



Generational Attitude To Abortion: Indian Perspective

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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to gain a broad insight into how different Indian demographic generations perceive abortion as well as health implications of abortion. The findings show that different generations have similar perspectives, but to varying degrees. The outcomes of the study would be helpful to create a baseline for future investigations as well as to plan and carry out reforms.

Key words: abortion, generational, perspective, legal, religious beliefs

Introduction

Even though abortions have been legal in India since 1971, tight guidelines have been put in place for who is allowed to terminate a pregnancy because of the millions of female fetuses that have been aborted, creating a horribly unbalanced gender ratio in the nation¹. The Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC) makes abortion ('induced miscarriage') a criminal offence under Section 312². MTP Amendment Act 2021 allows both married and unmarried women to go for abortions up to 20 weeks into their pregnancies on the grounds of contraceptive failure, and up to 24 weeks in special cases such as victims of rape, sexual abuse, incest, and disabled women³. The MTP Act 2021 stipulates that the only consent needed for abortion is that of the woman whose pregnancy is being ended. The approval of a guardian is necessary in the event of a minor, or a woman who is under the age of 18, or a woman who has a mental disease. Induced abortion, which means taking away a human life, has long raised ethical questions⁴. A legal justification is used by those who support liberal abortion to claim that it is a woman's sole decision⁵. While those opposed frequently use a moral or religious justification to refute the former⁶. Everyone has their own viewpoints on whether a woman should or should not be allowed to abort the foetus. Although there are several studies on the abortion rate⁷, little is known about the specific issue of how different generations in India see abortion, and how to address it.

The objective of the current study is to identify different generations' attitudes towards abortion and also to understand the health implications of abortion on women. The study would help in understanding the public's perception of abortion in India from a broad perspective. It would also help to establish a baseline for future research as well as in the planning and implementation of changes.

Methodology

A non-probability, sampling method, namely, snowballing, judgment, and convenience was chosen for assessment⁸. A questionnaire was prepared that contained both open and close ended questions which were concealed in nature. Questions were made keeping in mind that the problem of researcher bias does not arise, and we recorded the actual opinion of the respondents⁹. The questionnaire was shared with a certain set of people who were thought to have a certain level of knowledge in the field. For having perspective of broader population, people were requested to further share the questionnaire with their networks. Three obstetricians-gynaecologists were interviewed to fully comprehend abortion and its impact on women's health. The results are based on testing the following hypotheses. Null hypothesis: Different generations don't have different viewpoints on abortion. Alternate hypothesis: Different generations have different viewpoints on abortion.

Results and Discussion

105 responses were received on the questionnaire. The responses were a mix of Gen-Z, Gen X, Millennials and Boomers. Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses of various generations.

