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The Lived Experience of Infertility Among Married Southeastern Nigerian Women

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Background: Having a child in Nigeria is highly valued; however, childless women experience major psychological and social consequences. Women bear the burden of seeking treatment for infertility; suffering intimate partner abuse, psychological, and emotional trauma from spouse/ family; socially isolated and stigmatized. Literature highlights infertility in Nigeria, but paucity of empirical research on experiences of infertility among married Nigerian women obscure understanding of the phenomenon.

Purpose: To examine the Lived Experience of Infertility among Married Nigerian Women.

Methods: Max van Manen's (1990) qualitative phenomenological inquiry guided and directed this hermeneutic phenomenological approach; data analysis -Creswell (2013) six qualitative research activities. Reed's (2014), Theory of Self-Transcendence was the theoretical framework that paved a connection to the themes.

Results: Max van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenological approach conducted with 20 married women in Nigeria, self-identifying as infertile/sub-fertile 18 to 51 years, employed, residing in Nigeria, from Southeast. Participants recruited using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, via local church, Women's organizational Groups, tertiary women health centers, and Department of Gender Affairs of Southeastern States. Data collection: 60-minute face-to-face audio-recorded interviews using semi-structured interviews. Four major themes of challenging, dehumanizing, disharmonizing, and hoping were conclusive with one sub-theme of adopting emerging from theme of hoping. Married Nigerian infertile women's voices audibly echoed severe emotional, financial, psycho-social, cultural, and spiritual challenges while encountering infertility phenomenon. A participant, "Rose" stated, "A friend who ...infertile ... suddenly ...had baby, went ...a native doctor, he defecated asked her ...take eat it, ordinarily.... feces...disgusting. ... I've tried everything, really needed a child. wasn't, thinking about my own life, this stigma ...goes... away... anything, no matter what it is...remove the stigma. people stop calling me a barren woman....to do anything, feces are not meant to be eaten, am not a dog... I took". Reed's (2014) Theory of Self-Transcendence paved a connection to the themes and sub-theme to acquire in-depth conceptualization of this phenomenon, as related to infertile married Nigerian women.

Conclusions: This study showcased the embodiment of experiences of infertility; these women communicated their challenges hoping to make meaning of their lives and finding wholeness through adopting, spirituality, and other choices including helping other people. Participants' experiences add to body of nursing knowledge about infertility experiences among women in Nigeria and other developing countries.

Recommendation: More qualitative studies are needed-deeper understanding of experiences of infertile married Nigerian women, envisioning what it means to be married and infertile. Areas deserving exploration are effects of spousal communication on emotional experiences of married infertile women, evaluation of men's understanding of role in reproductive health with obligations in fertility evaluations, effects of family in-laws and societal appreciation of infertile couples' experiences of infertility. A study is warranted to evaluate women's understanding of reproductive "self" and coping with infertility and exploration of opposite gender's experiences.

Nursing Implications: This study, 1st qualitative nursing study on experiences of infertility among Nigerian married women, explored their lived experience unveiling the unique difficulties and needs that weighted on the emotional health of the married infertile Nigerian women

Title:

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Keywords:

Experience, Infertility and Married Southeast Nigerian women

Abstract Summary:

van Manen (1990) hermeneutic qualitative phenomenological study of lived experience of infertility among married Southeastern Nigerian women, using qualitative methodology of data collection and analysis, with emerged themes of *challenging*, *dehumanizing*, *disharmonizing*, and *hoping* with one subtheme of *adopting*. Pamela Reed's Theory of Self-Transcendence framework was used . Findings embodied infertility experiences.

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Author Summary: “There may be a great fire in our soul, yet no one ever comes to warm himself at it, and the passers-by see only a wisp of smoke, Van Gogh”. From the statements of infertile women from Nigeria, infertility is a raging fire, unseen by many around them, yet they try to keep a face mask that conceals their innermost feeling, I am here to tell a story of infertility.