

# INFERTILITY'S EFFECT ON CHILDLESS WOMEN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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**Deepa. S**

Research Scholar Maharaj Vinayak Global University  
Kukas (Jaipur) Rajasthan

**Dr. Shri Vallabh Sharma,**

Department of Sociology, Maharaj Vinayak Global University  
kukas (Jaipur) Rajasthan

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## ABSTRACT

In studies based on representative populations conducted in industrialised nations, the lifetime prevalence of infertility ranges from 17–28%, and on average, 56% of persons who are afflicted seek the assistance of a medical professional. Infertility is a medical problem, but it also has a social component; it is a poorly regulated, chronic stressor that has significant and long-lasting negative social and psychological effects. In addition to being a medical condition, infertility is a social issue. Infertility may put a significant burden on a couple's relationship, but it also has the ability to have a good impact if they choose to work through it together. In cases of infertility, coping mechanisms that are appraisal-oriented, particularly emotional coping, are connected with lower levels of stress. Long-term studies of forced childless women who had failed treatment have shown that while the majority of these women adapt well mentally, their childlessness remains a key theme throughout their life. The majority of studies are based on cross-sectional research among couples who are seeking reproductive therapy, and they concentrate on individual factors such as stress level, anxiety, and symptoms of depression. There are not enough research that look at how infertility and its treatment affects social relationships, and there are not enough studies that utilise couples as their unit of study. There is a pressing need for an increased number of large-scale, long-term prospective cohort studies that investigate the social as well as psychological repercussions of infertility.

**Keywords:** *infertility, psychology, social support*

## INTRODUCTION

The inability of a human, animal, or plant to reproduce on its own spontaneously is referred to as infertility. With the possible exception of some eusocial animals, this is not the normal condition of an adult that has reached full maturity. (mainly haplodiploid insects). This is the typical condition of a human kid or any other young offspring, since they have not yet reached the age of puberty, which marks the beginning of the body's capacity to procreate. Other young children may also be in this stage.

After one year of consistent, unprotected sexual activity between a male partner and a female partner, infertility in men is defined as the inability of the couple to produce a child. There are numerous different factors that may lead to infertility, and only a few of them are treatable by medical intervention. In 1997, it

was estimated that around five percent of all heterosexual couples throughout the globe were dealing with an unsolved issue of infertility. However, there are a significant number of additional couples who have been childless for at least a year; estimates place this number anywhere from 12% to 28%.

Male infertility accounts for 20-30% of infertility cases, whilst female infertility accounts for 20-35%, and shared issues between the couple accounts for 25-40% of infertility cases. 10–20 percent of the time, the root reason cannot be identified. Ovulation issues are the leading cause of infertility in women, and these issues are often accompanied by irregular or absent menstruation. The absence of sperm is the most common reason for male infertility; hence, the quality of sperm is often used as a surrogate for measuring male fertility.

Women who are capable of bearing children have a fertile time just before to and during ovulation, but they are unable to conceive throughout the rest of the menstrual cycle. Monitoring the changes in cervical mucus or basal body temperature is one of the ways that fertility awareness techniques are used to detect when these transitions take place.

Despite the fact that "demographers tend to define infertility as the absence of a child in a population of women of childbearing potential," the epidemiological definition of infertility more often refers to the "attempt" or "time" of pregnancy in a population of pregnant women who have the possibility to get pregnant. Fertility in women normally reaches its highest point at the age of 24 and then begins to fall around the age of 30. around the age of 50, women are very unlikely to get pregnant. Within the first twenty-four hours after ovulation, a woman is at her most fertile. The most fertile years of a man's life are often between the ages of 25 and 40.

When a couple is actively attempting to conceive, the amount of time it takes for that pair to get a diagnosis of infertility is something that differs from nation to nation. Because of the inconsistency of current definitions of infertility, it is difficult to compare the prevalence of the condition between countries or across time. As a direct consequence of this, the statistics quoted from various sources to estimate the prevalence of infertility vary significantly from one another. If a couple does not succeed in conceiving a child after a period of time (often quickly after, although definitions may vary), they are frequently referred to as subfertile, which means that they have a lower fertility rate than the average pair. Both infertility and subfertility are defined as the inability to conceive after a particular amount of time (the length of which varies), hence the two phrases sometimes overlap one another.

### **World Health Organization**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), infertility is defined as the failure to obtain a clinical pregnancy after 12 months or more of regular unprotected sexual activity. Infertility is a condition of the reproductive system that is characterized by this incapacity. (and no other cause such as breastfeeding or postpartum amenorrhea). Infertility that occurs in a relationship is known as primary infertility. After a woman has given birth, she may have infertility if she is unable to conceive again. Infertility may be brought on by an infection in either the male or the female, but in most cases, the underlying reason is not immediately apparent.

