

The Perception and Attitudes toward Abortions among Adolescents in Colombo District, Sri Lanka

DPDC Dias¹, TRK Abeysekara¹, TDRD Madhusanka¹, and HMP Herath^{1#}

¹Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Sri Lanka

#prasannah@kdu.ac.lk

This study evaluated perceptions and attitudes towards abortion among adolescents in peri-urban areas in Colombo district, Sri Lanka. Using a descriptive cross-sectional design, the study involved 422 female school children from four MOH divisions, Piliyandala, Homagama, Boralesgamuwa, and Ratmalana. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study in Sri Lanka focused on adolescent perspectives on abortion. Stratified random selection for schools and systematic sampling for students were used. Participants completed a self-administered questionnaire assessing socio-demographic characteristics, perceptions of abortion, parent-child communication about sexuality, understanding of abortion laws, and attitudes towards abortion. The mean age was 15 ± 0.8 . About 51.7% (n=218) had a positive perception of abortion, while 48.3% (n=204) viewed it negatively. Positive perceptions of parent-child communication about sexuality were reported by 85.3% (n=360). However, perceptions of abortion laws were mostly negative, with 59% (n=249) reporting poor perceptions and 41% (n=173) positive views. Attitudes towards abortion were predominantly favorable, with 85.3% (n=360) expressing positive attitudes. Significant positive correlations were found between perceptions of abortion and parent-child sexual communication ($r=0.418$, $p=0.001$), as well as attitudes towards abortion and both parent-child communication ($r=0.211$, $p=0.001$) and understanding of abortion laws ($r=0.340$, $p=0.001$). Critically, 28.7% (n=121) were unaware of different abortion methods, and 46.7% (n=197) did not know reliable sources of abortion information, highlighting the need for educational enhancement. The study concludes that Sri Lankan adolescents lack awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health. Improving school programs could enhance adolescents' knowledge, promoting a more informed approach to reproductive health.

Keywords: *abortion laws, adolescents, attitudes, sexual communication, perception*