

The Effect of Abortion Legalization on Sexual Behavior : Evidence from Sexually Transmitted Disease.

For some states in America, abortion has been legalized since 1969 and it was legalized nationally in 1973. Abortion refers to any pregnancy that does not end in a live birth, so it can refer to a miscarriage or premature birth that does not result in a live infant. However, abortion is used to mean “induce abortion” of and embryo or fetus at any point in pregnancy, and this is also how the term is used in a legal sense (*Abortion in the United State*, 2012). Abortion law is legislation and common law which pertains to the provision of abortion. Abortion has been a controversial subject in many societies through history because of the moral, ethical, practical, and political power issues that surround it. Even though the abortion has been legalized for about 39 years, a lot of American people are still questioning about abortion law. Some people agree with the legalization and some are not since moral and religion have something to do with the abortion. The history of abortion in the United States is far more complicated than most people imagine. It has been an issue of varying contention in this nation for the last 200 years. Nevertheless, abortion has never enjoyed such universal protection under the law as it has since 1973. As it stands today, American women have the legal right to obtain an abortion in all 50 states, through all nine months of pregnancy, for virtually any reason at all. This has been true since the Supreme Court declared that autonomous abortion rights are built into the Constitution, and that any legal barriers which prevent mothers from aborting their children are unconstitutional (*U.S Abortion Law*, 2012). When there are moral and religion getting involve, the conflict is more likely to happen because of the different in belief. So, what should be used to determine whether legalized abortion is better or not?

Two persons, Jonathan Klick (The Robert A. Fellow in Law and Liberty, George Mason University School of Law) and Thomas Stratmann (The Department of Economics, George Mason University) come up with the idea of using the number of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) to determine the effect of legalization. The STDs figures could refer to the negative effect in term of public health or the expenditure for the treatment of STDs. They decided to use STDs figures to see

the effects of legalization abortion since there is one analysis says that STDs response for a health and economic consequence in the United States.

These two persons try to examine whether abortion laws introduced in early 1970s had and effect on sexual behavior as measure by STD incidence, which are Gonorrhea (STD caused by bacterium *Neisseria gonorrhea*, which cause burning with urination discharge) and Syphilis (STD caused by the spirochete bacterium, the symptoms are very depend in which of four stages).

Klick and Stratmann set up the hypothesis : legalizing abortion lowered the cost of sexual activity, leading individuals to engage in more sex, causing an increase in STDs (gonorrhea and syphilis). The hypothesis could be explained by the concept of negative relationship between cost of sexual activity and level of sexual activity engaged.

For the conceptual framework, we assume that individuals consider the costs and benefits of sexual activity before engaging in sexual intercourse. The costs could be unplanned pregnancy financial cost associated with a pregnancy, the opportunity cost in the case the mother has to quit school, as well as emotional cost or the sadness that would happen to the women who has unplanned pregnancy, etc. Since legalizing abortion could help reducing the cost of sexual activity, they predict that legalization leads to an increase in sexual activity. This prediction is reasonable since people do not have to concern much about unplanned pregnancy. Negative relationship between cost of sexual activity and the level of sexual activity engaged is an application of downward-sloping demand curves, which means that when the cost of sexual activity decreases, the level of sexual activity engaged by individuals will be increased, vice versa. When people engage in more sexual activity due to the lower in cost, they predict that STDs will increase.

The results for gonorrhea and syphilis according to Centers for Disease Control(CDC), the marginal effect of the law change is estimated to be between 53 and 82 extra cases of gonorrhea per 100,000 people for the 1963-1980 period. This represents an increase of between 16 and 25 percent. For the incidence of syphilis, suggested that abortion legalization leads to an increase of about two cases of syphilis per 100,000 population for the 1963-1975 period. This represents about a 20 percent increase. From the incidence of STDs, the hypothesis is supported by the incidence. The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases shows that legalization abortion lowers the expected cost of sexual activity. But there are some variables that might response for increasing in level of sexual activity engaged besides the lower in expected cost of sexual activity reason.

There is not only the lower expected cost of sexual activity that increase the level of sexual activity engaged, but also some other factors. It means that some factors might mislead the incidence. The first factor is per capita income. The medical literature suggests that STD infections are concentrated among the poor. Demographic is also one of the factors, for example the age. The medical literature suggests that young people are more likely that older people to contract the STD.

The CDC also reports that blacks account for a large proportion of STD cases. Education also plays role in this since educated individuals may be more knowledgeable about the fact that sexual activities have the risk of transmitting a sexual disease. Since CDC reveals that alcohol consumption is highly correlated with STD incidence. So, this factor could also affect the experiment.

Even though, Klick and Stratmann claim that they can control all these variables, but some mistakes are still able to happen and it can mislead all the results. This is the weak point of this experiment.

It is a very hard thing to say whether abortion is a good thing or not. The answer is totally depended on individuals' opinion. So, government tried their best by applying the human rights to support the legalization of abortion. State claims that there are two reasons why abortion is legalized; first it is because women have the right to make decisions about their own reproductive systems, and because they have the power to exercise that right regardless of government policy. Even though we cannot tell exactly whether legalization abortion is better or not, the experiment of Klick and Stratmann can at least tell us the effects of legalization abortion. Since the results attribute a large increase in gonorrhea and syphilis rate to changing sexual behavior, which was introduced by abortion law changes. This increasing in STDs rates leads to increasing in additional expenditures for the treatment of gonorrhea and syphilis on the order of 300 million us dollars per year. This study is one of the factors that government could use to consider the effect of abortion laws.

