abortion, or oppose it.

### **Intervening on the problem of abortion**

Having established that the issue of abortion traverses the societal, geographic, age, gender, sex and political inclinations, it is important that we endeavor to take into account these issues when identifying an approach to intervene on the problem. Accordingly, one approach may suit a particular section of the society, and not another.

We need to consider the views and attitudes of the concerned parties prior to the intervention. In this case, the attitudes and views of the various

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individuals appear to differ from one region to another. For example, in the study undertaken by Norup (1997) on the attitudes and views of the Danes regarding the issue of abortion, the Danish Abortion Act and the religious affiliations of the study's respondents had an influence on the answers that they gave to the study's questionnaire. Separately, the Gallup Poll conducted in the U. S indicated that nearly 85 percent of the Americans supported abortion (Saad, 2003). Age is also another factor to take into account while intervening on the problem. This is because there is a variation in terms of those who are pro-choice and those who are pro-life from one age group to another. The underlying issues that informed such a trend need to be unearthed so that the intervention strategy can be a success.

An intervention strategy shall also be informed by the attitudes and views of the health care providers who are directly involved in helping to procure an abortion. Therefore, their views needs to be sought because they are the ones who are practically involved directly carrying out of the abortion due to potential practical consequences in future. It is also important to consider the views of the mother, and the decision process that they are likely to be faced with in deciding on whether or not to procure an abortion. This is because ultimately, mothers are the ones on the receiving ends when it comes to the debate of whether abortion should be legalized or not. In case policy makers fail to consider the views and opinions of the mother, the implemented rules on abortion are likely to be faced with resistance from this group.

It is also important to consider the political inclinations of the members of the society since this cast as an indicator of the position that the individuals

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in question are most likely to take, that is, whether pro-choice, or pro-life. On the basis of the foregoing arguments, an intervention strategy on the issue of abortion calls for collaboration among the various groups of individuals such as religious groups, policy makers, medical practitioners, the public, mothers, and the youth, among others. Once the views and opinions of all these diverse groups have been complied, there arises the need to ensure that the intervention strategy adopted is within the established laws of the land.

## **Conclusion**

Abortion is a social problem that impacts on individuals from diverse cultural, religious and political affiliations. Various research studies and opinion polls have been conducted to assess the view and attitudes of different individuals on the issues of abortion. The study findings have revealed deviations in the opinions and attitudes of different individuals on the basis of their gender, political affiliations, sex, and professionalism. In addition, there is diversity with regard to the views and attitudes on abortion among individuals on the basis of their geographical regions, age, sex, gender, level of education, and professionalism.

Therefore, it is important to explore the views and opinions of all these diverse groups of individuals so that a sustainable intervention approach to this problem can be reached.

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