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## **Infertility, loss and adoption: An Indian experience**

**By**

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Adoption is governed by several social, emotional and historical forces that shape the psychological processes associated with adoption decision making. Studies have indicated that most adoptive parents have a relationship with infertility and show a higher motivation for ‘wanting an infant’ to complete their family. With a high prevalence of pro-birth ideology in India, greater use of assisted reproductive technologies has been reported that has affected the non-family domestic adoption rates. This paper examines the psycho-socio processes of seven Indian adoptive parents who have undergone long years of involuntarily childlessness and were diagnosed with primary infertility. The parents’ pre-adoption journey from infertility diagnosis to infertility resolution and eventually completing their families through non-family domestic adoption has been explored. Jointly constructed couple interviews were conducted under the phenomenological methodology and the data was triangulated with interviews from adoption social workers and medical professionals. The interpretative phenomenological analysis revealed significant themes. This included hope and grief, perception of body image, loss of intimacy, theory of ‘karma’ (fate), gender differences in grief resolution, surrogacy vs. adoption, as well as the relationship between position of a woman in the family and adoption initiation. A further analysis showed that both medical reality of childlessness and social approval determined their willingness to accept adoptive parenthood.

The study findings show the emergence of diverse discourses on infertility, adoption and family dynamics in a non-western country such as India, where secrecy, stigma and closed system of adoption still influence the adoption process. The implications of the study for the design of educational programmes for prospective adoptive parents are discussed. It is envisaged that the experiences, needs and vulnerabilities of the already adopted will help to devise intervention strategies for future adoptive parents around expectations, grief counselling, infertility resolution and adoption initiation.

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