

Response paper

Myths and misconceptions around abortion

Abortion in simple words, can be defined as, termination of pregnancy. Abortion can either be natural (often referred as miscarriage) or voluntary termination of pregnancy. Abortion is a contentious issue around the globe. There are many myths around abortion because of repercussions and consequences of the procedure. These myths create fear and stigma about abortion and prevent many people from accessing the safe abortion services. The attitudes like stigma and fear, taboo around access to abortion leads to legal and institutional barriers. People often turn to opt for unsafe abortions. Unsafe abortions can lead to infertility, trauma to reproductive organs and mental health, severe infection and in extreme cases, can also tend to be fatal. The unsafe abortions, I believe, perpetuates violation of right to health of an individual.

There are several myths and misconceptions about abortion in India as well as across globe because of the taboo associated with the process of abortion, like-

1. Abortion affects fertility
2. Abortions are extremely unsafe
3. Abortions can cause breast cancer
4. It causes long term mental health issues
5. Young women or irresponsible women seek abortion
6. Insertion of sharp objects like twigs/hangers will result in safely aborting the pregnancy.

These myths and misconceptions arise because of the repercussions, lack of knowledge, fear and stigma around abortion. Safe abortion do not affect fertility. There is no evidence of developing breast cancer because of abortion. Indeed, mental trauma may develop because of abortion because of the stigma attached to the notion. This can be reduced by an effective dialogue about abortion. Women across the age groups seek for abortion because of different reasons. Insertion of sharp objects is an unsafe method of aborting a foetus and it can lead to sepsis(infection), and in severe cases can even prove to be fatal.

According to WHO, under *Right to health*, every individual has both freedom and entitlements for maintenance of one's health

"Freedom means every individual has the right to control one's health and to be free from interference.

Entitlements mean that each individual has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health"

So, it can be concluded by saying that any pregnant person (trans-man, non-binary folks, and cis-woman) is entitled to have an unbiased access to safe sexual and reproductive health services, and all of them also possess the right of individual autonomy which means that they have freedom to take decision about their own body.

The factors like sexuality education, use of effective contraception, provisions for safe, legal and induced abortion, and timely care for complications can help in reducing the taboo around abortion and prevent complications and deaths because of unsafe induced abortions.