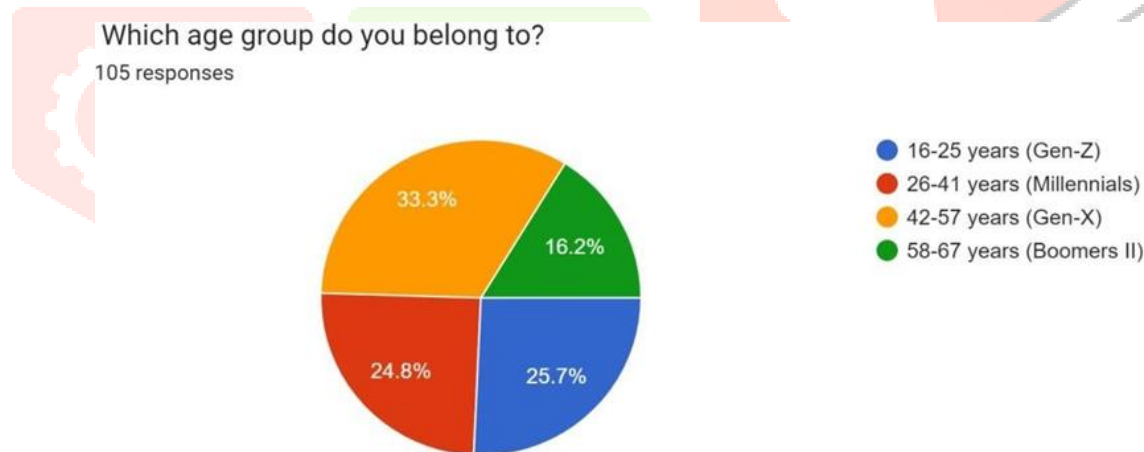


Fig.1. Distribution of responses of various generations

Perspectives of various generations of Indian population on abortion

1. Legal and ethical perspective

Figure 2 is a graph presenting the opinion of various generations on ethical and legal perspectives of abortion. The blue line represents ethics, and the orange line represents the legal perspectives. The Gen-Z is of the opinion that abortion is both ethical as well as should be legal. Millennials had milder response on both ethical and legal perspectives, but Gen X say that abortion is ethical and should be legal in India. Boomers II has the serious opinion that it is not ethical, and it should not be legal as well.

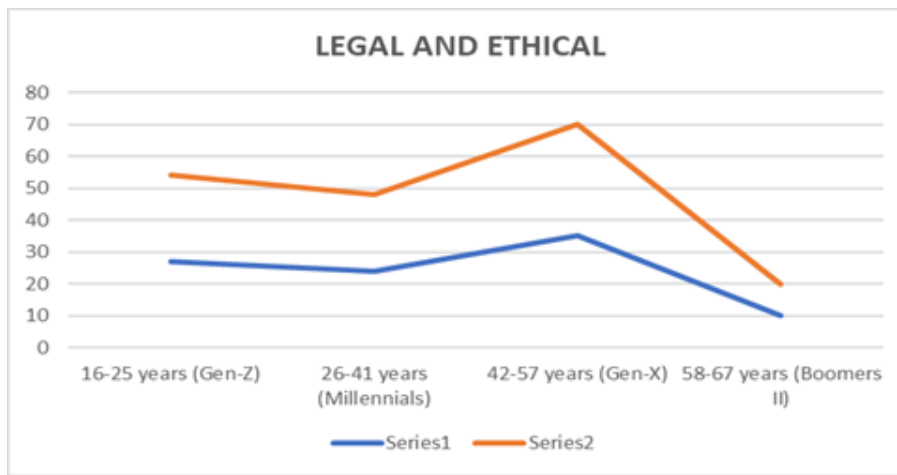


Fig 2: Legal and ethical perspectives of various generations on abortion.

2. Religious perspective

Religious beliefs affect the decision of abortion and major religions disapprove of abortion¹⁰. The majority of respondents across all generations believe that religion has no bearing on abortion but there are also people from all generations who say that religion significantly influences their decision on an abortion (Table 1). Nonetheless, society in general appears to have a wider awareness of the issue.

Table 1: Religious perspective of various generation on abortion

Which age group do you belong to?	Maybe	No	Yes	Grand Total
16-25 years (Gen-Z)	4	22	1	27
26-41 years (Millennials)	3	19	4	26
42-57 years (Gen-X)	2	31	2	35
58-67 years (Boomers II)	4	6	7	17
Grand Total	13	78	14	105

3. Women's safety and health perspective

The objective of asking this question was to dwell into the mindset of people of different age groups and understand what they think about the women's physical and mental health, safety during abortion, and about women's reproductive rights.

Almost all the age groups agree with the fact that women's health and safety is very important when it comes to abortion. More than 90% of respondents in Gen X and Boomers II answered "Yes," proving that the stereotype that these generations have an outdated mentality is untrue. All the generations agree that women's health and safety play a major role in taking the decision of abortion (Table 2).

Table 2: Women’s safety and health perspective

Which age group do you belong to?	Maybe	No	Yes	Grand Total
16-25 years (Gen-Z)	2	2	23	27
26-41 years (Millennials)	2	1	23	26
42-57 years (Gen-X)			35	35
58-67 years (Boomers II)		1	16	17
Grand Total	4	4	97	105

4. Perspective of the rising rate of abortion

Lack of awareness is the most common reason why there is an increase in abortion rate. But some people think too much awareness as the reason. The responses show that this thinking is mostly of the elder generation of Gen-X, Millennials, and the Boomers (Fig.3). It shows that somewhere there is a huge generational gap between these generations and Gen-Z when it comes to sensitive topic like abortion.

