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‘Man got married to the mule’: Exploring the challenges of couples experiencing infertility through the community lens

Konjit K. DARKERO and Tekla Z. MENGESHA

ABSTRACT

In many developing countries, including Ethiopia, couples experiencing infertility frequently face stigma and negative stereotyping due to their childless status. Thus, this study explored the lives of couples with infertility from the perspective of community members, with a focus on the cultural context and social meanings attached to the phenomena. Eight key community members who worked closely with couples were purposively selected and interviewed using in-depth interviews. Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings from the community perspectives revealed that infertility is widely interpreted not only as a medical issue but also as a socially constructed condition associated with identity, marital stability, and gender expectations. The findings were organized into one main theme “community views and understandings of 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). This study, with key community stakeholders as a participant, demonstrated a unique insight into the depth and context of the sociocultural and psychosocial challenges that couples with infertility experience. These findings shed light on local perspectives that have received limited attention in existing literature and offers new insights into how cultural meanings and local beliefs shape the lived experiences of couples with infertility, suggesting the importance of culturally responsive social work interventions to promote the well-being and social resilience of couples with infertility at the community level.

KEY Words: community, culture, Ethiopia, couples experiencing infertility, challenges, lives, views

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INTRODUCTION

In countries like Ethiopia, childbearing is often regarded as the primary and most socially recognized role of marriage. Couples who are unable to bear children suffer silently from a variety of social and psychological problems, yet infertility remains largely overlooked in research and policy debates that focus mainly on population control. Hence, this study explores community views and understandings of infertile couples' lives in order to better understand the sociocultural challenges they face and to inform culturally responsive psychosocial support interventions.

BACKGROUND

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers a couple infertile if the woman has not conceived after 24 months of regular, unprotected intercourse (WHO, 2018). According to a recent report worldwide, infertility affects one in six people at some point in their lifetime (WHO, 2023). Estimates show infertility rates in Sub-Saharan Africa range from 10-30% (Cox et al., 2022). Infertility can lead to separation, polygamy, and divorce (Ombelet, 2011; Anokye et al., 2017; Roomaney et al., 2024).

Other studies also show that infertility contributes to heightened marital instability, mental health issues and social stigma (Roomaney et al., 2024; Ekpor et al., 2025). 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 (Larsen et al., 2009). According to Adda (2025), infertile women face numerous mental and social problems that include emotional stressors, behavioural changes, marital instability, high cost of infertility treatment, and a strong desire to have children. Another African study also reported that women experienced intense distress, sorrow, and self-blame because of their inability to have children, further compounded by the stigma and they are subjected to derogatory labels and social contempt (Mashaah, Gomo, Maradzika, Madziyire, & January, 2024). Various studies indicate that couples experiencing infertility experience a higher prevalence of domestic violence and divorce compared to those in fertile marriages (Naab et al., 2019; Hollos, 2014).

Many societies treat infertility as a medical issue and ignore its social implications (Hasanpoor, Simba, Vedadhir, Azin & Amiri, 2019). On the other hand, most poor nations' populations cannot afford infertility treatment due to a shortage of or high cost of new reproductive technology (Njagi, 2023). A study also conducted on access to infertility treatments in five Sub-Saharan Africa countries identified lack of public funding, a shortage of clinics and qualified professionals, the predominance of private sector services, lack of access and high treatment costs and long travel distances as a challenge for couples with infertility (Whittaker et al., 2024).

In African society, the very complicated nature of infertility is largely linked to the societal significance of reproduction and the predominant social norms of requiring people to reproduce (Chimbatata et al., 2016; Mabitsela et al., 2025). In Ethiopia, procreation is the main goal of a marriage, children are considered precious assets, and having many children is seen as a symbol of higher status in society. Accordingly, couples are expected to give birth as soon as getting married and are sanctified to the expected roles in their wedding day which is referred as “ውለዱ ከበዱ” translated as “multiply yourself and be an honoured” For this reason, the role of fertility in the Ethiopian context is significant (Deribe, Anberbir, Regassa, Belachew & Biadgilign, 2007). The community frequently uses the phrase “ይኔን በዳይኔ አየሁ” and “ብሪ ቀባሪ አታሳጣኝ” to convey the importance of having children in marriage, identity formation, and late age. These phrases translate to “I saw my eye with my eye” and “God, don't deprive me of a child who will support me when I am old and bury me when I die. The majority of Ethiopian research on reproductive health focuses on identifying variables that contribute to a modest family size and how to reduce the nation's fertility rate. Infertility as a social and psychological issue is rarely researched. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the lives and challenges of Ethiopian couples with infertility through the community lens using African relational theory of Ujamaa (African Community Theory) and Ukama (African Family Theory).

