

Are People Willing to Adopt Children When They are Childless? A Qualitative Exploration

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Abstract

Making the choice of becoming a parent is one of the most important life choices and every individual might not take the same path for various reasons.

Some individuals are childless involuntarily while others are childless by choice. A meaningful alternative to having a child is adoption, but limited research is done on what really forms their willingness or unwillingness to adopt, specifically in the Indian context. This study tries to examine how individuals without children think, feel, and decide both about whether to pursue parenthood biologically and about adoption as an alternative path to becoming parents.

Using qualitative data, thematic content analysis was done. This study gathered information by conducting in-depth and detailed interviews with 10 married individuals who are childless and aged 39 and above, chosen through purposive sampling. Three interconnected conceptual categories were found out with the help of the analysis: (1) experiences of childlessness, including involuntary situations, voluntary choices, and neutral acceptance; (2) emotional and psychological attributes, including coping with the help of faith, fear of rejection, and assurance in bonding; and (3) mindset of different individuals, showcasing the differences in attitudes of adoption and biological parenthood among different individuals. Individual perspectives on the adoption process revealed both an appreciation in the transparency of adoption agencies and a feeling of frustration due to the complexities in the adoption process.

The findings tell us that willingness and the decision to adopt is extremely personal which is moulded by various factors such as emotion, experience and culture. This study showcases the reasons for individuals being childless in India and how these individuals consider adoption. It also proposes simplification of adoption processes, reduction in social stigmatization and better support by organisations to be given to individuals who are going through this path.

Index Terms

Childlessness, Adoption Decision Making, Social Stigma, Adoption Attitudes And Perception, Adoption Process Challenges