LIFE AND HEALTH OF FLOATING WOMEN IN CHENGDU, CHINA: A STUDY OF INDUCED ABORTION EXPERIENCE OF UNMARRIED FEMALE MIGRANT WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

Unmarried female migrant workers (UMFMW) have many problems, and they are especially at high risk of reproductive problems. To better understand their life and health in Chengdu, their induced abortion experiences have been studied from a critical medical anthropological perspective.

The data was derived from a qualitative study conducted from a family planning clinic at a maternal and child hospital in Chengdu. Through in-depth interviews with 15 UFMW who had had induced abortions and 5 other key informants, observation, and informal conversation, the study showed UFMW’s induced abortion experience is evidence of a lack of control of their bodies. The study also showed that their lives were “floating”, and that their health was not their priority of life.

UMFMW’s had induced abortions because they were not prepared to give birth to unplanned children. They made their decisions quickly without enough support, and their experiences in hospital were unsatisfying. During the recovery period, they lacked of enough support, and they were at continued risk of repeat induced abortions.

Their lives in the cities were boring and without a future. They lack social support in the city, and they were exploited sexually. For them, destiny is to go back home.

In conclusion, without permanent household registration and without legal protection, UFMW are exploited by private bosses. Because of their “floating” life in the city and unmet needs from induced abortion services in the family planning clinic, UFMW lack control of their bodies.

KEY WORDS: MIGRANT/INDUCED ABORTION/ FEMALE WORKER/CHINA

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