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to explore the struggles of couples experiencing infertility through the community lens. Therefore, eight key community figures from the community were purposively included for their ability to represent the values and perspectives of their communities 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 interview was employed in gathering data about the views, opinions, ideas, and beliefs about the problem of infertility under investigation. Data was gathered from members of the community who included elder, religious leaders, marriage counsellors, a social worker and a health professional. All of the religious leaders from three religious organizations [Orthodox, Protestant & Muslim] who took part in this study were working in family matters with their prospective religious organizations. Two of the other marriage counsellors were trained in the area and with many years of experiences in marriage

counselling. However, they were only working in one of the religious organizations 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 clinical nurse working at specialized gynaecology and maternal care clinic and the family social worker who was working closely with infertile couples. 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 interview's ranged from 50 minutes to 2 hrs. Informed consent was guaranteed in this study. Throughout this article, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the participants, and each participant is identified with a local first pseudo name and a brief descriptor of their profession or community role (e.g., Gebretsadik – Orthodox Christian Priest; Daniel – Protestant pastor; Mohamed – Muslim Sheik and Judge at Sharia Court; Hana – Social worker; Adonay – clinician; Weson – male marriage counsellor; Mistre female marriage counsellor; Zinash – elderly woman), in doing this the aim was to preserve confidentiality and retaining contextual meaning of participants' perspectives. The gathered data was analysed using qualitative content analysis employing the approach of Elo and Kynge (2008). The analysis involved three main stages: preparation, organization, and reporting. In the preparation phase, all interview transcripts were read several times in order to gain an overall understanding and archive immersion. In the organization stage, meaning units representing open coded key ideas were identified. Similar codes were then clustered to obtain subcategories, and summaries were abstracted to higher-level categories. Categorization was an iterative process, and constant comparison was included to ensure consistent and accurate analysis of the data. During the reporting stage, the final categories and subcategories were elaborated upon using illustrative quotes from participants. This approach contributed toward an equally systematic and transparent description of participants' perspectives while maintaining closeness to the data.

RESULTS

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 problems (with three subcategories); and challenges of couples with infertility (with four subcategories). The categories and subcategories are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Main categories, and subcategories, of community views and understandings of infertile couples

Main categories	Subcategories
Cultural contexts of infertility and its related problems	<p><i>Religious perspectives and infertility</i></p> <p><i>Family pressure, in-laws' interference and public concern</i></p> <p><i>Woman with evil eyes</i></p>
Challenges of couples with infertility	<p><i>Marital conflict and divorce</i></p> <p><i>Issues of social gatherings and isolation</i></p> <p><i>Services provided to infertile couples and observed gaps</i></p> <p><i>Affordability and accessibility of infertility treatments</i></p>

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

Majority of the participants indicated that society does not implicitly permit infertile couples to live their lives without potential interference. Hana, 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.

Mistre, 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, Daniel, 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 Daniel, Mohamod, a Muslim participant indicated that infertility undermines couples' love. Regarding the cultural contexts,

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.

Religious perspectives and infertility

Participants discussed their understandings of infertility in relation to their religious perspectives. Participants with a Christian background 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 Gebretsadik, 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, Wosen, 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 Mohamod, 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 sexes, 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, Daniel, said that God designed marriage to maintain wellbeing of humankind, as evidenced by the statement

It is not good for man to be alone. Since children are considered a divine blessing. Consequently, society should not hold the couple accountable or criticize them for not having children.

Mistre, a female marriage counsellor emphasised away from medical evidence 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.

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 participants,

Gebretsadik, stated that couples are expected to conceive immediately after marriage. He said,

When couples fail to achieve these expectations, husband relatives often criticize them.

Similarly, Daniel 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 infertility issues among couples were predominantly attributed to women. If couples are infertile, even if the infertility problem is with a male partner. Wosen stated,

The husband is told by his family that he got married to the mule, and he has married a barren woman who cannot bear him a child. She would not fit into their family. When a man is infertile, his family often mistreats and blames his wife and advises him to divorce and begin a fresh chapter in his life.

