

Legalization of Abortion in Saudi Arabia

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1. Thesis Statement

Abortion is one of the most widely debated topics in different countries. In the western side of the world, the legal system is much liberal, as it gives the women an authority to take decisions about the critical issue of abortion. On the other hand, some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, make laws against abortion. The governments, however, should allow women to decide to have an abortion or not without any limitations. This is because a right to choose is the corner stone of the basic human rights. In addition, a decision to opt for abortion can have numerous benefits, which may outweigh its disadvantages. It is, therefore, necessary Saudi Arabia to consider legalizing abortion as it will not only reduce the discrimination against women but will also enhance the overall standards of living in the country.

2. Advantages of Legal Abortion

One of the most evident changes that took place in the social policy of 20th century was the legalization of abortion. This had a major impact on the women who had an access to the services of abortion and the children who were born to these ladies. A number of studies have been conducted on the consequences of the legislation that legalized abortion. These impacts include: influence on fertility, levels of educational attainment, and income levels of the women who an ability and capacity to access abortion services. The access to abortion provide women with the basic right of deciding the direction for their life. In addition to that, an open and legal access to abortion has numerous health, social and economic benefits as well (Lutchen, 2011).

2.1. Health Benefits of Abortion

The access to legal abortion plays an important role in enhancing the health benefits to the pregnant women as well as the children. The legalization of abortion has enabled the couples, who are at a risk of conceiving at risk of having children that may have severe, which in some cases be fatal, genetic disorders to go for a safe way of ensuring that the health of the mother is secured. It also reduces the risk of post birth infections and diseases in the mother as well as the children (Milunsky, 1989). In addition, 'abortion access allows women to abort children who would have been less healthy if born' (Lutchen, 2011, p. 5). This can be done through an access to enhanced technology, such as ultrasound tests, which can indicate the health of fetus.

After the legalization of abortion a large percentage decline in the rate of births was observed to occur in the women who had a large number of social and health risks associated with the unintended childbearing. The greatest reduction in birth rate, within US, after the legalization of abortion was observed in women aging over 35 years, teenagers, as well as women who are not married (Levine, Staiger, Kane, & Zimmerman, 1999). In the present time around 27 percent of all abortions in the United States of America pertain to the women aging over 35 or teenagers (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

It is especially important for women, who confront medical and social issues to have an access to safe and legal abortion. The fertility rate in United States of America declined significantly after the legalization of abortion. This decline was more significant in the women who were married or had high medical risks associated with child bearing. For instance, the process of child bearing can be relatively more dangerous for the African American women who are older in age. A disproportionate amount of women, who confront medical and social risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth, are observed to rely on abortion. The legalization of

abortion is also closely associated with a reduction in premature birth rates, infant death, and sudden foetal deaths (Grimes, 2015).

The decrease in the rates of childbirth deaths, infant mortality, and post birth infections and diseases makes it feasible for Saudi Arabia to legalize abortion. This will not only add to the physical health of the women but will also enhance their psychological health. This, as a result, will have a positive impact on the health of the future children of the women under consideration.

2.2. Economic Benefits of Abortion

Abortion not only enables the women to have an access to safe and healthy pregnancy but also reduces the costs of treatment associated with unhealthy and unwanted pregnancies. In Saudi Arabia, as women are not allowed to have abortion, therefore, the costs associated with pre-birth and post-birth infections and diseases are very high. In addition to that, the cases where medical complications are very high, an access to legal abortion is the best possible choice for the mother as well as the child (Grimes, 2015; Lutchen, 2011).

Apart from that, when a comparison is drawn between the countries that have legalized abortion and those that have not legalized safe and legal abortion, it is observed that countries with legal abortion access spend lesser amount of money on various child care services. These may include but are not restricted to the following:

- Foster care,
- Education,
- Welfare,
- And the process of adopting children that are born with mental and physical disabilities (Schroedel, 2000).

The economic benefits associated with legal abortion also make the development of a policy associated with the legalization of abortion a feasible option for Saudi Arabia. This is because in many cases an unintended pregnancy can have severe economic as well as medical consequences for the families.

