

## 'Woman with Evil Eyes': Exploring the Lives and Struggles of Infertile Couples through the Community Lens

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### Abstract

**Background:** In developing countries like Ethiopia, infertile couples are often stigmatized and stereotyped due to their childlessness status. Thus, this study examines infertile couples' struggles through the community lens. **Methods and Materials:** This qualitative study uses content analysis. Eight figurative community members with knowledge and relevant information about the topic were selected carefully with maximum variation to participate in this study: three religious leaders from three religions, two marriage counsellors, an elderly woman, a family social worker, and a clinical nurse from the infertility medication hospital. In-depth unstructured interviews were employed to gather data. **Findings:** The main concepts from data were classified into one theme, "community views and understandings infertile couples lives," and two main categories, "cultural contexts of infertility and its issues" (with 3 subcategories) and "challenges of infertile couples" (with 4 subcategories). **Conclusions:** Infertile couples face social and economic challenges, and community education to dispel infertility misconceptions and policy changes for comprehensive support services are needed to ensure their well-being and social resilience.

**Key Words:** Infertility, Community, Views, Lives, Challenges, Culture Ethiopia

### Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers a couple infertile if the woman has not conceived after 24 months of regular, unprotected intercourse (WHO, 2018).

In Africa, where producing children is the main goal of marriage, infertility can lead to separation, polygamy, and divorce, according to Webber (2001). On the contrary, a research discovered that in some European nations like Belgium and Austria, 14% and 10% of men, respectively, do not want children; In contrast, in Slovenia and Latvia, this percentage drops to less than 1% for both sexes (Hikim, 2003).

The very complicated nature of infertility is largely linked to the societal significance of reproduction and the predominant social norms requiring people to reproduce (Dyer, Abrahams, Hoffman & van der, 2002; Inhorn, 2003; McDonald Evens, 2004; Riessmann, 2000, 2002). In Ethiopia, children are considered precious assets, and having a large number of children is seen as a symbol of higher status in society. For this reason, the role of fertility in the Ethiopian context is significant (Deribe, Anberbir, Regassa, Belachew&Biadgilign, 2007).

Regarding the psychosocial effects of infertility on marriages, there is compelling evidence that infertility contributes to heightened marital instability (Dyer, 2002). According to Larsen, Obono, and Whitehouse (2009), in most African cultures, the way women are treated, their self-esteem, and their understanding of womanhood are closely tied to their role as mothers. Research conducted by Upkong (2006) indicates that infertile couples experience a higher prevalence of domestic violence and divorce compared to those in fertile marriages.

Various studies have shown that infertile individuals are often stigmatised through verbal abuse and social exclusion, for instance by being denied participation in conversations (Dyer et al., 2005; Flederjohann, 2012) or access to events such as deliveries or rituals (Dyer et al. 2002; Gerrits1997; Riessman, 2002).

Many societies treat infertility as a medical issue and ignore its social implications (Hasanpoor, Simba, Vedadhir, Azin&Amiri, 2019). On the other hand, some research found that most poor nations' populations cannot afford infertility treatment due to a shortage of or high cost of new reproductive technology (Van Balen&Gerrits, 2001; Nachtigall, 2006).

Fikrewold, Daniel, and Biruk (2010) stated that the scarcity of studies on infertility in Ethiopia can be partially attributed to researchers' greater focus on fertility, which is assumed to be the primary priority for population research in Ethiopia. Consequently, infertility has been perceived as a less serious problem. This study is an apparent response to this existing gap. Furthermore, examining the perspectives of community members on the lives of infertile couples can serve as a prerequisite for recognizing its impact on the couples' lives and for designing more effective intervention strategies at the community level. Hence, this qualitative study seeks to offer an in-depth understanding of the experiences and struggles faced by infertile couples from community perspectives.

