

Psychological Effects of Subfertility on Women

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ABSTRACT

Background: Out of all the human beings present the 20% are infertile. The 10-15 couple experience difficulties in conceiving.

Study design: It is a cross-sectional study with statistical approach, conducted at Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Indus Hospital Jubilee Town, Lahore.

Objective: The study aimed to study the psychological effects of subfertility on women.

Material and Methods: The study was conducted on the 80 female patients under treatment as they are not conceiving after repeated unsuccessful attempts. The female attended the gynecology department of our institute teaching hospital. The review board of the hospital approved the study. The average duration of not getting pregnant was 2 years in these participants. The study was conducted for 6 month from January 2022 to June 2022.

Results: The average duration of not getting pregnant was 2 years in these participants. Most of the women reported that they previously had no child. However, there were 14% of them that had one child already. The mean of the state anxiety in these female participants came out to be 44 with a SD of 9.5. And the trait anxiety was reported to be 41 with SD of 7.1. Both of these features were found to be higher in case of sub fertile female patients undergoing fertility treatment. The level of stress was shown to be high in case of marital issues as compare to the social stress and personal stress. The educational level was found to be statistically linked to the participant's stress level. However, the financial condition and age was not found to be linked to stress in sub fertile female. **Conclusion:** The women undergoing fertility treatments as they are not being successful to conceive suffers from stress, anxiety and depression like psychological issues. The societal pressure and low educational level are some of the factors that elevates the psychological issues in sub fertile female. If proper professional guidance is given to the patients it can help them cope with the fertility issue stress free. Therefore, counseling is a much helpful thing to accept and face the challenges of sub fertility.

Keywords: Subfertility, psychological status, stress, anxiety and education level.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult problems to study is subfertility. Out of all the human beings present the 20% are infertile. The 10-15 couple experience difficulties in conceiving. One of the life crisis is childlessness. The couples visit the fertility specialist in absence of conceiving child. The couples have the decreased fertility as they are not sterile. Many of the sub-fertile couple conceive eventually. The infertility is inability of the women to conceive. While the one year of unprotected intercourse is called as subfertility¹⁻². The subfertility disorder include the ovulation disturbance and tubo peritoneal disorder. There is an advancement in the diagnostic test for subfertility but still it is prevailing and it has the close association with the psychological status of women. The long- time follow up of the patients diagnosed with subfertility will help to treat it³⁻⁴. There is limited and sufficient information available about the subfertility and its link with psychological issues. The any reduced form of the fertility and delayed in the un-wanted non-conception is the proper terminology for defining subfertility. It is quite different from infertility⁵. The 80% of the pregnancies occur within the first six cycles of intercourse. The 10% couples experienced the subfertility disorder. The probabilities of the conception are highly dependent on the age in the true fertile couples. The highly used treatment for the subfertility is fintra-uterine insemination⁶. The percentage of the abortion in the subfertile women is also high because of the associated psychological issues.

There is the close link between subfertility and the demographic features like age, educational status, social level, financial conditions. This link has the strong impact on the psychological stress in case of female participants⁷⁻⁸. There is a statistical linked between the stress, depression, anxiety and subfertility. The low level of stress and related issues are observed in sub fertile female. This emphasizes the importance of proper guidance and counseling to women who are trying to conceive and are failing.

There is also the association between the age, social class of the women. These results were also in accordance with the

previous findings. This study reported psychological issues like stress, anxiety, depression, some other factors should also be kept for better understanding. This study aimed to study the psychological effects of subfertility on women⁹⁻¹⁰.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted on the 80 female patients under treatment as they are not conceiving after repeated unsuccessful attempts. The female attended the gynecology department of our institute teaching hospital. The review board of the hospital approved the study. The average duration of not getting pregnant was 2 years in these participants.

The study was conducted for 6 month from January 2022 to June 2022. The questionnaire was given to the selected women. The informed consent from the women included in the study was taken. According to inclusion criteria the married women who have tried to conceive baby for more than one year was selected. The mean age was calculated. The psychological status, education level and other demographic features were reported. The statistical analysis was performed on the collected data. The questionnaire measure the anxiety. The validated standardized psychometric tool were used for the analysis. The depression, anger, anxiety and stress level were calculated. These are the issues associated with the subfertility. The women even reported the loss of self-esteem and body integrity. The depression symptoms were assessed by the center for Epidemiologic studies-depression scale (CES-D). The scales covered the symptoms the females have experienced in the past weeks. The scales reliability was duly checked. The questionnaire was validated and results were reliable.

RESULTS

Study was carried out by taking data from 80 female patients under treatment as they are not conceiving after repeated unsuccessful attempts. The average duration of not getting pregnant was 2 years in these participants. Most of the women reported that they previously had no child. However, there were 14% of them that

had one child already. The mean of the state anxiety in these female participants came out to be 44 with a SD of 9.5. And the trait anxiety was reported to be 41 with SD of 7.1 both of these features were found to be higher in case of sub fertile female patients undergoing fertility treatment.

