

Abstract

Key words: Abortion, Decision-making process, Stakeholders, India

Women in developing world carry heavy burden of reproductive morbidity and mortality associated with unsafe abortions. Although, in a country like India, abortion is legalized, access to safe and affordable abortion care is still a barrier for many women, more so in the rural and tribal regions of the country owing to skewed distribution of registered and approved abortion service providers. Apart from facility level barriers, cultural barriers specifically delay in seeking abortion care distances women from safe abortion services. There is little evidence on reasons for delay in the Indian context and more so role of abortion decision-making process.

This study explored the decision making process among 107 married women who have experienced induced abortion in the tribal state of Jharkhand in India. The study is based on a secondary analysis of data collected in a prior study.

Married women clearly played an important role in the decision making process. Role of husband was more supportive and other family members were rarely involved. Findings support the social norm of decisive autonomy to women in the tribal society. Conclusive evidence for decision-making process delaying abortion seeking could not be ascertained in the study. Many (68%) of the pregnancies were unwanted and women were resorting to abortion as a birth control measure.

Programmatic changes in the national reproductive health program in creating awareness about spacing methods, motivating couples to use contraception and ensuring availability of contraceptive methods could reduce the demand for abortion. Abortion policy should be inclusive in terms of service provision in rural and tribal regions of the country.