

INFERTILITY AS A CAUSE OF STRESS – A REVIEW ARTICLE

Dr. Swapnil Patil¹, Dr. Jai Kini²

1. PhD. Scholar, Dept. of Rognidan, YMT Ayurvedic Medical College, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai
2. Guide, Professor and HOD, Dept of Rognidan, YMT Ayurvedic Medical College, Kharghar, Navi Mumbai

ABSTRACT

Infertility is not only a physical condition but also a significant psychological stressor. Ayurveda explains that infertility disrupts the balance of the mind (Manas) and causes emotional disturbances such as anxiety, grief, and depression. This psychological stress further aggravates dosha imbalance—especially Vata—worsening infertility and trapping the individual in a cycle of emotional and reproductive distress. The impact of infertility on mental health is also well documented in modern science^{4 5 6}.

INTRODUCTION

Infertility is a global public health issue that impacts an individual's social, economic, and personal life. According to WHO, infertility is a reproductive system disease defined by the inability of clinical pregnancy to be achieved after twelve months of regular unprotected sex. Although infertility does not threaten life, it is depicted as a radical life-changing problem because it bears notable psychological trauma and social stigma. Infertility is a very distressful state; the stress associated with it causes a drop in sexual self-esteem, a decrease in the frequency of sexual intercourse, and an increase in marital conflict. Infertile individuals often report feeling less of themselves and inadequate. Statistics suggest that an estimated 48.5 million couples worldwide are not fertile, accounting for about 15% of all reproductive couples globally. About half of all cases of infertility are contributed by male conditions¹³.

Ayurveda recognizes that emotional disturbances originate from imbalances in Satva, Rajas, and Tamas. Infertility often leads to worry (Chinta), fear (Bhaya), and grief (Shoka), all of which increase Vata dosha, as noted in classical texts^{1+ 3}.

Modern research has shown that infertile individuals commonly experience anxiety, depression, and psychological distress^{4 7 8}.

Infertility-related stress arises due to:

- Social pressure
- Emotional dissatisfaction
- Low self-esteem
- Fear of future uncertainty
- Marital strain
- Persistent worry

These factors further disturb the doshas and impair reproductive health

INFERTILITY LEADS TO STRESS (AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE)

1. Aggravation of Vata Dosha

According to *Charaka Samhita*, emotions such as worry and fear aggravate Vata¹, disturbing mental stability and reproductive functions.

This leads to:

- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Restlessness
- Nervous tension

Vata imbalance further weakens Shukra Dhatu, worsening infertility.

2. Disturbance of Manovaha Srotas (Mental Channels)

Infertility generates chronic emotional pain, disturbing Manovaha Srotas, as described in *Ashtanga Hridaya*³.

This results in:

- Mood swings
- Depression
- Loss of enthusiasm

Modern findings correlate these symptoms with infertility-related stress^{4 6}.

3. Depletion of Ojas

Long-term emotional distress reduces Ojas, the essence responsible for vitality and mental strength¹. Low Ojas causes:

- Fatigue
- Weak immunity
- Emotional instability
- Low motivation

This decline further reduces reproductive efficiency.

4. Impaired Agni and Formation of Ama

Stress weakens Agni, forming Ama (toxins) that obstruct reproductive channels (Shukravaha Srotas) ¹. This results in:

- Hormonal imbalance
- Improper nourishment of tissues
- Reduced reproductive capability

5. Impact on Shukra Dhatu

Ayurvedic texts explain that emotional strain diminishes the quality and function of Shukra Dhatu³, reducing fertility.

Modern studies also show psychological stress negatively affects semen parameters and reproductive outcomes^{9,11}.

CLINICAL FEATURES OF INFERTILITY-RELATED STRESS

Patients may present with:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbances
- Reduced libido
- Social withdrawal

Infertility has been shown to cause more psychological distress than many chronic medical illnesses¹².

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

1. Manasika Chikitsa (Mind Therapy)

Ayurveda emphasizes Satvavajaya Chikitsa, which includes counseling, emotional support, and strengthening mental resilience¹.

Meditation & Mindfulness

These practices restore mental balance and increase Satva.

2. Yoga & Pranayama

Yoga stabilizes the mind and reduces cortisol.

Recommended Asanas are below:

- Vajrasana
- Balasana
- Shavasana

Pranayama:

- Nadi Shodhana
- Anulom Vilom
- Bhramari

Yoga has shown significant benefits in reducing stress and improving reproductive outcomes⁶¹⁰.

3. Rasayana Therapy

Rejuvenation therapy replenishes Ojas and strengthens mental stability.

Specific herbs:

- **Ashwagandha** – reduces stress, improves mood
- **Brahmi** – enhances calmness
- **Shatavari** – strengthens reproductive tissues
- **Jatamansi** – reduces anxiety

4. Vajikarana Therapy

Vajikarana nourishes Shukra Dhatu, improves hormonal balance, enhances libido, and reduces psychological stress related to infertility¹.

5. Panchakarma Therapies

Effective therapies include:

- **Abhyanga (oil massage):** calms Vata
- **Shirodhara:** reduces anxiety and mental tension

- **Nasya:** clears head channels
- **Basti:** the most effective therapy for Vata disorders¹

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda recognizes infertility as both a physical and psychological challenge. Emotional stress caused by infertility disturbs Vata dosha, weakness Ojas, impairs Agni, obstructs reproductive channels, and reduces Shukra Dhatu.

Modern science also confirms that infertility significantly increases anxiety, depression, and psychological distress⁴⁷⁸.

Ayurveda's holistic approach—including mind therapy, yoga, rasayana, vajikarana, and Panchakarma—helps to break this cycle and restore mental and reproductive health.

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