



Perception and Representation of Criminal Abortions by Adolescent Girls in the Commune of Nsele, City of Kinshasa

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ABSTRACT

The goal is to understand the perception and representation of criminal abortions by adolescent girls.

Our study attempts to understand the perception and representation of clandestine abortions by adolescent girls in the commune of Nsele, in the city of Kinshasa. This study addresses a qualitative estimate in the phenomenological approach, therefore, we used the naturalistic paradigm with narrative data, subjective and non-quantifiable facts.

From the central thematic analysis, the following emerges: Perception of criminal abortion: The analysis of this sub-theme has made it possible to identify two different categories below: Motivational factors for criminal abortion: adolescent girls invoke as motivating factors at criminal abortions Lack of means to bear the burden of pregnancy, irresponsibility of the partner responsible for pregnancy, pressure from parents and lack of information; Consideration of the girl who has a clandestine abortion: The adolescent girls interviewed consider a girl who has had a clandestine abortion as a murderer, witch and prostitute.

On the Representation of Criminal Abortions: Teenage girls represent criminal abortion as An act swaddled with complications that can lead to sterility and death and an act transgressing the law of GOD.

As for the strategies of fight, the teenagers propose to the young girls (their pairs) to use the methods of family planning to avoid the pregnancy And to follow the councils near the disabled people in the matter. But it is up to the Congolese State to ensure regular control in the structures to identify and punish those who abort and those who facilitate abortion and prohibit the sale of abortive drugs to young girls.

Keywords : Perception, Representation, Abortions, Criminals, Adolescents.

I. INTRODUCTION

In practice, a normal pregnancy results in a birth, but for one reason or another, we notice that some young girls choose to terminate it, alone or in complicity with their partner.

The term evolution of a pregnancy; and this despite the legalization of voluntary terminations of pregnancy in the West and the development of family planning policies in Africa (Tambwe Kabamba, Tshefu Pongo, Nsenga and Walo, 2008).

The reasons most often given for abortion (and which can add up) are numerous: the fear of parents with the risk of being kicked out of their home, the fear of not being able to continue their studies, flight/irresponsibility of the parent, or even, to a lesser extent, the lack of resources to raise a child, the fear of no longer being “marriageable” when one has already had a child outside a union (Byaene, 2007).

According to the same source, abortion maneuvers are often practiced by doctors, paramedics, women themselves, midwives, medical students, nursing students or nursing students.

Illegal induced abortions remain common and often a cause of life-threatening complications in many countries with political and social climates hostile to abortion. Some of these complications may require urgent surgical treatment, adding to the evolving risks of abortions, the risks of anesthesia and those of surgical treatments (National Abortion Federation, 2009).

These complications remain an important cause of preventable mortality in women. Their late diagnosis and the clandestinity of their practice are responsible for the unpredictable severe secondary complications. The risk of these complications imposes an intensification of the policy of limiting abortions to pregnancy interventions for therapeutic purposes. It justifies an intensification of the education of women and couples on the advantages of contraception and family planning (Takongmo, Nkwabong, Pish-Tangnyin, Simeu, Ndi Omgba, Fouda, 2010).

In black Africa, most abortions are performed in poor conditions and often by non-biomedical means. The mortality prevalence rate is all the higher because, on African soil, a few countries such as South Africa, Cape Verde and Tunisia seem to be the only States to decriminalize induced abortion in authorizing, at a time when most of the constituent countries of the African continent have only prohibited the act, categorically. All the same, we cannot deny the fact that certain African States, including Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Senegal, to name but a few, authorize, on an exceptional basis, voluntary termination of pregnancy, whenever the high probability of death of the mother is indicated by a doctor.

We should also know the excessive number of deaths of women and young girls, often desperate, poor, fighting against social suffering by agreeing to "sacrifice" themselves, out of respect for the cultural norms of the community, the constraining and coercive nature of which is recognized, who take the risk of taking this path, let's say this winding path, so as not to bring shame (Lamine NDIAYE, 2011).

In addition, BAYA BANZA (SD) quoted by Tambwe Kabamba, TSHEFU PONGO, Nsenga and Walo (2008) shows in his survey conducted in BURKINA FASO, precisely in Ouagadougou that 8000 clandestine abortions are carried out each year on adolescent girls aged 15 to 19. . Its survey adds that 28 women die each year as a result of abortion and that the most exposed are women who perform the operation itself, with 80% of abortions having a negative impact on health.

