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## Why adoption is not considered as an option in India?

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### Abstract

This paper studies the reasons why people in developing countries like India are treating adoption as the last option and go for treatment despite it being more costly and time consuming. The model is regressed using logit model. Study is conducted on 146 participants using purposive sampling. Using the model we found that biological substitute and social stigma are the main variables for people to go for treatment first.

**Keywords:** Infertility, adoption, treatment, social stigma and biological substitute

### Introduction

India is historically a patriarchal country with socio-culture-solid beliefs. Here in India, having a new born child is considered as an essential aspect for many people and many religions. According to Heinicke (2005) <sup>[16]</sup>, having a child is a strong growing milestone in a person's life. According to Brodzinsky (2007) <sup>[6]</sup>, Fertility increases confidence, widens the connection with society, and acts as a bridge to the new generation and the inheritance. But sometimes, couples face some issues in developing these milestones due to infertility (inability of women to conceive a baby). So, when couples face challenges in conceiving a baby, they might face devastating consequences. In some developing countries, infertility is considered profanity or a few non-public twists of fate or tragedy, impacting their entire family life, neighbours, and the local community.

Studies have proven that a family facing an infertility issue has to go through a lot in their lives; their family members, friends, and community/society do not usually lend them support, impacting their relatives' lives and even the neighbourhood network. The social stigma connected to infertility downhearted the couple mentally. In many developing countries, women are usually blamed for infertility issues which further leads to issues such as separation/ divorce. India is so open about its norms and beliefs, ritual, and rights, but when it comes to severe issues like infertility, they prefer to avoid talking about it. Studies suggest that people do not feel comfortable discussing issues such as infertility within the public domain. On one side, where people do not feel comfortable sharing this issue, on the other side, it has become a national issue. One out of six couples face infertility issues worldwide. Some couples face primary infertility, and others face secondary infertility.

In today's world, India has become so advanced in technology, where people can easily have their babies. There are many treatments available through which one facing this issue can have their biological child. These treatments depend on several factors like what is causing infertility, how long they have been infertile, their age and their partner's age, their personal preferences, etc. These treatments require financial, psychological, physical, and time commitments. These treatments available are so expensive and need a lot of patience. They are so time-consuming; all the treatments have their consequences. Literature studies have shown that people facing fertility issues wait for years and visit hospitals for regular treatment. They are going for treatment at the age of 35-40 when they face many physical problems. So, along with these physical issues, they are going through such treatments where they will be going to have a lot of medicines and then giving birth through treatment at this age can be a problem for women's health, and also these treatments don't always give desired results, i.e., after investing a lot of money and time, it is not even guaranteed that results will be in their favour.

We have other option as well, i.e., adoption. CARA (Central Adoption Resource Authority) Central Authority of India mandated to promote & facilitate domestic adoptions, regulate Inter-Country adoptions, and frame Adoption Regulations as per Section 68 of the JJ Act(C&PC), 2015.) has defined Adoption as the process in which adoptive parents will have their legitimate child with all the rights, responsibilities, and privileges attached to this relationship and will be separated from his/her biological parents. A child who has no home and no family, will find that by Adoption, he/she will be a part of the family who was just an abandoned child before. On one side couple would get a child, and on the other side child would find his/her parents whom he/she has lost in their childhood. They will get a chance to have an identity now, will get love and care from which they were deprived till today. People can adopt from their relatives, from their known ones, from strangers, or adoption institutions. It requires no such enormous amounts that other options demand. Here you need to go through a process that may take 1-2 years.

As time has changed, people's attitudes and thinking have also changed, but it is still the same in adoption. People still prefer their biological children. It is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but people still attach social stigma to the illegitimate child. The stigma attached to adoption concerns biased attitude toward adoption and adoption related issues and make couples to go for treatment first. People prefer treatment over Adoption even when treatment gives them hope of having their biological child, which is not even guaranteed that it will give the desired result. Literature studies have shown that couples rate treatments high, even if they know that it might not give them the desired result. They do this because they believe that it is their only option to get their child. So, for making themselves feel more comfortable and positive towards treatment, they rated it high.

