

Supplementary File

The analytical process was done according to the standards for assessing published IPA studies (Smith, 2011) and included five central steps:

- 1) The first and second authors immersed themselves in the data and independently read and re-read through each transcript.
- 2) These authors read each transcript again and proceeded line-by-line making descriptive and conceptual notes and paying close attention to content, contradictory statements, and participants' language, such as pronoun and metaphor use.
- 3) These exploratory comments were used to generate emergent themes that aimed to concisely capture the psychological essence of the information. For each interview, the two authors discussed the emergent themes they had arrived at and explored similarities and differences in interpretation. Disagreements or discrepancies were resolved by reviewing the transcripts, followed by discussion between the first and second authors.
- 4) As part of phenomenological coding, these authors organized the emergent themes for each transcript according to their relevance to the topics that guided the interview, such as parenthood goal importance, goal blockage, and individual and dyadic self-regulation strategies. To assist in this endeavor, a summary account of every transcript was created, drawing on the emergent themes and summarizing the topical data of the interview.
- 5) An important tenant of IPA is searching for patterns across the transcripts. This step was achieved by carefully examining the summary accounts of each transcript for higher-order themes that could help answer the research questions. Once higher-order themes were identified, Smith et al. (2009) recommends assessing the frequency of each theme by whether it is recurrently present in each transcript. A higher order theme was considered 'recurrent' if it was present in over half of the sample, as determined by careful re-reading of transcripts, emergent themes, and summary accounts.

Supplementary File

Interview Guide

Introduction

Welcome!

As you were already informed in the study consent form and information sheet you received by email, in this interview I will ask you open questions about your thoughts and feelings regarding the decision of doing another fertility treatment cycle, as well as about the way you and your partner decide this together.

As mentioned on the consent form, this interview is being audio recorded. After, it will be transcribed to a text document and your name will be replaced by a pseudonym (false name) to ensure that your data remains anonymous. The audio record will be destroyed. You can tell us to delete your data until the moment it becomes anonymous.

The information given in this interview is confidential and, apart from me, no one will have access to it, including the (removed for confidentiality) staff and your partner. Myself and the other members of the research team will have access to the anonymised data file. In case you experience strong negative feelings during the interview, please let the interviewer know so she can help you or give you support contacts (as in the information sheet). We really appreciate your contribution to this study. We think that this interview will last around one hour. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. We are just interested in what you think and feel and we want to know your opinions.

When undergoing fertility treatment, patients can experience unsuccessful treatment cycles. According to our knowledge, you have recently experienced an unsuccessful treatment cycle. After experiencing an unsuccessful treatment cycle of IVF/ICSI, people normally have to decide if they want to undergo another cycle attempt or not. In this interview I would like to know your thoughts and feelings about this decision.

If we begin to run out of time during this interview I may need to stop you and redirect our discussion. However, unless I do this please continue to share your thoughts and opinions for as long as you like. The more information that we obtain the better. Do you have any questions?

So, let's start the interview.

Please be aware you can withdraw the interview at any time in case you start experiencing negative feelings

Parenthood goal importance

Biological parenthood is an important life goal for many people but it can have a different meaning for each person.

- Q1: Can you please tell me how important it is for you to be a biological parent and why? (*descriptive question*)
- Q2: What about your partner? Can you tell me your thoughts about how important it is for him/her to be a biological parent and why? (*descriptive question*)
- Q3: Can you tell me a bit more about possible similarities OR difference in the importance you and your partner attribute to being biological parents? (*Prompt question*)
- Q4: How do you think your decision about undergoing more treatment would differ if you and your partner's views about the importance of being biological parents were more similar OR more different? (*comparative question*)

While some couples achieve biological parenthood spontaneously, other couples, like you, have to do fertility treatment. This sometimes means doing treatment cycles that do not result in pregnancy.

Parenthood goal blockage

- Q5: Right now, how easy or difficult does it seem for you to become a (biological) parent with treatment? (*evaluative question*)
- Q6: Can you tell me about what you think are the main obstacles you are facing? (*structural question*)
- Q7: What do you think about what your partner thinks about how easy or difficult it seems for you to become a (biological) parent with treatment? (*circular question*)
- Q8: How do you think your decision about undergoing more treatment would differ if your and your partners' views about the chances (easiness or difficulty) of having biological children were more similar or more different? (*comparative question*)

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Individual Self-Regulation strategies

Regarding your desire to have biological children, please think about the present moment of your life.

- Q9: Can you tell me about how much you feel committed to having a biological child? (Prompt: for instance, if you feel you want to keep investing in your desire of having biological children) (*narrative question*)
- Q10: What do you think about how much your partner feels committed to having a biological child? (*circular question*)

- Q11: Do you feel committed to invest in other possible life goals (such as career) rather than biological parenthood? (*comparative question*)
- Q12: What do you think about how your partner feels committed to invest in other possible life goals (such as career) rather than biological parenthood? (*circular question*)
- Q13: How do you think your decision about undergoing more treatment would differ if you and your partner's views about being committed to having a biological child were more similar or more different? (*comparative question*)

Interpersonal Self-Regulation Strategies

Let's now focus on what you and your partner have been doing together to try to have biological children.

- Q14: What are the main similarities and differences (if any) in the ways you and your partner have been trying to have biological children (with treatment)? (prompt: for instance, sometimes a member of the couple try to show the other he/she is investing effort during the treatment process than the other because he/she uses to be more updated about the medical prognosis) (*contrast question*)
- Q15: Can you tell me about how you manage these possible differences? (*narrative question*)
- Q16: How do you think your decision about undergoing more treatment would differ if you and your partner's views about the ways you use to try to have biological children were more similar or more different? (*comparative question*)

Please think about the moments you have to make a decision about doing (more) fertility treatments.

- Q17: Have you and your partner been deciding together about if you want to undergo more treatment? (*narrative question*)

- Q18:

(for those that say yes)

Can you describe what do you mean by "deciding together" (*Probes question*) (prompt: for instance, do you talk about it often? What do you talk about? Are these discussions satisfying for you?...) and how it affects your decision of undergoing another fertility treatment cycle? (prompt: for instance, do you think that your decision would be different if you and your partner discussed it in a different way?)

OR

(for those that say no)

How do you think the decision of undergoing another fertility treatment cycle would be different if you and your partner would start to decide together? (*comparative question*) (prompt: for instance, would it be good to start talking about it often? What would you like to talk about? How do you think the discussion could be satisfying for you?...)

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Goal achievement

Please think about your and your partner’ desires and efforts made in order to become biological parents.

- Q19: Do you feel (and how) that the way you and your partner managed your joint desire and efforts to become a biological parent have helped you to be closer to reach that goal? (*evaluative question*)
- Q20: Could you tell me what you and your partner decided about undergoing or not another cycle attempt? (*descriptive question*)
- Q21: How do you feel regarding this decision (if any) and why? (*evaluative question*)
- Q22 – The interview is about to finish.. but before we would like make you a last question..
We have been focusing on an important life goal (parenthood) and now we would like to focus on other life goals.. Can you please tell me more about other goals in life you have already achieved? Do you feel grateful about it?

“By feeling grateful.. we mean that you make an effort to think about the many things in your life you already achieved, both large and small, that you have to be grateful about. These might include particular supportive relationships, sacrifices or contributions that others have made for you, facts about your life such as your advantages and opportunities. In all of these cases you are identifying previously unappreciated aspects of your life, for which you can be thankful. You may not have thought about yourself in this way before, but research suggests that doing so can have a strong positive effect on your mood and life satisfaction.”