

## Attitudes and motives of potential sperm donors in Novi Pazar region of Serbia

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**Abstract:** *The paper explores motives for being sperm donor, and relevant attitudes of potential sperm donors in Novi Pazar region of Serbia: willingness to donate to different categories of receivers, and importance of confession, ethnicity and education level of potential receivers to potential donors. Our results show that the strongest motive to donate is to help a childless couple, financial compensation is not important but reimbursements of travel expenses is; ethnicity, confession and education level of women who are recipients are not important for donation although most potential sperm donors prefer to donate to women with higher education level. These results may be used in making a good strategy for promoting sperm donors from this region of Serbia.*

**Key words:** *potential sperm donors, sperm donor related attitudes, Novi Pazar, Serbia.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the contest for curing infertility, promotion of sperm donors and their donations are very important. Donors' rights (regulated by law) towards offspring resulting from their donation [10,12] their motives for donating, attitudes about people they want to donate sperm, are of great importance for clinicians, social workers and well-being of the child. With open systems of donation [6,9,13], attitudes of sperm donors about different categories of receivers become more important. It is a great challenge to create a successful recruitment strategy of sperm donors nowadays in contest of new demands about donors – receivers relations.

Wish to help childless couple is the main reported sperm donation motive in several studies [1, 2, 4, and 14].

With revocation of the donor's anonymity, it became important for some donors to know the identity of the recipients. Donors' attitudes towards different recipient categories (to whom they want to donate) are influenced by cultural values, and, possibly, by some personality traits. "Donors should have the right to direct their gametes to categories accepted as relevant by the moral and religious communities in their society." [7].

As interest for sperm donations for lesbian couples is increases [11] many private clinics include this option in their offer in spite of legal regulations prohibiting assisted reproduction for lesbian couples or single women. In one Danish clinic, approximately 50% of sperm donors would accept sperm donation to lesbians in both surveys (in 1992 and 2002) In 2002, approximately one third was positive towards donation to single women [7]. "In Germany health care coverage fertility therapies applies only to married heterosexual couples who are legal residents of Germany. The fertility clinic (in which the study was conducted) provided fertility therapies to unmarried heterosexual couples viewed as life partners, who paid out of pocket, but restricted access to other prospective clients, such as lesbian couples and singles" [15]. Over half sperm donors in Germany are willing to donate for other than heterosexual and married couples, thus risking legal responsibility [14].

Attitudes towards financial compensation for donation differ from country to country [14, 10, 1, 9, and 16]. In a study in Germany, most of sperm donors agreed that donors should receive financial compensation for their donation, but not all favoured reimbursement of costs [15]. "In France, semen donation is both unpaid and anonymous by law, and only reimbursement of travelling costs is permitted [10]. Research conducted in Australia and New Zealand also reported that the majority of men who donated semen for altruistic reasons rated payment rather unimportant [1]. In Sweden, Lalos et al. [9] reported that more than half of sperm donor state that they should be paid for sperm donation and almost twice as many from Umea (most of them were students) (81%) compared with Stockholm (43%) thought that providers should be reimbursed and not suffer financially.

The goal of our study was to explore relevant sperm donation related attitudes: motives for being sperm donor, attitudes towards different category of receivers, and are confession, ethnicity and education level of potential receivers important for potential sperm donors in the Novi Pazar region - a multiconfessional region of Serbia. The results may provide data that can be used for the creation of more effective donor recruitment strategy, and promotion of sperm donors and their relevant attitudes towards sperm donation.

## METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

### Measures

Measures of sperm donation related attitudes were obtained by using, the questionnaire that was based on that used by Thorn et al 2008 (7) and studies in Germany, New Zealand, Australia, UK and Sweden [1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 15] but adapted so that it would fit the context in Serbia [8]. The questionnaire consists of 40 questions, of which 15 concern sperm donation related attitudes and motives, and was thus considered in our analyses. This questionnaire contains demographic data and questions about whether a person would be interested in becoming a sperm donor, and a number of questions on attitudes about various aspects of the sperm donation process. We divided these questions into 5 groups: motivation, anonymity, finances, potential receivers of sperm donation and relations with offspring. In this paper motives for becoming a sperm donor, attitude towards potential financial compensation and potential receivers will be presented.

The study was conducted on a sample of 116 male participants. Men aged 18-40 were asked to participate in the study. Participation in the survey was voluntary. The study was conducted in September 2010.