2.3. Equal Rights for Women

As discussed in the above mentioned section an access to legal and safe abortion is one of the corner stones to the provision of equal rights to women. By getting an access to abortion, the women get a chance for planning for the right time for their pregnancies. It has been suggested that ‘unwanted childbearing, by definition, can be considered an uncontrolled and undesired event; the mother did not want to have another child, but she did anyway’ (Barber, Axinn, & Thornton, 1999, p. 235). An access to abortion, therefore, grants the women with right to having free will. In addition to that, it also enables the women to increase the level of educational as well as professional attainment for themselves (Lutchen, 2011).

It is evident from the fact that the countries, which have strong and rigorous laws associated with the criminalization of the process of abortion, can be regarded as the counties in which the women have a very low level of education. In addition to that these are also the countries that have very high level of poverty. Furthermore, the ratio between the male and female earnings is also very unequal in such countries. Apart from that, the women representation in the legislature of such countries is very low. Moreover, the number of mandates - that require the insurance providers to provide a cover for minimum levels of stay after childbirth – are also very low in the countries that have stringent anti-abortion laws and regulations (Schroedel, 2000).

Apart from the above mentioned issues, the women who go through unintended pregnancies and childbirth have relatively high levels of depression, stress, and other psychological issues. Furthermore, the quality of child and mother relationship is also effected by forced pregnancies. This, as a result, lead towards overall unhealthy family relationships. In addition to that, by forcing the women into unintended pregnancies, the governments of states with anti-abortion policies rob the women of the basic right of deciding the course of their lives. Women are also hindered from spending their time in ways in which they like, as they are imposed with a responsibility of a child (Barber, Axinn, & Thornton, 1999).

3. Disadvantages of Abortion

The basic argument that is made against the legalization of abortion is the fact that it can be regarded as a process of killing an unborn child. A wide range of arguments exist in relation to the fact that whether fetus shall be regarded as a person or not. The opponents of abortion indicate that by opting for abortion, women go for killing their unborn child. This is regarded as a highly unmoral activity (Lutchen, 2011).

In addition to this, in some of the cases the medical risks associated with abortion are also very high. This means that the women who go for abortion are at the risk of losing their lives. This risk, however, has declined considerably after the introduction of a wide range of technologies in the area of legal and safe abortion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). This, however, does not hold true for all the countries. The countries with low rate of literacy and a low access to technology cannot ensure that the health of the women is not at stake. It can, therefore, be said that in complicated and complex situation abortion may pose serious threats to the health of women (Lutchen, 2011).

Another important issue associated with abortion is the decline in the population of the country. This can have severe economic impacts for the country. This is because the number of people in the workforce of the country declines. In addition to that, as birth rate is low the number of old aged people in the country also increases. This, as a result, leads towards an increase in the dependency ratio of the country. When taken as a whole, this increases the demotivation among the work force, as higher taxes are imposed on them to benefit the dependent population of the country (Lutchen, 2011).

4. Recommendations

An analysis of the legalization of abortion clearly indicates that the countries that have legalized abortion have seen evident increase in the literacy rates, standards of living, women health, quality of family relationships, as well as the overall standards of living. The countries with an access to safe and legal abortion have been observed to witness a large number of medical, social, and economic benefits. It is, therefore, recommended that Saudi Arabia shall also work on the legalization of abortion. This will enable the country to raise the rights provided to women. It will also enable the country to enhance its economic and social conditions. Overall, it will add to the health of the women, and will enable them to have equal rights within the society.

5. Conclusions

Abortion can be regarded as one of the most critical topics, which is widely debatable in legal and academic arenas. An access to safe and legal abortion was one of the greatest milestones achieved within the areas of policy making in the 20th century. Not all the countries, however, have supported the process of safe and legal abortion. In Saudi Arabia strict policies

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exist on the criminalization of abortion. This, however, has a large number of economic and medical disadvantages for the families that are forced to go through unintended pregnancies. The disadvantages or risks associated with the legalization of abortion are outweighed by its benefits. It can, therefore, be said that an access to safe and legal abortion within Saudi Arabia can provide the country with a wide range of social, economic, and health related benefits.

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