

Prevalent Ideologies in the Gikùyù Language that contribute to the Stigmatization of the Involuntary Childless Women

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Abstract: In society, discourse is a key tool of power and control. If a woman does not have children within her childbearing years, she is stigmatised by society as a deviant and is expected to bear and raise children. Ideology and discourse are related in that they both come to us through or are reinforced by the language we use on a daily basis. As a result, ideologies are ingrained in the language that individuals employ. Therefore, ideology is utilised to support the dominant notions that stigmatise the involuntary childless woman. The main focus of this paper was on the prevailing notions that support the stigmatisation of involuntary childless women. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Fairclough and Van Dijk served as a foundation for the study. According to CDA, several components such as vocabulary, grammatical structure, and semantics should be thoroughly evaluated, and the study took that into account. Villages in Othaya sub-county, Nyeri County, were selected for the study using purposive sampling technique. They were Karima, Mahiga, Chinga, and Kairũ-thi. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and audio recording were both used by the researcher to gather data. Five respondents from each of the four villages took part in the FGDs totaling twenty involuntary childless women. After the data was collected, it was audio recorded, examined, and divided into themes. The study will mostly help linguists because it will inform them about how much language may be used to stigmatise social groups and equip them to fight for language change when necessary. This discussion will emphasise how language and ideologies are related and encourage curriculum developers to incorporate lessons on linguistic stigma, which will be useful for researchers who concentrate on gender issues as well. According to the study, attitudes created through language are used to stigmatise involuntary childless women.

Key Words: Ideology, stigma, Involuntary Childless, Gikùyù Language

I. Introduction

The non-Western nations, particularly those in the "infertility belt" of Central and Southern Africa, have the highest rates of infertility in the world (WHO, 2013). The societal and cultural framework of infertility in these societies is partially to blame for this. According to Cameron (2017), the issue affects up to 30% of marriages in resource-poor nations and results in significant suffering. More particular, infertility that is not voluntary affects one in four couples in underdeveloped nations (WHO, 2013). A core group of couples who are infertile for unknown or unavoidable reasons underlies these statistics. According to Cameron (2017), infertility affects at least 25% of Kenyan couples, making it a serious issue for reproductive health.

A woman is linguistically stigmatised when she is unable to conform to pronatalist social norms. Theoretically, according to Siwila (2022:134), "a language reflects the thoughts, attitudes, and culture of the people who make it and use it." Therefore, the producers and consumers of these languages have the power to shape reality. As a result, they use language as a tool to create, support, and spread their own bias or worldview. Similar to how there are many various ways to use language, Cameron (2017:36) argues that some language functions are functional, artistically pleasing, or morally just than others. Language, in her opinion, is not employed accidentally. The society should consequently pay close attention to why a speaker selects particular terms over others. They should also ask themselves what the user hopes to achieve by using those specific terms. This is true for both language used in everyday situations and language used for specific objectives, such as linguistic stigma. Since infertility has a social and cultural impact on society, the study's main point of interest was how language was used towards involuntary childless women to stigmatise them bearing in mind the prevalent ideologies among members of the Gikùyù community.

II. Literature Review

2.1' Pronatalist Social Norms

The "motherhood mandate," a collection of societal expectations on women to have and raise children, has an impact on certain women's reproductive decisions (Inhorn, 1996). Motherhood can have both biological and social elements, just like fatherhood can. Therefore, a woman can be a child's biological mother without also being that child's social mother, and vice versa. Pronatalism is a term initially coined by feminists to describe a set of pervasive and oppressive social practises that promote biological motherhood. It encourages the idea that women are solely naturally suited to bearing and nurturing children. As a

result, it essentializes women as parents and defines them in terms of their child-bearing responsibilities (Cameron, 2017). People who deviate from societal expectations are stigmatised because they are viewed as non-conformists.

Mc Quillan et al. (2014) claims that mothers are frequently seen as "genuine," "complete," "good," and "authentic" women. The act of having children is seen as a symbol of success and a means through which women can position themselves in society. These ideas are completely formed in a person's head prior to them verbally expressing it. According to All port (1954), an individual's bigotry is more likely to reflect his general worldview than it is merely a specific attitude regarding a particular group. This calls into question the function that ideologies serve in a social setting.

