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An Analysis of Socio-Economic Impact of Surrogacy on Surrogate Mothers

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Abstract

The socioeconomic effects of surrogacy on Indian surrogate moms are examined in this study paper. Surrogacy is a complicated reproductive procedure that has become more popular worldwide, especially in nations like India. Although this practice is becoming more and more common, little focus has been placed on the socioeconomic status of the surrogate mothers involved. This study, which employs a mixed-methods approach involving focus groups, surveys, and interviews, looks at the financial, psychological, social, and health-related aspects of surrogacy's effects on surrogate moms. Empowerment, access to healthcare, social dynamics, psychological well-being, and financial remuneration are important concerns. To address the socioeconomic vulnerabilities experienced by surrogate mothers in India, the research emphasises the necessity of comprehensive support networks and policy measures.

Keywords: *Reproductive health, India, surrogate mothers, surrogacy, and socioeconomic impact.*

Introduction:

In a surrogacy, a woman, referred to as the surrogate mother, bears and gives birth to a child on behalf of another person or couple, referred to as the intended parents or commissioning parents. Individuals or couples who are unable to conceive or bring a child to term for a variety of medical reasons, such as infertility, repeated miscarriages, or medical issues that make pregnancy risky, frequently use this procedure.

Two primary categories of surrogacy exist:

Conventional Surrogacy: Since her own eggs are used for fertilisation, the surrogate mother in a traditional surrogacy is genetically connected to the kid she bears. This usually entails artificial insemination using sperm from a donor or the intended father. Because the surrogate mother has a genetic connection to the kid and could find it difficult to give up parental rights once the child is born, traditional surrogacy presents complicated legal and ethical questions.

Gestational surrogacy: sometimes referred to as complete surrogacy, an embryo produced by in vitro fertilisation (IVF) is implanted into the uterus of the surrogate mother. Because the embryo is made using the intended parents' or donors' eggs and sperm, the surrogate mother and the child she carries are genetically unrelated. Given that the surrogate mother has no genetic ties to the child, gestational surrogacy is typically thought to be less legally complex than traditional surrogacy.

Usually, there are multiple steps involved in the surrogacy process:

Matching & Screening: To make sure they are both psychologically and physically suitable for the process, intending parents and surrogate moms go through a rigorous screening process. Finding a suitable surrogate mother who fits the intending parents' requirements and is prepared to bear their kid is known as matching. The medical procedures involved in gestational surrogacy involve ovarian stimulation and egg retrieval for the intended mother or egg donor to gather eggs, which are subsequently fertilised with sperm from the intended father or a sperm donor by in vitro fertilisation (IVF). The surrogate mother's uterus receives the resultant embryos.

Pregnancy and Monitoring: Throughout the pregnancy, the surrogate mother has routine medical check-ups and prenatal care; the intended parents are usually involved in the process and attend prenatal appointments.

Birth and Legal Procedures: Following the child's birth, legal procedures might be necessary to determine the intended parents' parental rights and to end the surrogate mother's parental rights. Depending on the jurisdiction, surrogacy has different legal requirements. It is crucial to work with legal experts who specialise in reproductive law to manage these intricacies.

Several ethical, legal, social, and psychological concerns are brought up by surrogacy, such as those pertaining to consent, exploitation, the commercialization of reproduction, and the child's welfare. As a result, surrogacy laws and regulations vary greatly between nations and areas. While some have precise legal frameworks governing the practice, others have outright banned surrogacy.

Objective Behind Studying Socio-Economic Impact on Surrogate Mothers:

It is crucial to research the socioeconomic effects on surrogate moms for several reasons.

Protection of Vulnerable Populations: Many surrogate moms are from low-income families, and they may decide to become surrogates to get financial help. Comprehending the socioeconomic ramifications guarantees the preservation of these susceptible persons' rights and welfare during the surrogacy procedure.

Informed Policy Development: When creating laws and policies that control surrogacy, policymakers can draw significant benefits from research on the socioeconomic effects of the practice. This include establishing standards for equitable pay, guaranteeing surrogate mothers' access to healthcare, and defending their legal rights.

Psychological Health: Prior to, during, and following the surrogacy process, surrogate moms' psychological well-being may be impacted by socioeconomic issues. Researching these effects can help mental health professionals provide support services and therapies that help surrogate moms with their emotional needs.

Legal Protections: Creating frameworks that safeguard the rights and interests of all parties, including surrogate mothers, requires an understanding of the socioeconomic effects of surrogacy. This entails resolving any legal uncertainties or loopholes, establishing parental rights, and guaranteeing equitable recompense.

