

# ปัจจัยทำนายความตั้งใจทำแท้งของวัยรุ่น

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## บทคัดย่อขยาย

**บทนำ** ปัจจุบันการทำแท้งเป็นปัญหาทางสาธารณสุขที่สำคัญของวัยรุ่นไทย ดังนั้นการศึกษาปัจจัยทำนายความตั้งใจทำแท้งในประชากรกลุ่มนี้เป็นประเด็นที่สำคัญซึ่งสามารถใช้ในการพัฒนาแนวทางป้องกันการทำแท้งของวัยรุ่นได้

**วัตถุประสงค์** เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่ร่วมกันทำนายความตั้งใจทำแท้งของวัยรุ่นไทย

**การออกแบบการวิจัย** เป็นการวิจัยแบบความสัมพันธ์เชิงพยากรณ์ โดยใช้ทฤษฎีพฤติกรรมตามแผน

**วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย** กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นวัยรุ่นอายุ 13-19 ปี จำนวน 120 คน ที่อาศัยอยู่ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานคร คัดเลือกแบบเฉพาะเจาะจงตามเกณฑ์คัดเลือก กำหนดขนาดตัวอย่างตามหลักการของ Green เครื่องมือวิจัยประกอบด้วย แบบสอบถามทัศนคติต่อการทำแท้ง แบบสอบถามการคล้อยตามกลุ่มอ้างอิงในการตัดสินใจทำแท้ง แบบสอบถามการรับรู้การควบคุมตนเองในการตัดสินใจทำแท้ง และแบบสอบถามความตั้งใจทำแท้ง ตรวจสอบความตรงเชิงเนื้อหาโดยผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิ 5 ท่าน ได้ค่าดัชนีความตรงเชิงเนื้อหาเท่ากับ 1.00, 1.00, .96 และ 1.00 ตามลำดับ และตรวจสอบความเที่ยงได้ค่าสัมประสิทธิ์อัลฟาของครอนบาคเท่ากับ .74, .84, .68 และ .93 ตามลำดับ เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยการตอบแบบสอบถามด้วยตนเองในระหว่างเดือนตุลาคม 2564 - มีนาคม 2565 วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติพรรณนา และการวิเคราะห์ถดถอยพหุ

**ผลการศึกษา** กลุ่มตัวอย่างมีอายุเฉลี่ย 13.95 ปี (ค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน = 1.70) ผลการวิเคราะห์ถดถอยพหุพบว่า ทัศนคติต่อการทำแท้งและการรับรู้การควบคุมตนเองในการตัดสินใจทำแท้ง เป็นปัจจัยที่สามารถร่วมกันทำนายความตั้งใจทำแท้งได้ร้อยละ 42.4 อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ( $F = 28.486$ ,  $p < .001$ ) โดยการรับรู้การควบคุมตนเองในการตัดสินใจทำแท้งมีอำนาจการทำนายสูงสุด ( $\beta = -.419$ ,  $p < .001$ ) รองลงมาคือทัศนคติต่อการทำแท้ง ( $\beta = -.252$ ,  $p = .002$ ) อย่างไรก็ตามการคล้อยตามกลุ่มอ้างอิงในการตัดสินใจทำแท้งไม่สามารถทำนายความตั้งใจทำแท้งได้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ

**ข้อเสนอแนะ** ควรมีการพัฒนาโปรแกรมสำหรับวัยรุ่นที่ประสบปัญหาการตั้งครรภ์ไม่พึงประสงค์ เพื่อส่งเสริมทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อการป้องกันการทำแท้งและการรับรู้การควบคุมตนเองในการตัดสินใจทำแท้งซึ่งจะช่วยป้องกันและลดความตั้งใจในการทำแท้งผิดกฎหมายได้

**วารสารสภาการพยาบาล 2566; 38(4) 400-407**

**คำสำคัญ** วัยรุ่น การทำแท้ง การทำนาย ทัศนคติ การรับรู้ ความตั้งใจ

วันที่ได้รับ 11 ก.ย. 66 วันที่แก้ไขบทความเสร็จ 1 ธ.ค. 66 วันที่รับตีพิมพ์ 8 ธ.ค. 66

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## Factors Predicting Intention for Abortion in Thai Adolescents

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### Extended Abstract

**Introduction** Currently, abortions are significant public health concerns among Thai adolescents. Therefore, investigating the factors that predict the intention for abortion in this population is crucial, contributing to the development of guidelines aimed at preventing abortions among Thai adolescents.

