

Why women delay abortion until the second trimester

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- Globally, 46 million women risk their lives and health undergoing unsafe abortions every year; 68,000 die and tens of thousands of others are injured.
- In the MENA region **one in ten** pregnancies ends in abortion;
- unsafe abortions constitute at least **6%** of maternal deaths.

Hessini L, Abortion Round Table discussion Cairo Nov. 2006

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Overview of abortion laws

- Most abortion laws are inspired by colonial legislation
- Iran, Saudia Arabia and Sudan's laws are based on Islamic law
- All countries include saving the pregnant women's life as a legal indication
- Close to half permit abortion in cases of danger to physical health, and a few include an exception for mental health
- A few also include rape and fetal abnormalities

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Overview of abortion laws

- Two countries: Tunisia (1973) and Turkey (1982) - allow for abortion on request in the first three months of pregnancy.
- In Tunisia, abortion is available in the second trimester for health reasons and in cases of fetal abnormalities.

Hessini L, Abortion Round Table discussion Cairo Nov. 2006

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Abortion and Islam

- Abortion after ensoulment (120day) is considered a sin in all Islamic schools,
- While before that time it is acceptable to some schools .
- other group would consider it a sin whatever the reason is .

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Abortion Policy In Egypt

- Egypt abortion policy is usually classified as rather “restrictive” when compared on a worldwide scale

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Abortion Policy In Egypt

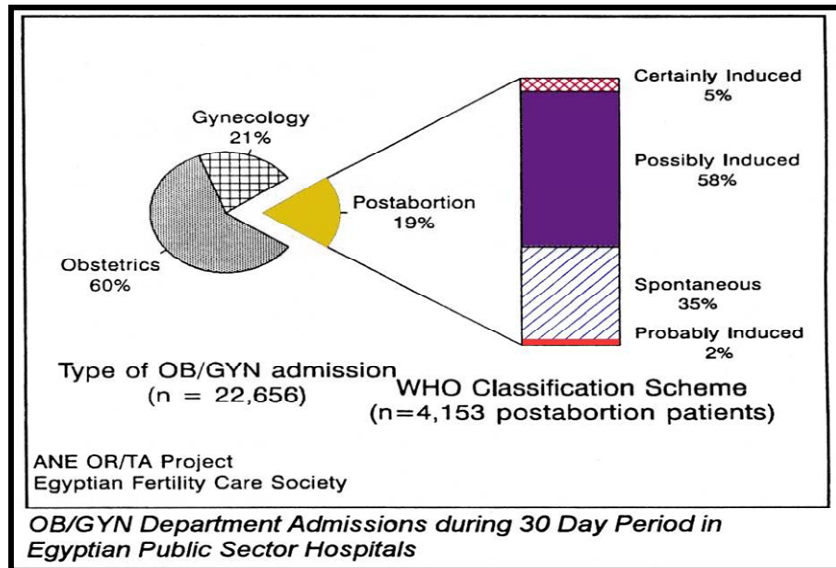
- Advocacy for decriminalization of abortion depends greatly on the major trend of Islamic doctrine.
1st four months of pregnancy,

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Case load in Egypt:

- The figure from different sources is about 31% of unwanted pregnancies tried to abort
- 41%of abortions that were classified as direct cause of maternal deaths, were induced

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- There is no reliable data in Egypt
Allowing accurate estimates of the incidence of unsafe abortion,
 - *Poor record keeping
 - *Stigma
 - * hostility and difficulty in conducting \abortion research
- Religious and patriarchal revivalism is growing

How a woman from Egypt, if nevertheless faced with an abortion decision can get an abortion?

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reflections as a physician

- In my country people are poor and women are the poorest. mostly illiterate, I have interviewed many of my patients, who described multiple and overlapping factors that influenced the timing of getting abortion.

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reflections as a physician

- I still remember the fear in the eyes of to 13 years old girl in the operating theater for C. S to 33 weeks pregnancy due to rape

Her mother said : *she discovered her pregnancy in the 6th month and she couldn't find any help, and the doctor she asked said it is Haram !!*

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- 45 years woman used tablets to abort 22 weeks pregnancy,

when I asked her why she is late?

- Replied: *I just discovered that I am pregnant. I thought I wouldn't have my period anymore. I didn't feel anything abnormal. as in previous times pregnancies,*

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- University student girl came with her mother for U.S examination!
- I found 18 week pregnancy!

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- Consanguineous (cousin-to-cousin) marriage is practiced in more than 20% of marriages in Algeria and Morocco and more than 50% in Jordan and Saudi Arabia.⁵⁰ Genetic counseling and antenatal testing have increased in these countries

Alkuraya. Attitude of Saudi families towards prenatal screening and abortion 2001;21:448-51

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- **So these are some of my reflections as a researcher**

During my work in “Biological Behavioral Surveillance”, with the Street girls

25% of cases have been reported, that getting Abortion is the only way to prevent transmission of HIV infection from mother to the baby

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- N=192
- Age : 12 -17
- 72.9 % never attended school
- 33.3% engaged in a commercial sex in the previous 12 month
- 97.1% has been engaged in non commercial sex

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factors influencing delays in obtaining abortions

- 1-failed to recognize their pregnancy during the first trimester
- 2- women described structural barriers to accessing services earlier, where abortion is illegalized
- 3- Women also express concern about health risks from IUD and hormonal contraception use,
- 4- some women either needed time to make a decision or only decided to abort after other events had transpired

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Providers perspective

- Mainly do it for money so they prefer surgical methods
- Others have a hostile attitude against whatever the justifications are
- Example from researches:
 - *Services introduced to victims of sexual violence
 - * Validation of the pregnancy checklist

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- I believe that asking the question “is abortion moral or immoral?” is asking the wrong question. The right question is can women be trusted to make moral judgments on their own or are women morally incompetent to make these decisions and they need men in robes or elderly men to make these decisions for them?

Mahmoud Fathala

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