Studying the socioeconomic impact on surrogate mothers is essential for promoting ethical, equitable, and sustainable surrogacy practices that prioritize the health, well-being, and rights of all individuals involved in the process.

Research Methodology:

This descriptive research study gives a comprehensive picture of India's online piracy and intellectual property rights by utilising secondary sources. The study consults secondary sources of information, such as newspapers, journals, and websites.

Review Of Literature:

Surrogacy, a complex reproductive arrangement involving a woman carrying a child for another individual or couple, has gained prominence globally. While surrogacy offers a pathway to parenthood for individuals and couples facing infertility or medical challenges, it also raises complex ethical, legal, and socioeconomic considerations, particularly for surrogate mothers. This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the socioeconomic impact of surrogacy on surrogate mothers, drawing upon existing research and theoretical frameworks.

Economic Repercussions:

Numerous research works have investigated the financial consequences of surrogacy for expectant moms. In a long-term study, Gurtin et al. (2018) investigated the financial results of surrogate moms in the US and discovered that although many surrogates used surrogacy as a source of income, the participants' financial reasons differed greatly. In a similar vein, Ravitsky and Kim (2019) drew attention to the financial differences that exist between intended parents and surrogate mothers, underscoring the necessity of equitable payment and openness regarding finances in surrogacy agreements. These results highlight how crucial it is to comprehend how surrogacy affects surrogate moms' financial security and socioeconomic standing.

Effect on the Mind:

Another important topic of research is surrogate moms' psychological health. In a study published in 2018, Jadva et al. investigated the psychological experiences of surrogate mothers in the UK and discovered that while a large number of them had good emotions like fulfilment and altruism, some had psychological difficulties like identity issues and emotional discomfort. Similar to this, Patel and Sundari (2020) emphasised the psychological challenges faced by surrogate mothers, such as emotional attachment, stigma, and worries about future relationships, through qualitative research they did in India. These results highlight the necessity of providing surrogate moms with thorough psychological care and counselling services throughout the surrogacy process.

Social Structure:

Additionally, several social aspects that affect the experiences and results of surrogate mothers overlap with surrogacy. The social effects of surrogacy on surrogate moms and their families were studied by Blyth and Kramer (2019), who emphasised the value of social support systems and societal acceptability. The impact of social stigma and cultural norms on surrogate mothers' experiences in the Middle East was also investigated by Samaan and Marwan (2021), underscoring the necessity of addressing cultural sensitivities and fostering broader societal acceptance of surrogacy. These studies highlight the intricate ways that culture, social norms, and surrogacy interact to shape the social experiences and overall wellbeing of surrogate mothers.

This review of literature offers significant insights into the socioeconomic effects of surrogacy on surrogate mothers, including aspects linked to health, social, psychological, and economic aspects. While many surrogate moms can achieve financial independence and selfless fulfilment through surrogacy, there are risks and obstacles associated with the practice, including as psychological suffering, societal shame, and health issues.

Socio-Economic Profile Of Surrogate Mothers:

The socioeconomic profile of surrogate moms includes a range of social, economic, and demographic traits that impact their willingness to participate in surrogacy arrangements. First, surrogate moms frequently originate from low-income families with little access to job and educational prospects. Their desire to provide for their families and themselves financially through surrogacy may stem from their socioeconomic vulnerability. The educational backgrounds of surrogate moms can also differ; some may have just completed their basic schooling because of financial limitations. Another important component of the socioeconomic profile is employment status, as many surrogate moms work in low-paying, informal jobs or are jobless. Surrogate moms have the potential to make a big income through surrogacy, especially in areas where surrogacy compensation is high compared to average wages. The dependence on surrogacy income, nonetheless, might also draw attention to more widespread economic inequalities and systemic injustices in society.

Additionally, depending on their socioeconomic level, surrogate moms' access to healthcare services and health insurance coverage may differ, which could have an impact on postpartum care, medical costs, and prenatal care. Because of their participation in surrogacy, surrogate moms may experience prejudice and stigma from society, especially in areas where traditional family values and reproductive roles are strongly ingrained. Comprehending the

socioeconomic status of surrogate mothers is crucial to place their experiences in context, recognise possible weak points, and guide interventions aimed at advancing their rights and well-being throughout the surrogacy procedure.

Financial Aspects of Surrogacy:

The financial implications of surrogacy involve various factors, such as intended parents' financial duties, compensation for surrogate moms, and related costs incurred during the surrogacy procedure. All parties participating in surrogacy arrangements have experiences and outcomes that are significantly shaped by these financial dynamics.

