

Abstract

The research project aims to explore psychosocial problems and coping styles of infertile men and women, and assess the determinants of their mental health and marital satisfaction. On the basis of the findings, need based intervention was devised to reduce the affects of psychological distress due to infertility. This research project was divided into four studies. Study 1 was conducted to explore 'psychosocial problems' of infertile men and women in Lahore, Pakistan. Semi structured interviews were conducted to collect the data from thirty participants (10-infertile men and women, 10-spouses and 10-infertility experts). A purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from participants selected from infertility departments of four hospitals. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. After analyzing the data via thematic analysis, eight major themes emerged: 1) psychological problems 2), social problems, 3) family pressure, 4) personal concerns, 5) sexual problems, 6) marital conflict, 7) treatment related concerns, and 8) coping. Study 2 was based on data collected in study I and aimed to develop a valid and reliable scale to measure infertility-specific emotional and social distress. After ensuring the content validity and try-out phase, 74 items were finalized. The developed scale was administered on a larger sample of 504 (men=148, women=356) to explore factorial validity through exploratory factor (EFA) analysis which reduced data into four factors (Distress, Identity and well-being, Feelings of insecurity and Sexual/Marital Issues) and 35 retained items explained 44.35 percent variance. To confirm the EFA model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was run on a sample of 445 (137 men, 308 women). The analysis confirmed the factor structure retained via EFA and 34 items were retained. The alpha reliability was =.92. Convergent and discriminate validity of the scale was also established. Finally, a 34-item Emotional

and Social Distress Scale was finalized. Study 3 was conducted to assess the relationship of psychosocial problems, infertility-specific coping, psychological well-being, mental health problems and marital satisfaction. The sample of the study comprised 270 (70 men, 204 women) participants having primary infertility. Measures used in the study were: Emotional and Social Distress Scale (ESDS- developed in study-II), The COMPI Coping Strategy Scales (Schmidt, Holstein, Christensen, & Boivin, 2005), Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 1995), Couples Satisfaction Index-16 item (Funk & Rogge, 2007) and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Results of step wise regression indicated that positive relations with others, active avoidance coping, self-acceptance, age and distress were significant predictors of mental health problems and explained 37% of the variance. Meaning based coping, passive avoidance coping, sexual/marital issues, self-acceptance and active avoidance coping were significant salient predictors of marital satisfaction and explained 12% of the variance. The mediation analysis showed that meaning based coping was fully mediating between psychosocial problems and marital satisfaction. Group differences also showed that gender, age, education and employment status had significant impact on study variables. Study 4 was conducted to apply 'Brief Culturally Adapted Cognitive Behavior Therapy (Naeem et al., 2015) for the treatment of psychological distress in infertile women. One group pre and post research design was followed. Twenty-one diagnosed female patients with primary infertility were included. All the participants were assessed by using standardized assessment tools: Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), Emotional and Social Distress Scale (ESDS- developed in Study-1) and semi structured demographic questionnaire. Afterwards, therapy was applied individually. All the women were reassessed after the therapy.

Participants received 6 sessions with the arrangement of 2 sessions per week. Results showed significant improvements in the mental health of patients after receiving therapeutic sessions. Statistical analysis showed a significant difference between the pre and post CaCBT assessment on depression ($p < 0.001$), anxiety ($p < 0.001$) and stress ($p < 0.001$) subscales of DASS and total of ESDS. The research project provides insight into the psychosocial problems and coping of infertile men and women in Pakistan, relative strength of the determinants of their mental health and marital satisfaction, and preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of CaCBT to reduce the psychological distress of women having primary infertility. The research also has implications for psychologists, gynecologists, infertile patients, carers and researchers.

Key Words: Infertility, Psychosocial Problems, Emotional and Social Distress Scale, Khushi-or-Khatoon (brief Cognitive Behavior Therapy).