## Methods

The aim of this study was to explore the community views and understandings of infertile couple's lives. Hence, eight figurative individuals from the community members were included in this study. Participants were selected through purposive sampling method with maximum variation, considering different types of age, religion, profession, social position and roles within the community. In-depth interviews were employed in gathering data about the larger communities' views, opinions, ideas, and beliefs about the problem of infertility under investigation. Key informant in-depth interviews are qualitative in-depth interviews with people who know what is going on in the community. The purpose is to understand the views and beliefs of community residents on a particular issue and to get information about the pressing issues from people with diverse backgrounds and opinions and be able to ask in-depth and probing questions (UCLA, 2016). To assess the views and understandings of infertile couples' lives and the challenges they are facing in the community level and to obtain more insightful information on the problem under study in general, data was gathered from different members of the community such as elder, religious leaders, marriage counsellors, a social worker and a health professional. It is assumed that these community experts, with their particular knowledge and understanding, can provide insight on the nature of problem under the study particularly on the community views and understandings of infertility issues and its implication on couple's lives. All of the religious leaders from three religious organizations [Orthodox, Protestant & Muslim] who took part in this study were males. Traditionally all those religious leaders were working in family matters with their prospective religious organizations in most cases. Two of the other marriage counsellors who were key informants for this study were trained in the area and with many years of experiences in marriage counselling. However, they were only working in one of the religious organization and were only offering services to those specific religious groups in connection with the court to address various marital issues including divorce matters. To obtain more comprehensive information on the aspects of infertility and infertile couple's lives the researcher also interviewed two professionals who were working closely with infertile couples. One was a male clinical nurse working at Specialized Gynaecology and Maternal Care Clinic and the family social worker who was working in Hossana Town First Instance Court. Interview has also been conducted with an elder woman who is head of local Iddir (Self-help institution) and has contacts with various people and well aware of the social issues of families in the community level. The duration of the interviews ranges from 50 minutes to 2 hrs. The data collection took place in August- September, 2022. Informed

consent was guaranteed in this study. The gathered data was analysed using content analysis.

### Findings

The findings were obtained by analysing the data obtained from in-depth interview with participants. Community views and understandings of infertile couple's lives were identified analysing interview data in two main categories: cultural contexts of infertility and its related issues (with 3 subcategories); and challenges of infertile couples (with four subcategories). The categories and subcategories are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: The main categories, and subcategories, of community views and understandings of infertile couples**

Main categories	Sub categories
Religious perspectives and infertility  Family pressure, in-laws interference and public concern  Woman with evil eyes	Cultural contexts of infertility and its related issues
Marital conflict and divorce  Issues of social gatherings and isolation among infertile couples  Services provided to infertile couples and observed gaps  Affordability and accessibility infertility treatments	Challenges of infertile couples

## **Cultural contexts of infertility and its related problems on the lives of infertile couples**

According to the findings this study the cultural expectation for couples to conceive a child quickly after marriage has a major impact on their experience of marriage with infertility. Majority of the participants indicated that society does not tacitly permit infertile couples to live their lives without potential interferences.

A social worker stated, “infertility is very difficult and exhausting experience for couples in society, as it is the expectation of the community and dictation of our culture for couples to be called a couple and they must have a child after getting married.” Another participant, a priest, also emphasized the importance of giving birth to children in any type of marriage.

The female marriage counsellor stated that in the past, it was believed that if a couple was unable to have a child, the problem was with the wife. She stated, “if couples were infertile, they would send the wife away from her marriage after tying her up with grass and putting butter on her head.”

According to another participant, a pastor, culture of this community has a great impact on wellbeing of married couples. From his observations, “in a marriage, let alone not being able to give birth, a woman would be highly stigmatized if she only gives birth to baby girls.”

Similar to the above participant, a Muslim participant indicated that infertility undermines couples' love. Regarding the cultural contexts, he argued that human needs are endless. “Those couples who have only girls are eager to have boys, those who have boys want to add girls, and those who have nothing at all would be much stressed,” he explained.

Concerning the cultural aspects surrounding the marriage and divorce issues of infertile couples, an elderly woman, established that if such couples decide to divorce, their marriage certificates will be officially torn apart in the presence of the family elder. During a divorce, She said, “a butter scrub is applied on both couple heads, symbolizing a blessing for infertile couples to conceive in their future marriage.”

Another participant, a nurse, described about the distinct behaviours of pregnant and infertile couples seeking medical treatments at the clinic. He further explained about this:

When pregnant and infertile couples come to the clinic, I noticed, pregnant couples have smiley face. On the other hand, infertile couples have fears and embarrassments even to speak loud. As medical practitioners, we've seen infertile couple's deep despair and fear over their infertility issues.

### Religious perspectives and infertility

Participants discussed their understandings of infertility in relation to their religious perspectives. Participants from Christianity orientation assert that there exists a biblical principle of procreation, which mandates, “for a man to multiply” Nevertheless, there are also instances in the bible where couples have experienced infertility. Regarding this a priest stated, “truly, children are gifts from God. Gifts depend on the giver's will. Infertile couples like Abraham, Sara, and Hana are mentioned in the Bible.”

