

Forum: SISMUN-Youth General Assembly 1

Issue: Measures to ensure rights to bodily autonomy

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Introduction

Freedom is a fundamental quality of ensuring basic human rights. When it comes to rights related to human body, bodily autonomy is a necessary right that must be protected in order to attain a harmonious society that everyone's freedom and equality of making decisions are guaranteed. It is not only to protect one's body, but also to ensure one's equality, dignity, and health without any discrimination.

According to a report from United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), there are only 75% of countries that legally ensure equal access to contraception and only 80% of countries that have laws supporting sexual health and well-beings. These data also mean that 1 out of 4 countries do not assure full access to contraception for everyone, and 1 out of 5 countries do not have foundational laws to support people's sexual health and well-being. Even if these numbers do not seem like massive numbers, there are considerable amounts of violations of bodily autonomy, which must be reminded, within these countries.

Bodily autonomy to women is especially a serious matter in this issue. The certainty of their bodily integrity is critical as the decisions they make have crucial impact on their health and well-being. UNFPA says only 55% of women have full access to making their own choice in the world. The remaining 45% of them are not able to confidently say yes or no to what they do not want regarding to their body or are in situations with coercion toward them.

Bodily autonomy violations include various forms that cannot even be imagined: cultural and traditional practices, medical interventions, legal restrictions, and many more. These violations not only directly harm people's health, but also ignore their human rights and cause those people whose bodily autonomy are violated to be more difficult to make choice on their body even in the future.

With this being said, it should be evident that measurements to ensure rights to bodily autonomy should be properly established in order to avoid more people losing their rights to make decisions on

their own body. To do so, collaborations between nations and mutual agreements between nations are required. When all nations come along to make a world with no violations on anyone's bodily autonomy, there is no doubt that this hope can become a reality.

Definition of Key Terms

Bodily autonomy

Bodily autonomy is a right to make your own choices about your own body, life, and future without a forcible demand or violence. This right has been recognized as a fundamental human right for a long time as it ensures individual's freedom of making own decision, dignity, and equality.

Bodily integrity

Similar to bodily integrity, bodily integrity refers to people having control over their own physical and mental well-being including unconstrained access to health care and freedom from violence or coercion.

Violations of bodily autonomy

Violations of bodily autonomy are any actions that can be considered as violating one's rights to make their own decisions on their body. This kind of violations includes various forms, such as cultural and traditional practices, medical interventions, and legal restrictions.

Background Information

Bodily autonomy refers to the right of individuals to control and decide what happens to their own bodies including decision about their physical selves, including medical choices, reproductive health, and physical boundaries. It is one of the fundamental rights that should be ensured to everyone as it is related to one's body and health that may affect one's whole life. Bodily autonomy ensures individuals various aspects of rights such as the right to consent, the right to refuse treatment, and the right to make decisions about their own body.

Historical context

The history of bodily autonomy has evolved significantly by social, legal, and political movements throughout a long period of time. In ancient cultures, personal rights were often viewed through a

communal lens with religious and cultural beliefs, which emphasized the role of individuals within families or tribes rather than role of individuals by themselves. Thus, in some cultures, there were practices such as slavery and arranged marriage, which limited individuals' bodily autonomy. In the Enlightenment era, from 17th to 18th century, ideas of individual freedom and personal agency were introduced by several philosophers such as Joan Locke and Jean-jacques Rousseau. This ideas later underlied the modern understanding of individuals' freedom and bodily autonomy. Then, in 19th century, importance of organized movements to advocate women's right was raised, which is called as Women's Rights Movement. Practices like forced sterilization and lack of access to contraception during that time highlighted the needs of bodily autonomy. Later in 20th century, the freedom of particular race and individuals was included in the concerns about bodily autonomy by the Civil Rights Movement. This further expanded individuals' freedom to make their own choices on their lives and advocated or equality and bodily integrity of for all individuals. Lastly, in the recent decades, bodily autonomy had expanded, including rights of LGBTQ+ and continued to push for the recognition of bodily autonomy in many areas. With this expansion, bodily autonomy for not only women but also LGBTQ+ was emphasized. Through this history of evolving individual's rights, the struggle for ensuring bodily autonomy has been recognized and emphasized, highlighting the need for continued advocacy for every individual's rights.

