



Systematic review on perception of psychosocial problems faced by childless couples

Nichitha Kumari^{1*}, & Dr.Suphala S Kotian²

¹Research scholar, Srinivas University, Mangalore.

²Professor, Srinivas University, Mangalore, India

ABSTRACT

Purpose: *Childlessness is a major issue that affects people all over the world in terms of demographics, society, and health (Dilan .C and et al., 2021). Women have begun their long journey toward freedom in a developing country like India, both at the family and societal levels. The social assumption is that a married couple will have children (Hilary.W.H, 2004). However, if they are unable to conceive for unidentified medical reasons, it could have a Psycho-social impact on the couple. The study purpose is to outline the psychological and social repercussions of childless couples in a significant province.*

Methodology: *The relevant literature reviewed and analyzed on infertility, depression, Beck depression inventory, and anxiety using databases SCOPUS, PubMed, and EMBASE, and the Conflict Resolution Survey for coping mechanisms.*

Result: *Based on the study revealed that childlessness can result in marital discontent, psychological burden, emotional impact, ineffective communication, financial issues, and stress, contributing to stress and depression.*

Originality: *Infertility's psychological aspects are crucial for promoting healthy physical, mental, social, and spiritual states, as infertile women / childless couples often experience low self-esteem and guilt.*

Paper Type: *Conceptual Research.*

Keywords: *Psycho-social factors, childlessness, medical reasons, repercussions, stigma, infertility*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Childlessness parents are increasing globally (Dilan Chauhan, et al, 2021). In middle- and high-income nations, notably those in Europe, childlessness is particularly on the rise (Kreyenfeld and Konietzka, 2017). It has become popular in recent years to attribute a sharp rise to "childlessness," yet this is by no means a new phenomenon. According to historical demography, almost 20% of women are numerous. European nations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did not have children, as stated by Michaela Kreyenfeld and Dirk Konietzka (2017). It has been demonstrated that American attitudes about childlessness are changing; nevertheless, it is also important to pinpoint it in developing countries that are

going through major social development and globalisation (Zeynep Çopur and Tanya Koropecykj, 2010;MaridaHollos, 2015).Millions of people around the world who are of reproductive age struggle with infertility. According to the data that is currently accessible, 186 million people and 48 million couples worldwide are affected by infertility. Childlessness and its links, starting with education, have been carefully researched in both developed and developing countries (Kreyenfeld and Konietzka, 2017; Florianne.C.J.etal, 2022).

2. RELATED WORKS:

Infertility is a condition of the male or female reproductive system that is described by the inability to conceive while engaging in frequent, unprotected sexual activity for at least a year. Primary infertility is the inability to conceive at all, whereas secondary infertility is the inability to conceive following a prior successful conception. More information about the various primary and secondary causes of infertility in men and women may be found in the WHO's International Classification of Diseases(Ahmad A, et al, 2013;Antonio La Marca & Elisa Mastellari , 2020).