### **Other definitions**

The incidence of infertility over a period of five years is often used as the basis for population-based studies conducted by researchers. Nevertheless, there are challenges with the practical measurement of any definition, since it is difficult to detect sustained pregnancy risk exposure over a period of years. These concerns might arise with any definition.

### **Psychological and social effects**

There are many different outcomes that may result from infertility, some of which include societal ramifications and emotional anguish. Recent developments in assisted reproductive technologies, such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), may provide a glimmer of hope to many couples who are eligible for treatment, despite the fact that health insurance and cost can be impediments. The medicalization of infertility has unknowingly led to the disregarding of couples' emotional reactions to stress, loss of control, stigma, and interruption in their route to maturity. This has occurred as a result of the medicalization of infertility. The accuracy of the self-report is one of the greatest obstacles when attempting to evaluate the emotional anguish experienced by infertile women. It's possible for women to give off the impression that they are in better health by acting "dirty." Because the majority of stress tests are performed during this time frame, it is also feasible for women to have an increased feeling of hope or optimism before beginning treatment for infertility. Some of the first study came to the conclusion that infertile women and fertile women did not significantly differ in the symptoms of anxiety and sadness that they experienced. When a patient gets farther along in their therapy, it is not uncommon for them to experience feelings of despair and anxiety. individuals who had one unsuccessful treatment attempt had considerably greater levels of anxiety compared to individuals who did not have a treatment history, and patients who had two unsuccessful treatment attempts experienced significantly higher levels of depression. On the other hand, studies have shown that the more sad a woman who is unable to conceive is, the less likely she is to begin fertility therapy, and the more likely she is to give up after completing just one round of treatment. In spite of a favorable prognosis and the availability of financial resources to pay for treatment, the researchers found that the most prevalent reasons for dropping out were psychological in nature. There is no indication that a woman's fertility will improve if she consumes antioxidants to mitigate the oxidative stress brought on by the illness.

The inability to conceive may have a psychological impact. One of the most significant changes that occurs in a person's life as they mature into adulthood is becoming a parent. This is true for both men and women. The stress that comes with attempting to conceive a child has been linked to a variety of negative emotional outcomes, including feelings of worthlessness, irritability, melancholy, and depression, as well as difficulties in marriage. The potential for increased anxiety among couples who are trying to conceive may lead to sexual dysfunction. Conflict in married relationships is common, particularly when one partner feels pressured to make choices about medical care. Women who are attempting to conceive typically experience rates of depression that are comparable to those of women who suffer from heart illness or cancer. Emotional strain and difficulties inside the marriage are more prevalent in relationships where one partner is unable to have a child. When it comes to infertility concerns, male and female partners react in various ways. When it comes to infertility, women, on average, exhibit far greater levels of despair than their male counterparts do. When attempting to conceive, women are more likely than males to experience feelings of responsibility and shame, which may be one reason for why. On the other side, infertile men go through the mental and physical strain of trying to conceive.

The majority of cultures place a high value on the human reproductive system. It's possible for infertile couples to have feelings of social isolation as a result of the societal and familial pressures they endure. Important characteristics that influence behavior include age, gender, religious affiliation, and social standing. A couple's choice over whether or not to initiate, avoid, or continue infertility treatment may be influenced by social influences. A lower socioeconomic position is related with a greater chance of developing depression, which is another factor that plays a role in the mental health of infertile couples. The inability to conceive is stigmatized in many different cultures throughout the world. Rejection, even on a little scale (or the perception of being rejected by a partner), may be a source of major worry and anger in social settings that are closed off to outsiders. Some people react by trying to avoid thinking about the issue altogether; middle-class males are more prone to react in this manner.

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act of the United States of America, individuals who are experiencing infertility may be eligible for certain treatments, including diagnostic testing, surgical procedures, and treatment with antidepressant medication. It has been suggested that infertility should be regarded as a distinct category of disability.

### **Causes of infertility**

Male infertility accounts for 20-30% of infertility cases, whilst female infertility accounts for 20-35%, and shared issues between the couple accounts for 25-40% of infertility cases. 10–20 percent of the time, the root reason cannot be identified. Ovulation issues are the leading cause of infertility in women, and these issues are often accompanied by irregular or absent menstruation. The most common reason for male infertility is a deficiency in sperm, and the quality of sperm is often used as a surrogate for measuring male fertility.

### **Iodine deficiency**

Iodine deficiency can lead to infertility.

