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Stigma and agency: Exploring young Kenyan women's experiences with abortion stigma and individual agency

Although abortion is now legal in Kenya under expanded circumstances, access is limited and many providers and individuals still believe it is illegal. This study aimed to characterise Kenyan women's perceptions and experiences with abortion and post-abortion care (PAC) services in Nairobi regarding barriers to care, beliefs about abortion, and perceived stigma. We conducted 15 semi-structured in-depth interviews with Kenyan women aged 18–24 years

who recently received abortion and PAC services at four Marie Stopes Kenya clinic sites in Nairobi. The most significant psychosocial barrier respondents faced in promptly seeking abortion and PAC was perceived stigma. In response to stigma, participants developed a sense of agency and self-reliance, which allowed them to prioritise their own healthcare needs over the concerns of others. To adequately address perceived stigma as a barrier to abortion- and PAC-seeking, significant cultural norm shifting is required.

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