

## An Axiological Perspective On Abortion Decisions: A Case Study Of Individuals' Reasons As A Reflection Of Values And Ethics

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**Abstract.** *Abortion, as an intentional act of terminating pregnancy, focuses on various reasons, including maternal health conditions, fetal abnormalities, pregnancies resulting from rape, and economic and social factors. Abortion is considered a significant public health issue, particularly due to its substantial impact on maternal morbidity and mortality. This study also highlights the importance of considering values and ethics in abortion decision-making, emphasizing the role of an axiological approach. The research method is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. The findings indicate that abortion decisions are influenced by economic factors, marital status, and psychosocial aspects. An axiological approach is crucial for considering ethical and moral values in abortion decisions.*

**Keywords:** *abortion, axiology, ethics, values.*

### BACKGROUND.

Abortion is the act of intentionally terminating a pregnancy before the fetus can survive outside the uterus. This action is taken for various reasons, including the mother's health risks, severe fetal abnormalities that cannot be resolved, pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, economic and social factors threatening the survival of the fetus or mother, or an individual's personal and ethical decision not to continue the pregnancy (Gilda Sedgh; et al. 2019).

Abortion is considered a crucial public health issue, especially given its significant impact on maternal morbidity and mortality (Tyler 2003). Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) reveal that there are about 25 million illegal abortions performed worldwide each year, with about 97% of these abortions occurring in developing countries. According to WHO, the global maternal mortality rate remains high, estimated at about 303,000 maternal deaths each year, with complications from unsafe abortions being one of the primary causes. Meanwhile, specific data for Indonesia indicates that there are about 2.4 million abortions each year (WHO, 2021).

Abortion, especially if performed illegally or unsafely, can lead to various health complications for women. Possible complications include heavy bleeding, damage to

reproductive organs, infections, mental and emotional complications, and even death (Brown, 2007).

The research on unwanted pregnancy (Bearak et al. 2020) from 2015 to 2019 shows about 121 million cases each year. This data indicates that there are 64 cases of unplanned pregnancy per 1,000 women aged 15 to 49 years. During the 2015-2019 period, about 61% of unwanted pregnancies ended in abortion. Based on this data, this means there are about 73.3 million abortion cases each year, equivalent to 39 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 49 years. According to the data, about three out of every ten pregnancies end in abortion (WHO, 2021).

Performing an abortion without proper medical handling can cause serious health complications, such as infections, excessive bleeding, damage to reproductive organs, and even mental and emotional impacts (Henshaw et al., 1999). Regardless of the personal or moral reasons underlying the decision to have an abortion, it is important to consider the values and ethics involved in this decision-making. For example, values such as justice, compassion, autonomy, and social responsibility can be important factors to consider in the context of abortion (Gawron & Watson, 2017). Understanding the role of axiology in the context of abortion is essential to comprehend the complexity of this issue more deeply. In abortion case studies, axiological considerations play an important role in understanding the moral and ethical reasons underlying the decision-makers' choices (Wardhani & Oktarina, 2019).

In order to achieve a fair and comprehensive understanding of the issue of abortion, an axiological perspective is important. A deep understanding of axiology not only helps in respecting and understanding various different views related to abortion but also encourages more constructive dialogue and discussion. Through this approach, individuals can reflect on their personal values and ethics in the context of abortion decision-making, while also considering other perspectives and possible impacts. Understanding the moral and ethical basis of abortion decisions deepens our understanding of the related values and ethics.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **1. Definition of Abortion**

In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the term "aborsi" derives from the Latin "abortus," meaning "loss or miscarriage." Abortion is defined as the process of expelling an embryo that cannot survive, occurring before the pregnancy reaches four months. Additionally, abortion can also be defined as the act of ending a pregnancy by removing the fetus or embryo after two months of pregnancy.

Abortion is the process of terminating a pregnancy by removing the embryo or fetus from the uterus before it can survive outside the womb. Generally, abortion is performed for medical reasons or because the pregnancy is unwanted (Chervenak & McCullough, 1999). However, in some cases, abortion is also carried out based on personal considerations involving moral and ethical values (Tutik, 2010).