### Sample characteristics:

Most participants (69%) were born in Novi Pazar, and Sjenica (14, 7%), others were born in Tutin (4, 3%), Prijepolje (4,3%), Kragujevac, Pančevo, Beograd, and Jagodina. The mean age of participants was 22, 52 years (min 19, max 38, SD 3, 98). 92, 2 % of was between 19 and 29 years of age. 95 (82,6 %) participants were students, 5(4,3%) were employed, 4(3,5%) were entrepreneurs, 5 (4,3%) unemployed, 3(2,6%) were students and employed at the same time and 3(2,6%) were students and entrepreneurs at the same time. One (0, 9%) didn't answer this question. In our sample 10(9%) participants were married, 1 (0, 9%) were divorced, 26 (23,4%) were in a long-term relationship, 72 (64,9%) were single or in a short-term relationship. 6 examinees didn't answer this question.

**Religion:** One (0, 9%) participant declared himself as Buddhist, two (1, 7%) as Atheists, 13 (11,3%) as Bosniak, 20 (17,45) as Christians, and 79 (68,7%) as Muslims. One participant did not answer this question.

35 (30,2%) participants stated that they would not be willing to be a sperm donor, and they were excluded from analyses relating to potential donors. Only participants who answered yes or maybe on the question about willingness to become a sperm donor were considered potential sperm donors.

## RESULTS

**Motivation:** Motives were divided in 5 categories. Participants assessed the intensity of their motives for becoming sperm donors on a five-point self-assessment scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). Results are presented in the Table 1.

The most pervasive motive for making a donation in our sample was the wish to help a childless couple. The mean reported intensity of this motive was significantly higher than the same measure of all other motives. The second most intensive motive was the desire to verify one's own fertility, while the mean intensity of the financial compensation motive

was much lower, and in line with the mean reported intensity of the curiosity motive (the difference in mean reported intensities was not statistically significant). These results are in line with the findings of several other studies [1, 2, 4, and 12] that reported the wish to help others to be the main reported sperm donation motive.

Table 1. Motives for being sperm donor and its intensity

Motive	Mean	SD
wish to help a childless couple	4,4459	0,95289
wish to inspect donor's own fertility	3,4259	1,47433
financial compensation	2,1569	1,44738
curiosity	2,2692	1,48344

**Financial compensation related attitudes:** 21,5% of participants considered that financial compensation should be given to sperm donors, 59,5% have opinion that financial compensation should not be given to sperm donors and 19 are not sure about receiving the financial compensation. 58,2% of participants considered that travel expenses should be reimbursed to sperm donors, 27,8% that travel expenses should not be reimbursed. Others (13, 9%) are not sure about reimbursement of travel expenses. These results are in line with the fact of relatively low importance given to financial compensation as a motive for making a donation.

Table 2. Importance of confession, ethnicity and education level of receivers

	%		
	yes	no	Not sure
Would <b>confession</b> of women who will receive your donation be important for your decision to donate?	20,3	63,3	16,5
Would <b>ethnicity</b> of women who will receive your donation be important for your decision to donate?	13,2	60,5	13,2
Would <b>education level</b> of women who will receive your donation be important for your decision to donate	17,1	51,3	31,6

Although 51,3% considered education level of women who would receive the donation not important, when asked which education level of women receiver they would prefer, 56,4% would prefer to donate to women with faculty (the highest education level), 15,4% would prefer to donate to women with a university degree. And 7,7% to the women with bachular degree or master degree.

Attitudes towards willing to donate to different **category of recipients are given in the Table 3.**

Table 3. Recipients of the donation

Question	%					
Who would you make a donation to?	people I am acquainted with	people I am not acquainted with	both	Acquaintan is not important		
	13,9	26,6	25,3	34,2		
Which categories would you make a donation to? (% checked)	married couple	heterosexual pair	lesbian pair	widow	single woman	divorced woman
	90,9	32,3	21	57,8	58,7	49,2
Would you give consent for your sperm being used by... (% yes)	married couple	heterosexual pair	lesbian pair	widow	single woman	divorced woman
	93,5	59,7	21,9	51,6	50,8	46

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

Our results show that the most important reported motive for making a sperm donation in our sample is the wish to help a childless couple, while financial compensation, ethnicity, confession and education level of women who are recipients turned out to be relatively unimportant sources of motivation. A majority of potential donors reported willingness to make a donation to a married and heterosexual couple, but in a much lesser percentage to a lesbian couple or a single woman. The results are in line with results of certain previous studies in other countries, but also point to a certain variability in sperm donation related attitudes across countries. Our future work will be to explore connections of religion and sperm donation related attitudes in multiconfessional and uniconfessional environments in different religions

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**Докладът е рецензиран.**