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**How does America Perceive Abortion?: A
Comprehensive Literature Review of
Abortion Attitudes in the Twentieth and
Twenty-First Centuries American Societies**

Sanah Malik¹

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¹ *HBA, University of Toronto Scarborough, Toronto, Canada*

Abstract

Women have been forced to extreme discrimination in the past few decades because of the 'issue' of abortion. Czarnecki et al. (2019), have indicated that attitudes towards abortion have changed significantly in American societies and are now in favour of women's reproductive rights, unlike popular beliefs. In addition, Hertel et al. (1974), in "Religion and Attitudes Toward Abortion: A Study of Nurses and Social Workers" hypothesize that religion is the main factor that influences decisions regarding the practice of abortion and liberal Christian denominations have more chances of approving it, as compared to their conservative counterparts. Whereas Czarnecki et al. (2019) reveal how people's approaches towards sensitive topics like abortion have changed massively, and today people's decisions are guided by an array of factors and religion- despite being a key variable is not the most important- both contributions circle around the common premise of abortion and had similar subjects, such as healthcare providers like nurses and welfare caseworkers. Given the 43 years difference between the studies, it is discovered that decision-making at work, especially in medical care, has evolved, and although the underlying similarity is religion, factors such as foetus' gestational age and reasons for terminating pregnancy are the primary concerns.

Keywords: *Abortion, Religious Beliefs, Religious Practices, Women, Healthcare, Pregnancy*

1.0 Introduction

Scholars have often argued whether religion is a key variable that influences perceptions about abortion. A literature review of two articles published in 1974 and 2019 highlights healthcare professionals' conflicting opinions about the same. While Hertel et al. (1974) claimed that a person's religious affiliation was a predictor of attitudes toward the practice, Czarnecki et al. (2019) showcased a direct contrast by asserting that participant decisions in abortion care were controlled by not just one but a variety of factors, further highlighting that religious beliefs could also encourage the provision of abortion care. Based on these two studies, the author(s) illustrate that in the twenty-first-century attitudes towards abortion have significantly changed and are in favour of women's reproductive rights. By reviewing the aforementioned literature, I strive to bring a fresh perspective on the 'issue' of abortion, which has exposed women to extreme discrimination in the past few decades.

2.0 How far does Religion Influence the Practice of Abortion?

Hertel et al. (1974) hypothesize that religion is the main factor that influences decisions regarding the practice of abortion and liberal Christian denominations have more chances of approving it, as compared to their conservative counterparts. This article revolves around an empirical study that uses a quantitative approach to examine attitudes towards abortion held by a sample of **125 female Christian public health nurses** and **323 welfare caseworkers** in Tennessee, **United States of America**- by collecting survey responses and assessing the results using the **Multiple Classification Analysis Procedure**. On contrary, Czarnecki et al. (2019) revealed how people's approaches towards sensitive topics like abortion have changed massively. The authors asserted that today, people's decisions are guided by an array of factors; religion, despite being a key variable, is not the most important. This article draws its empirical study based on qualitative analysis conducted through extensive interviews given by **50 Christian caregivers and healthcare professionals** in the **United States of America**.

3.0 Quantitative Analysis VS Qualitative Analysis to Determine the Most Accurate Responses

The Quantitative study conducted by Hertel et al. (1974) used Dummy Variables in multiple regression while following the Multiple Classification Analysis Procedure. The dummy variable used is an indicator variable with a numeric value that represents the categorical data of "profession" in the study. This Empirical study used surveys to determine that 65% of social workers approved abortion whereas only 40% of nurses followed suit in the United States. The social workers considered abortion acceptable for a variety of psychological and economic reasons, while the practice was only deemed acceptable within the nursing community when it was directly related to the client's health condition. The hypothesis was further supported by the fact that religion had a substantial impact on the views against abortion, despite the sample being highly trained professional nurses and social workers. Religious conservatives were more inclined to condemn the practice as opposed to the liberals. The finding suggests that high education or skill does not mean that it would prompt people to support the practice of abortion (Hertel et al. 1974).

This seems to be an oversimplification of reasons that drive participation in abortion care. Our conscience is not driven by pre-existing beliefs only, there are numerous factors into play; Czarnecki et al. (2019) came upon this conclusion after conducting fifty in-depth, semi-structured interviews with healthcare professionals in an American Midwestern hospital which was equipped with all abortion care options. The qualitative analysis in this study is based on detailed interviews that lasted for more than an hour. However, because the sample size is quite small- the results cannot be generalised. Czarnecki et al. (2019) argued that although personal ideals, values, and beliefs (including religious beliefs) influenced the participants' decision about their involvement in terminating a pregnancy, they solely did not govern decisions as many religious nurses who were personally opposed to the practice, claimed that refusing to take part in all aspects of abortion care would violate their religious commitment of no judgment towards others. For many participants, this practice meant strong advocacy of women's reproductive rights, and for others, it was simply their professional duty- declining care to a woman seeking an abortion was equivalent to refusing care to any other patient. In addition, the authors found that even when the participants were personally opposed to abortion, they did not prevent a patient from obtaining one if they requested it. (Czarnecki et al., 2019).

The two articles may have a common foundation, but their findings are drastically different. Hertel et al. (1974) conducted a quantitative analysis that enumerated the variables to prove their hypotheses of religion as an important stimulus to attitudes towards abortion. The surveys used were much more structured as compared to the study conducted by Czarnecki et al. (2019), which was intensive yet constituted a very small sample size. Therefore, the findings of the former article are more reliable based on its methodology.

Although Hertel et al. (1974) proved that, people let their attitudes and beliefs be influenced by religion despite their education and skill; Czarnecki et al. (2019) had a more noteworthy culmination to their study which emphasized that- religion drove the commitment of non-judgment among professionals and they focused on women's right to self-determination and reproductive autonomy while carrying out their professional duties.

4.0 Analysis and Conclusion

Both the studies focus on an “issue” that was relevant 43 years ago and even today draws upon the question, “Whether one should judge individuals seeking abortion or not?” While people were mostly guided by their personal religious beliefs in the twentieth century, a lot has changed in the past few years- abortion is no longer a topic that invokes ‘stigma’, but it is something that makes us wonder if women should always conform to the society’s beliefs and ideals, even when it comes to her own body and pregnancy. Czarnecki et al. (2019) proved that women have a right to unbiased medical healthcare, no matter what they choose to do with their bodies. It was astounding that not a single participant in the study prevented a woman seeking an abortion to change her mind, even when they were personally opposed to the practice. What we see is what we believe, and we see the shackles of indifference being broken, we would like to believe that they did. These articles made me wonder- if religious beliefs and political ideologies were taken into consideration, which variable would exert more influence on decisions regarding abortion and participation in the caregiving process? This could be a Qualitative study that considers the pre-existing religious beliefs of medical professionals, the health conditions of the patient, and the dominant political ideology concerning abortion in the region. It could determine how policies could be designed to promote Women’s Rights because they are, after all, human rights.

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