

Current Issues



Artificial Abortion and Sex Education Program in Future



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On April 11, 2019, the Constitutional Court decided that the abortion act, prosecuting a woman for obtaining an abortion and medical staffs for operating it, is unconstitutional. Accordingly, the National Assembly shall amend the law by December 31, 2020 [1]. This decision demonstrates that now Korean women can choose whether to give birth to a baby or not under safe conditions without any fear of punishment, and implies the changes in cultural, social, and religious values in the contemporary society regarding induced abortion. Under the changing social situation, I suggest that organizations should develop sex education programs to protect the right of self-determination for pregnant women and the life right of fetuses.

According to The Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA) [2], among Korean women aged between 15 and 44 years, 7.56% experienced artificial abortions, of which 46.9% were single women, 37.9% were married, 13.0% were in common law relationship. In addition, the results indicated that the main reasons for the abortion (multiple responses) were 'studies, workplace, and other social activities are likely to be disrupted by 33.4%', 'cannot afford a baby due to economic conditions (employment instability, low income, etc.) by 32.9%', and 'not ready for a(nother) child (family planning) by 31.2%'.

In fact, due to the strengthened protections for single mothers and the increased contraception rates, the number of annual induced abortions in Korea has decreased from 1.5 million in 1994 to 342,000 in 2005 and 258,000 in 2008 and has been gradually decreasing to 168,738 in 2010 and 49,764 in 2017 [3]. However, Hwang et al warned about an increase in the number of induced abortions among adolescents exposed to the impulsive sexual culture and suggested sex and character education programs, and establishment of a social system to protect them. In addition, although the annual number of induced abortions is decreasing, it is estimated that induced abortions are still performed annually in Korea, as many as the number of annual birth rates [3,4], which is 3–5 times higher than Europe and North America, where 20 to 40 artificial abortions are done per 100 births. This is the highest rate of artificial abortions among Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries [5].

The total abortion proportion was 44% and the proportion of induced abortion to total abortion was 84% in total. The total abortion proportion in the age group 10–19 years was

95% and the proportion of induced abortion to total abortion was 95% in total, representing the highest proportion of all the age groups [3]. The results reflected that most of the pre-marriage pregnancies opted for induced abortions, thus implying the necessity for active social measures for pre-marriage pregnant women accompanied by sex education programs for adolescents [6]. Moreover, the ratio of miscarriage to pregnancy for middle-aged women was 0.45 and about 70–80% of cases were induced abortion. Thus, developing a contraception education program for middle-aged women and offering social supports to encourage middle-aged women to give birth without miscarriages are important. In light of these conditions, I propose the followings as the directions for appropriate sex education program.

1. Respect-life and in the school curriculum
 - Developing a respect-life curriculum in education organizations, including elementary, middle, high school, and university, to educate the students to accept fetuses as one life.
2. Gender equality in sex education program
 - Enhancing the ability for independent decision making for women and girls (i.e. ask for contraception, choose to have sex or not).
 - Promoting the importance of using contraception amongst men and boys as a way of demonstrating responsible behavior and respecting women.
 - Fostering critical thinking about pornography and the sex industry.
3. Accurate and detailed explanation about pregnancy and contraception
 - Illustrating the process of fertilization and implantation and the biological changes, which a pregnant woman undergoes in her body.
 - Introducing types of contraceptives and providing instructions to use them.
4. Establishing a sex education program policy for middle-aged couples
 - Encouraging public institutions such as health centers to provide sex education programs for middle-aged couples.

In conclusion, sex education should be modified in the best possible way by integrating knowledge, attitudes, and values about sex.

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