In addition, MASSOSSA (SD) notes that out of a total of 221 observed cases of abortion in Brazzaville, there was 51.13% egg retention, 10.86% acute anemia, 10.86% peritonitis, 8.15% endometritis, 5.88% sepsis, 2.26% uterine perforations, 0.9% intestinal wounds, 0.9% Douglas fir abscess and 0.9% paraplegia.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, voluntary abortion is not authorized, except in cases where the pregnancy endangers the life of the mother. But unfortunately this type of abortion is still frequently practiced in our country. It is a source of morbidity and especially high maternal mortality. The only thing these laws achieve is to make abortion dangerous, to turn girls into criminals and to question the respect due to the law.

We see some girls who voluntarily risk their lives to end an unwanted pregnancy. The reasons given for this practice are above all socio-economic. And it has several consequences including: continuous or sporadic bleeding, infections, poisoning, HIV infection, coma, etc. They can also cause late secondary sterility, obstetric accidents (ectopic pregnancy, repeated spontaneous abortions) and AIDS (Tambwe Kabamba, Tshefu Pongo, Nsenga Et Walo, 2008).

In this perspective, we will try to understand how this phenomenon is perceived by adolescent girls in our environment. The following questions formed the basis of our reflection:

- How do teenage girls perceive criminal abortions?
- What do criminal abortions mean to them?

The goal is to understand the perception and representation of criminal abortions by adolescent girls.

To achieve this, we have set the following specific objectives:

1. Describe the characteristics of the adolescent girls who participated in the study;
2. explore their perception of criminal abortions;
3. Clear their representation of criminal abortions;
4. Raise their expectations vis-à-vis this phenomenon.

II. MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1. Research quote

Our study attempts to understand the perception and representation of clandestine abortions by adolescent girls in the commune of Nsele, in the city of Kinshasa. This study addresses a qualitative estimate in the phenomenological approach, therefore, we used the naturalistic paradigm with narrative data, subjective and non-quantifiable facts.

2.3 . Target population, Sampling and study sample

In our study, these are the adolescent girls of the commune of Nsele. We used the non-probability reasoned sampling method which consists of collecting information from the individual himself who has already experienced the phenomenon in his daily life.

Given that in qualitative research, the size of the sample is determined by redundancy, that is to say when there is repetition of the information collected, our sample was limited to the moment when there was repetition of the information. without producing new declarations, therefore to Twenty teenagers.

2.4 Data Collection Method, Technique and Instrument

Phenomenology is the method for conducting field surveys and it is the method par excellence for this study since we have to do with the social facts that people experience on a daily basis. The semi-structured face-to-face interview (self-report) is the technique used in this study in order to allow the interviewee to express all his thoughts. And to keep the information faithful, we used a recorder to record the entire speech or thought expressed by the respondent. We used the interview guide with recorder.

2.5 Data analysis plan

The data were analyzed according to an approach called the reduction of the hidden meanings inherent in the descriptions that the subjects made of the phenomenon studied: the keeping of educational documents .

The data analysis was thematic and categorical, that is to say from the theme, we retained sub-themes then categories supported by verbatim with their meanings.

This analysis was made following:

- Try to describe the highlights of the interview
- List key words or key phrases
- Transcribe the interviews in the form of verbatim to develop a feeling,
- Extract the data under the statements and expressions that relate to it,
- Eliminate repetitions of statements, formulate themes and sub-themes,
- Delineate all the meanings in central theme,
- Analyze the central theme according to the specific objectives of the research,
- Configure literature review results in items.
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2.6 Ethical Considerations

In the health field, we worked on humans. It is preferable from the beginning that ethical considerations are taken into account rigorously, it was necessary to respect this obligation, to seek informed consent.

In the same logic, we committed ourselves as investigators to respecting the confidentiality of the information collected while taking care to explain the purpose and objectives of the study, to define what was expected of the respondent, to answer questions that the respondent might ask themselves, to explain the methods of data collection and to choose a quiet environment, sheltered from noise and this in collaboration with the respondent.

Moreover, the respondent had the possibility of refusing the interview or interrupting it at any time.

