

Roe V. Wade: The Impact of The Overruled Policy on Women's Well-Being

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Abstract. In the United States, a significant number of pregnancies end in miscarriage or abortion each year. Yet a significant number of abortions also end in maternal death. Thus, in this case, the protection of women's reproductive freedom to abort and the safeguarding of maternal health in the event of abortion is a matter related to human rights and equality. The purpose of this paper is to outline the effects on women's social status, physical and mental health, and spillover effects by analyzing Roe v. Wade, which had a huge impact in the United States, and Dobbs v. Jackson, which overturned Roe v. Wade. This paper concludes from the analysis that the fall of Roe v. Wade has deprived women of the safety of abortion and has negatively impacted women in a variety of ways for women in need of abortion. At the same time, as a superpower, the US abortion policy has had an impact on many other countries around the world. If the negative externalities of the Roe v. Wade reversal are to be addressed, society as a whole and policymakers should take a more humane and holistic view of women in need of abortions and develop policies that are more conducive to protecting their safety and human rights.

Keywords: Roe v. Wade; abortion right; reproductive health.

1. Introduction

Abortion has long been an important means of terminating a pregnancy. In some countries or regions, abortion is considered "murder" or a "crime" because of its religious or cultural background. In the US, there are two main schools of thought on abortion - the "pro-choice" school of thought and the "pro-life" school of thought. The "pro-choicers" believe that abortion is part of a woman's reproductive rights and part of her right to privacy and that the law has no right to interfere. The "pro-lifers" believe that abortion is murder and that it shows contempt and disrespect for life [1].

In 1976 Norma McCorvey, also known as Roe, and her defense lawyers Sarah Weddington and Linda Coffee filed a lawsuit against the District Attorney Wade of the United States in federal court in Texas, alleging that the Texas abortion law was unconstitutional. With the success of Roe's lawsuit and the repeal of the Texas abortion law, the bell tolled for anti-abortion laws in the United States.

Legal and regular abortion procedures and medications are a must for women with unwanted pregnancies. Studies have shown that about 13% of maternal deaths are due to abortions performed by unsophisticated doctors using improper surgical methods in unsafe environments [2].

In 2022, in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, the successes and advances achieved by Roe v. Wade were once again negated. Approximately four years have passed since the event began. This paper outlines the current state of affairs in the United States and the world following the overrule of Roe v. Wade in three separate areas: women's social status, the reproductive and mental health of maternity, and the spillover effects of the US states and their impact on the world.

2. Women's Social Status

According to statistics, in 2020, 57 percent of women who had abortions were around 20 years old [3]. This also happens to be the age at which they are moving from high school to college or have been in college for a couple of years. According to a research study, female college applicants in states that ban abortion are about one percentage point lower than in states that do not [4]. About 73

percent of college applicants felt that the state's reproductive laws largely determined their decision to apply to college.

Such a one percent gap greatly impacts the future structure of the labor market and has significant economic implications for states. A survey examining the college-specific labor market shows that approximately 50 percent of recent university graduates will work or live near the institution they attended after graduation [4]. As the data show, if the number of female applicants is low in states with abortion bans, the number of women who will be able to enter the labor market in those states after graduation will also be relatively small. The number of occupations such as female nurse, female gynecologist, and female teacher would be decreased.

Women comprise about three-quarters of industries like nurses, gynecologists, and teachers in the United States. If the influx of young women in a particular state decreases due to abortion restrictions, the number of jobs in these female-dominated industries will be in a surplus. Better resources, especially human resources, will flow to states with more liberal abortion restrictions.

Thus, in this case, in some specific industries, due to their scarcity, the nominal wage and nominal status of women would be increased. However, at the same time, this will in turn make it more difficult for women to survive in these industries.

There have also been studies investigating shows that four years after a woman has been denied an abortion, she is three times more likely to be unemployed than those who have undergone the procedure, along with an increase in personal debt and financial insecurity, and a decrease in credit score [5]. Physiological and physical manifestations are - serious pregnancy complications, chronic pain, decline in health, and risk of death. According to research, women who are denied abortions are more likely to be linked to family poverty and abusive partners [6].

For these women, undergoing an abortion was not just the beginning of a process that will make them more independent individuals, but may also be an opportunity to break away from their original environment.