2.2. Discursive Negotiation of Motherhood

The value of parenthood for the female role is still emphasised by our cultural and social systems (McQuillan et al., 2014). The therapeutic literature asserts a connection between childbirth and women's sexual and psychological development (Siwila, 2022). The disclosure of the wife's pregnancy is sometimes viewed as an emblem of manhood in the husband, despite the fact that nothing is written on the value of motherhood for males. But the inability to have children is likely the result of a problem with the mother (Sophanna, 2016). This is due to the fact that dominant groups create society's ideologies in order to uphold and justify their power. They believe that the domination is inevitable, natural, and a gift from God (Siwila, 2022). The majority of infertile people learn of their condition considerably later in life, usually after committing to marriage and forging a strong adult identity. Given pronatalist sentiments, it is likely that this sense of self for both men and women centres on the possibility of falling pregnant, giving birth, and raising children to some level. The discovery of infertility may have a significant impact on one's social identity and actions. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine how widely held beliefs about childless women affect their sense of social identity.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

Fairclough's (2001) and Van Dijk's (2006) theories of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) served as the foundation for this investigation. The CDA theory was important to the study because it explained how power relationships are created and sustained in Gikùyù society as well as how stigmatising ideas about women are transmitted to create dominant ideologies, upholding power.

Critical discourse analysis holds that in order for the reader to completely comprehend what a text is saying, the form and intent of the text must be examined. It also shows how writing is produced, absorbed, and connected to the rest of society. As a result, CDA views text as an all-encompassing process in which social practises are entwined with it and establish a symbiotic relationship in which they are dependent on one another (Richardson, 2007). According to Fairclough (2001), analysis should always start with the text and then progressively include additional, more complicated discursive practises that are also socially acceptable.

In order to analyse speech, Fairclough (2001) contends that it is essential to consider its process and social environment. He advises the researcher to always consider the issue's institutional and social structures as well as to the current circumstances. According to CDA, grammar, lexicons, and semantics by themselves are not particularly significant. This is because their functionalities consistently stand out in any investigation. This concept was crucial to this study since it was explored in the context of phrase usage in the stigma towards involuntarily childless women. Richardson (2007) argues that it is essential to concentrate on conventional approaches to language analysis and to critically assess how they either uphold or undermine social norms and power structures. He further claims that before evaluating the employed characteristics of the text, one should take other possibilities that the society had into consideration. The grammatical constructions and lexicons were examined to assess the predominate ideas in the community in order to gauge the severity of the stigma in the Gikùyù community. The paper's objective was to discover community stereotypes that stigmatise involuntarily childless women.

Van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive approach to CDA also demonstrated to be quite applicable to the study. Language users, like members of organisations, groups, or races, take on social attitudes that have been established in them. This ideological cognitive element is often referred to as "the communal mental representation of language." There are three basic categories used to classify social cognitions. Van Dijk (2006) states that the first is comprehending ideologies from a cultural standpoint. Members of the affected community often exchange this information. Because it is shared equally across cultures, knowledge that is disseminated in this way is typically seen as part of public discourse. The second is attitudes. They can be viewed as people's perceptions of one another, and social and cultural realities influence their conversation. Ideology is the final and most important factor. Ideologies are essential principles that shape the beliefs of the broader public, claims Van Dijk (2006). The dominant group uses these ideas to legitimise and spread the stigma in order to reign over others. In line with the paper's objective of identifying the dominant beliefs that stigmatise the involuntary women in the Gikùyù community, the theory revealed social attitudes. This ideological idea was included in the last section of Fairclough's (2001) research. In order to accurately portray the linguistic stigma, all expressives in this research were considered as ideologies.

Every bit of data gathered for the study was thought to contain cultural ideas that had developed through linguistic learning and generational evolution and had since been stored in cognitive processes. For any indications of a power imbalance between the dominant and marginalised groups, the data was carefully scrutinised. According to this study (Fairclough, 2001), any attempts to uphold specific discursive practises that centre on ideologies that are seen as dominant in opposition to those that are seen as inferior are seen as dominances in power. The purpose of this paper was to examine the prevailing ideologies that support the stigmatisation of childless women who choose to remain childless.

