

# PERSPECTIVES: Empirical Research from Romania

## Abortion: Pro and Contra

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### Abstract

To kill a new life before it's born, to do an abortion. This is a problem of many generations. In the evolution of human civilization, the attitude concerning abortion was different in different cultures, periods, societies. The aim of our study is to evaluate the actual opinion and attitude about abortion of young persons, students, and residents in medicine in Timisoara city, and the situation of the whole country. We performed a questionnaire for 400 people between the ages of 19 and 28 with superior studies. The group is composed of 320 (80%) women and 80 (20%) men. We accepted for recording and analyzing all the completed questionnaires. The questions referred to the topic of abortion in the antecedents, and asked if they had had one, how it affected the life of the women and her family, the circumstances of acceptance of abortion today, religious aspects and different other aspects.

### Introduction: General Data

The social and political changes in Romania after 1989 created new concepts about female, family, pregnancy, solitary mother, abortion.

Abortion is purposeful termination of pregnancy with intentions to not produce a live born infant or to remove a dead fetus; or the purpose of the abortion is to avoid becoming a parent, for different reasons.

Romania has the highest rate of mortality after abortion, five times higher than the medium rate from European states. In the last years the rate of abortion has decreased, but on the international scale, Romania continues to be in the top of the list referring to the number of abortions, recording a rate of 3 abortions for every birth. (Among 1 million of pregnancies per year, more than 2/3 are ended with an abortion.)

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This happens because the older women didn't accept the idea of contraception; which was illegal before 1989 (BMJ). In that period many women died because of the illegal abortion. They were exposed to infections, septicemia, hemorrhage, embolism, sterilizations, coma.

A study of Romanian Population Services shows that 97% of the Romanians heard about a contraceptive method. However, for every 1.000 new born children with approximation there are 1.200 abortions. This data is only that which is centralized in state clinics and hospitals. A good part of women preferred to do the abortion in particular clinics.

In 1990 Romania had 1 million abortions. Romanian Population Services confirmed that there were 11 million abortions between 1989 and 2000, but the number does not include the abortions from the particular clinics.

From 1992, the government started sexual education in schools and familial planning units. The number of abortions is decreased from 980.000 in 1990 at 254.855 in 2001, and the maternal mortality caused by abortion has decreased from 280 in 1989 at 35 in 2001.

The population of Romania decreased by 1.400.000 from 1990 since 2002. There are recorded about 22 deaths caused by abortion per 100.000 births. Alarming is the fact that 20.000 girls aged 15 years old had an abortion in 2002. In 2003 the statistics recorded 224.807 abortions and in 2004 their number was 200.000.

About 20% of women are infertile secondary of an abortion. The mortality caused by abortion represents more than 50% from the total maternal deaths. Romanian female has 3-4 abortions, versus Occidental Europe women where is recorded less than one abortion in a woman's lifetime.

The number of the women who has had sexual contact before the wedding has risen from 77% in 1999 to 90% in 2004. More than 50% persons who are sexually active and can have children didn't want to become parents (2004).

The total fertility rate remains at 1.3 births per woman. The specific rate of fertility has been raised by almost 80% for those aged 30-34 years, remained stable for the 25-29 age bracket, and decreased for the 20-24 age bracket.

The prevalence rate of contraception methods has been tripled for women of about 15-44 years old. The most used method is the contraceptive pill which is used

by 16% of women. 36% are still using the traditional methods like coitus interrupts, and 34% are not using any of contraceptive methods.

In Timis County the rate of abortion is high compared to other counties. In 1991 there were 27.066 abortions and they are decreasing over the years at 6886 in 1998.

There exist new opportunities, but all are they favorable for a healthy society?

We conducted a study to evaluate the actual opinion and attitude about abortion of young persons, students, and residents in medicine in Timisoara city.

Because physical and social aspects differ between sexes, we tried to analyze data in accord with these parameters. Our research is a part of a larger ongoing study.