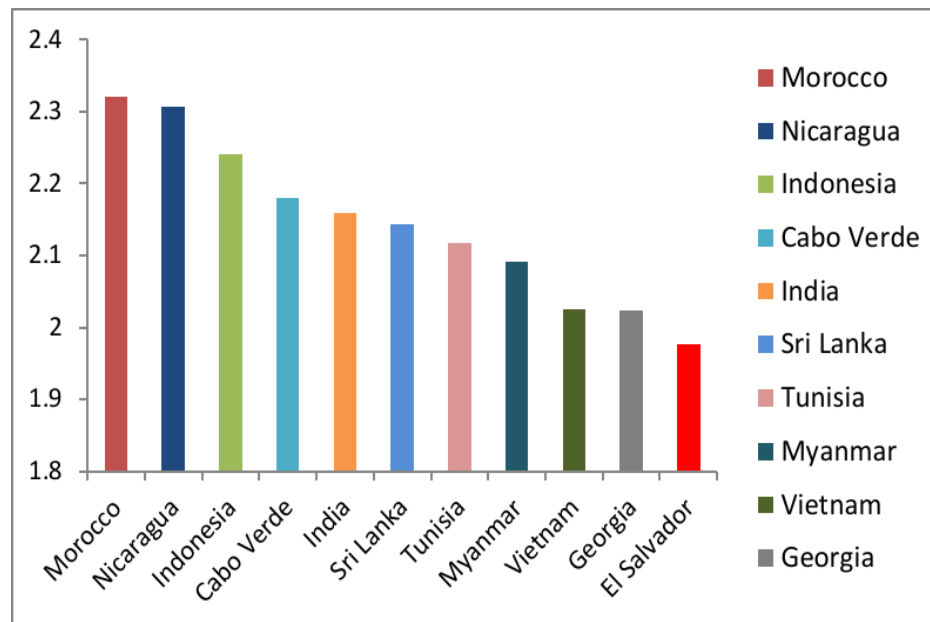


Figure1.World wide fertility statistics

Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects 2022 Online edition

Childlessness is a serious problem that has a global impact on demographics, society, and health (S. Mageswari, 2021).Today's generation lives a speedy life in the metropolitan world. Many people today are opting out of parenthood due to financial conditions and the burden of too many responsibilities on their shoulders, late marriages, few married couples who are choosing to not embrace parenthood; their feelings that the child would be a bigger responsibility are the multiple reasons for opting to be childless. So they want to stay in a childfree lifestyle (Joanne Doyle and et al, 2012).

The declining child population may result in a decline in their overall population. It has become popular in recent years to attribute a sharp rise to "childlessness," yet this is by no means a new phenomenon. According to historical demography, almost 20% of women in numerous European nations in the late

19th and early 20th centuries did not have children, as stated by Michaela Kreyenfeld and Dirk Konietzka (2017).

2.1. Definition

Childlessness is the absence of children in a person or couple. There are two types of childlessness: Voluntary and involuntary (Olga Gouni and et al., 2022).

2.2. Involuntary childlessness

Women have an inability to become pregnant physically (Evans. N et al, 2018) and sometimes a person is medically unable to bear children, whether for known or unknowable causes is called involuntary childlessness. The World Health Organisation states that, despite the absence of success guarantees, many people view fertility treatment as the answer to infertility. Childlessness can be viewed as being determined by circumstances when a person wants to have kids but the first pregnancy is delayed and, ultimately, the person is left without kids for a long time (Olga Gouni and et al., 2022). Involuntary childlessness is a problem that affects families in modern society everywhere.

2.3. Voluntary

Childlessness is a person deliberately chooses. It's his choice of a couple. Nowadays, women are having children later in life than ever before, and a record-high of nearly one in five women are barren by the time they reach menopause. Unexpectedly many women also sought medical help to find out why they had been unable to conceive. There may be concerns about the potential significance of late age at marriage among women who have never given birth. (KatjaKoppen, et al., 2021). Due to age-related fertility reduction, delaying childbearing may make it more difficult to conceive. More years spent in school have been linked to longer delays in childbirth, which increases the childless rate. (Kreyenfeld and Konietzka, 2017; Olga Gouni et al., 2022). Women who are currently married, have been married for at least five years, and have no living children Demographic aspects of infertility International (MaridaHollos, 2015).

2.4. Childlessness in India

In Indian culture, a young girl's personality is shaped by the motherly role from an early age. In our culture, celebrating puberty is fairly frequent. When a girl's reaches puberty, her family takes extra special care of her and pays close attention to her eating habits to protect her reproductive organ to get progeny (T. Karunakaran and K. Somasundaran, 2016).

India continues to lead the globe in population growth despite declining fertility. From 4.97 to 2.3, it has decreased more than 50%. From 2025 to 30 it will drop to 2.1, from 2045 to 50 to 1.86, and from 2095 to 100 to 1.78. However, the fertility replacement level is typically thought to be 2.2. The population rate will unquestionably shrink if the fertility rate falls below this mark. Infertility is currently affecting 1 in 6 couples in India, with a rate of 10 to 14 % overall and higher in urban areas. It is a major cause for concern for the government as well as for individual couples. The social and interpersonal relationships would be impacted. The results of infertility will have an impact on a variety of facets of an individual's and a country's life. Most often referred to as the replacement rate, this is the rate at which the population would remain stable. India's Hidden Infertility Struggles population is predicted to shrink when the fertility rate falls below this level. Another tale is one involving dropping birth rates and desperate

couples behind India's expanding population (K. Manimekalai, et al.,2020).