Mohamed submitted 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 that traditional misconceptions affected infertile couple's 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 'ምሳኛ' which means an 'old cow' that only produces manure. The husband is regularly insulted for feeding a non-reproducing ox named "ሰ??"

According to Mistre 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, Zinash, 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. Eventually, this type of marital union will result in divorce. Additionally, Zinash said that female with fertility challenge face 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 Hana, a social worker, in cases when infertility arises from the husband's side, the husband's family will falsely attribute the issue to the wife. She stated that Infertility causes confusion and instability for the wife, largely due to societal and familial expectations.

Woman with evil eyes

Most of the participants in this study reported that infertility had a negative 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. Zinash, 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, Mohamed mentioned:

Neighbours may occasionally label a woman with fertility challenge as a 'woman with evil eyes' (ልጅ የማትወልድ ሴትን አንድ ቡዳ ያያቷል) and may even complain about why she looks at their children. They may also indirectly insult the woman with infertility by using cruel words.

Another participant, Geberestadik also indicated that wives with the fertility challenge 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.

Mistre, a 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 stated.

Challenges of couples with infertility

Marital conflict and divorce issues

Most participants reported that couples with infertility divorce because of infertility itself and family pressures. Mohamed, a Sharia Court judge, said both couple initiates divorce due to infertility. He explained.

Sometimes, if the man with the 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.

Participants stated that relatives force infertile couples to divorce and start new life. According to participants, infertile couples' marital dissatisfaction and separation are caused by families' involvement of both sides. Regarding family reactions of the couples with infertility challenge, Hana, stated:

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

Zinash, 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, according to Hana, in infertile marriage, male is the initiator of divorce. Females are much stressed one.

Issues of social gatherings and isolation

Some of the participants reported that couples with infertility 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. Zinash, explained:

Within our culture, when a woman delivers birth, a ceremonial event known as the 'ገገ' (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 child the following year and celebrate at her house. A woman's infertility may make her feel uneasy about participating in such rituals.

Similarly, Gebretsadik, 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. A family social worker also described,

Infertile couples also develop habits of rejecting birthday invitations and other social gatherings due to their infertility problems and other significant prejudicial comments.

Services provided to infertile couples and observed gaps

Adonay, the Nurse identified that there is a huge gap regarding the psychotherapy service deliveries to couples

with infertility in Hosanna town in general. He explained:

Couples with fertility challenges 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.

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

I advise them not to rush toward divorce, just listening to the negative's advice of their parents.

Regarding psychotherapy and counselling services to infertile couples in Hosanna town, Hana, the social worker described, that 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 with the same religious affiliation, supported them with counselling, prayers, visited regularly and comforted them. Weson, the male counsellor stated,

As marriage counsellors within our office, we do offer some counselling and psychosocial support to infertile couples.

However, Mistre, female marriage counsellor stated that only very few infertile couples come to church in seeking out counselling and majority of them prefer keeping their infertility problems to themselves.

Affordability and accessibility 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 Adonay, there are infertile cases that stopped their medications 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 chosen medication because they wanted to have children. They casually say they stopped or missed treatment because of shortage of money.

Another participant, Zinash 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 have also observed lower-class couples with infertility who desperately wanted to have babies. They sold their assets and homes to pay for infertility treatment. Despite their sacrifices, seeing infertile couples who could not make it with either having a baby or their money is sad.

According to Wosen, some infertile couples experience significant emotional and financial struggles in their efforts to have a child. He explained:

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

Mohamed, A Muslim judge and sheik also explained:

For example, I know infertile couples who went to India for medication which was not successful. 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 a child.

Similarly, according to Daniel, infertility medication requires high amount of money which is impossible to be covered by those infertile couples with low socioeconomic backgrounds. "Regarding the infertile couple's medication challenges Hana 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.

DISCUSSION

The study explored the lives and struggles of infertile couples' (ልጅ የማይወልዱ ጥንዶች) through the community lens in Hosanna Town. The findings of this study indicated that religion is an important component in the way that the phenomenon of infertility was constructed. As a result, the majority of participants were more likely to make dialogues about infertility in light of their religious beliefs and spirituality.