### Methods

We performed a questionnaire about abortion. We performed a questionnaire for 400 people between the ages of 19 and 28 with superior studies. They were young medical students (312 persons) and residents in medicine (88 persons). We want to analyze aspects about abortion just for young persons, who were children in 1989, without past influences, and who have sexual life developing in a "normal" society. The group was formed by 320 (80%) women and 80 (20%) men. The mean age is 23.3 years (SD=3.7 years).

The data were collected by anonymous questionnaires with the acceptance of collaboration. Incomplete answers were excluded. The initial number of participants was 423.

We do not have data on: how many of them started their sexual life, whether they have a regular sexual life or not, what contraceptive methods are used, and what their social status is.

For these questions we did obtain pertinent data or they refused to answer.

The analysis of the results was performed in EPI 6 Info Program of the WHO (frequencies, Odds Ratio, Relative Risk, Chi-squares, p-values). It was used with 95% confidence interval.

### Results

All of the participants know what the abortion is. Most of the questioned persons consider that it is important to keep the pregnancy (258). Just 92 females agree with the idea of abortion, but the number of males was 50. More than 35% of all questioned persons accept it, motivation that can be a necessity.

280 (70%) would regret if it they were personally being implicated in the decision of making an abortion.

Abortion is a considerate solution

Answered "YES FOR ABORTION, BECAUSE..."

Question	Female		Male		Total		p
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Non-legitimate relation	76	23.75	45	56.5	121	30.25	0.000
Undesired pregnancy	130	40,6	20	25	150	37.5	0.009
Malformation	301	94.06	80	100	381	95.25	-
Mutagen exposure of parents	285	89.06	71	88.75	356	89	-
Pregnancy with risk for mother	251	78.43	72	90	323	80.75	0.018
Too early, parent	230	71.87	48	60	278	69.5	0.039
Do not want children	80	25	10	12.5	90	22.5	0.016
Pregnancy secondary to rape, incest	309	96.56	71	88.75	380	95	0.004
Finances problem	69	21.56	0	0	69	17.25	
No adequate conditions	108	33.75	12	17.64	120	30	0.001
Too young to became parent	62	19.37	42	52.5	104	26	0.000
Parents demand for abortion	31	9.63	19	23.75	50	12.5	-
Not too many children	50	15.6	33	41.25	83	20.75	0.000

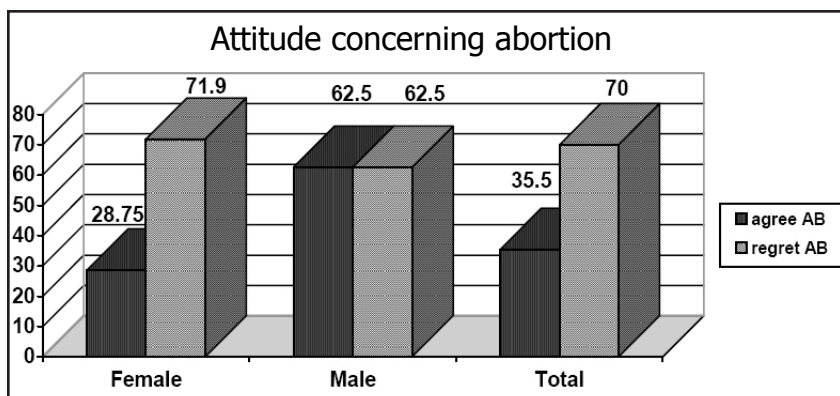
in some cases like fetal malformation (but no significance between sexes) and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, by 380 (95%) persons. Females believe that abortion is rightly motivated in the second situation.

Abortion is seen to be a necessity by 356 of them in the case of parents' exposure to mutagen agents, without differences between sexes.

If the parents were exposed to mutagen agents the child can be born with malformations or different incurable diseases. In many cases the parents choose to do an abortion. They do not accept the risk.

Pregnancy after rape or incest is considered a necessity (309 female versus 71 male). In this situation many women have an abortion because of a psychiatric cause: they see in the new born child the person that abused on them. If she keeps the baby, it is very difficult to get attached to him. And the child will grow in an incomplete family.