The adoption rate has always been low in India, but it has been dropping over the past few years rapidly. According to the statistics of Adoption from CARA (central authority resource authority of India), Adoption was 5693 in-country and 628 inter-countries in 2010, while in 2019-2020, there were 3351 in-country 394 inter-countries. It has declined by approximately 40%. In 2022-2023, only 3010 in-country and 431 inter-countries were adopted. Every year around 20,000 to 25,000 applications are registered for Adoption. Still, formally only around 4000 adoptions occur, and others have to wait for 2-3 years before meeting their adopted child, and the rest tend to leave the thought of adopting a child in between. The number of children available for adoption is not limited to the children in adoption units. But, if we go outside, we can see so many homeless children who can be adopted. By Adoption, they would find a roof over their head, food to survive. According to the childline India Foundation (CIF- works for women and children, 2017), there are around 30 million abandoned children. In institutions, there are only 4,70,000, and these are the figures we have in numbers; if we survey this, we will find much more than this. Ironically, on the one hand, there are many couples without a child who has already gone through treatments, and adoption is their last option. On the other hand, there are lot of children available for adoption. Still,

the rate is declining continuously.

According to Meera Marti (adoption counsellor at Families of joy foundation (NGO)), half of the couples visited adoption centres after being exhausted by other options. She shared a case of her NGO, where a couple visited an adoption centre aged 64; the couple adopted a son after trying all the natural conceptions, waiting for several years, and after trying medical treatments for a long time. After getting tired of endless visits to the hospitals and spending a considerable amount, they were fed up and eventually turned up for adoption; basically, they treat adoption as their last choice.

People have the psychology of biological parenting. They believe in the factor of their own child; they highly prioritize blood relations. Studies suggest that couples are going for treatments first and then for adoption, like if treatment fails or not going for any options. Studies based on this issue are significantly less in India. Through this paper, We would like to study this behaviour and ask why people are not going for adoption first, i.e., why people in India treat it like their last option or not even consider it as an option, why most people give adverse reactions when we ask them about adoption, their views about adoption.

For this study, I prepared a questionnaire consisting of around 30 questions. I interviewed and circulated the questionnaire on a random basis to married couples. While conducting the survey, even before informing everyone about the nature and kind of study, I found very strange reactions when I asked them to imagine a situation where they are going through this issue. I want to study the reason for this reaction. My main objective is to know why people choose treatment over adoption and why people are not going for adoption and treat adoption as their last choice; for some couples, why it does not come under the options available as the solution to infertility. Through this survey, I would get to know about the reasons and factors affecting their choices. Also, through this survey and study, I would like to increase awareness about adoption as awareness plays an essential role in changing attitude of people positively.

## Results and Discussion

It is a primary, cross-sectional study. The study was conducted on 145 participants. The participants were selected using purposive sampling (it is the procedure of selecting a sample for a particular purpose). For the data collection, a questionnaire was prepared. The questionnaire was circulated online in the form of google form and asked them questions over the call and personally. Responses were taken individually.

The study includes the two dependent variables, i.e., adoption and treatment. Individuals' socio-demographic factors such as gender, their age, occupation, location, education, religion, marital status, years of marriage, social stigma, treatment success rate and awareness are taken as independent variables.

The dataset constitutes strongly balanced cross-sectional data for which a logit model of estimation has been used. In regression, 1 will represent the adoption, and 0 will represent treatment.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{biological substitute} + \beta_2 \text{social stigma} + \beta_3 \text{success} + u$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{biological substitute} + \beta_2 \text{social stigma} + \beta_3 \text{success} + \beta_4 \text{gender} + \beta_5 \text{religion} \\ + \beta_6 \text{education} + \beta_7 \text{occupation} + \beta_8 \text{geographical location} + u$$

As per the result we got from this study, biological substitute and social stigma are the main variables for people to go for treatment first. In our society a social stigma is attached to a female or family about the baby birth. When a female is not able to conceive a child, the family has to go through a lot and also has the fear that society will never accept the child as their real child which makes a couple to not prefer adoption. The stigma attached is not only widely incorrect but also damaging for the family as it affects the couple and their child mentally. This stigma makes the child to think that he/she is being treated differently from the society. Most people believed that an adopted child could not be a substitute for a biological child.

### Conclusion

People have a strong urge to have their biological children. Even if someone thinks about adoption, they stop because there is a social stigma attached to the adopted child and also due to lack of support. We found that people are not aware of the agencies working in the field of adoption. For increasing the awareness and to change people's view: colleges can arrange webinars for their students and their parents, adoption agency can arrange a campaign every month, welfare agencies can take surveys and help in changing people's perceptions about adoption personally, the school once in an academic session can plan to visit an adoption agency, students can be asked to do a project on adoption, the government can help agencies. The awareness will not solve the issue totally but it will help to increase the adoption rate and also social stigma attached to adoption will reduce.

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