Impacts of denied bodily autonomy

Psychological impact

Experiencing violations such as sexual assault, medical malpractice, or forced medical procedures can lead to long-lasting impact on the victims. For examples, victims of violations of bodily autonomy often suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. These psychological scars may cause victims to a pervasive sense of mistrust, fear, hatred, and emotional instability. Moreover, denied bodily autonomy may also lead victims to struggle with feelings of shame, guilt, and worthlessness, which eventually makes them to lose their self-esteem. After experiencing violations of bodily autonomy, those victims may also feel sense of powerlessness, which leads them to lose control on their bodies and perpetuate the cycle of abuse and victimization.

Physical impact

Denied bodily autonomy may also result in significant health issues, both immediate and long-term to its victims. For example, lack of control over reproductive choice can lead to an unwanted pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) such as HIV, chlamydia, genital herpes, and many more. With lack of ability to make decisions on safe sexual relationships, individuals may have higher risks of getting STIs, which may need long-term health effects if untreated. Moreover, in some cases, denied bodily autonomy may also lead individuals to be subjected to unwanted medical interventions or surgeries, which can result in physical impairments or disabilities.

Controversies surrounding bodily autonomy

Bodily autonomy is a contentious issue, which often goes along with ethical, legal, and cultural debates among people.

Reproductive rights

Access to abortion and contraceptive methods when discussing bodily autonomy remains a polarizing topic. Some significant debates discuss women's right to choose whether to terminate pregnancies, while the other side argues that it's against moral and ethical beliefs about fetal rights. This controversy raises an important question that asks about each nation's laws or policies related to this matter, which are different from each other.

Medical consent

Informed consent is a cornerstone of medical ethics, but some issues still arise when patients feel pressured to undergo certain procedures or treatments. The debate often centers around patient rights versus medical authority. While some people argue that patients should receive adequate information about their medical condition, other people assert that medical jargon can obscure important details and lead to inadequate consent. This controversy encompasses a wide range of issues that challenge the balance between patient autonomy and medical practice.

Transgender rights

The rights of transgender individuals to make decisions about their own bodies, including access to gender-affirming care, face significant opposition in many societies. There are significant debates over transgender individuals' access to hormone therapy and surgeries. While some people argue for the rights to self-determination, some other people concerns about medical ethics and potential irreversible effects on their bodies. This controversy highlights broader issues of gender identity, societal acceptance, and the right to self-identify when solving this issue.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United Nations Population Funds

United Nations Population Funds (UNFPA) is an organization, which aims to achieve global access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, to promote reproductive health rights, and to reduce any health problems that occur during treatments. UNFPA has been working on issues related to bodily autonomy for several decades and showed their early efforts on ensuring bodily autonomy. These efforts

include International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which emphasized women's right and importance of addressing lack of bodily autonomy that people face, and Flagship Report Launch titled *My Body is My Own*, which was the first comprehensive report that highlighted issues of bodily autonomy and denied decision-making power among people's body. With these previous efforts put to take actions regarding to this issue that UNFPA has, nations will be able to understand the issue more clearly and formulate more effective solutions. Therefore, collaboration with UNFPA will be a significant consideration for nations when addressing this issue.

MSI United States

MSI United States, considering themselves as "fearless providers of choice and hope", work with governments or local leaders in order to ensure safe and modern reproductive healthcare services to woman in the globe. According to the annual report of 2023, they were able to reach 16.5 million unintended pregnancies to be prevented and 23.3 millions of people to have access to MSI's sexual and reproductive healthcare, progressing to fully achieve their goal in the whole globe with effective and positive impacts in many regions. Thus, when dealing with issues related to bodily autonomy, collaborating with MSI United States will be a helpful way for nations to make effective progresses. Moreover, there are only 36 countries working with this organization; therefore, encouraging other nations to join this collaboration can also be a possible solution that can help solving this issue.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan is a particular country that must be discussed when dealing with bodily autonomy. Tajikistan currently has the lowest bodily autonomy rate for women. Approximately 67% of women do not have access to autonomous decision even in critical aspects of their lives. With such a high rate of women who do not have their rights to make decisions on their bodies, Tajikistan becomes one of the major countries that must be mentioned in addressing issues related to bodily autonomy.