**Objective** The aim of this study was to examine factors predicting abortion in adolescents.

**Design** This study employed a correlational predictive design, applying the Theory of Planned Behavior.

**Methodology** Through purposive sampling, the participants consisted of 120 adolescents aged 13–19 years residing in Bangkok. Sample size was determined based on Green statistics. The research instruments included questionnaires on attitudes toward abortion, subjective norms about abortion, perceived control for abortion decision-making, and intention for abortion. Content validity was examined by five experts, obtaining the content validity indices (CVIs) of 1.00, 1.00, .96, and 1.00, respectively. Reliability was tested, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .74, .84, .68, and .93, respectively. Data were collected through self administration between October 2021 and March 2022. Data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics and Multiple Regression Analysis.

**Results** Participants had mean age of 13.95 years (SD=1.70). Multiple regression analysis showed that the participants' attitudes toward abortion and perceived control for abortion decision-making jointly accounted for 42.4% of the variance in adolescents' intentions for abortion ( $F = 28.486$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Perceived control for abortion decision-making had the highest predictive power ( $\beta = -.419$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by attitudes toward abortion ( $\beta = -.252$ ,  $p = .002$ ). However, subjective norms about abortion did not significantly predict intention for abortion.

**Recommendation** Efforts should be made to develop a program for adolescents experiencing unwanted pregnancies to foster positive attitudes towards preventing abortion and perceived control for abortion decision-making that will mitigate intention for illegal abortion.

*Journal of Thailand Nursing and Midwifery Council 2023; 38(4) 400-407*

**Keywords** adolescents/ abortion/ predictivity/ attitudes/ perceived control/ intention

Received 11 September 2023, Revised 1 December 2023, Accepted 8 December 2023

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## Introduction

In 2017, abortion statistics in Thailand indicated that 51.4% of abortions occurred in violation of the law, while only 48.6% were performed within the legal constraints. Among illegal abortions, 5.2% resulted in severe complications, with 50.6% involving severe bleeding.<sup>1</sup> According to a 2020 Division of Health Survey, 20.3% (215 out of 1,060 cases) of abortions involved students.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, has reported that there are approximately 2 million abortions annually and more than 70,000 women have died from unsafe abortions. The most common complications are severe bleeding (42.1%) and sepsis (36.8%). A large number of illegal abortion cases were adolescents. This trend is similar to Bangkok metropolitan, highlighting a significant issue of unwanted pregnancies among adolescents.

Princess Agradajakumari College of Nursing, Chulabhorn Royal Academy is consistently involved with communities in Laksi District through education, research, and healthcare. During a meeting focused on curriculum development and health service promotion, a survey was conducted in community leaders, Laksi district officers, and other individuals responsible for healthcare in Laksi district, Bangkok. The survey revealed that there were 7,352 adolescents aged 13–19 years, constituting 7.3% of the total population.<sup>3</sup> Within this group, unwanted pregnancy and illegal abortion emerged as significant issues, reflecting broader national concerns as outlined in the regulations by the Medical Council of Thailand on the termination of pregnancy.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note

that illegal abortions can have serious consequences on the physical and mental health of mothers.

Adolescents often resort to illegal abortions due to economic factors rather than health concerns. In a survey of adolescents under 20 years old who underwent abortions, 151 participants mentioned economic or social reasons, and nearly all of them (99.34%) indicated a lack of intention and information regarding the abortion.<sup>2</sup> From this, it can be inferred that Thai adolescents may have insufficient knowledge to make informed decisions about abortion.

The criteria for legal abortion in Thailand are described in Article 305 of the Penal Code. According to this article, physicians are permitted to terminate a pregnancy in the following conditions: 1) life-threatening physical problems related to pregnancy, 2) life-threatening psychological issues related to pregnancy, 3) severe deformities or the risk of severe genetic diseases in the fetus causing intense stress to the mother, and 4) cases of rape.<sup>4</sup> Abortions performed under these conditions are considered legal. However, it is noteworthy that most adolescents undergoing abortions do not meet these legal criteria. While there has been research on the influence of induced abortion, prevention of unintended pregnancy, and the impact of abortion, the specific factors contributing to this type of abortion in Thai adolescents remain unstudied.

## Research Objective

This study aimed to investigate factors jointly predicting intention for abortion in adolescents. The predicting factors include attitudes toward abortion, subjective norms on abortion, and perceived control for abortion decision-making.