III. Methodology

The research used the qualitative research approach (Labov, 2018) in order to examine the stereotypical prevalent ideologies, spread about the involuntarily childless women. The target population consisted of 20 women, aged 45 to 65, who were involuntarily childless. The respondents for the study were selected by purposive sampling. Othaya Sub-County of Nyeri County was the only area included by the study. When compared to other counties in Kenya, Nyeri is regarded to have the highest rate of infertility. According to (KDHS, 2020), 866 cases of infertility, affecting both men and women, were documented in the county during the years of 2012 and 2019. With 328 individuals or 38% of the county's infertility rate being from Othaya sub-county making it the sub-county with the highest percentage of cases. Among them were 68 men and 260 women. In Othaya sub-county, the four villages of Mahiga, Chinga, Kairũ-thĩ and Karĩma were specifically sampled because the researcher had seen that infertility was common in the four villages. The study was guided by eight FGD questions, and the researcher selected unique instances that were informative. The involuntarily childless women were divided into Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs). The information was then tape recorded to make sure no data was lost. After being transcribed, the data was then translated.

On ethics, the study sought the consent of the respondents before the actual Focus Group Discussion. The consent was sought both verbally and in written form. The names of the respondents were not mentioned and they were given codes. The data was then put under lock and key.

IV. Results

In response to the FGDs in this part, the solutions had to present unique viewpoints. The frequent stereotypes held by the Gikũyũ community about childless women and what society expects of them serve as the foundation for this section. The information was arranged and condensed into themes. Relevant sub-sections illustrated the discrepancy between what the community thought of the involuntarily childless women and what it expected of them as a result of their childless status. Ideologies are groups of ideas that make up a larger system of cognition or thought (Cameron, 2017), and all of these ideas fit under this category. They were thus formed through routine conversational interactions, which are essential in forging identities and bonds within society.

4.1. Childlessness versus Social Biography Discourses

Discourses about social biographies convey social roles and normative expectations. Like many other African ethnic groups, the Gikũyũ community places a high priority on social and communal ties (Njuguna, 2019). There is a lot of societal pressure to identify with and belong to popular groups. An individual who defies categorization is seen with suspicion as "a solitary individual, a non-person" (Cameron, 2017). There are many ways to fit in with the right crowd, but none—particularly for women—is more important than having a child. Children make it possible for individuals, large families, and lineages to be taken seriously and to achieve the required status (Kimani & Olenja, 2001). Having children not only increases the size of the extended family but also ensures the survival of the human race (Kimani & Olenja, 2001). All facets of social interaction are incorporated into the social practise of childbirth. This procedure includes the manufacturing process as well as the interpretation process. In support of this notion, one respondent stated:

Gũthiĩ mũciĩ ona kũrĩ na ũndũ gũtiangenagia. Tata akwa nĩ manjũragia ciũria itarĩ mũthia hĩndĩ ciothe cia thigũkũ. Nĩmarigagũ mũno niatia na ũthaka wakwa itarĩ na ciana. Manjikaragia thũ maita maingĩ mũno makienda kũmenya nĩkũ kia riire kĩa kũngĩ. ũndũ ũcio nĩ watũmire ngũre kairetu gakwa na riũ nĩmamenyerire.

Going home for whatever reason made me miserable. My aunts would grill me nonstop every time I went for Christmas. They could not comprehend how a stunning wife like me could not become pregnant. They even sat me down and kept asking me questions. I had to adopt a lovely young girl. Now, they were used to it. (Respondent 19: 50 years)

The aunts of the respondent above were unhappy that she was unable to conceive. So, whenever they encounter her, they do not think twice to express it. They made an irrelevant comparison between her beauty and the fact that she did not have children (Njuguna, 2019). Her aunts unknowingly anticipated her to be a "normal" woman because, according to this study, she was gorgeous up until she fell short of social norms. A significant emphasis in the pronatalist beliefs of the Gikũyũ people is placed on the relationship between a woman's value and her ability to procreate.

A woman of reproductive age is deemed a deviant and is stigmatised by society when she is unable to achieve these social expectations by bearing and raising biological offspring. The body is the most common of three separate stigmatised abominations, according to Goffman (1963). Infertility is one of these physical abnormalities. Linguistic stigma regularly labels, stereotypes, segregates, and discriminates against involuntary childless women (Sophanna, 2016) in a power dynamic that permits all of the stigma's components to form. Only social forces may produce this kind of stigma. Added one more respondent:

Ha indo mũthuri wakwa ni mũrathime no ni v̄ndv̄ v̄heaga ruo mũno tondv̄ ndingiumira andv̄-ini tondv̄ ingirv̄o nditamborithie ki-v̄gikv̄ȳ njagiv̄r̄ire ni gv̄itambv̄r̄ithia ngitagv̄o nyina wav̄.