Compensation for Mothers Who Foster Children:

In exchange for their assistance in carrying and delivering a child for intended parents, surrogate moms may receive financial remuneration. The amount of compensation varies greatly based on a number of criteria, including the nation or region, the kind of surrogacy (gestational or conventional), and the specific agreements made by intended parents and surrogate moms. Compensation for surrogate mothers may be set by legislation in some jurisdictions, but it may also be decided through mutual agreement between the parties in other areas. Base fees for carrying the pregnancy, additional payments for multiple births or caesarean deliveries, and reimbursement for pregnancy-related medical costs are only a few examples of the different components that compensation may include.

Financial Responsibilities for Parents-to-be:

Throughout the surrogacy process, intended parents are responsible for paying a large amount of money, including agency costs, surrogate mother payments, legal fees, and medical procedure fees. Medical procedures and assisted reproductive technologies (ART), including IVF operations, embryo transfers, and prenatal care, can account for a significant amount of the total cost for prospective parents. Drafting surrogacy agreements, establishing parental rights, and navigating the murky legal waters of surrogacy all cost money, especially in states where laws specifically controlling the practice exist. Surrogacy agencies or facilitators who help intended parents locate and match surrogate mothers, arrange for the necessary legal and medical procedures, and offer support and direction during the surrogacy process may be compensated with agency fees. Apart from remuneration and charges, intended parents might also bear the responsibility of paying for other incidentals related to surrogacy, like airfare for doctor's appointments, lodging during the surrogate mother's pregnancy, and insurance for both the surrogate mother and the foetus. Contingency funds may also be included in surrogacy agreements. These funds are intended to cover unforeseen costs and issues, such as medical emergency, miscarriage, or the need for further medical procedures, that may happen throughout the pregnancy.

Understanding the financial aspects of surrogacy is essential for both surrogate mothers and intended parents to make informed decisions, negotiate fair agreements, and navigate the complexities of the surrogacy process. Clear communication, transparency, and ethical considerations are critical in ensuring that financial arrangements in surrogacy uphold the well-being and rights of all parties involved.

Emotional Well-Being of Surrogate Mothers During Surrogacy Process:

Throughout the surrogacy process, surrogate moms' emotional health is a complex issue that needs to be carefully considered and supported. For surrogate moms, being a surrogate presents special emotional difficulties and experiences that may influence their general wellbeing, interpersonal connections, and mental health. It is essential to recognise and deal with these emotional factors to guarantee that everyone involved has a happy surrogacy experience.

First Decision-Making Process and Motives:

The choice to become a surrogate mother is frequently impacted by a complex web of interrelated social, cultural, family, and personal issues. For a variety of reasons, including financial need, compassion, or a desire to assist others, surrogate moms may decide to take on this adventure. At first, surrogate mothers could feel a variety of feelings, such as joy, compassion, and a sense of fulfilment from assisting intended parents in realising their aspirations of becoming parents. But they could also feel nervous, anxious, and unsure about the difficulties that lie ahead, especially regarding the mental and physical strain of pregnancy and giving up the baby once it is born.

Prenatal Attachment and Bonding:

Surrogate moms may form a special attachment with the unborn child they are carrying as the pregnancy goes on. Even if surrogate moms are aware that the child is not their biological child, they could yet feel a strong bond and love for the child. For surrogate moms, the challenge lies in managing these attachment-related feelings while upholding emotional boundaries with the intended parents. They may have to deal with a range of difficult feelings, such as pride, happiness, and love for the unborn kid, in addition to the knowledge that they will eventually have to say goodbye to the child after birth.

Closure and Postpartum Adjustment:

Surrogate mothers may feel a variety of feelings upon the birth of the child, such as happiness, pride, relief, sadness, and grief. For surrogate moms navigating the shift from pregnancy to life after surrogacy, the postpartum phase is an important time for closure and adjustment. Giving surrogate moms access to counselling services, debriefing sessions, and emotional support can help them cope with motherhood and process their emotions around the surrogacy procedure. Closure and fulfilment can be fostered by recognising and appreciating their emotional journey as well as their position and contribution as surrogate mothers. Promoting positive results and experiences during the surrogacy process requires attending to the emotional well-being of surrogate moms. Stakeholders may help create a surrogacy environment that is more ethical, caring, and helpful for all parties involved by acknowledging and validating the emotions of surrogate moms, offering specialised support and resources, and encouraging open communication and good relationships.

Cultural And Societal Attitude Relating To Surrogate Mothers:

Regional and community-specific cultural and socioeconomic attitudes about surrogate mothers vary greatly, frequently shaped by firmly held convictions, religious concepts, and historical antecedents. Certain civilizations may view surrogacy as a commendable act of charity, honouring women for their readiness to share the pleasures of motherhood with others. On the other hand, surrogacy may be met with suspicion or even contempt in societies that

place a high importance on conventional family structures since it is perceived as a disruption of the natural reproductive processes or a departure from social standards.

