

**SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING OF  
INFERTILE WOMEN: A STUDY OF CONJUGAL RELATIONS,  
STIGMATIZATION, DISCRIMINATION,  
AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN HAIPHONG CITY, VIETNAM**

**LE THI THUY NGA**

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LE THI THUY NGA 4637976 SHHS/M

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THESIS ADVISORS: SANTHAT SERMSRI, Ph.D., SAWACON PERAPUN, M.S. (Development Economics), M.Com. (Honors) Economics, VEENA SIRISOOK, Dr.P.H.

**ABSTRACT**

This research explored the experiences of childless women in Vietnamese society, and how women suffer socially and psychologically due to their infertility. The suffering of infertile women was examined in the context of conjugal relations in Vietnamese families. The concepts applied in the research include stigmatization, discrimination and social support. The research targeted a group of infertile women seeking medical interventions in Haiphong City, Vietnam. The respondents in the research were married women pursuing medical treatment and counseling either in Haiphong Gynecology and Obstetrics Hospital or two fertility clinics in Haiphong town.

The research employed qualitative methodology with in-depth interviews and non-participant observation.

The findings revealed that infertile women suffered socially and psychologically, because of infertility, in many aspects of their lives in the Vietnamese patriarchal system. There was social disruption of sexual life and marital stability among childless couples. Infertile women were stigmatized because of infertility and discriminated against as they are seen as economically dependent upon the family. This tendency of disruption also appeared in the relationships with family members (parents-in-law, brothers and sisters-in-law, and kinship), and community members (neighbors, medical professionals, and fertile women).

Recommendations are made in an attempt to help infertile women improve their status. The power status of infertile women should be improved through opportunities in education and occupations. Stigmatization and discrimination against childless women should be addressed among concerned parties including family members and medical care experts. Health counseling should be provided and it is necessary to facilitate the empowerment of women through collaboration among medical doctors, social workers and psychologists.

**KEYWORD: INFERTILITY/ SOCIAL SUFFERING/ PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING/ CONJUGAL RELATIONS/ STIGMATIZATION/ DISCRIMINATION/ PATRIARCHY**

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