

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF INFERTILITY

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Introduction:

Parenthood is one of the precious transitions in the couple's life, for both men and women. Becoming a parent is considered to be one of the most exciting times which gives the new adventure with great expectations about life.¹ However few parents are unable to experience this joy due to certain complication. Various research suggested that Parents who are struggling to conceive suffer from the depression, anxiety, loss of anger control, mainly social isolation seen in the women.² Couple who learns they are infertile, often experiences the distressing emotions.³ Relationships also suffers due to exiting stigmatization in the society, for instance women who is unable to conceive are not allowed to be participated on the several types of occasions.⁴ Reproduction and Lineage are most important instinct of all humans and infertility causes the situation where situational and complex crisis occur which is Psychologically threatening, emotionally stressful, Financially challenging, and physically painful due to expensive diagnostic as well as treatment modalities.⁵

Prevalence of infertility in India: Infertility affects up to 15% of reproductive-aged couples worldwide, according to the report of WHO it is estimated that, prevalence of primary infertility in India ranges between 3.9% to 16.8%. Around 60 to 80 million couples currently suffer from infertility through the globe.⁶

Psychological complications due to infertility: The causal role of psychological disturbances in the development of infertility is still a matter of debate, long term inability to conceive can stimulate feeling of loss, coping with infertility and multitude of medical decision may arouse great emotional disturbance for the couples or individuals.⁷ Psychological symptoms includes loss of interest in usual activities, depression, strained interpersonal relationship with partner, family and friends, difficulty in thinking or making proper decision, high level of anxiety, diminished ability to complete the task, changes in sleep pattern, changes in appetite,

increased use of alcohol or drugs, social isolation, thought of suicide, persistent feeling of guilt, Persistent feeling of anger⁸

Reviews regarding psychological complications of infertility:

CicekHocaoglu has conducted descriptive study on psychological impact of infertility among couples and result depicted that, infertile couple exposed to tremendous social pressure and they tend to hide this matter.⁹

Krl Krupp conducted survey on prevalence & correlations of stress with primary infertility among young women which shows positive correlation of stress with infertility and suggested that family support plays important role in psychological wellbeing.¹⁰

Reproductive psychiatry resource and information centre publish article on mental stress and infertility which gives information that, depression could directly affect infertility in the matter of severity as it elevated prolactin levels which further cause the disruption of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, and thyroid dysfunction.¹¹

Windy Ezzell, conducted study on impact of infertility of women's health which resulted that, the psychological impact of infertility presents various challenges and variety of clinical situations. The mental health professional's role within the multidisciplinary team of providers treating patients with infertility is ever growing and changing.¹²

In a cross-sectional study of infertile patients, investigators found that, for women, the most important factors related to psychological distress were perceived personal control, optimism that they would eventually have a child.¹³

Similar to research on women, the infertility experience appears to impact men in social and personal ways. In particular, involuntary childlessness increases social and physical stress in men. Some men also report increased sexual stress and decreased sexual satisfaction¹⁴

The infertile couple have chances of losing self-esteem by repeatedly trying to achieve a desired goal of having a baby and getting failure in it, this challenge initiating the feeling of losing their self-esteem. The problem can be significantly worsening, if the individual has been highly successful in other aspects of life but not able to develop the coping skills to deal with failure and loss.¹⁴

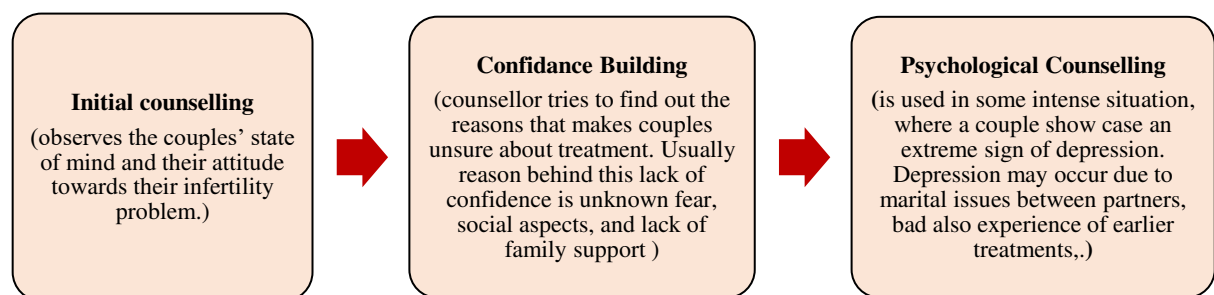
Psychological Services for Infertile Couple:

Infertility has a severe consequence on mental health of both male and female, it needs urgent attention and psychological counselling, first and foremost point is to meet the physician in order to discuss the choice of treatment. The information-giving, counselling and guidance of the infertile couple can be provided in the general or infertile clinic. It needs the collaborative approach, which consist of medically orientated members such as nurses, doctors, biologists, embryologists and lab technicians, and psychosocially orientated members such as Psychologist and counsellors.¹¹

Most programs providing assisted reproductive technologies have a mental health care professional such as a psychologist or social worker, The Mental Health Professional Group (MHPG) of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) has outlined qualifications for mental health professionals providing counselling service for infertile couple.¹⁵

Understanding view point of couples and making the partners to understand themselves and their expectations and ambitions throughout the treatment journey. Providing assistance to couples to manage their own emotional situations that may occurs in any stage of treatment.¹⁶

Counselling has to be done in sequence as follows:



Phycological services in infertile couple are the matter of concern which need to be focus However, Fertility treatment like Invitro Fertilization with appropriate Counselling and guidance has found effective according to various database reviews. Through counselling, couples will be able to see both positive and negative sides of pregnancy and birth.

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