Regarding the causes for infertility, the male marriage counsellor claimed that it might be God's plan for couples to be infertile. Here are his reasons:

God may give a child to a couple and take away his glory, or forbid a child and reveal his glory. In the Bible, there is a scripture that indicates following Hannah's intense Prayer, God gave her a son named Samuel. Elisabeth, Rachel, and Sarah who were infertile eventually experienced the joy of childbirth.

According to a Muslim participant, infertility is usually considered natural in a Muslim religion. His explanation is as follows:

The Holy Koran states that Allah offers a boy for whom he wants, likewise gives a girl as he desires, he also blesses couples with offspring of both genders, and may even render individuals infertile if it aligns with His divine plan. No matter his efforts, a man cannot have a child without Allah's approval.

The other participant, pastor, said God designed marriage to maintain wellbeing of mankind, as evidenced by the statement “It is not good for man to be alone.” He added, “since children are considered a divine blessing. Consequently, society should not hold the couple accountable or criticize them for not having children.”

A female marriage counsellor emphasised away from medical evidences and scientific explanations, couples ought to consider that if God wills, a woman over 90 can conceive and gives birth. “However, in our community, married couples are not even encouraged to delay having a child,” said this participant.

The relationship between sin and infertility has been debated by two informants. Male marriage counsellors claimed that sin may cause infertility. He justified, “if a young girl has multiple partners and abortions, she could become childless in her subsequent marriage, if she doesn't repent before God. The Bible says sinners will suffer.”

Unlike the above participant, a Muslim informant explicitly stated, “there is no connection between infertility and sin. According to the Quran, couples' fertility depends exclusively on Allah's compassion and divine purpose, not sin.”

### **Family pressure, in-laws interference and public concern**

Most of the participants of this study reported that, due to cultural expectations;infertile couples typically receive unpleasant comments and criticism for their childless marriage.The participants indicated that husband's siblings, mother-in-law, and close relatives blame female spouses mainly for couple's infertility.

One of the informants, a priest stated thatcouples are expected to conceive immediately after marriage. He said, “when couples fail to achieve these expectations, husband relatives often criticize them.”

Similarly another participant, a pastor also confirmed that it is presumed obligations for couples to have a child. Women's tummies are publicly checked one or two years following marriage in anticipation of pregnancy. He said, “If they stay without a child for more than two years, things will become difficult for infertile couples due to a family and public pressure.”

Some of the participants also indicated that in a marriage, in the prevailing societal context, especially in the specific location of the study, infertility issues among couples were predominantly attributed to women. if couples are infertile, even if the infertility problem is with a male partner, in-laws will try to manipulate and label the wife negatively. One participant said,

The husband is told by his family, ‘you got married to the mule’, and ‘You have married a barren woman who cannot bear us a child.’ ‘She would not fit into our family.’ When a man is even infertile, his family often trashes his wife and advises him to divorce and begin a fresh chapter in his life.

A Muslim participant highlighted that in cases where a woman exclusively gives birth to female children, her husband and family subject her to criticism, even in the absence of infertility. He remarked, “traditional misconceptions affected infertile couples emotions negatively.” Regarding family interferences, this participant stated:

The husband's family responds distinctively to the woman. They also nagged the wife by calling her ‘Mesena’—an ‘old cow’ that only produces manure. The husband is regularly insulted for feeding a non-reproducing ox named "Senga."

According to the female marriage counsellor also, in cases of infertility, the husband's relatives may derogatorily refer to the wife as 'a Mule' and question the husband about the wife's value if she cannot bear children. They encourage the husband to engage in extramarital affairs.

Similarly, an elderly woman stated that when couples are unable to conceive, the husband's family would encourage their son to bear a child on his own, secretly, outside of the marriage. Upon discovering that her spouse has fathered a child outside



of their marriage, an infertile wife would experience profound distress, leading to further strain in their relationship. Eventually, this type of marital union will result in divorce. An elderly woman said that female infertility leads to insults, shame, and familial neglect. She explained, “as her husband's relatives may mistreat and discriminate against her, a childless woman's suffering is worse.”

According to social worker, in cases when infertility arises from the husband's side, the husband's family will falsely attribute the issue to the wife. The couples split due to this bias. She also said, “Infertility after marriage can cause confusion and instability for the wife, largely due to societal and familial expectations.” However, Male marriage counsellor stated that the community sympathizes with infertile couples. “Some may show their petty with facial expressions and lip suction,” he said.