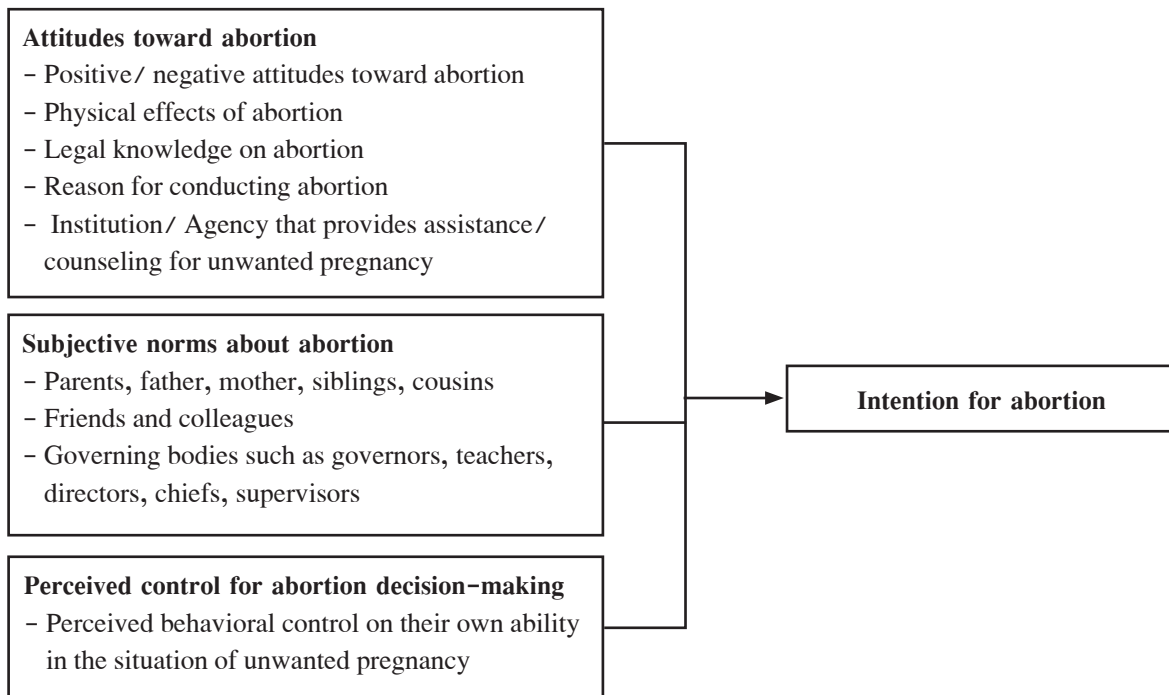
## Hypothesis

The attitudes toward abortion, the subjective norms on abortion and the perceived control for abortion decision-making can together predict the intention for abortion.

## Conceptual Framework of the Study

The theory of planned behavior describes that a person's actions are largely influenced by their

intentions. Behavioral intentions, in turn, are shaped by three key factors: 1) attitudes toward the behavior, 2) subjective norms, and 3) perceived behavioral control. These factors play a crucial role in influencing adolescents' intentions regarding abortions.<sup>5</sup> In this study, predictors include attitudes toward abortion, subjective norms concerning abortion, and perceived control for abortion decision-making. (Figure 1)



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework of the Study

## Methods

The study used a correlational predictive design.

### Population and Sample

The sample consisted of 120 female adolescents, selected from the age group of 13–19 years, residing in a community in Laksi district, Bangkok. Purposive

sampling was employed, and participants met the following inclusion criteria: 1) current enrollment in a school or university, 2) proficiency in Thai language for communication (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and 3) willingness to participate in the study.

Green statistics were employed to determine the sample size. The sample size (n) for testing individual predictors with a medium-size partial

correlation is determined by the formula  $n \geq 104 + m$ ,<sup>6</sup> where  $m$  represents the number of predictors or independent variables (IV).<sup>7</sup>

### Research Instruments

There were five parts to the research instruments developed by the researchers.

**Part 1 Demographic Record Form**, developed following a literature review, includes age, gender, level of education, past relationships, sexual history, abortion and illegal abortion history, risk factors associated with illegal abortion, knowledge about preventing illegal abortion, family history, and income.