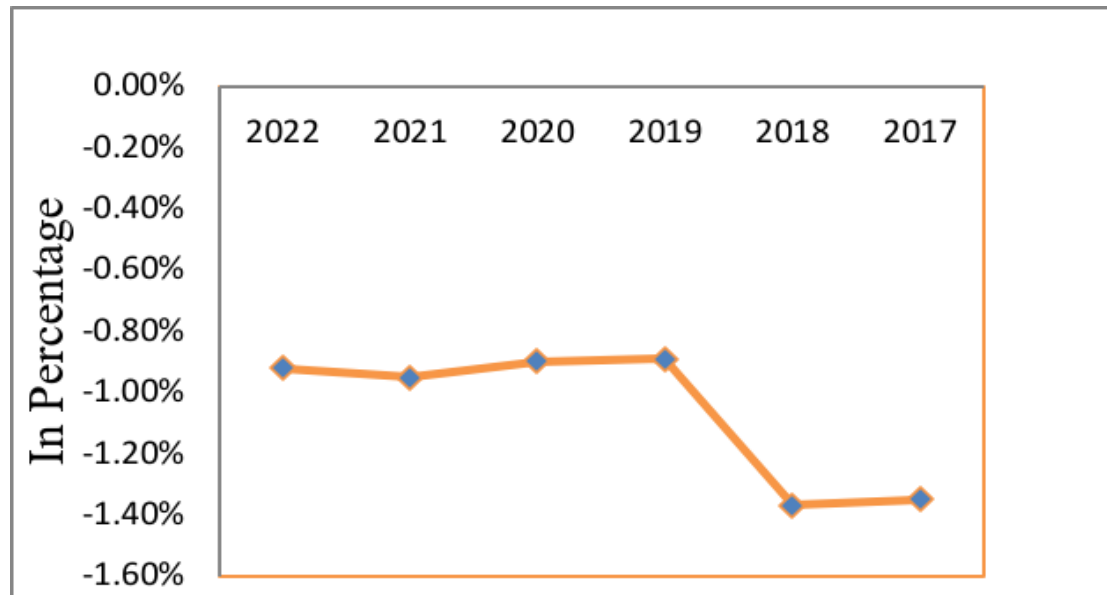


Figure 2: India-Historical fertility data in year

In India, it is customary for all marriages to result in children, primarily male children. Childlessness stems, we believe, from the complexity of the underlying processes. There is a tremendous need for a son in the patriarchal Indian society in order to maintain the family line and carry on the tradition (Thomas Baudinandand KoyelSarkar, 2021). Infertility stigma is a problem that is connected to various psychological and social issues, especially for women. The stigma is connected to a sense of secrecy and shame. The goal of the current study was to investigate the idea of infertility stigma based on the perceptions and experiences of infertile women.

2.5. Psychological perception of the childlessness

Childlessness is the inability to get pregnant after a year of unprotected sexual interaction. It influences psychological problems like low self-esteem, hopelessness, and anxiety as well as a couple's capacity to adapt to marriage. In order to compare these two factors between these two groups of women, this study aimed to ascertain the association between emotional competence and marital adjustment in childless women and women with children. (Shabir Ahmad Malik, 2021). Psychological suffering is influenced by a variety of factors, including social pressure, alleged relationship expectations, and personal goals. The couple may also perceive larger expenditures and risks as a result of the circumstance, which would lead to unhappy marriages. Grief at a lost opportunity to become a parent only serves to exacerbate these unpleasant feelings (Shara M.T, 2021). Few studies have looked at preventive interventions focusing on maternal mental health as a means of lowering adverse birth outcomes (ABOs), despite the fact that mother stress and depression have been associated to ABOs. This controlled trial looks at the effects of family foundations and Adverse Birth Outcomes (Mark E. Feinberg, 2015).

Recent intervention studies have discovered that yoga reduce the stress and sadness. It is logistically more challenging to implement a programme that focuses on couples. Treatments for depression that are

beneficial include yoga, meditation, and counselling. A person may discuss their concerns surrounding infertility, set goals, and develop relationship-improving strategies in therapy. Attending counselling together may also be beneficial because some couples feel that infertility damages their relationship (Datta J, et al., 2016; Mark E. Feinberg, et al., 2021; Zawn Villines, 2018).