III. RESULTS

Table 1: socio-demographic characteristics of adolescent girls

Characteristics	Workforce n=22	%
Age		
≤17 years old	01	4.5
≥18 years old	21	95.5
Average age 19 years ±86		
Educational level		
Without level	01	4.5
Primary	08	36.4
Secondary	10	45.5
Superior	03	13.6
Occupation		
Unoccupied	09	40.9
Studies	02	9.1
Saleswoman	02	9.1
Seamstress	05	22.7
Nurse	02	9.1
Hostess	01	4.5
Braiding	01	4.5
Parity		
Without children	19	86.4
A kid	03	13.6
Gesture		
Never had a pregnancy	16	72.8
Pregnancy	05	22.7
Two or more pregnancies	01	4.5
having aborted		
Yes	03	13.6
No	19	86.4

This table reveals that the age group of 18 years and over is the most represented with 95.5%, that is an average age of 19 years ±86; 45.5% have a secondary education level; 40.9% are unoccupied; 86.4% have never had children and 72.8% have never had a pregnancy; but 3 adolescent girls out of 22, or 13.6%, do not admit having had a clandestine abortion.

Thematic analysis results

The main theme retained in this work is the Perception and representation of criminal abortions. From the central thematic analysis emerge three sub-themes in this study, namely:

- 1) Perception of criminal abortion
- 2) Representation of criminal abortions
- 3) Strategies to fight criminal abortions

These sub-themes emerge from the statements of the respondents. And each sub-theme brought out categories according to the responses of the respondents, faithfully reporting the significant descriptions or the full report otherwise called the *verbatim*.

Furthermore, we have organized these data by reducing their volume into smaller and more meaningful units called meaning.

First sub-theme: Perception of criminal abortion

The analysis of this sub-theme made it possible to identify two different categories below:

- **Motivational factors of criminal abortion**

In view of their declarations, we find that adolescents invoke as motivating factors for criminal abortions: Lack of means to bear the burden of pregnancy, this adolescent testifies by saying: *REP1: the others abort because there is no no means, when she lives with the boy, she does not expect that the pregnancy can happen, we expect that we will return normal but by mistake, she finds herself pregnant, during this time the boy finds himself also incapable to host it. In such a case, it is difficult for the young girl, the only way out for her is to have an abortion.*

The next factor invoked is the irresponsibility of the partner responsible for the pregnancy, as expressed by this teenager: *REP16 : Hey! iya other girls who can have pregnancy but they are afraid of the parents, they will abort. But there are also others whose mothers know that the child is pregnant, they lead them to abort.*

And finally they invoke pressure from parents and lack of information, this is taken up in this excerpt: *REP6 : we don't teach well at school, I who didn't learn life education I I have a mother who hides nothing from me. Some mothers cannot speak with their children, but when the child receives life education, she will be informed.*

- **Consideration of the girl who aborts clandestinely**

The teenage girls interviewed consider a girl who has had a clandestine abortion as a murderer, this girl affirms it in these terms: *REP1 : I will always consider her a murderer. If we tell her story to the future husband who will come, he will not accept such a woman.* Others see a teenage girl as a witch and prostitute. These two teenagers pointing this out in their declarations: *REP3 : Well, she is a witch because she threw away the child, she committed sin. REP22 : I call him a whore.*

Second sub-theme: Representation of criminal abortions

The analysis of this second sub-theme made it possible to identify a single category: Representation of criminal abortions. Teenage girls see criminal abortion as An act swaddled with complications that can lead to sterility and death, these different complications are cited in the following statements: *REP3: abortion causes a lot of problems, you can remove the tubes, you won't start more to give birth to, girls of this kind can meet a good marriage but she does not give birth, it will become a problem, oh! the father's and mother's family are witches, except you*

are yourself... **REP4** : it causes inconveniences, many people do that, they died with their children. **REP11**: It's bad, abortion can bring many inconveniences sometimes death can also lead to section of the fallopian tubes.

In addition, it is an act transgressing the law of GOD as these teenagers say: **REP2** : See what, the way to have a criminal abortion? It's not joy, it's bad, but are cases that happened to me, I had to abort it hee.. But your conscience always reminds you that you had an abortion, it's bad... **REP8** : According to me, I don't like it, first of all because it's forbidden in the bible, secondly it kills an entire human so I don't authorize this act.

Sub-Theme 3: Strategies to Fight Criminal Abortion

- **About young girls**

In favor of these young girls who like to have clandestine abortions, the teenage girls questioned advise using family planning methods to avoid pregnancy, they quote: **REP1**: you have to avoid it by your behavior, you have to have it after your dates , you benefit in the hours when you cannot have the pregnancy. We are taught to use the product called " **Alaise**" if you have sex at risk of pregnancy in order to eliminate the possibility of becoming pregnant.