Men seem to be more attentive if the woman's health



is in danger if the pregnancy continues. 72 of them voted for abortion in this situation. And men are not prepared to be “father” at a young age (42 persons, more than half of them), in non-legitimate relationship (45% man versus 23.75% women). Men are not dreaming of a big family, with many children. 33 of them prefer abortion.

Female are more courageous than males, in the face of unplanned pregnancy in a non-legitimate relation. More of them accept the child if they are too young, if the baby is too early, or if their parents oppose to maintain the child. When the female’s parents do not agree with the pregnancy it is very difficult for her to avoid an abortion, especially when she depends on them and lives with them. Some parents understand their daughter and they try to help and support her decisions.

It is better for a child to grow in a complete family. The mother needs the support of her partner because it is difficult to raise a child all by herself. Taking care of a baby implies love, time, affection, financial support and the most important: to be prepared to be a parent.

The young age of parents is not an impediment for having a baby if they know what to expect. If they are prepared physically and mentally, they can raise a child.

Sometimes the woman’s health is in danger if the pregnancy continues, and in these situations it is rational to avoid the loss of the mother and to perform an abortion.

The birth of a child is a moment of joy and happiness, but sometimes when the baby is malformed, or he has birth defects or severe medical problems, the sadness is bigger than the joy. The malformations make a harder life for the child and for his parents. The child feels that something is not right with him; he can’t do things like other children his age, others laugh and look strangely at him. He needs a lot of attention, special care and medicine. It is very difficult to see your child in this situation, to know that all you can do is not enough, to bring him to normal. You can’t know what is going to happen to him. The family is forced to take the hard decision to make the abortion if the child to be born has this kind of problems.

The reason they don’t agree with the abortion is especially their conscience 280 (70%) persons. To be afraid

of the future 310 (77.5%), education 280 (70%) and religion 220 (55%) are not strong motives to avoid the abortion.

At the question “Imagine that you have done an abortion, would you repeat it?” 303 (75,75%) persons answered that they won’t do that mistake again, and 97 (24,25%) would repeat it if it is necessary. Two of them were afraid to repeat it because of the possible complications.

292 (73%) believe that they won’t make an abortion because they are sure that contraception is a sure method.

The rest of them 108 (27%) would do it if the mother is in danger or if there are some fetal malformations.

Motivation	Female		Male		Total		p
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Religion	140	43.8	40	50	180	45	-
Educational reasons	108	33.75	9	11.5	117	29.25	0.000
Conscience	210	65.62	70	87.5	280	70	0.000
Afraid of abortion	73	22.81	22	27.5	95	23.75	0

According to the medical ethics, a doctor can deny to interfere in the process of reproduction, pregnancy interruption and abortion if this is his opinion; inviting the persons to ask for the advice of other doctors (The International Conference of Orders and Organisms with similar attributions Paris, January 1987 art.18).

Our data was obtained questioning young medical students and residents.

Our conclusion is that young medical students and residents are not well prepared to face to an unplanned pregnancy. They do not have the theoretical knowledge, they

were not interested in documenting the topic of abortion, and in general they think that this cannot be their problem.

Some of them consider

abortion like “the last way” to follow, in some specific cases, motivated by subjective reasons.

We have no answers for such a complex problem. But we know that the new generation in Romania have the right to choose for themselves and in general they fight for life. 🙏

Question	Female		Male		Total		P
	No.	%	No.	No.	%	No.	
Imagine that you have had an abortion. Would you repeat it?	88	27.5	9	11.25	97	24.25	0.002
Probability to do / or agree with an abortion in the future	86	26.87	22	27.5	108	27	-

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*Editor's note: Pursuant to PBJ policy regarding submissions in a language other than the author's primary one, this article has been edited for clarity. No major changes were made, nor original meanings altered. We worked with the author to alter some usage and structure and to clarify the original submission. For more information on PBJ policies regarding submissions and the editorial process, please visit our website or contact the Executive Editor by emailing [editors@bioethicsjournal.com](mailto:editors@bioethicsjournal.com).*