Since my husband is one of the wealthiest in the community, I don't usually go to public events, but when I do, cultural norms demand that I present myself as the mother of so-and-so... (Respondent 1:45years)

The respondent decides not to attend public events because the cultural demands placed on her are too much for her to handle. She finds it challenging because her husband has a lot of clout in the community. She asserts that women had frequently proposed marriage to her husband on the grounds that they were "women enough," which is to say that they could bear and raise children, as opposed to the respondent who let her husband down. She claims:

Kv̄i mũtumia wa iv̄ra wetwarire kv̄i mũthuri wakwa tondv̄ niarenda kv̄mwehereria thoni cia kv̄aga ciana tondv̄ we ni mũtumia mv̄kinyaniru dahana tani.

One woman from our village approached my husband and offered to help. She informed him she could bear him "enough" children, unlike me. (Respondent 1:45years)

Therefore, children are critical for developing relationships, exposing adults to social groups that are important for the life cycle, and encouraging a healthy lifestyle. It is terrible to be on the edge of social life, and childlessness makes a woman especially vulnerable. In the Gikv̄ȳ society, adults are also assigned at birth in addition to children. All of these are made possible by the use of language, which serves a social purpose in establishing and negotiating meaning.

4.2. Childlessness vs Gendered Discourses

The majority of males are reluctant to defy gender norms because doing so could result in rejection and ridicule. It is required of all men to present themselves in a manly manner (Connell, 2005). As a result, social pressure forces them to follow accepted norms. A respondent remarked:

Ndahik̄itio ni mũtungat̄iri rita riakwa ri mbere kv̄hika. Giv̄mi giake giake giã gv̄tiga v̄tungat̄iri kiari aciari ake tondv̄ nimendaga tvc̄v̄ nan owe wari mwanake kwao. Niandigire riv̄ra onire ati ndiimv̄ciar̄ira...

The priest I had as my first husband, gave up his priesthood to appease his parents' demands for grandkids as he was an only son. He divorced me after I let him down by not getting the children that he so much wanted... (Respondent 20: 64 years)

Due to the gendered ideals ingrained in him, her priest husband filed for divorce. Men were expected to abide by the reality-constructs established by hegemony in accordance with the norms established by the culture of a particular society (Connell, 2005). Men who were unable to father children or did not do so, like women, were assigned subordinate duties since it was believed that they did not live up to hegemonic norms of manhood. These gendered ideologies discriminate against involuntarily childless women since the dominant group (men) creates and justifies its dominance through the use of gendered language (Fairclough, 2001). The involuntary childless woman is stigmatised through language because society believes that motherhood is God-given, natural, and unavoidable (Inhorn, 1996). This is because they do not comprehend her situation. The respondents' affirmative comments supporting this finding are listed below:

Ha kv̄menyerera ciana cion a athuri ri, atumia niõ matongoragia..

Mothers are fantastic at taking care of their children and husbands. (Respondent 6: 61years)

Wira woth̄e wa nyumba ni wa atumia.

Home maintenance is the responsibility of women. (Respondent 8: 60 years)

In pronatalist civilizations, the term "mother" is highly revered, and it is claimed that motherhood gives women their sense of self (Inhorn, 1996). In the Gikv̄ȳ society, the terms "mother" and "woman" are synonymous because it makes sense that all women should have children. When (Respondent 6: 61 years old) claims to have been informed that a mother's first duty is to take care of her children and spouse. She is steadfastly upholding a conventional societal structure that socialises women as feminine, in which all women are expected to uphold the traditional social order and where their main responsibility is universality and

stability, which equates to the motherhood mandate (McQuillan et al., 2014). (Respondent 8: 60 years old) asserts that caring for the home is a woman's primary responsibility. These ideologies characterise a "good" mother as unselfish, child-centered, and capable of putting family needs ahead of personal goals. This gendered ideology is practised, upheld, and spread in society, where it has become the standard (Sophanna, 2016). All women are expected to work towards having children and to take on maternal responsibilities. In the Gikũyũ culture and all of Africa, having a child is not something that a couple, especially the woman, decides on her own.

Oduyoye came to the conclusion that motherhood is one of a woman's most important characteristics after coping with her infertility. The Swahili proverb "Gumba hashukuru," which translates to "A barren wife never thanks," refers to the idea that women without children have few reasons to give God thanks for because children are the greatest gift that God can give a woman. One of the respondents stated the following:

Mũhĩrĩga witũ ndũri ndeto cia rũracio kwaga gũtwarũ kana gũtwarũ mũgaro na ũgikũyũ. Na niũndũ woguo ũndũ ũyũ ni mũritũ. Ndĩri na ũndũ wa gũatĩra.

