

Unveiling Infertility in Bangladesh

Prevalence, Experience, and Care-seeking in Selected Rural Areas

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Publication date January 23, 2024

Background



What is Infertility?

Inability to conceive despite regular unprotected sexual intercourse.

Infertility is categorized into:

- Primary Infertility (Never conceived)
- Secondary Infertility (Previously conceived at least once)

49 million
couples experience
infertility globally.*

Immediate attention on infertility is necessary

- Despite having key human rights aspects, Infertility is being neglected in the global and national SRHR policies and agenda.
- Infertility is an emerging public health problem, yet under-emphasized in prevailing fertility and family-planning programmes.

Reproductive Rights

"Rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the **number, spacing and timing of their children**, and to have the information and means to do so."

Human Right

Right to health, equality, and non-discrimination

Infertility

Sustainable Development Goals



Infertility is integral to reproductive and human rights, and is strongly linked to several Sustainable Development Goals

The Study

Rationale

- Globally used definitions of infertility (WHO clinical, WHO epidemiological, Demographic) varied in reference periods and conditions, and thus the prevalence of infertility also varies
- Limited information available on the experience of infertile couples and their care-seeking behavior in Bangladesh
- Piecemeal information on service provision for infertility in Bangladesh

Objectives

- Understand the measurement of infertility and estimate its prevalence
- Exploring the experiences of infertile couples
- Examining the existing Infertility service provision to document the challenges and opportunities

Methodology

Cross-sectional study at the Matlab and Baliakandi Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) areas, from October to December 2022

- Household survey among 2,948 currently married women aged between 20-49 years
- In-depth Interview with 10 couples experiencing primary infertility
- Key Informant Interviews with 8 infertility specialists

Findings

Prevalence of Infertility

0.9% Primary infertility

- In a Union \geq 5 years
- No contraceptive use \geq 5 years
- No previous conception
- No pregnancy

9% Secondary infertility

- In a Union \geq 5 years
- No contraceptive use \geq 5 years
- Previous conception
- Last pregnancy outcome \geq 5 years
- No subsequent pregnancy

Impact of Infertility on Couple's Well-being

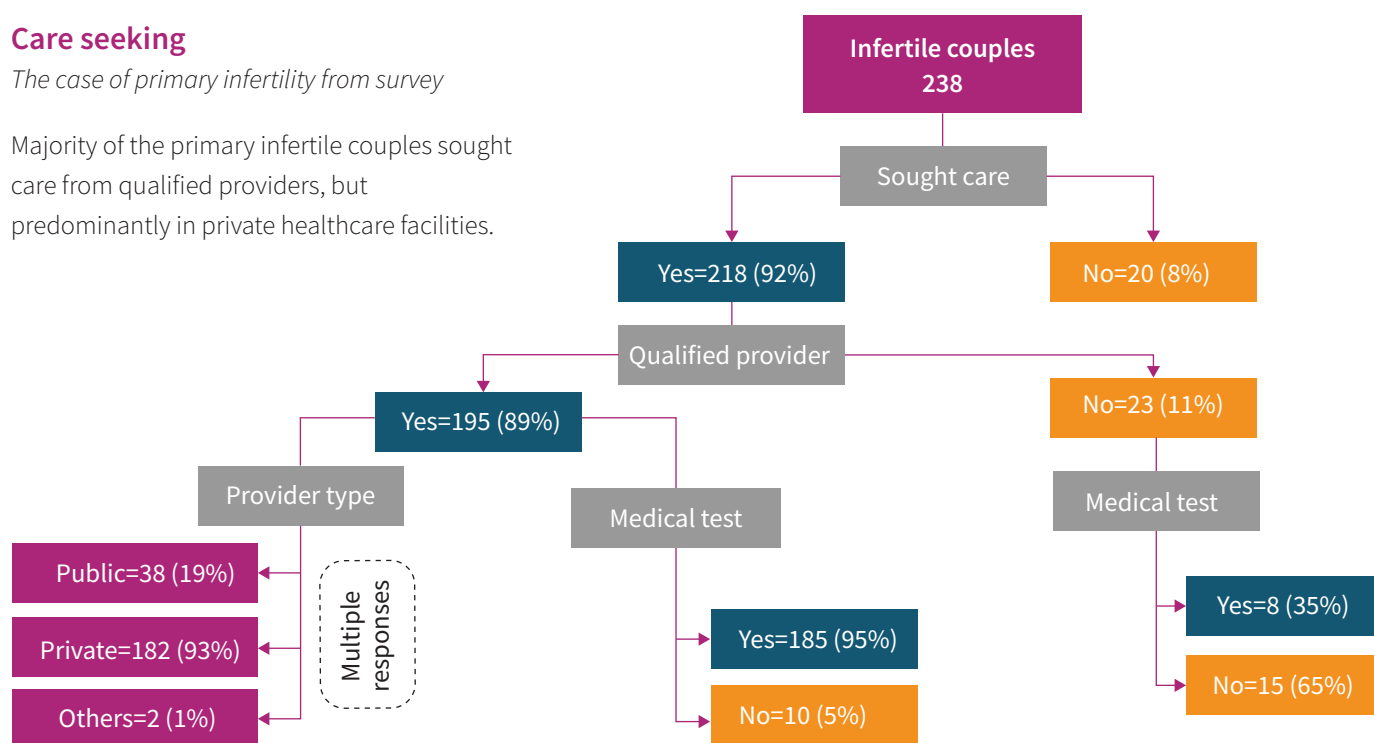
Revealed from in-depth interviews with infertile couples

- All couples expressed sadness and a sense of incompleteness for not having child
- Some couples reported self-exclusion from social gatherings due to uncomfortable questions and advices from others.

Care seeking

The case of primary infertility from survey

Majority of the primary infertile couples sought care from qualified providers, but predominantly in private healthcare facilities.



Challenges in Infertility Care

Opinion of Key informants

- **Lack of trained healthcare providers:** Few specialists, few trained doctors and technicians at primary and secondary healthcare facilities
- **Lack of logistics and technology:** Lack of required instruments and technologies at public healthcare facilities
- **Lack of specialised centers:** Specialised centers are mostly centred in Dhaka; lack of service availability at periphery
- **Expensive and long treatment course:** Treatment is costly, particularly those required tertiary interventions
- **Absence of national-level policy and guideline:** No national plan of action for strengthening infertility care and no national guideline for treatment

Opportunities in Infertility Care

Opinion of Key informants

- Two specialised centers at public facilities for infertility (BSMMU & Dhaka Medical College Hospital)
- Tertiary treatment (IVF, ovarian PRP) at low cost at public health facility (BSMMU)
- Availability of specialised academic courses (MS, FCPS)
- Establishment of Fertility and Sterility Society of Bangladesh (FSSB)