## **2. Reasons for Abortion**

There are many reasons why someone may choose to have an abortion. These reasons include serious or life-threatening health issues for the mother, fatal or inoperable genetic abnormalities in the fetus, pregnancies resulting from rape or incest, economic and social conditions that make the continuation of the pregnancy untenable for the fetus or the mother, or the individual's personal and moral decision not to continue the pregnancy (Ananti et al., 2014). Fundamentally, each individual has the right to make decisions about their own body and health based on their values, beliefs, and personal experiences (Tutik, 2010). In making abortion decisions, it is important to consider and reflect upon the values and ethics adhered to and believed in by each individual (Brown, 2007).

## **3. Complications of Abortion.**

Undergoing an abortion that is illegal or performed in unsafe conditions can lead to a variety of health problems for women, including severe bleeding, trauma to reproductive organs, infections, and potentially fatal mental and emotional disorders (Brown, 2007). Henshaw et al. (1999) also emphasize that abortions conducted without adequate medical supervision can result in serious effects such as infections, extreme bleeding, damage to reproductive organs, and adverse impacts on mental and emotional health.

## **4. Definition of Axiology**

Etymologically, axiology comes from the Greek words "axios," meaning value, and "logos," meaning science or theory. Axiology is a theory that studies the essence of values, often identified as the philosophy of value. The main topics in axiology are values related to the virtues and grandeur of human life, closely linked to major psychological functions such as intellect, will, and emotions. Particularly, the issue of

virtue in human life is often associated with morality, where goodness is considered as a result of will (Ediyono, 2015).

Although a person's judgments can change, it does not mean they lack solid principles or stances. Conversely, it is risky to cling to old values that are no longer relevant while new, more suitable, and beneficial values emerge. It is important for a person to realize this and be open-minded, always ready to engage in dialogue with their surroundings, the belief systems they adhere to, the judgments they have made, and the culture or new values that emerge (Ediyono, 2015).

## **5. Axiological Perspective in Abortion Decisions**

Axiology, as the study of values, plays a crucial role in understanding the moral and ethical reasons underlying individuals' decisions to have an abortion. Values such as justice, compassion, autonomy, and social responsibility can be significant factors in the context of abortion. This study will conduct an in-depth analysis of how these axiological values influence individuals' abortion decisions (Putri, 2023).

According to Fidawati (2018), in making decisions about abortion, axiological values considered include human values related to the right to life and dignity, moral and ethical principles like integrity and justice, the influence of religious and cultural values, considerations of physical and mental health and well-being, as well as the value of autonomy and individual freedom in making decisions about their body and health.

From an axiological perspective, it is important to understand how ethical and moral values affect individuals in making these decisions. Axiological values such as justice, autonomy, compassion, and social responsibility can play a significant role in the abortion decision-making process (Gawron & Watson, 2017).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, aiming to delve into the personal experiences of women who have undergone abortions. The study focuses on the motivations behind the decision to have an abortion. The informants are women who have experienced abortion attempts. In selecting the sample, purposive sampling technique is used, taking into account aspects such as age, marital status, number of children and their ages, economic condition, type of employment, level of education, and residential

location, whether rural or urban. The number of informants in this study is three women who have attempted abortion.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Characteristics of Informants**

In our research focusing on abortion decisions, we explored the backgrounds and experiences of three different informants. Each informant brought a unique perspective, reflected through various aspects of their lives, including age, education level, employment status, marital status, and their abortion experiences.

- a) Informant 1: Aged 20, with an educational background up to primary school (SD). This informant is unemployed and unmarried. She had one abortion at the age of 1 month into her pregnancy.
- b) Informant 2: Aged 24, with a Bachelor's degree (S1). This informant works as an employee and is unmarried. She had more than one abortion, with the last abortion performed at 3 months of pregnancy.
- c) Informant 3: Aged 26, with an education up to junior high school (SMP). This informant is a housewife who is married. She had one abortion at 3 months of pregnancy.

### **2. Considerations in the Abortion Decision-Making Process**

Various considerations can motivate someone to choose abortion, despite often being viewed negatively by many, including the individuals themselves. This research reveals that the informants' reasons for abortion include economic considerations, marital status, and psychosocial factors. Moreover, axiological values also play a significant role, especially in relation to financial conflict, social stigma, and the need for a holistic approach and empathetic support in the abortion decision-making process.

