

Beyond the Nuclear Ideal: A Qualitative Analysis of Forum Posts by Single Mothers by Choice

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Abstract

In 2018, 3.2 per cent of all fertility treatments were undertaken by single patients. Despite this prevalence, there is limited research that explores the experiences of single mothers by choice through sperm donation. Previous studies have highlighted the value of online forums, in terms of accessible support and information sharing with others who have similar experiences. This paper aims to offer an insight into women's experiences and concerns, and the advice they offer and receive when pursuing this pathway to motherhood. A thematic analysis of an online fertility forum of 39 forum posts by 28 different forum contributors was undertaken. Three themes were identified: 'Making the choice', 'the challenges of becoming a single mother by choice' and 'support provided by the forum'. Women seeking solo motherhood through sperm donation appeared to carefully consider this decision, and plan for the potential future challenges. Furthermore, the use of online forums provided a sense of belonging and validation that created a safe space to share experiences. This enabled women to receive support that was presented as a crucial element in their journey to motherhood.

Keywords: Single mothers by choice, Support forums and donor-conceived children, Sperm donation and single mothers, solo motherhood, choice mothers

Introduction

Any discussion of 'single mothers by choice' requires an understanding of a number of key issues relating to reproduction, family organisation and changes in relational practices, as well as understanding the wider social pressures that those seeking solo motherhood face. In this section, I will outline the historical and societal context surrounding solo motherhood before moving on to discuss how this study will help contribute to existing literature.

Background

This study explores single women who choose to become a mother through methods of assisted reproduction. **Donor insemination** (DI) is a form of third-party assisted reproduction that uses donor sperm to enable individuals or couples to conceive (Zadeh *et al.*, 2016). This type of fertility treatment involves injecting donor sperm directly into the womb and is most commonly accessed by women with no fertility problems who need donor sperm (HFEA, 2021a). **In Vitro Fertilisation** (IVF) is an alternative and more invasive method of assisted reproduction where eggs are collected and mixed with sperm in a laboratory. If fertilisation is successful, an embryo is transferred into the womb (HFEA, 2021b). Recent years have seen an increase in the number of patients with no partner seeking parenthood through assisted reproduction. In 2016, of all patients using DI, 17 per cent were unpartnered, which demonstrates an increase of 8 per cent since 2014 (HFEA, 2018). Similar patterns have been found among patients accessing IVF treatment – which has become the main treatment type for all single patients (HFEA, 2020). The increase in single women

utilising sperm banks has also been observed in other countries, demonstrating the growing prevalence of this route to motherhood (Russel, 2015).

The clear increase in the use of [Assisted Reproductive Technologies \(ARTs\)](#) among single mothers has raised debates about the legislation in considering who ought to be permitted access to fertility treatments in the UK (Zadeh and Foster, 2016). ‘Single mothers by choice’ are women of any sexual orientation who actively decide to become mothers without the involvement of a partner. These women are also referred to as ‘choice mothers’ and ‘solo mothers’ (Graham, 2018; Jadva *et al.*, 2009). It has been cited that this sub-group of single women are typically aged mid-to-late thirties, European or American, middle-class and well-employed (Bock, 2000; Mannis, 1999; Mattes, 1994; Morrisette, 2008; Weinraub *et al.*, 2002). Most women who actively seek out solo motherhood do so through attending fertility clinics for donor sperm (Jadva *et al.*, 2009). This pursuit of motherhood has raised wider questions about both the structure of the family and how this family is created (Graham, 2018). Psychological literature has found that solo mothers, and their children, are well-adjusted and categorised by positive mother–child relationships (Golombok *et al.*, 2016). Despite these positive outcomes, disapproval has been voiced by politicians (McCandless and Sheldon, 2010), fertility professionals (Lee *et al.*, 2014) and the UK media (Correia and Broderick, 2009; Michelle, 2007; Zadeh and Foster, 2016) who have challenged the damaging effects of destabilising the nuclear family. Researchers (Zadeh and Foster, 2016) have observed how critics position the marital unit as the best possible framework to raise children. However, factors related to negative outcomes for children in single-parent families (parental conflict, economic hardship, disruption of family relationships) do not apply to single mothers by choice (Jadva *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, debates have questioned whether women could actively choose single motherhood yet still act as a ‘good mother’ (Graham, 2018) and whether women are putting their needs above their child by condemning them to a fatherless life (Weathers, 2007). These views highlight the stigma attached to single mothers by choice who are exposed to prejudice and potential discrimination (Krajewska, 2015).