Contrary to the above the above participant, a nurse by profession stated that there is awareness problem on the community side regarding infertility. “This awareness problem is affecting infertile couple's lives negatively” He mentioned.

### **Woman with evil eyes**

The majority of the participants in this study reported that infertility had an impact on both couples, with female spouses being most affected.

According to the findings, couples wanted to delay having children after marriage due to infertility or to enjoy time without children, women who couldn't conceive faced criticism and rejection from their husband's family. An elderly participant explained:

Unfortunately, when such couples are infertile, people say things like ‘our unfortunate son brings the very old woman to the family’ and condemn the wife as too aged. Even if the husband is infertile and the woman is fertile, she must carry all the guilt.

Regarding the issues of social approval, one participant mentioned:

Neighbours may occasionally label an infertile woman as a ‘woman with evil eyes’ and may even complain about why she looks at their children. They may also indirectly insult the infertile woman by using cruel words.

Another key informant, a priest also indicated that infertile wives are more likely to receive criticism. He explained, “the in-laws would insult the woman if she failed to exhibit signs of pregnancy in the sequential months after their wedding.”

A family social worker who is working in the court indicated that even after their cases being seen in the court, infertile women are eager to reconcile with their spouses to



save their marriages. She said, “Instead of divorcing, women ask the court to refer their cases to senior family members to convince their husband to reconsider.”

Regarding the in-laws pressure and women’s expressions of their infertility problems in the court, the social worker also added:

Infertile women receive harsh, anxiety-inducing comments. The husband's family thinks a woman can physically create a child with her own hands. During divorce proceedings, I see women venting their emotions through tears.

Female marriage counsellor further noted that a childless woman was once called 'a Mule' and compared to 'manure'. “There is a little adjustment with such backward views at present however; fertility is typically seen as a female issue” She said.

### **Challenges of infertile couples**

#### **Marital conflict and divorce issues among infertile couples**

The majority of key informants reported that infertile couples divorcing as a result of infertility itself and family pressure.

A Muslim participant, a Sharia Court judge, said both couples initiates divorce due to infertility. He explained:

Sometimes, if the man has infertility, the wife may wonder, ‘What benefits would I get? Except serving my husband’ the wife filed for divorce. Male partners often actively initiate divorce if the wife is infertile. There are cases which bounced with reconciliation at a time and ended in divorce later.

Participants stated that relatives force infertile couples to divorce and start again. Infertile couples' marital dissatisfaction and separation are caused by both families' involvement.

Regarding family reactions of the infertile couple’s infertility diagnosis result reports, she stated:

After infertile couples reveal their partner's specific reproductive issues, their family, especially the husbands, offer negative advice. If her husband cannot conceive, the wife's family will also encourage her to divorce, remarry, and have children.

one of the participant, an elderly woman also added, “if couples are infertile, some members of the community including the couples’ family would propose, for couples to split-up and pursue other marriages to improve their chances of having children.” On the other hand, “from my observation, in infertile marriage, mostly male are the initiator of divorce. Female are much stressed one” said the social worker.

Regarding divorce in relation of divorce in the community, a male marriage counsellor also stated:

Family involvement is often the main reason infertile couples divorce. There have been instances where infertile couples, who had filed for divorce and had a court record, were able to reconcile in a religious setting and subsequently live together harmoniously.

### **Issues of social gatherings and isolation among infertile couples**

Some of the participants reported that infertile couples were not stigmatized in the community based on their status of childlessness. Nevertheless, they specified that certain rituals had a significant impact on the emotional well-being of infertile couples, specifically the wives. An elderly woman stated that when invited to social gatherings, infertile women would not be happy to attend it. Her explanations are presented as follow:

Within our culture, when a woman delivers birth, a ceremonial event known as the 'Genfo' (Porridge) takes place. During this event, married women from the surrounding area come together to commemorate the arrival of the infant and partake in a communal meal served in a large dish. Upon completing the meal, the women would place the serving dish on the head of one of the participants in the ceremony. They would then declare their wish to have a kid the following year and celebrate at her house. A woman's infertility may make her feel uneasy about participating in such rituals.

Similarly, the priest also stated that from his observations, infertile couples particularly women isolate themselves from social activities due to the pressures that come from families and community members.

According to a male marriage counsellor, currently, infertile couples are not excluded from community participation. However he stated that fertile couples are hesitant to invite infertile spouses to their children's birthday parties. The rationale he provided:

They do not despise infertile couples, but they sympathize with infertile couples. Even when invited, infertile couples may choose to cancel or fail to attend, citing various reasons. When both fertile and infertile couples reside in the same compound, fertile couples feel uncomfortable and stressed when infertile spouses hug and kiss their children.