REP2: Well, for me, in order not to get pregnant, I can use a condom, buy medicine or go to the hospital to ask the nurses, they are there for us, they will explain to us and prescribe a product that can prevent you from getting pregnant if you're dating a man. ... Well, what I can add is when you know you have a boyfriend, you also have to share with friends, especially share with those who have already gone through the same life, ask them how you do when you leave sleep with a man to avoid pregnancy? The other can explain to you oh! me when i go out with my boyfriend to avoid pregnancy i drink water, when i finish i drink water after i stand up i jump and i don't get pregnant...

And follow the advice of people with disabilities in the matter , as the latter says: ... she must seek married women who are empowered to give advice on the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, because this does not only concern married women, being given that we will all be in marriage. Or also see a nurse or doctor before going out with a man for advice, I have already consulted a nurse or doctor, he told me this and that.

- **Concerning the Congolese State**

The teenagers ask the Congolese State to ensure regular control in the structures to identify and punish those who abort and those who facilitate abortion and prohibit the sale of abortive drugs to young girls. The following teenage girls claim this: **REP13**: Hey! For me, the State must put its hand on these girls who abort in hospitals like doctors and nurses, if we bring them this case, that they denounce that we arrest them and show them to the state so that this act ends... **REP19** : that we close all the places where they go to have an abortion and the pharmacies that sell these products to girls to have an abortion are closed.

IV. DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of adolescent girls

Our results reveal that the age group of 18 years and over is the most represented with 95.5%, that is an average age of 19 years ± 86 ; 45.5% have a secondary education level; 40.9% are unoccupied; 86.4% have never had children and 72.8% have never had a pregnancy; but 3 teenage girls out of 22, i.e. 13.6%, admit to having had a clandestine abortion.

On the other hand, in the study by Tambwe Kabamba, et al, (2008), it was carried out among young finalists aged 18 to 24 who were candidates for state exams residing in the maquis and those who evolve in the ecclesiastical environment and this had interested two "focus groups" composed on the one hand of 12 girls and on the other hand of 12 boys finalists in the 2004 State examinations in the maquis located in the DEBONHOMME district, and on the other hand of two other "focus groups" oriented towards young people from the ecclesiastical milieu, whose perceptions we have collected.

But we note that the age of its target population is not far from those of our study.

4.2 Results of the thematic analysis

In view of our results on the thematic qualitative analysis, we note that adolescent girls invoke as motivating factors for criminal abortions the lack of means to bear the burden of pregnancy, irresponsibility of the partner responsible for the pregnancy, pressure from parents and lack of information. This is what they express in these stories: **REP16** : *Hey! iya other girls who can have pregnancy but they are afraid of the parents, they will abort. But there are also others whose mothers know that the child is pregnant, they lead them to abort.* **REP6** : *we don't teach well at school, I who didn't learn life education, I have a mother who hides nothing from me. Some mothers cannot speak with their children, but when the child receives life education, she will be informed.*

Supporting our results, Kalonda (2015) explains that the clandestinity of abortion is mainly favored by the criminalization of abortion and the unfavorable or sometimes even violent attitude of parents in the context of pregnancy. Some Congolese men and women are in favor of a partial decriminalization of abortion (for example in cases of rape or incest), but this remains a minority. All these factors push girls to often be the first to decide to have an abortion in secrecy. They are also the first victims of clandestine abortions.

The will to abort depends on the age of the subjects (the girl and the boy), their occupation (school and learning), the context of the family (experiences, in the entourage, other pregnancies unwanted things that bring shame, etc.), the lack of financial and material means for birth management, etc. This is confirmed by excerpts from men, women and caregivers.

In addition, the WHO adds that "44% of the women who die each year in the world, following an unsafe clandestine abortion, are African. The latter are forced to abort in dramatic medical conditions because of very restrictive laws prohibiting a practice that only South Africa, Cape Verde and Tunisia authorize". Since we are interested in the moment from

which a fact becomes a socio-cultural phenomenon considered as making sense and deserving to be questioned, we must, as a result, allow ourselves to define and explain the practice that is customary to call an abortion (**Lamine NDIAYE, 2011**) .