**Part 2 The Attitudes Toward Abortion Questionnaire** was developed according to Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior. The questionnaire comprised 6 items assessing attitudes, including both positive and negative statements. Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree), with reverse scoring for negative statements. Interpretation criteria categorize attitudes into positive (6.00 – 14.00), neutral (14.01 – 22.00), and negative (22.01 – 30.00) toward abortion.

**Part 3 The Questionnaire on Subjective Norms about Abortion** was formulated in accordance with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior and a comprehensive literature review, comprising 10 items. Responses were based on a 5-point rating scale (5 = highest, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low, 1 = lowest). Interpretation categories were established as high (36.68–50.00), moderate (23.34–36.67), and low (10.00 – 23.33) in comparison to the reference group.

**Part 4 The Perceived Control for Abortion Decision-Making questionnaire** was formulated in alignment with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior and a literature review. It comprised 6 items with

both positive and negative statements. Responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = not sure, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree), with reverse scoring for negative statements. Interpretation categories were defined as high (22.01 – 30.00), moderate (14.01 – 22.00), and low (6.00 – 14.00).

**Part 5 Intention for abortion** is a questionnaire developed according to Ajzen's Theory of planned behavior and literature review. The questionnaire consisted of 3 items. Responses were based on a 5-point rating scale (5 = highest, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low, 1 = lowest). Interpretation categories were defined as high (11.01–15.00), moderate (7.01–11.00), and low (3.00–7.00).

**Quality of the instruments.** There are five experts, including two obstetrics nurse instructors, two lawyers, and one physician instructor validated the content of questionnaires Part 1–5. The Content validity index (CVI) was .93, 1.00, 1.00, .96, and 1.00, respectively. Reliability was tested in 30 adolescents experiencing unwanted pregnancy who were not part of the study. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for questionnaires Part 2–5 revealed .74, .84, .68, and .93, respectively.

### Ethical Consideration

This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee under the reference number 093/2563. The data collection conducted in schools in affiliation with Bangkok Metropolitan in Laksi District was permitted by Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (letter number BK7123/7087). The researchers communicated the study aims and provided detailed information to potential participants. Consents were obtained from those who were eligible and willing to participate in the study, with participants informed of their right

to decline participation at any time. Data were kept confidential, and the results were presented in overall without specifying individual names.

### Data Collection

Recruitment of participants involved reaching out to community schools and leaders by the researchers. The researchers scheduled data collection appointments with participants who expressed a willingness to take part in the study and met the eligible criteria. Between October 2021 and March 2022, demographic information, attitudes toward abortion, subjective norms about abortion, perceived control for abortion decision-making, and intention for abortion were collected through self-administered questionnaires, each taking approximately 30 minutes.

### Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the frequency, percentage, range, mean, and standard deviation (SD). Multiple regression analysis with enter method was used to analyze factors predicting intention for abortion. Assumptions were met including normality, independence, linearly, no multicollinearity, no

autocorrelation, and homoscedasticity.

### Results

The demographic data for a total of 120 participants showed that their mean age was 13.95 years (SD=1.70), ranging from 13–19 years. Less than half of the participants (47.5%) had been in a relationship and 10% had sexual relationships. One participant (0.83%) had undergone an illegal abortion. Of participants, 45% lived with their parents, 19.16% lived with only their mothers, and 14.16% lived with their cousins. The average monthly income of participants was 1,824 baht (SD=3438.77, Median=1,000). However, 24.16% reported having no income.

Participants had low levels of positive attitudes toward illegal abortion (M 24.72, SD = 3.28), moderate level of subjective norms about abortion (M = 23.59, SD = 7.72), high perceived control for abortion decision-making (M = 25.59, SD = 2.96), low perceived control for abortion decision-making, and low intention for abortion (M = 4.26, SD = 2.25) as described in Table 1. Correlation matrix of the variables was described in Table 2.

**Table 1** Description of the predictors among the participants (n = 120)

Predictors	Score		M	SD	Level
	Possible	Actual			
Attitudes toward abortion	6–30	16–30	24.72	3.28	Moderate
Subjective norms about abortion	10–50	10–44	23.59	7.72	Moderate
Perceived control for abortion decision- making	6–30	16–30	25.59	2.96	High
Intention for abortion	3–15	3–14	4.16	2.25	Low

SD, Standard Deviation

**Table 2** Correlation Matrix of the variables (n = 120)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Intention for abortion	1.000	-.489 <sup>***</sup>	.051	-.606 <sup>***</sup>
2. Attitudes toward abortion	-.489 <sup>***</sup>	1.000	-.102	.470 <sup>***</sup>
3. Subjective norms about abortion	.051	-.102	1.000	.070
4. Perceived control for abortion decision-making	-.606 <sup>***</sup>	.470 <sup>***</sup>	.070	1.000