Concerning the social isolations, a family social worker also described, "Infertile couples also develop habits of rejecting birth day invitations and other social

gatherings due to their infertility problems and other significant prejudicial comments.”

On the other hand, a female marriage counsellor expressed that the level of social engagement and acceptance depends on infertile couple's personality and understandings. Her explanations are as follows:

There are some infertile couples who are very sociable even better than fertile couples. Even though we can't see their inner hearts and how they feel about their problems. There are also exceptional couples who consider their infertility as minor problems.

### **Services provided to infertile couples and observed gaps in the area**

According to the nurse, that majority of infertile couples around 90% of the couples followed up their medications till the end. From majority of the couples with infertility problems, women were more affected. He testified, “Based on the statistics of the clinic and from my day- to -day observation, most of the cases with the infertility problems are women but there are also infertile men who are following their medications in this clinic.”

The Nurse also identified that there is a huge gap regarding the psychotherapy service deliveries to infertile couples in Hosanna town in general. He explained:

Infertile couples receive inadequate psychosocial support from family, friends, and neighbours. Infertile individuals prioritized infertility treatments over other forms of therapies. Similarly, as health care professionals, we focus on the administration of infertility medical treatments while neglecting the vital role of psychotherapy.

The priest stated that he provides services to infertile couples by offering prayers and blessings when they seek assistance at the church. He also added:

I will also comfort them with the word of God that they should be faithful to God and to one another. I advise them not to rush toward divorce, just listening to the negative advice of their parents.

Regarding psychotherapy and counselling services to infertile couples in Hosanna town, the social worker described, “There is not any health centre in particular which provides psychotherapy or counselling services for infertile couples with psychological and social problems.”

According to both marriage counsellors' accounts, they informally followed up those infertile couples, supported them with counselling and prayers and visited regularly and comforted them. The male counsellor stated, “as marriage counsellors within our office, we do offer some counselling and psychosocial support to infertile couples.”

Concerning those couples who come for counselling and prayer, female marriage counsellor stated that only very few infertile couples come to church in seeking out counselling regarding their infertility problems and majority of infertile couples prefer keeping their infertility problems for themselves. She also added:

There is also a shortage of experts with counselling skills and specialized knowledge in the area. During Sunday services, we remind the audience that anyone with marital issues can come to our office for counselling. Unfortunately, couples with infertility issues are not interested in our counselling services.

### **Affordability and accessibility issues of infertility treatments**

In this study majority of the participants reported that infertile couples faced challenges with infertility treatments in terms of accessibility and affordability.

According to the nurse there are infertile cases who tried their best to cover their infertility medications costs till the end but who stopped in the middle due to financial problems. Regarding the accessibility and affordability issues of infertility treatments, he added:

Patient complaints included difficulty of paying for infertility treatments. Even though the procedures were costly, they desired medication because they wanted to have children. They casually say they stopped or missed treatment because of shortage of money.

Another participant, an elderly woman also stated that infertile couples struggle to cover their infertility treatments. She argued, “those medications are just for the wealthy and rich people not for the poor ones.” She further explained:

I've also observed lower-class infertile couples who desperately wanted to have babies. They sold their assets and homes to pay for infertility treatment. Despite their sacrifices, seeing infertile couples who couldn't make it with either having a baby or their money is sad.

On the other hand female marriage counsellor stated that some infertility problems can be fixed and treated easily, that she witnessed infertile couples who went to a nearby referral hospital and had their own child. “However, I also know infertile couples who sold their house and other stuff to have medications, who couldn't make having a child instead been exposed to extra marital and economic problems” she said.

According a male marriage counsellor, there were infertile couples struggled and made so many sacrifices to have own child. He stated:

However, these successes also depended on infertile couples' financial capabilities because the medication is expensive. Wives usually pressure their

men to sell their assets, including their home, and take infertility medication. Even if the husband agrees, it may fail, finally leading to divorce.

A Muslim judge and sheik also explained:

For example, I know infertile couples who went to India for medication which was not successful. After coming back to home country, they went to different private hospitals but still failed. The question here is that how many infertile Ethiopian couples would afford and have such a kind of medications to fulfil their dreams of having kids.