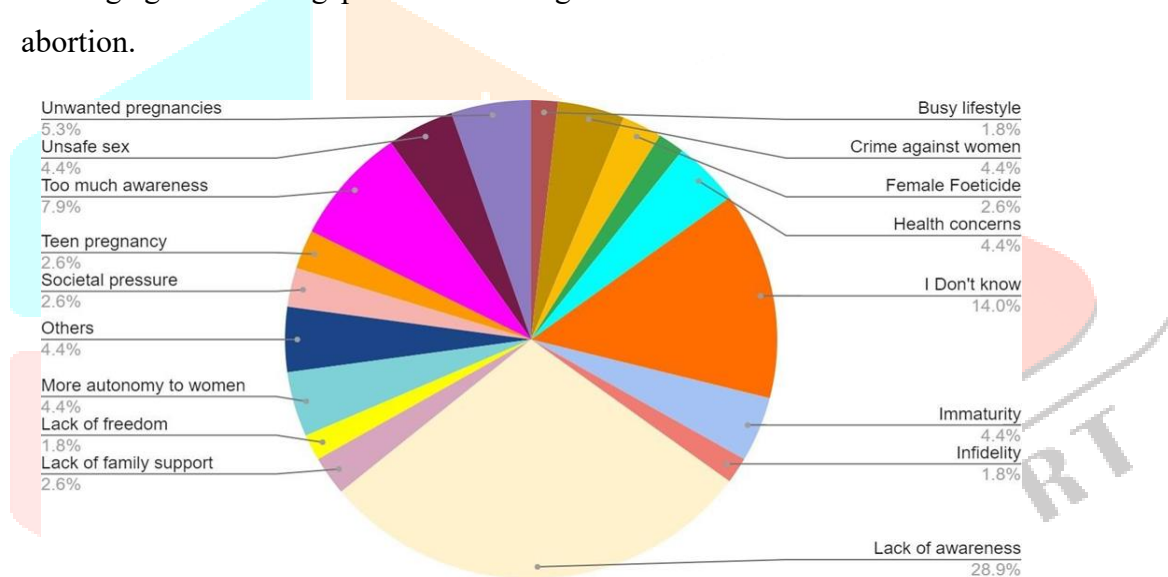


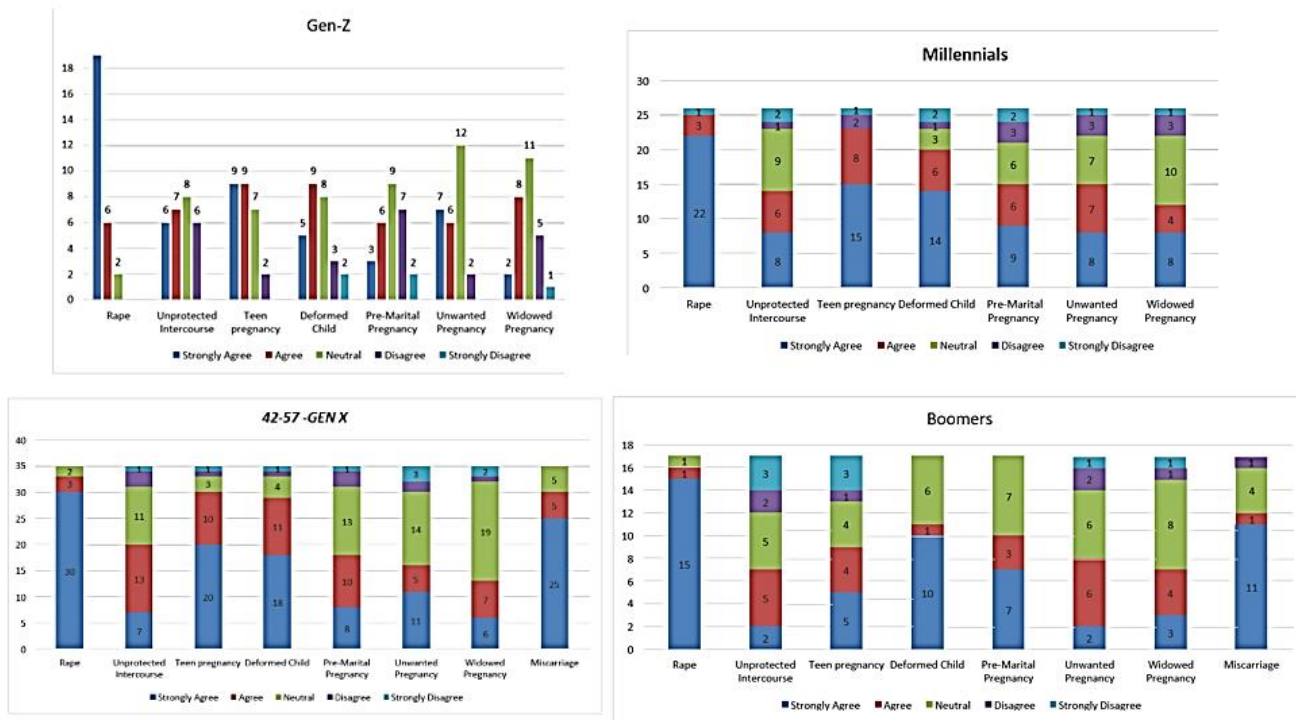
Fig 3: Perspective of generations on the rise of abortion rates