2.6. Social Perception of the childlessness

Being infertile and childless out of choice prevents an individual or couple from leading fulfilled lives. This is mainly because it's possible for a couple who's been medically found to be infertile to decide to keep their childless status and contribute to the welfare of others in society. (Evans N. Nwaomah and Sikhumbuzo Dube, 2018). Among childless couples in India, women need children but they hesitate to go for infertility treatment. Many women suffer a sense of sadness and grief as a result of the loss of the opportunity to have a child due to infertility. Many conveyed feelings of ostracism due to their inability to experience parenthood due to social stigma and discrimination (D Chauhan et al, 2021; Dorcas Ofori-Budu & Vilma Hanninen, 2020). In our society, women internalize parenthood to the point where they feel unworthy of themselves if they are unable to conceive. A woman's infertility serves as her defining characteristic, therefore this is the case. To change the situation and move forward, she must exert every effort. Infertile and childless women frequently experience anxiety and fear as well as pressure from society to have children. She must put up with being socially stigmatized and going through endless therapeutic regimens. When it comes to significant spheres of social life like kinship, inheritance, and marriage, infertility is a major issue that affects those spheres and is a contributing factor in divorce. In that an overpopulated state is more concerned with overpopulation than infertility issues, it acquires a political component (Mahboubeh.T. et al., 2021).

3. OBJECTIVES:

The conceptual nature of the study is followed by a forecast based on a survey of the literature and an analysis based on postulates.

➤ This paper presents a review and analysis of the results of the psychosocial perception of infertile couples.

4. METHODOLOGY:

In order to prepare for this study, the phrases "infertility," "depression," "Beck depression inventory," and "anxiety" were searched for in the SCOPUS, PubMed, and EMBASE databases. Infertility, STAI, Spielberg, and coping mechanisms. Comparable Hungarian keywords were also used in the Matarka database. Only texts written in English or Hungarian were included. The basis for this summary was selected from 19 years of self-survey studies utilising the Spielberger Anxiety Type Inventory (STAI) and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) with at least 100 patients. Older papers were only taken into consideration if they were judged to contain important details or a definition of the topic. Since the Conflict Resolution Survey is the most often used questionnaire in standard clinical practise, it was used in studies looking at coping techniques.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Thirty-five research studies into various social and psychological effects and perception of childlessness. Some research had a sociological, based on a sizable survey, and provided quantitative information (F. Van Balen and H. M.W. Bos, 2009 ; Olga Gouni, et al, 2022). The ineffective communication, money issues, and sustained stress might all contribute to marital discontent. However, given that marital

contentment is characterized as a condition of seeing a relationship's benefits as outweighing its drawbacks, which is to suggest that their relationship may need to take other things into account, since they think their marriage has made them content and joyful. Unplanned childlessness can put a lot of psychological and social burden on a couple (Burman.B andMargolin.G, 1992). Four studies stated with a psychological perspective of childless couples (J Marriage Fam, et al., 2010;F.Van Balen and H. M.W. Bos, 2009; Olga Gouni, et al., 2022). Other researcher studied the emotional impacts of infertility can be managed in a variety of ways. It is unclear whether this psychological burden was already present before infertility or whether it was taken on as a result of infertility. Previous research reveals that the childless couple needing support from a partner itself is the best indicator of maternal and paternal depression (SeyedeBatoool and et al., 2014;Kristin L. Rooney, 2018).

5.1. Motivation behind Child bearing

According to Norbert Pasztor, (2019) study revealed that the Infertility may be present if you frequently participate in unprotected sexual activity but are unable to conceive within a year. After six months, the diagnosis of infertility can be made if the woman is older than 35. According to the reports states that, between 8 and 15% of couples who are of reproductive age experience difficulty getting pregnant. An interesting population to study when examining reasons for wanting children is infertile men and women. Healthy spouses may not be aware of these motivations, whereas infertile patients show signs of unmet desire. Age, societal and cultural expectations, relationship status the desire for equality, religion, and economic considerations are some of the factors that influence whether a woman decides to have children.

