

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Denying and Preserving Self: Botswana Women's Experiences of Infertility

Dintle K Mogobe

Department of Nursing Education, University of Botswana, Private Bag 00702, Gaborone, Botswana

*For Correspondence: E-mail: Mogobekd@mopipi.ub.bw and Phone: 00 267- 3552362

Abstract

This qualitative study was conducted to understand and theoretically explain infertility from the perspective of 40 infertile women and four members of the traditional health care system. Symbolic interaction and feminism were combined to undergird the study. Through ongoing data collection and analysis, a theoretical framework of denying and preserving self was constructed. Preserving self or self-preservation means developing personal measures aimed at preventing or reducing harm inflicted by others as a result of one's infertility. Contributory factors to denying of self include denial of status as a woman; denial of immortality; denial of experiences of pregnancy, labour and delivery; denial of economic and social security; and the belief that they are being chastised by God and the forefathers. In addition, the women develop strategies to deal with such denials by looking for deeper meaning, working it out, giving in to feelings, getting more involved, getting away, and doing adoption. Implications of the study are discussed. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2005; 9[2]: 26-37)

Keywords: *Infertility, women, gender, Botswana*

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