Table 1: Demographic features of the female sub fertile participants

Participants features	No. of participants(%)
Age	
30	6
30-34	2
35	47
Social class	
High	49
Medium	20
low	11
Educational level	
high	38
Medium	40
low	10

The level of stress was shown to be high in case of marital issues as compare to the social stress and personal stress. The educational level was found to be statistically linked to the participant's stress level. However, the financial condition and age was not found to be linked to stress in sub fertile female.

Table 2: Type of psychological issue in female

Psychological issue	No. of participants (%)
Depression	52%
Anxiety	20%
Anger	7%
Stress	21%

The existence of a child already and previous therapies were also not found to be statistically linked with the stress level. It was found by one-way analysis that the women's stress and anxiety was affecting the treatment in case of sub fertile female.

Table 3: Stress response in case of sub fertile female

Women's responses	Female sub fertility
Personal stress	(10%)
Social stress	(7%)
Marital stress	3 (3%)
State anxiety	43 (9%)
Trait anxiety	40 (6%)

DISCUSSION

This study was done to find out the psychological effects in sub fertile female participants. The study was done by taking data from 80 female patients that were under treatment in tertiary care unit for delayed pregnancy. According to the studies, the common psychological response was linked with repeated failed attempts to plan a baby, the expenditure of fertility treatment after unsuccessful attempts adds to the problems of the couple. There is a link between psychological state of women and the sub fertility¹¹⁻¹².

The purpose of this study was to measure the state of anxiety, stress and depression in women who are unable to conceive and is undergoing treatment. It was found that the normative scores of state and anxiety were 35 and 34 as per published reports but the female participants were showing mean state and stress scores in the range of 44 and 41 respectively, which were quite high as compared to normal scores¹³.

These findings were linked to previous studies as per results, the mean state score was depicting generalized anxiety disorder in sub fertile female, and these scores were same to the patients undergoing surgeries in the hospital, and also to the pregnant female having foetal markers of aneuploidy¹⁴⁻¹⁵. The high rate of these state scores were generally attributed to increased anxiety levels in case of these women due to repeated unsuccessful attempts to conceive a child. Such women rush for

treatment to multiple doctors as per previous reports¹⁶. As per studies it was observed that the stress level of female patients was reduced after many years of not conceiving, and it was may be because they had handled the stress linked with delayed pregnancy. Moreover, it was found that the CES-D scores were less than 23 which were proof that there were no previous symptoms of depression in these patients before marriage. The mean scores of CES-D were not different in any other study that suggests that there were no depression signs in women undergoing fertility treatment before this issue. The burden of receiving a medical help adds to the stress of female who are not getting pregnant¹⁷⁻¹⁸.

The study was done to look for anxiety, depression related issues in women who are trying to conceive but they are not getting successful. The type of issue delaying the pregnancy of female is one other factor that plays important role in psychological state of women. If they find out that they don't need treatment the stress level did not increase, but if they find out that they need medical help to get pregnant it automatically increased the anxiety, depression related to fertility¹⁹⁻²⁰. As per our results majority of the patients reported anxiety, and social stress, the fear that society will question them regarding their not having a baby. In addition to this, unexplained sub fertility was also found to be linked to high level of stress in the female participants. As per previous reports there is link between psychogenic factors and the sub fertility. Previous results have shown the association between psychogenic factors and sub fertility but still study is required to further confirm it²¹⁻²².

The demographic features like age, educational status, social level, financial condition also play important role in determining the link between sub fertility and psychological stress in case of female participants. As per studies, educational wellbeing was found to be statistically linked to stress, depression and anxiety. The women who are educated have low level of stress and related issues in case of sub fertile female. This emphasizes the importance of proper guidance and counseling to women who are trying to conceive and are failing. As per studies it was found that the age, and social class were linked with sub fertility related stress in case of female participants. These results were also in accordance with the previous findings. This study reported psychological issues like stress, anxiety, depression, some other factors should also be kept for better understanding²³. If the data was taken from clinics and more public health centers the findings would be more precise and general. This study was solely based on women facing psychological issues because of sub fertility. If the studies were done to compare the stress anxiety level of these issues in case of male participants as well it can provide further insight to this aspect²⁴.

CONCLUSION

The women undergoing fertility treatments as they are not being successful to conceive suffers from stress, anxiety and depression like psychological issues. The societal pressure and low educational level are some of the factors that elevates the psychological issues in sub fertile female. If proper professional guidance is given to the patients it can help them cope with the fertility issue stress free. Therefore, counseling is a much helpful thing to accept and face the challenges of sub fertility.

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