5.2. Coping strategies

A coping strategy can be defined as any cognitive or behavioural effort made by the person to deal with an external or internal influence that is perceived to overwhelm or otherwise impair current personal resources (Norbert Pasztor and et al, 2019).The coping mechanism is one of the major factors that regulate this transaction under challenging adoption settings, according to the transactional perspective, which holds that behaviour is the results of a relationship between a person and their surroundings.Since infertility is linked to a profound loss experience, it might be thought of as a challenging position to adapt to. Loss because the infertile couple forfeits the satisfaction of becoming parents, the delight of receiving praise from others, and the anticipation of a child. Szigeti J and Konkoly B (2012) conducted research on 1169 women and 1081 men who were all struggling with infertility. According to their research, meaning-based, passive avoidance, active avoidance, and aggressive confrontation were found to be the four core elements. A situation that suggests childlessness will never be presented to someone with an active avoidance personality type. Actively confronting individuals express their emotions, seek support, and ask their peers for advice. Last but not least, the meaning-based individual seeks out the cause and significance of infertility, offering a positive perspective on what has happened. The passive-avoidant type watches and waits for things to change. Regardless of gender, their research has demonstrated that the active-avoidance personality is linked to higher intrapersonal and interpersonal suffering. Actively confronting individuals who express their emotions primarily burden their partners, and utilizing such a coping strategy is associated with a higher level of relationship misery. Online groups are typically beneficial for patients who engage in active confrontation. Patients can share their experiences and receive assistance from these networks, which also offer empathy (AbdulazizAflakseir, et al., 2013;Norbert Pasztor, et al., 2019).

5.3. Psychological depression and anxiety

According to Shara May T (2021) research study stated involuntary childlessness has a greater psychological impact on women. Because they would carry the child during pregnancy, it is simpler for everyone to assume that infertility is a woman's issue, which plays a significant role in this. The psychological issue could be brought on by their husbands and families as well as the environment. According to research, Psychological differences are a feedback response to the stress of this crisis scenario during involuntary childlessness. This pain can be divided into intrapersonal and interpersonal components (Greil A.L, et al., 2010). In the literature, the expressions of the intrapersonal components that receive the greatest attention are depression, anxiety, and negative self-evaluation. Relationship issues, unfulfilled sexuality, or perhaps a decrease in the frequency of sex can be interpersonal repercussions.

5.4. Social effects and cultural of childlessness

A few studies were sociological in character. Some papers began with a limited perspective and covered only specific aspects of childlessness, like marital relationship problems. Nearly all stories highlight community effects. The highest intensity of community impacts (isolation, rejection, and exclusion) is indicated. In 14 complaints, scorn and verbal abuse are also reported, along with social failure, status loss, and lack of respect (F.vanBalén and H. M. W. Bos, 2009). There aren't many comparative, cross- cultural studies in the literature about the psychological elements of infertility. In most societies, having children is intimately associated with feminine and unquestionably improves the quality of life for males (Dyer S and et al, 2008). Regardless of the cultural setting, infertile women experience similar things including anxiety, despair, stigmatization, and self-blame. However, having children has become a personal choice in developed nations due to the availability of safe contraceptive options. Because families are smaller, infertility continues to be mostly a private matter. In contrast, extended families and close- knit communities are more common in developing nations (Batool S.S, 2016; M.C.Donnej, 2012). The studies show that Indians do not choose not to have children as frequently as people in western countries. However, due to financial independence and work pressure in the present, there is a chance that they may not have children as a result of a late marriage in India.

6. CONCLUSION:

Increasing evidence points that as a way to improve a person's chances of conception as well as their physical, mental, social, and spiritual health. The psychological effects of infertility on both men and women require more study. According to the study, infertile women had lower psychological health than their fertile counterparts. We can surmise that social bonds and gender-specific coping mechanisms account for the research' underestimation of the psychological burden of male infertility. The causes of the societal unrest are several. Childlessness has a range of social, psychological, and emotional repercussions for childless couples. Because of their infertility, childless women have low self-esteem. It is common to describe them as parched, hollow, empty, barren, or wasted. The majority of these childless women, according to the study, did not distinguish between their failing bodies and their failing personalities. In the same way that studies of childless women in low-income communities have revealed emotions of guilt accompanying misery, they appear to view childlessness as a generic role failure rather than just a medical failing.

7. RECOMENDATION:

It is crucial to take this into consideration, and also advise married couples to get counselling in order to maintain society's health.

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