Armenia

Armenia is another country that must be addressed in this issue. In Armenia, 38% of people do not have rights for their own decision on sexual and reproductive health, and 15% of them do not have full decision-making power on sexual intercourse. This rates in Armenia indicates that Armenia is one of the countries with lower rate of bodily autonomy and the country that must need policies and solutions in order to increase the access of people on bodily autonomy. Not only Armenia or Tajikistan, but there are also a lot of countries that have low rates of bodily autonomy without much recognition from the world. Therefore, when addressing this issue, there should be a close view of those countries and solutions that are possible for all those countries with low rates of bodily autonomy.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

United Nation – International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

ICPD was a conference held in Cairo, Egypt by UN from September 5 to 13, 1994. Representatives from 175 countries joined the conference and adopted to ICPD Programme of Action, which affirmed the significance of reproductive rights, empowerment of women, and prioritization of fundamental human rights. For a proper and successful implementation of the Programme of Action by every government, ICPD also set long-term goals and standard for guiding national policies and programmes, which provided each nation comprehensive understanding and guidelines of actions they must take. As the result, there has been reduction in maternal mortality rates, increase in access to contraception, and many more positive impacts, which showed notable improvements that indicated that the nations are one-step closer to their goal, ensuring bodily autonomy for every individual.

UNFPA – My Body is My Own: Claiming the Right to Autonomy and Self-Determination (2021)

My Body is My Own, which was published by UNFPA in 2021, is a report that focuses on critical issues regarding to bodily autonomy and rights of individuals. This report stated bodily autonomy as a fundamental human right, mentioned several serious impacts and consequences of denied rights, and lastly, called for an action to enhance bodily autonomy. This report raised seriousness and awareness of this issue by clearly stating several issues of denied rights and suggested important and effective solutions, aiming to achieve a world where everyone has equal rights on making their own decisions.

Possible Solutions

Education and awareness about the issue

As bodily autonomy fundamentally affects individuals' rights, health, and dignified life, it is crucial to let everyone recognize the seriousness of this issue and understand their own basic rights related to their bodies. Raising awareness about this ongoing issue also allows individuals to have more empowerments to assert for their rights to make decisions on their own lives and bodies, including decisions related to healthcare, reproduction, and personal boundaries. This can be done through campaigns that include how serious this issue is, which actions are included in violations of bodily autonomy, and what actions an individual can do to ensure his/her own rights. In addition, implementation of comprehensive sexual education to every nation can be considered as well. Current sexual education in many nations face several barriers such as social, cultural, and religious norms, lack of support from communities, and limited participation in curriculum development. In order to prevent any misunderstanding of bodily autonomy and to ensure every individual's recognition of bodily autonomy,

comprehensive sexual education should be put to schools, which can help students to learn and understand the issue from a young age. Thus, raising awareness about this issue is one of the powerful solutions that can be discussed.

Providing healthcare access

Providing comprehensive and accessible healthcare services plays a crucial role in ensuring bodily autonomy as it empowers people with clear information and knowledge about their bodies and medical conditions. It also allows them to make their own decisions on their bodies and health. Proper access to healthcare provides people a clear information about their medical health which allows them to clearly understand their own bodies and make their own decision on their bodies after a careful consideration. Furthermore, access to healthcare allows individuals to make decision among expanded choices that include a range of treatment options and preventive care measures. This increases one's right and ability to choose what happens to their bodies and clearly understand the treatment that they can receive. Thus, providing comprehensive healthcare access is a fundamental possible solution that can be considered when enhancing bodily autonomy.

Establishing international policy

Establishment of international policy on the issues of bodily autonomy is another significant solution that can help enhance bodily autonomy. International policy provides legal frameworks for nations to promote rights to bodily autonomy, cope with violations, and ensure access to necessary healthcare services. Moreover, it standardizes rights to bodily autonomy, allowing nations to align their laws with the global standard and set proper punishments on any violation based on the legal framework. Thus, establishing international policy on nations is crucial for them to promote successful enhancement of bodily autonomy by utilizing globally accepted policies.

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