

IUSSP Debate:

***If the wife says that she wants no more births but the husband does want another birth, can one necessarily say that her subsequent pregnancy is unwanted?
Yes or No?***

8 November 2021

Written Questions in the Q&A

1. Question to NO team: Our goal is definitely joint decision-making. BUT how real is it in the grassroots level? In several countries, including India, the "joint" decision is usually husband's decision and wife agreeing in the fear of not offending her husband. "Joint autonomy" remains a dream for a huge chunk of population in developing countries. In such case, how do you really navigate the ambiguous autonomy? Men's participation in reproductive health and their reproductive rights are definitely important but not at the cost of women's, especially when she is the one who bears all the reproductive labour.
Aditi Prasad
2. Question to Dr Santhya: How do we reconcile between human right of the man wanting the child and the inevitable violation of right to body of the woman who doesn't want to bear the child?
shreya banerjee
3. Research has shown that fertility intentions are fluid and if you ask a woman before a pregnancy, during a pregnancy, and after a birth, whether the pregnancy or birth was "wanted" you will get very different answers. Our survey measures don't capture this fluidity, so how would this affect each sides argument?
Jason Bremner
4. Have you thought how reproductive rights are violated when, despite of the woman desire for a child, she does not have it because, in an unbalanced gender relationships, it is the man who does not want children at all? I believe that in some contexts, Latin American, perhaps, this might be one of the reasons why fertility went down so fast
Laura Wong
5. When we ask the question on unwantedness, it is not clear 'for whom'. It seems that this concept is constructed by the researcher who is determined to categorize 'wantedness' of a pregnancy. I feel like there are three views of 'unwantedness': the wife's, the husband's and of the researcher's that are conflated while thinking about the answer to this question. As researchers, could we take the responses from both the wife and husband about the wantedness of the last pregnancy and compare their answers at the couple level to decide 'unwantedness' of the pregnancy. How do you feel about this methodological approach (if data is available)?
Isha Bhatnagar
6. So, is this simply a measurement question? If so, often surveys do not have the men's responses so we wouldn't know if it is "intended" based on the men's response. Then we might be stuck using her perception of his intention which isn't necessarily better. So, what is the objective of this overall question? To know "how much" unintended pregnancy there is? Or is it about understanding who might be at risk of an abortion in this later case, the woman's intention might be the determining factor in the end.
Ilene Speizer

7. An important issue is that of perspective. Who is qualified to designate a pregnancy as unwanted? Recent data in the COVID era showed that pregnancy decision is highly dynamic depending on the circumstances of each woman/couple.
Joshua Akinyemi
8. Why would we say that women can't change their mind? Are we more interested in measurement or human rights? If women can't change their mind (at any time) about wanting to get pregnant, do they have the right not to have sexual intercourse? (I'm my view, they have that right even to discontinue sex once started.)
Ben Light
9. Ideally, we want couples to decide together. But the burden falls disproportionately on the woman. The woman therefore should have a veto. If she doesn't fully, any related pregnancy is not sufficiently "wanted" and doesn't meet the (very high and most fundamental) human right standard.
Ben Light
10. IN my opinion, "My body, my rules" summarizes the argument: it is the woman's decision whether she wants another pregnancy or not. Otherwise, one is saying that women without husbands are the only ones who can make decisions about reproduction on their own. Could the NO Team comment on that, please?
Paula Miranda-Ribeiro
11. Concordance, communication, and shared decisionmaking about family planning among couples in Nepal: A qualitative and quantitative investigation.
Zacharie Tsala Dimbuene

I agree risks should be considered for deciding yes or no.
12. Is it fair to lable a pregnancy as unwanted based on only one parent's desire? Can we not address it as unwanted pregnancy for women/men. A pregnancy will be unwanted in real sence, when both husband and wife didn't want to have more children and subsequent pregnancy still occurred.
Minakshi Vishwakarma
13. To the debaters: Don't you think that designating a pregnancy as wanted or not might also need to combine couples' decisions as regards pregnancy to include each partner's likely anti-pregnancy behaviour like sexual activity, contraceptive use (covert or overt) among others?
David Okunlola
14. The initial point of discussion/thought should be childbearing and related consequences. As said, women suffer first and foremost from potential pregnancy-related consequences, and ultimately death.
Zacharie Tsala Dimbuene
15. Question to dr suzana : given that the site of gestation is the woman's body, do we still consider the man and woman as equal stakeholders in a scenario where the woman wants pregnancy and man doesn't?
shreya banerjee
16. Wanted by both is the ideal situation. Measurement is not an issue. It can be done easily. However, many studies have shown that women in most cultural settings have limited access to their human rights including SRHRs. Thus, the one who carries higher risks (to life/SRH state... etc.) should be given priority in deciding whose desire matters.
Chander Shekhar

17. Question to Santhya: choosing between individual autonomy and cooperative actions is not a false dilemma? (could they not act together?)
Irene Casique
I think we should be context specific in the decision.
18. Timing is of essence!
Akanni Akinyemi
19. Question to Francis: could you provide an example when acting contrary to women's preferences does not mean usurping their rights? (other than trivial aspects but related to reproductive decisions)
Irene Casique
20. The focus on women's preferences suggests that we would count a pregnancy/birth as wanted even if the husband did not want a child? Does that make sense?
Elizabeth Thomson
21. How joint is joint decision in most couple relationships where unequal power position is the norm? When women bear the consequences on their bodily integrity and safety it's her right to decide about her reproductive choice that she and only she is left to handle the consequences in pregnancy decisions. I think the no team focuses on the equality principle while the equity principle should be the base here.
Dr Ayesha AlRifai
22. Does it seem like unwanted pregnancy might be relative?
Oluwadamilola Oyediji,
23. In a case where the man insists on not having more births for health or economic reasons but the woman insists on more births, whose right is been violated?
Julia Afachung
24. Do we know the cross-tabulation of the votes by whether the respondents self-identify as female or male, based on Stan's Ouagadougou responses
Ilene Speizer