

**POST ABORTION CARE: THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG
UNMARRIED WOMEN IN VIENTIANE, LAO PDR**



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POST ABORTION CARE: THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG UNMARRIED WOMEN IN VIENTIANE, LAO PDR**KHAMPHA KEOVILAY 5137927 SHHS/M****M.A (HEALTH SOCIAL SCIENCE)****THESIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: PIMPAWUN BOONMONGKON, Ph.D.,
SUCHEELA TANCHAINAN, MA., SAWACON PERAPUN, M.Com.(Honors).****ABSTRACT**

More than one fourth of the world's population lives in countries where abortion is prohibited or permitted only to save the woman's life. Regardless of legal status, abortions still occur, and nearly half of them are performed unsafely, threatening tens of thousands of women's lives, and leaving them with chronic and often irreversible health complications. Likewise, Lao PDR is hit with high incidence of post abortion complications from unsafe abortions, especially among young unmarried women, and post abortion care has not been given enough attention.

This action research qualitative study employing a narrative approach was done in order to understand the life experiences of young unmarried women who needed post abortion care and investigate the quality of post abortion care services in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Narrative interviews with eight young unmarried women, who had had post abortion complications and utilized the healthcare services of a Government Hospital, as well as interviews with two male doctors and two nurses, combined with non-participatory observation, were conducted.

The results revealed that most of the young unmarried women experienced long waiting times to get services and did not receive enough information throughout the process. Regarding the treatment, they relied on self-medication and asked for help from their close friends or boyfriends in order to avoid being noticed by others and being condemned as a bad or sinful girl. Moreover, they were afraid of being questioned or stigmatized as a wrong doer by health providers. Laos has gender inequality between men and women; men control women's sexuality and bodies through moralistic beliefs and legislation. Such control is called patriarchal ideology and power, which weakens women's power and takes away the women's rights and choices about their own sexuality and bodies. This patriarchal ideology of typical Lao society was shared by the participants in this study. It is present in beliefs about reproduction, abortion and other religious beliefs concerning sexual misconduct and Baap (sin), and is reflected in daily life as gender inequality between men and women.

It is recommended that the women's right to receive sufficient and clear information should be prioritized by health care providers, and comprehensive post abortion care provided, including treatment of post-abortion complications. Also, family planning counseling and reproductive services should be considered in the government hospitals in order to prevent unplanned pregnancies that will probably result in repeated unsafe abortions in the future. Finally, more attention should be paid to gender mainstreaming in health care as well as society in general.

**KEY WORDS: UNSAFE ABORTION/ POST ABORTION CARE/ YOUNG
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