Online forums are often used by parents for emotional support or advice regarding physical and social aspects of parenting concerns (McDaniel *et al.*, 2012). These forums may challenge stigma by providing a unique source of social support and a space for women to seek advice anonymously (Moore *et al.*, 2016). Communication in specialist forums can be used by single mothers by choice, or those considering this option to share information, experiences and support. It has been noted that the popularity of these forums heavily relies on their convenient accessibility and the anonymity offered (Hanna and Gough, 2018), which provides users with the opportunity to discuss ‘taboo’ topics without the perceived need to be ‘politically correct’ (Coulson, 2005). Online forums provide naturally occurring ‘conversational’ data as a useful tool to capture raw opinions, experiences and advice (Arden *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, forum users are more genuine and open in their responses than in data elicited from more traditional means, such as interviews, focus groups and questionnaires (Gosling *et al.*, 2004).

Existing studies have suggested that the factors of age, decreasing fertility and failure to find an available partner contribute to women considering becoming a single mother by choice (Bock, 2000; Graham, 2018; Hertz, 2006; Jadva *et al.*, 2009; Mannis, 1999; Murray and Golombok, 2005). Jadva *et al.* (2009) explored the motivations and experiences of 291 ‘solo mothers’ through online questionnaires. Choice mothers were well-educated women who did not experience any marked financial difficulties in choosing this route to motherhood. They made practical changes to facilitate their decision and felt that it was important to have and maintain a male role model for their child (Jadva *et al.*, 2009). This confirms findings from previous studies with smaller and less-diverse samples (Bock, 2000; Klock *et al.*, 1996; Leiblum *et al.*, 1995; Mannis

1999; Murray and Golombok, 2005). Jadvá *et al.* (2009) also found that women continued to identify with, access and participate in the 'single mother by choice' community, which shows the significance of intra-community support among these women. Similarly, Graham (2018) found that solo mothers believe that they are capable of fulfilling the requirements of being a 'good parent' and negotiating the risks involved in a single-parent family structure. Graham (2018) drew on the narratives of 23 choice mothers through interviews, finding that women were aware of the possible consequences of their decision, including the judgement from others. However, ultimately it was accepted that solo motherhood would have to be considered to pursue their deep-rooted desire to become a mother (Graham, 2018).

Despite the growing number of single women seeking solo motherhood through [sperm donation](#), there is minimal knowledge about those who consider this pathway (Weissenberg *et al.*, 2007) and limited literature exploring their unique experiences relating to intra-community support. This research paper seeks to address this gap in the literature by offering an insight into women's experiences, concerns and the advice they offer and receive when pursuing solo motherhood. This exploratory research hopes to provide a unique contribution to existing studies by utilising forum posts. The conversational data derived from these peer interactions will offer a new insight into the experiences of these women.

Methods

This study analysed data from an online forum that focused on becoming a single mother by choice through sperm donation. The data was gathered from 'Netmums';^[1] the UK's biggest parenting website, which offers support and local information primarily for women. Netmums self-reports having a comparatively greater number of users from low-income families (Russell, 2006), compared to 'Mumsnet', which has a demographic skewed towards older, well-educated, middle-class women (Pedersen and Smithson, 2010; Pedersen and Smithson, 2013). Messages were collated from the most recent forum thread titled 'single mothers with [donor-conceived children](#)', dated from October 2017 to November 2019.

The forum thread incorporated 39 posts by 28 different contributors and reflected the perspectives of women who were either already single mothers by choice or considering this. Of these posts, 21 were publicised as a direct reply to existing posts made by forum contributors. The average length of posts in the thread was 115 words, ranging between 6 and 524 words. Only messages written by women who were discussing becoming a solo mother via sperm donation were selected for analysis.

Forum posts were considered using thematic analysis to establish the recurring themes and patterns present throughout the data. Thematic analysis was carried out with reference to Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. The first phase of analysis involved the author examining the data on a semantic level through repeated reading and establishing recurring patterns. The second phase was concerned with generating initial codes to highlight the information of interest and further organising this into larger meaningful groups. With reference to the previous notes and codes, themes and sub-themes were agreed with the supervisor of the project to embody the overarching definitions and patterns in the data. The analysis was done manually without the use of software to aid the immersion of the researcher within the dataset itself.

This study followed the British Psychological Society's (BPS) guidelines for internet-mediated research (British Psychological Society, 2013). Due to the open nature of online forums, ethical approval and informed consent were not required. Forum users of 'Netmums' are made aware of the publicity of forum threads upon registration for the site. While contributors did not use their full name on the site, usernames and any other identifying information were anonymised. Participants' usernames were replaced with pseudonyms.

