

ABSTRACT

Within research, the inability to experience parenthood becomes a secondary issue for infertile men, as most studies tend to focus on the psychological health concerns of infertility instead of social influences contributing to it. Fatherhood is an important aspect of masculinity and infertility presents a major obstacle to achieving it. Information concerning the desire for fatherhood is limited (Fisher & Hammarberg *et al.*, 2012), especially in South African contexts, where fatherhood is a valuable part of one's culture and status as a patriarchal figure (Richter & Morrell, 2006). The impact of male factor infertility becomes a challenge for men who are unable to participate in this experience as sociocultural expectations and norms are predominantly pro-reproduction and influence how men view fatherhood (Burton, 2014; Sylvest *et al.*, 2014). This qualitative study explored the participants' experiences of infertility and their perceptions of fatherhood by taking to account their concerns with their masculine identity. A phenomenological approach guided data in exploring the relationship between the perceptions of fatherhood and the masculine identity of infertile men, using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, 2004). Twenty-one men diagnosed with male-factor infertility between 26 to 43 years old were included in the study. Data was collected through volunteer sampling using anonymous self-report questionnaires. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the participants perceived fatherhood as valuable and desirable. Of these participants, fatherhood was perceived as either a personal desire outside of the social and gender role, whilst other participants perceived the desire for fatherhood in relation to their identity as a man in society.

Keywords: Fatherhood, Infertility, Male-Factor Infertility, Masculinity