My lineage shows me that the dowry has been paid as it should have been. I consequently do not comprehend this situation. I don't have anything to be grateful for. (Respondent 16: 48 years)

According to Kimani and Olenja's (2001) study *Infertility: Cultural Dimensions and Impact on Women in Selected Communities in Kenya*, infertility is connected to a variety of different things in different Kenyan communities. Infertility was thought to be the result of breaching taboos, such as failing to pay bride wealth. The respondent, however, asserts that there was no violation of the established dowry payment standards in her lineage, making it impossible for her to identify the source of the infertility.

It is important to emphasise that stereotypes are closely related to gender since it affects how they are created. These stereotypes are conceptual boxes that society makes in order to explain events and persons. Language is used to reflect and infer cultural beliefs and attitudes, which helps to spread stereotypes.

4.3. Childlessness versus Religious Ideologies

The pronatalist Gikũyũ group has a strong religious tradition. People's religions are influenced by their social constructionist beliefs, which affect all aspects of their lives (Van Dijk, 2006). The Gikũyũ women will do anything to have their own child because, even in religion, childbirth is the pinnacle of a woman's grandeur. Additionally, rather than offering comfort, religion encourages women to become pregnant and have children. The anxiety of a barren womb is only heightened by Old Testament teachings that use language similar to the curse issued in the creation myth. In a later passage, God warns the young nation of Israel, "The offspring of your womb and the fruit of your ground shall be cursed" (Deuteronomy 28:15a, 18a, ESV), if they do not heed the voice of the Lord their God or take care to obey all of His instructions. Even if this is followed by a promise that those who obeyed would have an abundance of offspring (Deuteronomy 28:11, ESV), the negative associations with fruitlessness are wholly established by the conclusion of the historical account. Given that the barren womb is shown throughout the Old Testament as a symbol for God's retribution for disobedience, some individuals see infertility as a "repression from a higher power for past sins and indiscretions" and see infertile women as "morally suspect" (Siwila, 2022). Gehman (2022) asserts that many childless people would mistrust not only the supernatural but even their own selves in an effort to make sense of their circumstances. Respondent 13 said:

Maita maria maĩngĩ ndatũraga na ihoru na kũrero ngĩũragia ngai kũria ndahitirie.

I used to get emotional a lot and cry my eyes out asking God why He had abandoned me. (Respondent 13, 49 years)

The respondent struggled to understand why God had left her. Gehman (2022) claims that women who are childless often ask, "Has God abandoned me?" Have I done anything to encourage this to occur? Is there some sort of punishment here? (p.3). When it comes to delivery and reproduction, women have historically been seen as "essential to self-identity and to the fulfilment of gender roles and religious duties" (Siwila, 2022, p. 45). According to Mc Quillan et al. (2014) (p.384), women who believe that there are "inherent, God-given, variations among men and women" are more inclined to "follow the conventional feminine duty" of childbearing.

4.4. Childlessness as the Deviant 'Other'

Simone De Beauvoir coined the term "othering" in 1949 to describe how women relate to males dialectically (Sophanna, 2016). Since then, instances of normative standards-based exclusionary behaviours have been added to this description (Siwila, 2022; Mc Quillan et al., 2014). The phrase is used in this context to emphasise how women who choose not to have children are viewed as outcasts and the "other" because they do not adhere to the social norms associated with parenting. For instance, when people inquire about children, it stigmatises them by reinforcing the notion that they are

imperfect and abnormal. This was acknowledged by Siwila (2022) in her research, and one respondent reaffirmed it in their response:

Maita marià maingì-rì, atumia makoragǔo makiaria ndeto o' cia ciana na mahuu ta gǔgǔturithia. Utari wahitukìra marià marauga taniì rì, wendaga o òmehere tondǔ ndǔrì na uge.