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> p < .001



Multiple regression analysis revealed that attitudes toward abortion and the perceived control for abortion decision-making were joint factors that predict 42.4% of the intention for abortion in the participants ( $F_{3,116} = 28.486, p < .001$ ). Perceived

control for abortion decision-making had the highest predictive power ( $\beta = -.419, p < .001$ ), followed by attitudes toward abortion ( $\beta = -.252, p = .002$ ). However, subjective norms about abortion were not a significant predictor of the intention for abortion.

**Table 3** Factors predicting the intention for abortion using Multiple Regression Analysis (n = 120)

Predictors	b	SE	$\beta$	t	p-value
Constant	17.614	1.594			
Attitudes toward abortion	-.173	.055	-.252	-3.125	.002
Subjective norms about abortion	.017	.021	.059	.829	.409
Perceived control for abortion decision making	-.374	.062	-.419	-6.102	< .001

$R = .651, R^2 = .424, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .409, F_{3,116} = 28.486, p < .001$

## Discussion

Multiple regression analysis results indicated that attitudes toward abortion and perceived control for abortion decision-making jointly predicted the intention for abortion in adolescents. The regression model was significant, explaining 42.4% of the variance of intention for abortion, partially supporting the hypothesis. However, subjective norms about abortion did not predict abortion intention in adolescents.

The statistically significant and highest predictive power of perceived control for abortion decision-making ( $p < .001$ ) is in accordance with the behavioral theory, particularly the theory of planned behavior.<sup>5</sup> This theory describes that an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform certain behaviors influences their intention and actual execution of those behaviors. It could be explained from participants' personal information in this study revealing that less than half (45%) of the participants lived with their parents. This circumstance potentially fosters a more permissive environment for sexual activity. This aligns with the findings of Pramote Wongsawat, Ananya Kooariyakul, and Panyakarin Hoirat (2021),<sup>8</sup> as well as Mahawannasri (2015),<sup>9</sup> who identified that a significant factor contributing to adolescent sexual activity is "not living with family."

Lack of familial attachment and being alone together were found to be influential. Also, this finding is consistent with the research of Cecilia Espinoza, Ghazaleh Samandari, and Kathryn Andersen,<sup>10</sup> who systematically reviewed adolescent experiences with illegal abortion practices. The study revealed that a lack of knowledge and problem-solving skills among adolescents contributed to the choice of illegal abortion. Similarly, Cozzarelli's research found that the perception of low self-efficacy in addressing unwanted pregnancies led to the decision to undergo abortion.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the perceived control for abortion decision-making emerged as a strong predictive factor of the intention for abortion.

Attitudes toward abortion emerged as the second predictor of intention for abortion with statistical significance ( $p = .002$ ). The study findings suggest that Thai society, influenced by cultural norms and religious beliefs, maintains a discreet approach to sexuality. Attitudes, both positive and negative, toward illegal abortion, as well as perceptions of its physiological effects, legal knowledge, reasons for intending illegal abortion, and available support during pregnancy, play crucial roles. Despite recent legal revisions allowing abortion within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, societal, and cultural factors, along with uncertainties about legal and parental

consent for adolescents, contribute to the significance of attitudes toward abortion as a determining factor in the choice of opting for an illicit abortion.

Subjective norms about abortion did not significantly predict adolescents' intention for abortion ( $p > .05$ ). In the present era, access to learning resources is readily available, including both reliable and unreliable information. With convenient communication, adolescents can independently address the issue of unprepared pregnancy. The stigma associated with unwanted pregnancies often leads teenagers to keep such matters confidential, making them shameful.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, subjective norms could not serve as a predictor for adolescents' intention for abortion.

This study had limitations. The COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges in accessing participants, leading to an extended duration for data collection.

## Recommendation

This study provides substantial information for nurses and health team to develop programs aimed at promoting attitudes toward abortion and enhancing perceived control for abortion decision-making, particularly to assist adolescents with unwanted pregnancies in urban communities. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of raising awareness about preventing illegal abortions, thereby mitigating the intention for abortion. The effectiveness of the developed program can be tested in a future study.

## Acknowledgements

This study was supported by the Thailand Science Research and Innovation. The authors express gratitude to all participants for their valuable time.

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