As the findings indicated the psychosocial challenges faced by couples with infertility were well understood by the community members. Based on the findings, infertile couples had experienced different challenges at the community level. Infertility contributes to heightened marital instability, mental health issues and social stigma (Roomaney et al., 2024; Ekpokor et al., 2025). Findings from the participants revealed that the broader community, including families of the couples, holds the expectation that procreation should occur immediately after marriage, reflecting the deeply rooted cultural association between marriage and childbearing. When this expectation fails, couples faced various issues, such as family criticisms, parental interferences, social pressures and stigma from the community due to the misconceptions concerning the infertility and infertile marriage. The African relational theory of Ukama can explain why both family and community are intensely involved in infertile couple's lives. As Carstens and Preiser (2024) stated, Ukama theorizes that a person's identity and well-being are deeply connected to their network of relationships with others. Findings from this study indicates that marriage is viewed as an alliance between two families, where having children plays a crucial role in preserving the family name and strengthening family ties. Therefore, infertility is not seen as a private medical issue but as a relational crisis that affects the entire family and community, leading to the intense pressures observed in this study. The findings that infertility affects marital bonds, family relationships, and leads to divorce are direct consequences of this perceived disruption to ukama.

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. Informal help from the community leaders reflects the Ujamaa principle of "familyhood," (ASWNet, 2023) but this community support fails when it coexists with stigma and isolation, as the community becomes punishing instead of supportive. This shows that African communal values, such as community-based support groups, are important in addressing social problems but require strengthening to overcome harmful traditional beliefs. 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 reported that most poor nations' populations cannot afford infertility treatment due to a shortage of or high cost of new reproductive technology (Njagi, 2023, p. 67; Whittaker, 2024, p. 112).

The findings of this study indicates that wives in infertile marriage were labelled with different degrading names such as "ብቅሎ" which means "Mule", "ብሬና እበት" which translated as "an ox only with dung" to indicate that women with infertility were worthless to be called a wife without giving birth to a child. Moreover, women with fertility challenge (ልጅ የማይወልዱ ሴቶች) are also considered as having harmful impact on children who are born by fertile couples and they are labelled as "ቡዳ" "women with evil eyes." Due to this, it was reported by participants that women with fertility challenge isolated themselves from various social gatherings such as birthday celebrations and baby showers because of certain practices and traditional expectations. This finding is consistent with recent African studies reported that because of their inability to have children, women experienced intense distress and self blames further compounded by the stigma and are subjected to derogatory labels and social contempt (Mashaah et al., p.30; 2024).

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. This gendered burden is deeply rooted in the relational expectations of Ukama theory, where a woman's primary role upon marriage is to build and extend her husband's heredity. Her failure to do so is perceived as a fundamental failure in her relational duties, making her the primary target of blame. 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. This substantiates other African study which finds that infertile women face numerous mental and social problems that includes emotional stressors, behavioural changes, marital instability, high cost of infertility treatment, and a strong desire to have children(Adda, 2025; Obeagu, Njar & Obeagu, 2023).The findings from this study also indicated that due to all the above mentioned problems in most cases, infertile couple's marriages end in divorce.

IMPLICATIONS

According to the findings, couples with infertility (ልጅ የማይወለዱ ጥንዶች) face marital interferences, blames, accusations and undignified labelling's from families and community members due to their infertility. Thus to change this cultural prospects, interventions must be grounded in an understanding of Ukama and Ujamaa. By increasing awareness, developing culturally sensitive programs and involving community leaders, social workers, marriage counsellors and healthcare professionals can better support infertile couples and reduce the challenges associated with infertility. Specifically, social workers can use the principles of Ujamaa to mobilize community support groups that protect couples rather than stigmatize them, thereby strengthening, not severing, their Ukama or relational belonging.

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. Furthermore, policy should not only focus on biomedical solutions but also recognize and integrate indigenous support systems, aligning with Ujamaa principles of collective care and local problem-solving, as advocated by the African Social Work Network (Mugumbate & Mtetwa, 2019). 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 study 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 through the community lens.

CONCLUSION

Due to their close engagement with couples experiencing infertility, participants demonstrated substantial understanding of the challenges faced by these couples in the infertility journey. Findings have demonstrated that lots of misconceptions and myths are prevalent in the society. Consequently, couples with infertility 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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