

Awareness of the general public of Surrogacy as an Assisted Reproductive Technology

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Objective

To describe knowledge and factors associated with surrogacy among 20 - 40-year-old adults in Sri Lanka.

Design

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among men and women aged 20 - 40 years, in Colombo District, Sri Lanka.

Methods

The study instrument was an online questionnaire with close ended questions. A sample of 431 was obtained via a snowball sampling method. Inferential statistics were performed using Chi-Square, Fisher’s Exact and Mann-Whitney U Tests, with significance level set at 95%.

Results

The larger proportion (65.89%) had an average level of knowledge while only a minority of the sample (9.51%) exhibited poor or very poor levels of knowledge on the concept of surrogacy. The majority (>80%) had awareness about ART in general and its subset; surrogacy. Additionally, 89.10% had heard of the concept of surrogacy prior to the questionnaire. However, only 22.51% acknowledged the use of surrogacy in Sri Lanka. Of the sample, 70.30% claimed they did not know about the possibility of foreign intended parents to have a child via a Sri Lankan surrogate mother and 62.65% were not aware of surrogacy being practiced as a commercial trade in Sri Lanka.

When queried on the presence of regulatory mechanisms over surrogacy locally, 25.06% (n=108) answered correctly. A significant difference in levels of knowledge between males and females were observed (p=0.019), as well as between those who had undergone higher education and those who hadn’t (p=0.022). None of the other sociodemographic characteristics such as age, religion, ethnicity or sexuality were significantly associated with the participants’ level of knowledge regarding the concept of surrogacy.

Conclusion

Due to meagre levels of comprehension on legal ramifications and status quo with regards to surrogacy in Sri Lanka; especially within the current socio-cultural context, it is recommended that subfertility clinics, in government and private hospitals in Sri Lanka, conduct health promotion activities to enhance awareness of surrogacy, with special attention on legal context to prevent illegitimate institutions from taking undue advantage. Concerned subsectors of professionals should also be addressed.