Whenever women meet up, the common connecting thing is children and pregnancy. When you have not experienced either, like me, you always want to move away from them because you have no experience on the situation. (Respondent 10: 47 years)

In contrast to severe criticism from others, the respondents' experiences revealed a more pervasive theme of feeling denied and lacking room to place oneself (Siwila, 2022). Involuntary childless women are stuck in the social framework without knowing who they are since they do not fit anywhere. The childless experience, according to the respondents who took part in the FGDs, was difficult and uncomfortable. A respondent said:

Thaa ici ndirì n auge. Maa nìmarìo, ndiaragìria andǔ rìu. Njiguaga njiganiìre ǔguo. Ndihotaga kwaria ndeto icio ona hanini.

I'm speechless right now. Truth be told, I've decided to keep it to myself. For me, that makes it simpler. It's so awkward to bring it up. (Respondent 5: 44 years)

It is difficult to come up with a consensus definition of involuntary childlessness without appropriate communication discourses, as well as the acknowledgment and acceptance of women without children. There is a lack of understanding of the struggles that involuntarily childless women face in the discourses that depict this constructive stigma.

Nieendi mǔno. Magiaaga ciana ta marashindana (akìnyira). Tutingìkìaria nao ndeto icio.

They are ignorant. They have kids like it's a fashion statement (sneering). Therefore, it is very difficult to discuss that with them. (Respondent 10: 47 years)

The involuntarily childless woman is stigmatised since she is thought of as a deviant person. They come to realise that they cannot fulfil the social norms of parenthood. Based on the same evaluation criteria, these women's social and gender identities that are related to parenthood are evaluated. Because they lack a different identity or a space to perform "creative labour," they stop being considered women (Siwila, 2022). This "deviant" approach has a number of unfavourable effects, including being ignored, stigmatised, abused, and losing authority (Sophanna, 2016) making the stereotypical social and ideological norms very powerful.

V. Discussion

The primary conclusions of the paper were determined after taking into account the objective, data analysis, and subsequent findings. The study was built on the following research question:

- i. Which are the prevalent ideologies that contribute to stigmatizing involuntary childless women among the Gikùyù people?

According to the study, ideas were intentionally crafted to caricature involuntary childless women, and they were then used to persuade the public to believe these stereotypes to be true. This begs the question of whether there are any stereotypically held views that contribute to the stigmatisation of the involuntarily childless women. The research revealed that the Gikùyù community had negative preconceptions about childless women who are involuntary childless and frequently compared them to mothers. It was very challenging to shift men's and women's perceptions about a woman's infertility because such beliefs had been ingrained in both groups of people's thoughts at a very young age. The study found that gender ideology had a significant impact on people's sense of identity and self and cut across socioeconomic and social barriers. As language is never used accidentally, it was utilised to develop, sustain, and challenge gendered conceptions, adding to stigma.

VI. Conclusion

The primary objective of the paper was to discover prevailing norms that support the stigmatisation of childless women in the Gikùyù society. The research revealed that language plays a big part in how stereotypes are formed. This function is illustrated by the way in which certain prejudices are generated, reinforced, and repeated to produce society beliefs. The study showed how deeply ingrained these biases are in the Gikùyù community hence contributing to the stigmatisation of involuntary childless women. In this approach, the study's main finding—that the Gikùyù group has ingrained stereotyped views in its members—is validated and confirmed.

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Appendix 1- Focus Group Discussion Guide Questions - Involuntary Childless Women

A researcher from Laikipia University would like to determine the discursive strategies used while stigmatizing the involuntary childless women in the Gikùyù community. Be guaranteed that:

1. Neither your identity nor name will feature anywhere in the final research.
2. Your voluntary disclosure of information is only used for scholarly purposes.

Kindly respond to these questions.

Bio Data

A. Among these age groups, which one do you fall under?

- i. 44-49
- ii. 49-54
- iii. 54-59
- iv. 59 -65

B. Mention whether you are married.

How many times have you been married?

Section A – Childlessness Versus Stigma

i. What led you to believe or draw the conclusion that you are infertile? Have you ever had an infertility test?

If the answer is no, why do you think you are the infertile one rather than your partner?

If so, has the absence of a child caused your marriage to suffer?

ii) How long did you try to conceive unsuccessfully?

Section B – Stigma vs Social Support

- i. Is there any shame associated with your infertility? If so, then by who?
- ii. Which phrases did your partner, coworkers, in-laws, neighbours, and/or relatives use to express their disappointment in your inability to have children?
- iii. Which terms, expressions, or sentences were most frequently used to refer to you or your condition?
- iv. What questions do people ask you when they find out you are infertile?
- v. When you were younger, how did you picture your family?
- vi. How has the absence of children impacted that dream?