

Abortion and Partner Relationships

Few studies have examined the impact of elective abortion on the relationships between partners. Most of the research on this topic has focused on women while considerably less has queried men about their perceptions of post-abortion relationship quality. Findings from the research are summarized below:

- Negative effects of abortion on partner relationships were reported by 12%,¹ 20%,² 27.6%³ and 82.6%⁴ of women and by 17.6%,⁵ 50%⁶ and 81.8%⁷ of men in various studies.
- Several studies have reported the demise of relationships after abortion.^{8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13}
- Relationship failure was specifically attributed to abortion by 15.6%¹⁴ and 20%¹⁵ of men in two studies.
- Even couples who agree to abort may experience stress in their relationships.¹⁶
- Research findings indicate an association between induced abortion and sexual dysfunction for both women^{17, 18, 19, 20, 21} and men.^{22, 23} The incidence of women's sexual problems after abortion ranged from 10-20% during the first few weeks or months after abortion to 5-20% at one year post abortion.²⁴ A recent survey study found that 69.5% of female and 55.6% of male respondents experienced abortion-related sexual problems.²⁵
- Among women and men, a history of abortion in a past relationship is associated with difficulties in and/or failure of current relationships.²⁶

Various explanatory factors regarding abortion and relationship problems have been proposed such as: inequality between partners in terms of the decision to abort,²⁷ discrepant grief reactions between partners,²⁸ inability to mourn the loss of the child at the time of abortion,²⁹ and a decrease in trust and communication between partners after abortion.³⁰ Further research is needed to identify the factors that contribute to relationship challenges during and after abortion and to provide guidelines for abortion counseling.

Prepared by the *Alliance for Post-Abortion Research & Training*

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