The teenage girls interviewed regard a girl who had an illegal abortion as a murderer, witch and prostitute. Here's what they say: **REP1** : *I'm still going to consider her an assassin. If we tell her story to the future husband who will come, he will not accept such a woman.* **REP3** : *Well, she's a witch because she threw away the child, she made the sin.* **REP5** : *She is like Satan.* **REP6** : *I see her as a witch from what she does, it's already killed a human.* **REP11** : *I see it as less serious.* **REP22** : *I call him a whore.*

In the work of Tambwe Kabamba, et al (2008), their observations on the results obtained from the survey, showed that the young students finalists in the state exams are moderately aware of the seriousness of abortion. And, the percentages obtained sufficiently demonstrate their low perception of certain consequences.

In terms of representation, teenage girls see criminal abortion as An act swaddled with complications that can lead to infertility and death and an act transgressing the law of GOD. We see this in their expressions: **REP11**: *It's bad, abortion can bring a lot of inconvenience sometimes death can also lead to section of the tubes.*

REP1: *For me, I see that it is a sin first, you killed human. It hurts when you learn that a girl has an abortion in secret, although I never listen to that. it's a bad act you have to be careful.* **REP2** : *See what, how to have a criminal abortion? It's not joy, it's bad, but are cases that happened to me, I had to abort it hee.. But your conscience always reminds you that you had an abortion, it's bad.*

Illegal induced abortions remain common and often a cause of life-threatening complications in many countries with political and social climates hostile to abortion. Some of these complications may require urgent surgical treatment, adding to the evolving risks of abortions, the risks of anesthesia and those of surgical treatments (National Abortion Federation, 2009).

As for the strategies of fight, the teenagers propose to the young girls (their pairs) to use the methods of family planning to avoid the pregnancy And to follow the councils near the disabled people in the matter. But it is up to the Congolese State to ensure regular control in the structures to identify and punish those who abort and those who facilitate abortion and prohibit the sale of abortive drugs to young girls. The following statements affirm this finding:

REP2: *Well, for me, in order not to get pregnant, I can use a condom, buy medicine or go to the hospital and ask the nurses, they are there for us, they will explain and prescribe a product for us. who can prevent you from getting pregnant if you go out with a man.... Well, what I can add is when you know you have a guy, you must also share with friends, especially share with those who are already gone through the same life, ask them how you do when you go to sleep with a man to avoid pregnancy? The other can explain to you oh! me when i go out with my boyfriend to avoid pregnancy i drink water, when i finish i drink water after i stand up i jump and i don't get pregnant...*

REP4: *Another strategy is to decide not to do any more, I see that staying like that is good.*
REP6 : *if these small children catch pregnancies it is because they do not know how to calculate their dates, as for me, in order not to catch pregnancy the strategy is to know how to calculate the dates.*

REP14 : *Well, there are drugs that interrupt this act that we sell at the pharmacy that you can take even if we go out with the guy so you don't get pregnant like decaris or Tetra are the ones produced there protect against pregnancy .*

REP13 : *Hey! For me, the State must put its hand on these girls who abort in hospitals like doctors and nurses, if we bring them this case, that they denounce that we arrest them and show them to the state for this act to end.*

REP19 : *that we close all the places where they go to have an abortion and the pharmacies that sell these products to girls to have an abortion are closed.*



CONCLUSION

The main theme retained in this work was the Perception and representation of criminal abortions. From the central thematic analysis emerge three sub-themes in this study, namely: Perception of criminal abortion, Representation of criminal abortions, Strategies to fight against criminal abortions.

Perception of criminal abortion: The analysis of this sub-theme has made it possible to identify two different categories below:

- Motivating factors for criminal abortion: adolescent girls cite as motivating factors for criminal abortions the lack of means to bear the burden of pregnancy, irresponsibility of the partner responsible for the pregnancy, pressure from parents and lack of information.
- Consideration of the girl who has a clandestine abortion: The adolescent girls interviewed consider a girl who has had a clandestine abortion as a murderer, witch and prostitute.

On the Representation of Criminal Abortions: Teenage girls represent criminal abortion as An act swaddled with complications that can lead to sterility and death and an act transgressing the law of GOD.

As for the strategies of fight, the teenagers propose to the young girls (their pairs) to use the methods of family planning to avoid the pregnancy And to follow the councils near the disabled people in the matter. But it is up to the Congolese State to ensure regular control in the structures to identify and punish those who abort and those who facilitate abortion and prohibit the sale of abortive drugs to young girls.

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