Reviewer’s report

Title: Understanding the impact of gendered roles on the experiences of infertility amongst men and women in Punjab

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Reviewer: Arthur Greil

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This manuscript reports on a qualitative analysis of ten infertile women, two infertile men, and two infertile couples in Punjab, Pakistan. The article emphasizes the ways in which the experience of infertility varies by gender in a patriarchal context. I was particularly interested in reading about the role that endogamous marriage plays in preserving marriages challenged by infertility.

1. Major compulsory revision: I found the paper to well-written and informative, although it is missing some of the descriptive richness I expect from qualitative research. I would like to see more systematic discussion about Pakistani culture as well as more discussion of the case histories of the individuals being quoted. Right now, this article is suggestive, but I do not come away from it feeling fully informed about the ways in which Pakistani culture shapes the experience of infertility. This manuscript, were it to be more fully developed, has the potential to be incredibly informative and moving. I assume the lack of detail stems from space limitations imposed upon the authors by the requirements of the journal.

2. Major compulsory revision: My main concern here is that, while this article purports to compare the experiences of infertile men and women, almost all the quotes are from women. Thus, this is really an article about infertile women’s perceptions of the gendered nature of infertility in Pakistan. The manuscript would be much more satisfying if more attention were paid to the male point of view. The authors claim that their original contribution is that the attend to both men and women, but I would find their presentation much more convincing if more attention were given to men’s voices.

3. Major compulsory revision: It is not clear from the manuscript whether this is meant to be a discussion of men’s and women’s responses to infertility or to male infertility. My impression is that most, but not all, of the quotes come from individuals with male infertility. If this is an article on male infertility, then individuals with undiagnosed or female infertility should be removed from the sample. If this is to be an article on the gendered experience of infertility in general, then the sample needs to include more individuals with undiagnosed infertility and female infertility. My own preference would be for a paper that focused on male infertility. It strikes me that the most interesting and disturbing finding here is that women are blamed for infertility even when it is known that the infertility is due to a male factor.
4. Minor essential revision: The recommendations in the conclusion do not seem to flow from the main body of the text. The main theme of the text is that Pakistani culture has a powerful influence of the experience of infertility for both men and women. To conclude that health care deliverers should be more culturally sensitive seems like a relatively weak conclusion to draw from the moving accounts of these women.

To summarize, there is powerful data here, but the authors could do more to take full advantage of it. The authors need to decide whether this is an article about infertility or about male infertility, they need to be more systematic in explicating the cultural context, and they need to give the perceptions of the men more of a voice.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no competing interests.