

**Ethics Topic Paper**

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Since the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, many states have limited the accessibility of abortions. According to Pabayo et. al, (2020), statistics show that “restricting access to abortion is a risk factor for adverse maternal and infant health”. This case study is about an ethical dilemma and is relevant to recent discussions of abortion. There is a conflict between values and legality. A 27-year-old man raped a 10-year-old girl. She is now pregnant and is three days past the time allowed for someone to have an abortion in her state. The family expresses concern that they aren't sure if they should travel to find access to abortions in another state, or have the child give birth and either take care of the infant or consider adoption.

This is a complicated process, which I, as the social worker have to keep in mind. There are many different aspects to this dilemma that have to be considered. I'm not aware of the family's financial status, but it is a possibility that they are low-income and cannot find the finances and resources to travel to another state. The family dynamic is another aspect that has to be considered, their relationships and their feelings about the situation are important and should be valued. The young child will be going through significant changes regardless of which decision they choose. The 10-year-old girl will likely struggle significantly with her mental health and physical health. According to Erfina, et. al, (2019), “Adolescents often become mothers without the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to deal with early motherhood” (p.222). Because of her age, she could experience life-threatening conditions to both herself and the fetus, if she carried to full term. Pabayo et. al, (2020), says that “infants of adolescent mothers are at greater risk for mortality.”

Social Justice is a value from the Social Work Code of Ethics which is important in this case. The adolescent is pregnant because she was sexually assaulted. Children are a vulnerable population and they need as much support and guidance as they can receive. The abortion laws

that are restricting her are not ethical. The adolescent has limited options because of the laws currently in place. This is a dilemma because the child has reproductive rights, and abortion should be considered healthcare in every state. As a social worker, for social justice, it is my job to “ensure access to needed information, services, and resources” (NASW, 2021). This is one reason why I believe it would be more ethical to provide them with resources to travel out of state for the abortion. However, for many people, abortions go against their religions or beliefs, so for some families, this may not be an option. However, I will still seek to provide services such as mental health support and family therapy, even if they don’t want to have an abortion.

I also think it is important to focus on the dignity and worth of a person. For this adolescent child, it is important to pay attention to her needs, and her decisions. Although she is still young, it is critical to ensure she feels self-determination, where she feels confident in her decision because it is her body. This also means that as a social worker, we should attempt to help resolve any of the issues within society and our clients (NASW, 2021). Abortion is a large topic right now, and for many people, restricted access to abortion, has severely impacted their decisions. We must advocate and fight for their reproductive rights and try to ensure safety.

With this family, they are being forced to make a difficult decision with extremely limited time. The pregnant child’s well-being and relationships are an important part of this process. Her family is her support system, and they are also included in this decision because if they decide to continue the pregnancy, it will become their responsibility to care for the child. Regardless of which decision is chosen, resources are needed to ensure the family relationship is strong and to provide support for the pregnant child. According to Erfina, et. al, (2019) when talking about support systems they found that, “the most important sources of social support were found to be from their parents”.

The 10-year-old girl is currently in the Industry vs Inferiority stage of development according to Erik Erikson. This stage is critical to a child's self-confidence and sense of belonging. Industry vs Inferiority is when the child begins to branch out from just the main social system, the family, and they reach out more to friends and peers (Issawi & Dauphin, 2020). This allows them to determine where they fit, and how they want to be perceived. This is a large part of their identity exploration and without it, they often feel like they aren't enough and are doubtful of themselves (Issawi & Dauphin, 2020). Regardless of which decision the family makes, it will be critical to provide resources and support for every individual, especially the adolescent who is currently pregnant. Examples of resources that could benefit the family are family therapy, individual therapy, and play therapy. Play therapy could be very useful for the adolescent, it will allow her to communicate and process her feelings and emotions without having to use words to articulate what she wants to say.

## References

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