Race is likewise one of the most important factors influencing abortion. Especially for African American women. It is particularly noteworthy that in Florida, for example, where black females make up about 15 percent of the population, 75 percent of criminal arrests are pregnancy-related [7].

3. Reproductive and Mental Health of Maternity

3.1. Reproductive Health

The most far-reaching and wide-ranging effect of restricting female abortion is the impact on women's reproductive health. Important means of stopping pregnancy include not only abortion but also contraception. According to Aid Access, the only online telemedicine provider in the US that legally offers self-administered medication abortions outside of regular medical facilities, before the *Roe v. Wade* disclosure, the average number of daily medication requests they received was 82.6. After the disclosure, that number increased to about 137 and spiked to 213.7 after the official sentencing [8].

The trend toward increased numbers was greatest in states that banned abortion altogether, and least in states where abortion laws did not change. Moreover, about 30 percent of drug requesters requested drugs because of "current abortion restrictions and policies" [8]. The surge in requests undoubtedly reflects the anxiety of reproductive health as well as abortion concerns, especially among women in states with tight abortion restrictions. In addition, according to scholarly research, studies based on four US states with varying degrees of abortion control show a significant decline in the number of sexual activities in states with stricter abortion control. Also, in the more tightly controlled states, about 4 percent more women were unable to access or delayed in accessing their preferred contraceptive method [9].

For women with substance use disorders (SUD), the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* made it both objectively and subjectively more difficult for them to obtain coverage for abortion or reproductive care, especially physical care [10].

The intrauterine device (IUD) serves as one of the most effective means of contraception. Nonetheless, since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, IUDs have been considered part of "abortion" in some states. These restrictions make it more difficult for women with SUDs to receive good upfront contraception [10].

Additionally, women with SUD are often accompanied by characteristics such as low income, being young, needing Medicaid, and being a colored race person. According to statistics, black women are about ten times more likely than white women to be arrested for alcohol or drug use during pregnancy [10].

3.2. Mental Health

Pregnancy is a cause for excitement and joy for some mothers and women in labor, as it means the arrival of a new life and the beginning of a whole new journey. Nonetheless, for women with unwanted pregnancies, the presence of a fetus can be a stressful experience. According to the American Psychiatric Association's classification, after experiencing abortion, women are highly susceptible to two types of related co-occurring mental disorders - post-abortion distress (PAD) and post-abortion syndrome (PAS). Symptoms of both disorders include widespread anxiety, depression, insomnia, nightmares, irritability, concentration problems, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and lowered self-esteem, as well as sexualized fear of getting pregnant again and fear of sexual intercourse [11].

According to a research study, there is a correlation between the loss of a woman's right to an abortion and an increase in the prevalence of mental anguish of about 10 percent in the three months following the entry of the judgment of the *Dobbs v. Jackson* case [12].

According to the data, the majority of women who receive abortions in the US are low-income, unmarried, and represent minorities. Before the *Dobbs v. Jackson* case, about one in five women in need of abortion had to travel 50 miles or more to have access to abortion care, and about one in ten women had to cross state lines. After the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision, the number of women receiving abortions across state lines nearly doubled tenfold [5].

Whether the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* happened or not, the psychological impact of abortion on women cannot be underestimated. Not to mention that after *Dobbs v. Jackson*, the likelihood that some women in need of an abortion will have to cross state lines to obtain one has been greatly increased.

In general terms, for women who had the right to abortion, the deprivation of their original right creates an even greater psychological gap. Whether or not they are women who have a need or consideration for abortion, witnessing the rights that belong to them being cut out of the equation is not an easy thing to bear in any case.

4. Spillover Effects

4.1. North America

Mexico, which borders the southern United States, has long been one of the top destinations for women in the southern United States who need abortions. American women are familiar with and can easily enter Mexico. In 2021, although not all states have liberalized their laws, Mexico has established the legality of abortion in the name of the law [13].

As of March 2024, only New Mexico in the southern US and Colorado in the south-central US have no pregnancy cycle or hourly restrictions on abortion. Texas and Louisiana, the closest neighboring states to Mexico, include abortion in the completely illegal column.

