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Infertility is considered as major life changing event which causes higher stress among couples facing the problem of infertility. In the present study, the infertility related stress was studied in relation to gender of couples having the problem of infertility and method of infertility treatment they took for their problem. This study was extended by exploring this infertility related stress as a predictor of some psychological phenomenon of these considered couples namely quality of life, life satisfaction and sexual satisfaction.

The sample comprised of total 120 diagnosed infertile couples including 120 wives and 120 husbands (n=240) attending Nova IVI Fertility Clinic situated in Ahmedabad city of Gujarat state for their infertility treatment. These couples were equally selected based on their treatment of infertility namely Intra Uterine Insemination (IUI) and In Vitro Fertilization (IVF). The main outcome measures were Fertility Problem Inventory (FPI) developed by Christopher Newton in 1999, Fertility Quality of Life Questionnaire (FertiQoL) developed by joint effort of expert from European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) and the American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM), Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Dr. Q.G. Alam & Dr. Ramji Srivastava (2001) and Sexuality scale developed by P. Kumar in 1987. These tools were used to measure fertility related stress, quality of life (QoL), life satisfaction and sexual satisfaction respectively.

To accomplish all the objectives of the present study, 2 X 2 factorial (Between Group Design) and correlation (within Group Design) design were employed. The obtained data were further statistically analyzed under two way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), correlation and regression analysis. Based on the data analysed following conclusions were drawn.
Conclusions

Conclusion of the present study drawn under following analysis –

Descriptive and Exploratory Analysis:

- The prevalence of infertility related stress was found to be very high in couples undergoing the treatment of infertility. Considering the various subscales, stress related to the need for parenthood was higher followed by Rejection of Childfree Lifestyle, Relationship Concern, Social Concern and Sexual Concern.

- The analysis reflected satisfactory level of Quality of Life. The mean scores of the subscales, the core sub-scale and the treatment sub-scale showed moderate levels of Quality of Life.

- Infertile couples undergoing IUI or IVF reported average levels of Life Satisfaction. The satisfaction level of the social domain was highly pronounced followed by marital and job satisfaction. The areas; health, personal and economic satisfaction were found to be average.

- Lower levels of sexuality were found in couples undergoing the treatments of IUI and IVF.

Inferential Analysis:

Analysis of Variance (F-value)

- F-value (Analysis of Variance) revealed that infertility stress was higher in wives undergoing the treatments of infertility when compared to their husbands. It also showed that wives reported higher stress levels on the domains of need for parenthood, social concern and sexual concern. There was no difference found between the husbands and wives as far as the domains of relationship concern and rejection of a childfree lifestyle were concerned.

- The computed F-value revealed no difference in the stress level whether as a whole or domain wise, when IUI and IVF modes of treatments were compared.
As far as husbands and wives were concerned, the infertility stress, global as well as domain wise showed no significant difference irrespective of whether they underwent IUI or IVF.

**Regression Analysis**

- Global stress related to Infertility was found to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction of couples' undergoing IUI or IVF ($R = .178$, $R^2 = .032$, $B = -.030$).
- While considering all domains of infertility related stress of the Fertility Problem Inventory (FPI), stepwise regression analysis revealed social concern ($R = .256$, $R^2 = .066$, $B = -.127$) as only significant predictor of life satisfaction for couples undergoing the treatment of infertility.
- Global stress ($R = .620$, $R^2 = .384$, $B = -1.390$) significantly contributed 38.4% variance evaluation of the quality of life of couples undergoing either IUI or IVF.
- Stepwise regression revealed that social concern ($R = .640$, $R^2 = .410$) along with need for parenthood ($R = .667$, $R^2 = .444$) showed 41% and 44.4% of variance respectively on the quality of life of couples undergoing the treatment of infertility (IUI or IVF). Rest all the domains, that is, sexual concern, relationship concern, rejection of a childfree lifestyle was found to be insignificant for the same.
- Global stress with respect to infertility was verified as significant predictor of sexual satisfaction among couples undergoing treatment of infertility ($R = .249$, $R^2 = .062$, $B = -.025$).
- Stepwise regression analysis revealed sexual concern ($R = .295$, $R^2 = .087$) along with relationship concern ($R = .322$, $R^2 = .104$) contributed 8.7 & 10.4% variance respectively in experience of sexual satisfaction for infertility couples undergoing IUI or IVF whereas Social Concern, Rejection of Childfree Lifestyle and Need for parenthood were reported as insignificant for same.
Limitations & Suggestions

The current study contained a number of limitations which are described as below with respective suggestions -

- As in the present study all considered psychological aspects related to infertility were measured on questionnaire or self-report assessment of subjective experiences, it limits validity of data. Although this assessment are logical and valuable means of accessing relevant information, but result might have been enriched by additional methods of measurement like interview or observation which are speculated to provide more valid information.

