

提交网址:

<http://iussp2009.princeton.edu/>

Theme 1: Reproductive Health

Session 104: Induced abortion: implications, consequences and service needs

Title of the abstract: The Changing Trend of Induced Abortion among Married Women and Its Determinants: Findings from China

Name of the authors: Xiaoying Zheng, Lihua Pang, Yukun Hu, Lijun Pei, Gan Lin

Affiliation and contact address: Institute of Population Research, WHO Collaborating Center on Reproductive Health and Population Science, Chinese Center on Population Health and Development (CCPHD), Peking University, Beijing 100871, China, Telephone: 86-10-62759185, Fax: 86-10-62751976.

E-mail: xzheng@pku.edu.cn , pang@pku.edu.cn , huyukun@263.net, peilj@pku.edu.cn, lifo.lin@gmail.com

Short Abstract:

Using data from the 1988, 1997 and 2001 sample surveys related to married women's pregnancy history, which were conducted by China's State Family Planning Commission, this paper examines the general level of induced abortion among women of reproductive age and its trend in China relying upon the indices such as the total abortion rate and the abortion ratio. Moreover, sex of children born after abortion was analyzed to identify whether there existed sex-selective abortion after the mid-1990s. Both description results and regression results reveal that son preference actually affected abortions in the 1990s; by contrast, in the 1980s such relationship did not significantly exist. Therefore, sex selective abortions occurred and sex ratio also increased along it in the recent decade in China. More strict enforcement of the regulations, and close monitoring at hospitals and family planning centers might change the situation.

Extended Abstract:

Background: As a last resort to the failure of contraception and unwanted pregnancy, induced abortion is legal in China, which has been playing a significant role in China's efforts to protect women's reproductive rights as well as to reduce fertility rate. Because of its unique relationships to birth control programs initiated and directed by Chinese government, the level of women's induced abortion has drawn considerable attention inside and outside China. More recently, the relationship between induced abortion and sex ratio at birth has aroused serious concern among scholars and policymakers due to the extremely high sex ratio among newborns. In this respect, this paper aims to compare the general level of induced abortion among

Chinese women of reproductive age and its trend in China by examining the total abortion rate, the ratio of induced abortion to live births (abortion ratio thereafter) as well as other related indices. Moreover, sex of children born after abortion was analyzed to identify whether there existed selective abortion of female fetus after the mid-1990s.

Methods and Data: Based on the 1988, 1997 and 2001 Surveys initiated by Chinese Population and State Family Planning Commission, this paper focuses on women's pregnancy history, and uses several induced abortion indices such as Total Abortion Rate and Abortion Rate to compare the general abortion levels for Chinese women of reproductive age and the induced abortion level together with its trend in China.

This paper analyzes the abortion patterns of women of reproductive ages based on three major sampling surveys in China. In terms of sampling frameworks and sampling methods, all the above surveys use stratified, systematic and cluster sampling, so, the data from above surveys remain highly consistent with one another. The quality of the survey in 1988 and 1997 is good, and there is no assessment to the overall quality of 2001 yet, but the pregnant history data, especially the abortion data might be under-reported.

Comparing with National Population Censuses in 1990 and 2000, women of reproductive age in above survey have similar distribution in age structure, ethnic nationalities, education level, marriage status and so forth, except that the survey data have higher illiteracy rate than that in the census. To sum up, the three surveys mentioned above reflect the main demographic characteristics of Chinese women at reproductive age (we include the comparison of reproductive survey and population census).

The existed Researches on trends of abortion in China were based on only one single survey mentioned above. Considering respondents' retrospective report on their pregnancy history in all three sampling surveys, some information may be underreported for diverse reasons, particularly for abortion and other non-living fetuses. Furthermore, the long time the last pregnancy, the more information underreported by women investigated. To avoid the under-report problem, our research combined the above surveys together, and only took the pregnancies dating back to five years before the survey to get a better understanding the trends of abortion in China. All above 3 surveys only collect information on pregnancy history among married women including first marriage, remarriage, divorce and those who are bereft of their spouses. So, the abortion level and trends only focus on married women in our research.

Results and Discussions

Total abortion rate rose in the period of 1984-1987, and then fell in 1993-2000. In the mid-1980s, the number of abortions for per woman on average went up during her reproductive years. Although we are not sure when the peak of total abortion rate occurred exactly in terms of the present data, yet it declined slowly but obviously after 1993. The total abortion rate exhibits a remarkable decline and was lower in the

1990s than in the 1980s. It is emphasized that the implementation of reproductive health programs had in fact greatly reduced abortions; especially in the middle of 1990s, family planning service once aimed to birth control gradually shifted to reproductive health services. Those women with unmet contraceptive needs in the 1980s and in the early stage of 1990s, especially for women at their early reproductive age, were supplied with comprehensive reproductive health care in the late-1990s after ICPD.

Comparing all age groups of reproductive women, women at their peak reproductive age aborted more fetuses than other women, while their abortion ratio was lower than other groups. Compared with the situation in 1987, the decline of abortion rate in 1996 mainly occurred for women at their later reproductive stage, while it changed little for those at the early stage both in 1987 and 1996. Nevertheless, from 1996 through 2000, abortion rate decreased sharply for women at their early reproductive age.

Rural women had relatively lower abortion than that of urban women in terms of total abortion rate and abortion ratio. The higher education women, the higher abortion ratio and total abortion rate. These aspects reflect that family planning and reproductive health services as well as free health services were mainly focused in rural China, for most of reproductive women lived in villages and towns.

Conclusions:

Both description results and regression results reveal that son preference actually affected abortions in the 1990s; by contrast, in the 1980s such relationship did not significantly exist. Therefore, sex selective abortions occurred and sex ratio also increased along it in the recent decade in China. Women in both rural and urban China in the 1990s had changed their reproductive behavior, which was different from that in the 1980s. Women with no children or in the early stages of reproductive age or with the first pregnancy in the 1990s aborted more fetuses than before, for those women did not sufficiently satisfy their contraceptive needs. Thereby, we should play more attention to newly married women and younger women, and provide much high quality reproductive health services to them. To stop sex selective abortion in China more strict enforcement of the regulations forbidding prenatal sex determination and sex-selective abortion, and close monitoring of the use of ultrasound B-scans at hospitals and family planning centers might change the situation. Nevertheless, institutional insurance, such as social insurance and medical insurance, particularly in villages and small towns, as well as to improve the social status of Chinese women, should become the centre of changing the path of sex-selective abortions.