Effects of infertility on the mental and social health of infertile women in Bangladesh and their quality of life

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Objectives: To assess the effects of infertility on the mental health, social health, and quality of life of infertile women in Bangladesh

Methods: This cross-sectional study recruited 300 female infertile patients from a fertility clinic between October and December 2021. The DASS-21 was used to assess the participants' mental health status, while the SF-12 determined their quality of life. Based on a previous study, eight questions regarding social health status were posed. Using correlation analysis and chi-square tests, bivariate relationships were examined. The mean differences between SF-12 and the background variable were determined using a one-way ANOVA test. The relationship between the three dimensions of the DASS-21 and the predictor variables was investigated using multiple logistic regression models.

Results: The majority of participants exhibited primary infertility (88.3%). The mean ± (SD) scores on the PCS-12 and MCS-12 were 40.77± (6.17) and 37.95± (6.95), respectively. Approximately 70% of the participants faced direct or indirect criticism from family members, friends, colleagues, or others due to infertility. 16% of women were assaulted by their in-laws physically and/or mentally. 58.10% of respondents who abstained from going out and attending family gatherings preferred social isolation. The DASS-21 score showed that 59.67% suffered from mild to extremely severe depression, around 55% of women reported mild to extremely severe anxiety, and 49.7% were stressed to some degree. The odds of depression increased by 20 percent for each additional year of treatment (OR = 1.208, CI:.985 to 1.44), and age by one year (OR = 1.271, CI:.936 to 1.766). The husbands' age was statistically significant (OR.934, CI:.881 to.989) after adjusting for other covariates.

Conclusion: Infertility and the associated social stigma remarkably impact an individual's mental health, social health, and quality of life. To control the added burden of infertility on women's social and psychological health, appropriate counseling techniques, social awareness campaigns, and media involvement are necessary.

Keywords: Infertility, Mental Health, Social Health, Quality of life-QOL