

Abstract

Palestinian Women Reproductive Health Rights: Knowledge, Opportunities, Challenges and the Way Forward. A Qualitative Study in Bethlehem Area in the West Bank

Yara Hadweh

Corresponding Author:

Yara Hadweh

Abstract

Background: Reproductive health rights (RHR) were declared as fundamental human rights since Cairo's (1994) and Beijing's (1995) conferences. The acknowledgement of the importance of these rights was a momentous point for reproductive health. In the Palestinian context, RHR are severely affected by the combination of constraints of the political system and the cultural context. RHR remain one of the least prioritized matters making them extremely unmentionable.

Objective: To underpin the multiple political-demographic and cultural factors/conditions that influence Palestinian women RHR.

Methods: This research relied on an empirical qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews were done through Skype. A purposive sample of ten Palestinian women living in Bethlehem Area in the West Bank was selected. These interviews formed the basis of the analysis.

Results: Findings were considered under five emergent themes: knowledge, information and education; services and resources; Palestinian context and norms; conflict and occupation; violence against women. These intersecting themes shaped women's knowledge and perceptions of RHR. They highlighted the underpinning factors that influence the existing opportunities and challenges for Palestinian women to access to RHR, and health seeking behaviors and overall wellbeing.

Conclusions: This research emphasizes the great importance of this topic to the field of public health in general and specifically women's health. This research is rare in its kind in the Palestinian context. In insuring universal access to RHR in Palestine, it is recommended that governments should demonstrate commitment to prioritizing RHR initiatives. Creating economic opportunities and socio-cultural empowerment for women in Palestine would build women's resilience. Further researches regarding RHR should be conducted in other areas of Palestine.

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