Similarly a priest also stated that there were wealthy infertile couples who went abroad to have medical treatments for their infertility problems. However, the success of their medication was most of the time fifty-fifty. He also said, “on top of this this, infertility medication requires high amount of money which is impossible to be covered by those infertile couples with low socioeconomic backgrounds.” Regarding the infertile couples medication challengesthe social worker also argued, “Infertile couples complain how the physicians gave them false hope that they would conceive and have a baby , when the medication doesn’t work, couples are left with frustration and disappointments that result in divorce too in some cases.”

### Discussions

The study explored the lives and struggles infertile couple’s through the community lens in Hosanna Town. The findings of this study indicate that religion is an important component in the way that the phenomenon of infertility is constructed. As a result, the majority of participants were more likely to talk about infertility in light of their religious beliefs and spirituality.

As the findings indicated the psychosocial challenges faced by infertile couples were well understood by the community members. Based on the findings, infertile couples had experienced different challenges at the community level. Findings from the key informants’ showed that once couples got married, the larger community, including family members expected couple to procreate soon. When this expectation fails, couples faced different challenges, such as family criticisms, parental interferences and pressures due to the misconceptions concerning the infertility and infertile marriage.

The findings of this study showed that there was no separate centre which provides psychotherapy and counselling services to infertile couples except those informal spiritual oriented counselling services provided by religious organizations and spiritual preachers. In this regard, ignoring the psychosocial needs of infertile couples, health professionals were also more concerned with delivery of infertility treatment and psychotherapy was not part of infertility medication. Furthermore, findings from the participants indicated that infertility treatment services were not equally

accessible and affordable to all classes of infertile couples in the study settings. Similarly, other studies also indicated that for most developing countries, a large majority of the population cannot afford infertility treatment given that new reproductive technologies are either unavailable or very costly (Van Balen & Gerrits, 2001; Nachtigall, 2006).

The findings of this study shows that wives in infertile marriage were labelled with different degrading names such as “Mule”, “an ox only with dung” to indicate that infertile women were worthless to be called a wife without giving birth to a child. Moreover, infertile women are also considered as having harmful impact on children who are born by fertile couples and they are labelled as ‘women with evil eyes.’ Due to this, it was reported by key informants that infertile women would isolate themselves from various social gatherings such as birth day celebrations and baby showers because of certain practices and traditional expectations.

Hollos, Larsen, Obono, and Whitehouse (2009) stated that in the majority of African communities also, women’s treatment in the community, their self-respect, and understanding of womanhood depend on motherhood. The same way, the findings in this study also revealed that, whether the infertility problems were with the husband or wife, womanhood identity constructions in the larger public forced women to be held accountable for the infertility problems. This in turn had an impact in their mental wellbeing. Moreover, if the husbands are even with the infertility problem, the infertility problems also are directly associated with the woman and husbands are insisted by their family members to have affairs with other woman secretly, and have children of their own while keeping their infertile wives at home. The findings from the key informants indicated that due to this problems in most cases, infertile couple’s marriages end in divorce.

### **Implication**

According to the findings, infertile couples face marital interferences, blames and accusations and undignified labelling from families and community members due to their infertility. Thus to change this cultural prospects, by increasing awareness, marriage counsellors, social psychologists and healthcare professionals can better support infertile couples and reduce the challenges associated with infertility.

Policymakers can use the findings to inform the development of policies that address the financial burden of infertility treatments and promote equitable access to healthcare services. Social relationships, such as relations with friends, family, and medical professionals, can also be impacted by infertility. Future studies may also include infertile couple’s families particularly in-laws perspectives and friends to see the impact of infertility on these relationships

## Limitation

This work is a part of the first author's doctoral dissertation. Originally, the purpose of this study was to confirm and strengthen the dissertation data obtained from selected infertile couples by cross-checking and triangulation. A limitation of this study is the absence of perspectives and understandings of infertility from other sources, such as families and significant others, notably the in-laws. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the findings may not be applicable to all members of the community. However, measures have been taken to ensure diversity among the participants in terms of gender, age, religious affiliation, profession, and proximity to working with infertile couples. This was done to include several perspectives and insights regarding infertile couples' lives and struggles.

## Conclusion

Working nearer to infertile couples, the participants had vast understandings about infertile couples' lives and challenges they were facing in the infertility journey. Findings have demonstrated that a lot of misconceptions and myths are prevalent in the society. Consequently, infertile couples have faced enormous psychosocial problems both in their marriage and at the community level. Moreover, Be it staying together without child or divorced due to infertility, in infertility journey, women were highly the victims and the most distressed ones as compared to their male partners.

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