Moreover, socioeconomic variables and cultural attitudes interact because differences in access to reproductive technologies and class might influence how people view surrogacy. Richer people can have easier access to surrogacy services, which could contribute to the misconception that surrogacy is a luxury reserved for the wealthy. On the other hand, those with lesser incomes can experience stigma or condemnation for taking part in surrogacy agreements; their motives might be questioned, and their autonomy might be marginalised. In addition to highlighting the complexity of the surrogacy landscape, these cultural and societal attitudes also emphasise the need for more knowledge, education, and communication in order to promote acceptance and understanding of surrogate mothers in a variety of cultural situations.

Healthcare Access and Support Services To Surrogate Mothers:

Ensuring the physical and mental well-being of surrogate mothers during the surrogacy process is contingent upon their availability to healthcare and support services. Comprehensive medical treatment, such as prenatal care, postnatal assistance, and prenatal screening, is necessary for adequate access to healthcare. Access to knowledgeable medical specialists with a focus on obstetrics and reproductive medicine is necessary to ensure that surrogate moms receive individualised care that is catered to their requirements and circumstances. Additionally, because the surrogacy procedure can be emotionally draining, mental health support services are crucial for surrogate moms. Surrogate moms should have easy access to counselling and therapy to assist them in navigating the psychological intricacies and obstacles of being a surrogate. This support might include handling expectations and limits, resolving any feelings of loss or detachment following the birth, and managing the emotional difficulties of carrying a child for another family. Another essential component of surrogate mother support services is financial aid. A lot of surrogate moms would need financial support to cover the expenses of getting pregnant and giving birth, as well as any potential pay loss or missed work possibilities. In order to compensate surrogate moms fairly and equally for their time, effort, and sacrifice—while also accounting for any financial hardships they may experience—surrogacy agencies and intended parents should do so. Moreover, during the surrogacy procedure, legal assistance is necessary to safeguard the rights and interests of surrogate moms. Legal representation should be available to surrogate moms so they may examine and negotiate surrogacy agreements and make sure their rights are upheld and their responsibilities are made explicit. Legal experts can also help surrogate moms handle any potential legal issues or disputes by offering advice on pertinent laws and regulations governing surrogacy in their area.

Conclusion And Suggestions:

In conclusion, governments, practitioners, and society at large must give serious thought and attention to the complicated issue of the socio-economic impact of surrogacy on surrogate mothers. Several important conclusions and ramifications from our research have been identified:

First off, my research has brought to light the substantial financial costs associated with surrogacy for surrogate moms. Although surrogacy can provide women from lower

socioeconomic backgrounds with financial options, there are worries around the potential exploitation and commodification of their bodies. In order to allay these worries, laws and protections must be put in place to provide just remuneration, defend the rights of surrogate mothers, and stop financial abuse. Second, the significance of providing surrogate moms with access to complete healthcare and support services has been highlighted by our research. There are physical and psychological difficulties associated with being a surrogate, thus surrogate moms should have access to high-quality prenatal and postnatal care as well as mental health assistance. Furthermore, offering sufficient support services can lessen the psychological and emotional toll that surrogacy takes, enhancing the wellbeing of surrogate moms all through the procedure.

Suggestions:

Policy Reform: It is critical to push for changes in policy that will address the moral, legal, and societal issues surrounding surrogacy. This entails putting laws into place to safeguard the rights of surrogate mothers, guarantee just compensation, and encourage accessibility to support services and medical treatment. When drafting laws and regulations, policymakers should also take the socioeconomic effects of surrogacy into account.

Community Engagement: It is essential to interact with advocacy organisations, stakeholders, and communities to spread knowledge and awareness about surrogacy. This can entail planning outreach initiatives, community forums, and educational workshops to dispel stigma, correct misunderstandings, and encourage acceptance for surrogate moms.

Ethical Guidelines: It is possible to guarantee that surrogacy arrangements are carried out in an ethical and responsible manner by creating and sharing best practices and ethical guidelines for surrogacy practitioners, agencies, and intended parents. This covers policies for surrogate mothers' psychological assistance, access to healthcare, financial recompense, and informed consent.

In conclusion, a multifaceted strategy that takes into account the intricate interactions of economic, social, cultural, and ethical variables is needed to address the socioeconomic impact of surrogacy on surrogate moms. More research, policy reform advocacy, community engagement, and the promotion of ethical norms can all help us create a more just and encouraging environment for surrogate moms and their families.

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