5. Perspective of valid reason for abortion

Based on survey results, 70 % of Gen-Z considers abortion as a good option in case of rape. Gen-Z strongly disagree to abortion in case of pre-marital pregnancy with only 11% of them agreeing to it as a valid reason for abortion. This is probably that Gen-Z generation thinks marriage will take place and the child will not be illegitimate and will have both parents. In case of unwanted pregnancy, Gen-Z group has mixed views with 44% neutral and 48% strongly agreeing to agreeing (Fig. 4).

Millennials strongly agree that in case of rape, the abortion should be allowed. In general, Millennials strongly agree to abortion as legal right for women as very low number of millennials have strongly disagreed to any of the option as not being reason for abortion. GEN-X also strongly agree on abortion in case of rape. Gen-X also believes abortion is good option in case of teen pregnancy and miscarriage with 85% of participants strongly agreeing to agreeing for abortion as legal option. The analysed group holds neutral view on widowed pregnancy. Boomers also hold view on abortion as legal option in case of rape with 88% of surveyed group strongly agreeing to the option. In general, all age groups are of view that abortion shall be a legal option in case of rape (Fig. 4).

All generations except Boomers are open to legalizing abortion in case of teen pregnancy. In case of widowed pregnancy, all population groups are in general undecided. Gen-Z is more against



legalizing abortion in case of pre-marital pregnancy than any other population group or are neutral in their view. This is presumably a result of how society has changed, with younger generations less likely than older ones to view living together as taboo (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Perspective of different generations on valid reason for abortion
Obstetricians-gynaecologists’ perspective on abortion

After abortion, there may be implications for one's health, fertility, and mental well-being (feeling low, depressed, and post-traumatic stress disorder). As long as the procedure is performed by a licenced physician, it is usually safe. The treatment is based on the woman's age and health. Generally, young, healthy women choose medicinal abortion (pills), while older, unwell women choose surgical abortion. While the younger generations are a little more pragmatic, the elder generations are often against the choice and are reluctant. The level of comfort of patients and families is usually low due to cases of anxiety, insecurity, and stress, but a few people are also very open about it. The mother or both partners make most of the decisions, while other family members also offer their opinion, especially in cases of health concerns.

Research Limitations

As only convenience and judgment sampling were done, collected data is from the small set of population who had enough knowledge about the topic. As the topic ‘abortion’ is a very sensitive, case studies were difficult to conduct as respondents were unwilling to share their experience.

Conclusion

Data analysis of the study indicates that, the null hypothesis that different generations have different points of views is accepted. There are various circumstances where the various generations are on nearly on the same page. Gen-Z are a little more open about this subject as compared to Boomers due to change in times. There are several publications on various American generations' perspectives on abortion^{11,12,13}, but there is little literature on various Indian generations' points of view. The outcomes of this study would provide baseline for further research that may help in developing the strategies for more progressive abortion laws.

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