### **Natural infertility**

Before puberty, a person's gonads have not yet created the gametes essential for reproduction. This means that a male's testes have not yet generated the sperm necessary to fertilize a female, and a female's ovaries have not yet begun ovulating, which promotes the fertility of an egg. (ovulation is confirmed by the first menstrual cycle, called menarche, which indicates the biological probability of pregnancy). Infertility in men is often referred to as prepubertal infertility. (or being prepubertal , also an adjective used to refer to people who lack secondary sex characteristics).

Because the hypothalamus in children's brains has not yet fully formed, these individuals are unable to secrete the hormones that are required to activate the reproductive cells that are found in the gonads. As a result, infertility is seen as a normal and unavoidable aspect of human growth and development. It is referred to as premature puberty when fertility occurs in youngsters before the age of 8 or 9. This condition is often brought on by a brain tumor or another damage of a similar kind.

### **Delayed puberty**

Infertility may be the result of factors such as delayed puberty, a lack of a family history of puberty, or puberty that begins beyond the middle years (between ten and fourteen years). In the United States of America, a female is regarded to have delayed puberty if she has not begun menstruation by the age of 16 (and if her breasts have not formed by the age of 13). When it comes to males, delayed puberty is defined as the inability of the testicles to mature until beyond the age of 14. Puberty begins later than normal for around 2% of adolescents.

The onset of puberty may often be pushed back by many years without affecting the overall health of the individual. In this particular scenario, it is seen to represent a structural slowing of growth, with puberty being understood as a common variation of healthy physical development. Puberty may also be delayed for a variety of reasons, including the following: B. Malnutrition, a variety of other systemic disorders, or problems in the reproductive system (hypogonadism), or the body's reaction to sex hormones

### **Immune sterility**

Antisperm antibodies, also known as ASA, are thought to be the root cause of infertility in anywhere between 10 and 30 percent of infertile couples. The synthesis of ASA in both males and females targets the surface antigens found on sperm, which has the potential to alter sperm motility and transit through the female reproductive system, as well as capacitation and acrosome response, poor fertilization, culture, and the prevention of poor growth and development. There are a few different categories of antibodies, the most common of which are IgA, IgG, and IgM antibodies. The location on the sperm (head, body, or tail) to which they are attached also differentiates them from one another. Violations of normal systems of immune control, infections, violations of the integrity of the mucosal membrane, rape, and unprotected oral or anal intercourse are all factors that might lead to the development of antisperm antibodies in women. males are more likely to produce antisperm antibodies if they have blood-testicular barrier malfunction, have had trauma or surgery, have orchitis, varicocele, infection, prostatitis, testicular cancer, immunosuppression failure, or have had protected non-receptive oral or anal intercourse with other males. Other risk factors include: orchitis, varicocele, infection, testicular cancer, immunosuppression failure, and testicular cancer illnesses that are transferred by sexual contact

Both *Chlamydia trachomatis* and *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* are examples of sexually transmitted infections that may have a negative impact on a couple's ability to conceive a child. There is a significant correlation between infections caused by *Mycoplasma genitalium* and disorders affecting the female reproductive system. There is a correlation between having an infection with *M. genitalium* and having an elevated risk of infertility.

### **Genetically**

In a select group of men who suffer non-obstructive male infertility for whom the underlying reason is unclear, mutations in the NR5A1 gene, which codes for steroidogenic factor 1 (SF-1), have been discovered. Changes in the SF-1 joint region were seen in the study's cohort of 315 men, however these changes were not associated with any unusual allelic mutations in fertile control males. People who have been affected by this condition have been shown to develop more severe types of infertility, such as B. azoospermia and severe oligozoospermia.

### **CONCLUSION**

A pilot study was conducted to determine the relevance and applicability of the questionnaires for the current study in the Indian context. The internal consistency of the three instruments was determined. Since Cronbach's alpha values were satisfactory, the researcher moved on to the main study. The first phase was descriptive and interrelated; These variables measured infertility stress, along with psychological well-being and coping skills, as they were considered important in the management of infertility stress. We evaluated infertility-related stress levels, psychological well-being and coping strategies of 242 women with infertility in Chennai. They were also evaluated in terms of demographic factors such as age, education level, occupation, and location. Social factors i.e. household income, type of house, age of marriage and year of marriage. And clinical factors, namely the cause of infertility, the number of intrauterine insemination (IUI) attempts and the number of in vitro fertilization (IVF) attempts. The first phase was descriptive and adopted a survey research design; A higher correlation was sought to examine the relationship between infertility stress, psychological well-being, and coping strategies. Additional bivariate correlations were performed to find the relationship between social and clinical factors and study variables, namely infertility-related stress, psychological well-being, and coping skills.

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