

Life Experience with Infertility; a Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

Introduction: In most cultures, fertility has a great social value and parenting one's own biological child is considered the most basic motive in the process of human life. On the other hand, infertility could lead to a destructive emotional experience. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 80 million people in the world live with infertility. Infertility has a negative influence on the lives of both genders and predisposes them to emotional and psychological burdens. Physical, mental and economic challenges may affect young couples during infertility treatment. The purpose of this study was to examine the in-depth life experience of infertile couples.

Materials and Methods: This qualitative, phenomenological study was conducted on 11 purposively selected couples attending the outpatient department of Reproductive Health Research Center at Taleqani Hospital on August-December 2008. The interviews were carried out to explore life experiences of the infertile couples who were under infertility treatment process. The data were generated from taped interviews and the researchers' observational field notes. The data were analyzed according to the procedure outlined by Colaizzi.

Results: Interviews were categorized by examining the participants' interview transcripts and identifying significant statements and meanings. Themes emerging from the statements were identified, and cross-case comparisons were made to confirm or modify them. Six key themes followed by eleven sub-themes emerged from the data. The results showed that infertility affects emotional and sexual relationships of infertile couples. The couples' relationship with family members and relatives is affected when they realize about their problem. Sometimes the infertile couples resort to unusual and non-medical treatment options when their expectations from the medical team are not met.

Conclusion: Thematically, infertility could deeply affect infertile couples' entire life. More widespread use of midwifery and psychological counseling services at infertility treatment centers seem to be of help to infertile couples and their relatives.

Keywords: Colaizzi's method, Infertility, Life experience, Phenomenology, Psychological counseling, Qualitative study.

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