Economic reasons, such as the financial burden of having many children, are a crucial factor driving women or mothers to choose abortion. For instance, one informant expressed exhaustion from having young children and economic limitations that required her to continue working. Another informant chose abortion to avoid losing her job, given her situation working at a bank with policies regarding employees' marriages. Both cases highlight how economic factors and workplace policies can influence women's decisions regarding abortion. This aligns with the axiological value

of utility, where individuals or groups consider the benefits and welfare they will gain from abortion, such as financial freedom and career stability (Wardhani & Oktarina, 2019).

Pregnancy out of wedlock is often considered shameful by the perpetrators and their families, pushing them to choose abortion to avoid shame. One informant expressed fear of death and being discovered by her parents, emphasizing the importance of avoiding shame. Axiology in the context of abortion involves axiological values such as mental and physical health, quality of life, autonomy, and social responsibility. Another important axiological consideration in the context of abortion is mental and physical health. In situations of unwanted pregnancy, individuals or groups must consider the mental and physical health consequences of the abortion decision. Research (Dwyer & Jackson, 2008) indicates that women experiencing unwanted pregnancy and deciding to continue it can suffer significant mental strain, negatively impacting their mental and physical health. Meanwhile, social factors are also an important consideration in abortion decision-making. For example, social stigma associated with out-of-wedlock pregnancy or family pressure (Mayendri & Prihantoro, 2020).

Psychosocial reasons, such as a mother's unwillingness or reluctance to have another child, also motivate abortion. An informant expressed her feelings, saying, "How can I be pregnant again? I'm already tired and just want to abort it because I can't handle taking care of another child." This aligns with research findings that indicate psychosocial reasons such as financial conditions, emotional state, and limited support resources are significant factors in abortion decisions (Åhman & Shah, 2002).

With a holistic and supportive approach, each individual faced with an abortion decision can feel heard, respected, and supported according to their needs. Thus, implementing axiological values in the context of abortion can lay the foundation for creating an inclusive and empathetic environment for individuals needing support in abortion decision-making. The presence of external factors, such as social pressure or attached stigma, can also influence a person's decision to choose abortion. Therefore, it is important to understand that each abortion decision is unique and influenced by various personal, social, and cultural considerations (Mayendri & Prihantoro, 2020).

### **3. Axiological Values and Abortion Decisions**

Axiology is understood as a branch of philosophy related to values, including ethics, aesthetics, and religion. It involves analyzing beliefs, decisions, and moral concepts to develop a theory of value. Axiology is divided into two main categories: objectivism and subjectivism, both focusing on whether values are dependent or independent of human perspectives. In the context of abortion, axiology plays a crucial role in influencing the views of individuals or groups towards abortion decisions. Additionally, axiology can aid individuals or groups in considering ethical and moral aspects in their decisions (Fidawaty, 2018).

Identifying axiological values influencing abortion decisions must include a deep understanding of these values. An individual might consider human values that emphasize the right to life of the fetus, while another might prioritize autonomy and rights over their own body. These values provide insight into the potential value conflicts that may occur in the context of abortion decisions. Considering ethical factors in the abortion decision-making process is essential for achieving a holistic understanding and ethical comprehension of abortion decisions, thus providing a more comprehensive picture of the role of ethical values in the context of abortion (Gawron & Watson, 2017).

In the ethical considerations of the abortion decision-making process, it is important to consider various moral and ethical perspectives underlying the decision. For example, in cases of abortion due to unwanted pregnancy, ethical considerations will involve the individual's right to autonomy and freedom in making choices concerning their body and health. On the other hand, ethical values related to the right to life of the fetus are also important aspects to consider (Fidawaty, 2018).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Conclusion.**

- a) Abortion decisions are influenced by economic factors, marital status, psychosocial aspects, and axiological values, emphasizing financial conflicts, social stigma, and the need for a holistic approach and empathetic support.
- b) From an axiological perspective, considering ethical and moral values in abortion decisions is essential for making informed and ethical choices.

## 2. Recommendations

- a) It is essential to provide comprehensive counseling services focusing on the psychological, emotional, and axiological aspects of abortion decisions to support the individual decision-making process.
- b) For public policy, it is recommended to implement more inclusive and ethical policies that consider axiological values and social justice, as well as provide safe and informed access to abortion services.
- c) Future researchers are advised to conduct further studies on the axiological aspects of abortion, particularly in diverse cultural and social contexts, to deepen the understanding of the influence of social and personal values on abortion decisions.

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