- This study limits by employing purposive sample, as it's comprised only those couples who were attending the infertility clinic for their treatment which cause bias in sample selection and also limits generalization of findings. To minimize the bias and enhance the generalization, further study should comprisethose infertile couples who are not attending the clinic too.

- The study was conducted only in urban area; their outcomes may not be representative of all infertility patients, which further limits generalization of the findings to rural population. Future research could also incorporate patients dwelling in rural area.

- In cross sectional part of this study, infertility related stress was studied in relation to gender disparity of infertile couple and their involvement in either of infertility treatment that are IUI and IVF, however other aspects like type of infertility, perceived social support, economical status, culture etc. were reported as dominating factor, further study could incorporate these unstudied aspects to advance the literature in the same area.

- As in the present study regression analysis was limited for some particular aspects of these couples namely quality of life, life satisfaction and sexual satisfaction as a whole in relation to their infertility related stress, however different domains comprised under these phenomenon revealed more accurate
information so these domains are suggested to be studied separately in order to advance information of considered aspects.

Significance of the Study and Implications

Why is this study Important (The Present Scenario)

- This research is very important as it taps on the psychological factors of couples who can't bear a child naturally and have to undergo treatments of infertility especially IUI & IVF. In today’s scenario, the acceptance in a couple that they require a treatment to bear a child is very low, as in a country like India, people are ignorant about the problem of infertility leading the couples and their immediate family enter a state of shock when diagnosed with such a problem. The doctors too do not give importance to how and what a couple feels after knowing about the problem and the treatment they have to take. This research study will help to find out the stress levels of such couples and whether the increasing levels of stress affect their quality of life, life satisfaction and sexuality or no? It will also help to find whether husbands and wives have varied in these emotional responses or no? It will help the couple introspect their own self, understand how the treatment affects their day to day functioning, social lives and their marriage and relationship. To medical professionals, it will provide an understanding that they need to be more sensitive towards such couples. It will also help the immediate family to know that their support can help the couple deal with the situation in an effective manner. Overall, it will help provide an in-depth understanding of the emotional status of such couples and may also help in increasing their acceptance and tolerance level.

Inter-Disciplinary Approach

- This research basically has its direct roots in two disciplines, first being the health psychology and the medicine being the second. For psychologists, it communicates the involvement in the psychological dimensions: the stress, the
quality of life, the life satisfaction and the sexuality. It thus helps the psychologists to improve the life of such couples facing infertility and undertaking treatments of IUI & IVF. To the health professionals, it justifies the need for a better patient-informed approach that can be established by giving pre and post treatment counselling sessions. The couples who have achieved proper medical and psychological counselling are more emotionally strong and have a better psychological functioning. The personnel of both these fields are required to work in collaboration to enhance health and well-being.

**Interventional Application**

- When it comes to interventional application, this research will help psychologists to plan and design proper therapeutic intervention for couples undergoing IUI & IVF, which would lay emphasis on improving their coping styles and personal competence. It will also help them plan interventions for their family members, so that the couples can get good support before, during and after the treatments. It also informs the medical fraternity about the need for developing programs for increasing awareness about the problem of infertility and the treatments available for it, as in our country people are ignorant about it and do not even accept such treatments because of several miss-conceptions and beliefs.

**Directing Future Investigations**

- This research will lead to a lot of future investigations on various other emotional aspects face by a couple undergoing infertility treatments. It can be carried a step forward to check their coping strategies, social support, emotional adjustment, self-esteem, anxiety and so on. It can even be investigated whether these emotions have a direct effect on the pregnancy rate of IUI & IVF or not. The future investigations can happen on other available treatments of infertility too.
Recommendations

There are substantial evidence regarding infertility related stress and its significance on adverse psychological health of infertile couples but based on present findings it is recommended that these infertility couples should be managed using a psychological approach or stress management techniques specially design to reduce their stress related to different spheres of infertility conditions to enhance their quality of life, life satisfaction and sexuality Psychological aspect of infertility should be given more attention, and be considered in all stages of treatment and medical interventions to decrease the psychological suffering of the couples facing the problem of infertility.