According to statistics, on the day *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, the number of calls for appointments at a representative Mexican abortion clinic, which primarily provides abortions to women in the United States, spiked from the usual average of 5-7 inquiries per month to more than 70 on that day [14]. Behind such a surge in the number of abortion counseling in Mexico is a reflection

of the trend of sloping demand for abortions among women in the southern US toward Mexico in the wake of the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

At the same time, however, according to professional interpretations, individual Latin American countries had adopted dangerously right-leaning conservative policies, and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* further restricted the already limited freedom of abortion for Latin American women [13].

Canada, which is connected to the northern part of the United States, is experiencing a similar situation to Mexico. According to polls, about 46 percent of Canadians believe that the abortion situation in the United States will have an impact on Canada [13].

The United States is one of the most economically and politically influential superpowers in the world, and as far as East Asia and the southern hemisphere are subliminally affected by American policies and influences.

4.2. Oceania

It has been argued that the end of *Roe v. Wade*'s protection of women's abortion rights in the United States will have symbolic consequences for other countries around the world. For example, the pro-life factions within a country can be aided by resources from the United States of America, and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* has provided them with progressively fertile ground to do so [13].

For example, even before *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, well-known anti-abortion organizations in the United States, Helpers of God's Precious Infants and 40 Days for Life, had already opened branches in Australia. After *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, some Australian politicians began to use similar rhetoric and statements as anti-abortionists in the United States. These statements have been exemplified in attempts to politicize abortion in several provinces, including New Anne Wales and South Australia [15].

Most directly, following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the Australian government banned the importation and registration of the abortion drugs in question [15].

While these actions have little relevance within Australia, it is the change in the abortion bill in the United States that has caused a shift in the abortion situation for women in Australia.

4.3. Africa

Article 14 (2) (c) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa ("Maputo Protocol") is the first regulation in Africa to provide for and protect women's right to abortion explicitly. To date, more than 40 African countries have acceded to the Treaty.

Similar to Oceania (Australia), abortion in Africa is heavily influenced by the United States. Particularly in Africa, anti-abortion organizations often use, but are not limited to, marches, educating youth and intellectual groups about abortion rights and the conflict between religious and social norms, etc. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* not only proves to them that what they believe and believe in is "right," but it also increases their publicity and awareness, and capitalizes on their propaganda [6].

4.4. Asia

Many countries in Asia have made considerable progress in recent years on issues related to abortion and women's rights. Nepal has always been seen as a conservative and traditional country, but it allowed abortion in pregnancies up to 28 weeks back in 2018. Also, South Korea, for example, tried to completely decriminalize abortion in 2021, although the result was not successful. Thailand and India have also made progress in these areas [6].

However remarkably, courts in some Asian nations have incorporated decisions from the US Supreme Court into their jurisprudence and have used these rulings to interpret domestic laws. Similar to Oceania and Africa, abortion laws in Asia cannot help but ignore changes in US policy [6].

However, while it is impossible to ignore the impact of the United States and its abortion policy, some countries in Asia are still moving towards greater protection of women's rights and interests

and respect for women's abortion and reproductive wishes. Some countries have passed bills protecting women's right to abortion even after Roe v. Wade was overturned which promoted women's abortion right to a great extent [6].

5. Conclusion

The Roe v. Wade victory was an important milestone in the long female struggle for reproductive and abortion rights. Roe and her attorneys' successes had laid down a half-century-long history of women's fundamental right to abortion, while also helping the many women who had suffered as a result. What is undeniable, however, is that Robbs v. Jackson, half a century later, has had a huge impact on all American women and women around the world involved in abortion. This paper provides an overview of women's rights in the post-Roe v. Wade era by analyzing three different perspectives. The entry into force of Dobbs v. Jackson undermines and deprives women of the fundamental rights and guarantees to which they are entitled while creating negative externalities in terms of women's social status, maternal health, and global spillover effects. Given this, if the legal provisions are not changed, women should be given more policy support and protection in more areas, especially women from vulnerable groups.

Due to the evolution of time and society, there are more factors affecting a woman's reproductive and abortion rights than just the overturning of Roe v. Wade, so the limitation of this paper is that it does not consider all other factors affecting a woman's reproductive and abortion rights in their entirety. Also, since Dobbs v. Jackson did not happen for a long time, the conclusions of the study now are not representative of the long-term situation and conclusions. Future research on women's right to abortion and reproductive health could focus on outcomes after the judgment has been in force for a long period of time, as well as on the findings of research that integrates a wider range of considerations.

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