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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### RISK FACTORS AND CAUSES OF INFERTILITY

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#### Abstract

Infertility is the inability of a couple to achieve pregnancy over an average period of one year (in a woman under 35 years of age) or 6 months (in a woman above 35 years of age) despite adequate, regular (3-4 times per week), unprotected sexual intercourse. There are some risk factors that may give chances for infertility like; Age, diabetes, eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia, excessive use of alcohol, exposure to environmental toxins, such as lead and pesticides, over exercising etc. Infertility may be caused by a number of different factors, either in the male or female reproductive systems. So therefore it is most important to identify the cause and treat the infertility for becoming fertile to a woman.

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#### Introduction:-

Infertility is the inability of a couple to achieve pregnancy over an average period of one year (in a woman under 35 years of age) or 6 months (in a woman above 35 years of age) despite adequate, regular (3-4 times per week), unprotected sexual intercourse. According to the reports of the International Committee for Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technology (ICMART) and the World Health Organization (WHO), "infertility" is a couple's failure in pregnancy after 12 months of unprotected sexual intercourse and pregnancy attempts.<sup>i</sup> Infertility can be due to the woman, the man, or both. Infertility is primary or secondary.<sup>ii</sup> Primary infertility means that the couple has never conceived. Secondary infertility means that the couple has experienced a pregnancy before and failed to conceive later. Globally, most infertile couples suffer from primary infertility.<sup>iii</sup>

Infertility affects up to 15% of reproductive-aged couples worldwide. According to World Health Organization estimate the overall prevalence of primary infertility in India is between 3.9 to 16.8%. In Indian states prevalence of infertility varies from state to state such as 3.7 per cent in Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, to 5 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, and 15 per cent in Kashmir and prevalence varies in same region across tribes and caste.<sup>iv</sup> There are some risk factors that may give chances for infertility like; Age (over age 35 for women or over 40 for men), diabetes, eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia, excessive use of alcohol, exposure to environmental toxins, such as lead and pesticides, over exercising, radiation therapy or other cancer treatments, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), smoking, stress, substance abuse, obesity or underweight.<sup>v</sup> Infertility may be caused by a number of different factors, either in the male or female reproductive systems. In the female reproductive system, infertility may be caused by: tubal disorders such as blocked fallopian tubes caused by untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or complications of unsafe abortion, postpartum sepsis or abdominal/pelvic surgery, uterine disorders (such as endometriosis), septate uterus, or fibroids, disorders of the ovaries, such as polycystic ovarian syndrome, disorders of the endocrine system causing imbalances of reproductive

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hormones. The endocrine system includes hypothalamus and the pituitary glands. Examples of common disorders affecting this system include pituitary cancers and hypopituitarism.<sup>vi</sup> In the male reproductive system, infertility may be caused by: obstruction of the reproductive tract causing inadequate ejection of semen. This blockage can occur in the tubes that carry semen (such as ejaculatory ducts and seminal vesicles). Blockages are commonly due to injuries or infections of the genital tract, hormonal disorders leading to abnormalities in hormones produced by the pituitary gland, hypothalamus and testicles. Hormones such as testosterone regulate sperm production. In hormonal imbalance pituitary or testicular cancers, testicular failure to produce sperm due to varicoceles or medical treatments that impair sperm-producing cells (such as chemotherapy), abnormal sperm function and quality. Conditions or situations that cause abnormal shape (morphology) and movement (motility) of the sperm negatively affect fertility. For example, the use of anabolic steroids can cause abnormal semen parameters such sperm count and shape.<sup>vii</sup> Every human being has a right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Individuals and couples have the right to decide the number, timing and spacing of their children. Infertility can reverse the realisation of these essential human rights. Addressing infertility is therefore an important part of realizing the right of individuals and couples to found a family. Therefore is essential to treat infertility.

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