



Perceived barriers for child-adoption among subfertile Sri Lankan women: A qualitative study



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Introduction

In Sri Lankan society childbirth is an expectation of marriage. With reported 15% prevalence, subfertility has become a public health concern subjecting couples to psychological and social stigma.

Though adoption meets the interests of both subfertile couples and orphaned children, social misconceptions and lack of awareness encumbers its practice.

This phenomenological study was conducted to gain an insight in to perceived barriers for child adoption among subfertile women in Sri Lankan society.

Materials and methods

This study was conducted among subfertile women (N=24) attending the gynecology clinic at North Colombo Teaching Hospital, Sri Lanka.

Participants were purposively recruited and data was collected using indepth telephone interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Data were collected between January 2020 to April 2021.

Results

Statements and phrases were extracted from transcribed interview recordings and the meanings were organized into themes and subthemes. (P indicates the participant number)

Positive attitude towards child adoption

Feeling complete and fulfilled

“This life without a child is really boring. I'm very stressed. If a little baby comes into our lonely lives, I will be able to spend time with him/her, and have a different life.”(P20)

Same as having a biological child

“I would take care of the child as if he/she was born to me. I would not consider that he's/she's someone else's. I will love him/her no less than my own child” (P21)

Belonging - Opportunity for abandoned or under-privileged children to find family – for parents and children to connect and make up a family

“There are many individuals who abandon their children due to difficulties in raising them. But there are people without children, who are unable to find a child to adopt” (P11)

Positive experiences and perceptions about adopted children

“They cared for her so well, better than some people treat their biological children. Later she discovered that she was adopted but decided to love her adoptive parents as if they are her real parents” (P23)

Soical sanctions

Sanctions from extended family

“If I adopt a child now, I will probably have to leave the house we share with husband's extended family, as they don't like the idea of adoption” (P06)

Sanctions from husband

“my husband does not like it, if I adopt a child against his will I might have to face difficulties. It's not a problem if we both agree” (P21)

Sanctions from others

“if the child looks different from us when he/she grows up, the others will comment on the child's parentage. This could embarass all of us and even there is a danger of child being mistreated by relatives” (P06)

Desire for younger child

“If the child finds out that he/she is adopted, it can be a problem for him/her. If we can adopt him/her while he/she is young; then he/she will accept us as parents. Problems would arise, if we adopt an older child” (P05)

Knowledge about adoption procedure

“There is a legal side. We think it will become an issue when we adopt.” (P02)

Other preferences

Health and appearance

“It's good If the child's appearance matches ours, otherwise the child will face identity issues growing up, since he/she will feel the difference” (P06)

Gender

“I do not have a special preference for gender. But my husband prefers a baby girl” (P24)

Religion and race

“Religion and race won't matter as the child is raised by us” (P19)

Family background

“it's better,if we could adopt a child from a family with good qualities”(P19)

Conclusions

Participants expressed a positive attitude towards the option of child adoption. Identified key barriers for the adoption are

- Preference for biological children.
- Spouse's objections.
- Inadequate knowledge of legal procedures.

Recommendations

The identified barriers can be overcome by,

- Introducing adoption as a viable solution for infertility by healthcare providers to subfertile/infertile individuals.
- Raising awareness on benefits and core issues of adoption among potential adoptive parents.
- Strengthening legal framework to promote and facilitate adoption process.
- By creating an enabling environment through transformation of societal perception towards child adoption.

Reference

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