

Title: Attitudes towards abortion among university undergraduatet students in two selected public universities in Kenya : implications for counselling

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Abstract: It is currently estimated that 26-31 million legal and 10-20 million illegal abortions are performed each year worldwide. The estimated worldwide total abortions (legal and illegal) range between 36-53 million yielding an annual rate of 32-46 million abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age. In Africa alone, over 1.5 million illegal abortions are procured annually, while in Kenya it is approximated that about 300,000 abortions are procured each year. The major purpose of this study was to investigate attitudes towards abortion among Kenyan university students, and the main reasons that motivate the female students to procure abortion. The study also aimed at finding out the extent to which gender, religious affiliation, age, area of residence, economic status of parents, and faculty, influence their attitudinal trends. The main aim was to establish the abortion perspectives that students subscribe to in relation to the pre-identified perspectives of prochoice, pro-life and situationalist moderates, and to critically analyse the counselling implications of the findings. To realise the purpose of the study, a descriptive survey design was adopted. The study subjects comprised 205 students from Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities. Stratified random sampling procedure was used to choose the sample population. Primary data was collected by use of a questionnaire, which contained both open-ended and structured questions. Purposive informal discussions were held where necessary to seek clarification and additional information from the respondents. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data processing and analysis. Both descriptive and inferential analysis was conducted. The first stage of processing and analysis involved computation of frequencies, means and percentages and generation of tables and charts. The second stage involved testing of hypotheses by use of chi-square, ANOVA and t-test. It was discovered that variables of religion, parental income, and faculty significantly influenced the students' attitudes towards abortion in relation to some of its three facets namely foetal personhood, morality and legalisation. The students also gave their opinions regarding factors that motivate female university students to procure abortion. The three highly ranked factors were: fear of humiliation, fear of discontinuing studies, and financial constraints. The implications of the findings were critically examined and the findings were found to be of significant importance in constructing programmes for youth personal-social counselling in the area of sexuality I and its related issues such as abortion. Recommendations were made for counsellors, parents, teachers, religious leaders, students, legal and educational policy makers, and future researchers.