"Abortion? That's for Women!" Narratives and Experiences of Commercial Motorbike Riders in South-Western Uganda

Stella Nyanzi1*, Barbara Nyanzi2 and Kalina Bessie2

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, London WC1E 7HT1; Medical Research Council Programme on AIDS in Uganda/ Uganda Virus Research Institute, Uganda2

*For Correspondence: E-mail: snyanzi@yahoo.com

Abstract

Although constitutionally illegal, induced abortion is a vital reproductive health option in Uganda. This paper analyses men's narratives about meanings of, and experiences with, abortion. Men play significant roles in abortion as instigators, facilitators, collaborators, transporters, advisors, informers, supporters or punishment givers. Many participants were knowledgeable about abortion. Attitudes were ambivalent, with initial reactions of denial and relegation of abortion to women's private domains. Further exploration, however, revealed active support and involvement of men. Interpretations of abortion ranged from 'dependable saviour' to 'deceptive sin'. Though a private action, abortion is socially scripted and often collectively determined by wider social networks of kinsmen, the community, peers, law and religion. A disjuncture exists between dominant public health discourse and the reality of local men who interact with women and girls as wives, lovers, sex sellers, mothers, daughters and sisters. Interventions targeting men about abortion should include safe sex education, provide safe abortion services and create stronger social support mechanisms. Policy and law should incorporate local knowledge and practice. (Afr J Reprod Health 2005; 9[1]: 142-161)

Keywords: Abortion, attitude, perception, support

References

7. Ringheim K. When the client is male: client-provider interaction from a gender perspective. Inter Fam Plann Persp 2002; 28(3): 170-175.
20. Hollander D. Although abortion is highly restricted in Cameroon, it is not uncommon among young urban women. *Inter Fam Plann Persp* 2003; 29(1): 49-50.
23. Henshaw SK, Singh S, Oye-Adeniran BA, Adewole IF, Iwere N and Cuca YP. The incidence of induced abortion in Nigeria. *Inter Fam Plann Persp* 1998; 24(2): 156-164.