Findings

Three key themes were identified from the data: 'making the choice', 'the challenges of becoming a single mother by choice' and 'support provided by the forum'. Each theme relates to several sub-themes that embody the experiences of the women. Themes and sub-themes are presented below with illustrative quotes

Theme 1: Making the choice

Motivations for choice motherhood

There were a range of motivating factors involved in choosing solo motherhood that were shared among the posters. One woman talked of her experiences conceiving her son after a failed relationship:

I couldn't put my dream of motherhood on hold any longer and, like many have said, I did not see the point in looking for a relationship based on having a child. I was living with my parents (still am) and, in the end, it was my mum who said 'I think you should pursue having a child on your own as I can't bear you to miss out on motherhood'.

– (Eve)^[2]

Eve highlights her strong desire to become a mother and states that she did not want to waste time actively looking for a relationship to conceive a child. This sentiment was echoed by other women, who also spoke about their choice to seek solo motherhood in the context of not finding a partner to settle down with:

I'm in my early mid 30s, always wanted children and have decided to go it alone after not meeting 'the one'.

– (Sarah)

I'm a 33 year old woman who for many reasons, have failed to find 'the one'.

– (Emma)

These posts display concern about not finding 'the one' to have children with. The use of this language indicates that women had hoped to seek their perfect 'one and only' partner to fulfil their destiny of having a child. This shows the high levels of pressure women place on themselves to find the ideal partner to achieve motherhood. Both women also highlight the factor of age within their concerns over their partnership status. These interlinked factors indicate that many women's choice to seek solo motherhood was based on being unable to find their ideal partner within the limitations of age and the notion of the 'ticking time bomb'. Christina spoke of her anxieties regarding her fertility and conceiving naturally as she is getting older:

I always knew I would have trouble conceiving naturally, and being single in my 30s, I had it set in my mind that it wasn't going to happen for me. At 35, I started to think about going it alone. I considered it on and off for a couple years, then all of a sudden it clicked. This is what I wanted/needed in my life.

– (Christina)

Similarly to other women, Christina cites her increasing age as a dominant reason to seek solo motherhood. Moreover, the time Christina spent considering her options suggests that she seriously reflected on the possible implications of solo parenthood. For other women, their choices were shaped by concerns about being able to conceive naturally due to their gynaecological health conditions:

I was diagnosed with premature ovarian failure at the age of 34 years and decided to 'go it alone' in the face of some daunting statistics about my likelihood of ever conceiving, even with IVF.

– (Jane)

I have just come out of a relationship where the guy didn't want children. So I have decided to go it alone as it's all I've ever wanted! I am 33 and have polycystic ovary syndrome.

– (Judy)

The posts presented in this sub-theme suggest that seeking solo motherhood is based on a deep desire to experience motherhood, but not being in the position to do so within a traditional partnership. The factors of age and fertility health exacerbated women's urgency to conceive within their limited fertile time frame. This suggests that the motivations of choice motherhood are primarily based on circumstances, rather than single motherhood being the ideal and preferred option.

Gratitude for making the choice

The second sub-theme highlights women's triumph over adversity in choosing solo motherhood. One woman spoke about her struggles, but expressed gratitude in choosing this pathway to motherhood:

I feel continuously blessed to have my girl, and although, without a shadow of a doubt, it has been the most overwhelming thing I have ever done, it has also been the most life-affirming experience and I would not change a second of being a single mother by choice.

– (Jane)

Jane reflects that seeking solo motherhood was the right decision, despite the challenges and unpredictable nature of becoming a solo mother. Many women clearly related to this experience and expressed similar feelings:

Nothing ever prepares you! But it's totally worth it :-D My little baby is the best thing that's ever happened to me!

– (Alice)

Having my son in my life has made me the happiest I have ever been.

– (Christina)

These posts reflect the women's strong appreciation for their child after seeking solo motherhood. This indicates that the choice to become a solo mother was affirmed after experiencing motherhood and meeting their child. Moreover, these women may be more reflective on what life would have been like having not pursued this pathway and potentially missing out on becoming a mother altogether.

Theme 2: The challenges of becoming a single mother by choice

The posters identified a number of challenges involved in becoming a solo mother, which covered a range of social aspects, including the fiscal realities of raising a child alone, the ethical dimensions of having chosen motherhood, extending the family again through sperm donation, and the views and opinions of others.

Financial strain

Several women highlighted the fiscal reality of seeking solo motherhood and looked to the forum for guidance on the financial implications:

And another worrying side is financial. My company is only offering a six-week fully paid maternity leave; the rest is statutory pay of about £500–£550 per calendar month. How does one deal with this

in this country, when nursery is £20,000+? I'm flat sharing at the moment and even though I could afford to rent by myself, this would take about 50% of my income and I'm not sure how much I could afford the rest – childcare, and my own expenses.

– (Jade)

Jade highlights the financial burden of becoming a single parent and the reality of raising a child alone. Posters used the forum as a safe space to share concerns and seek clarification on the financial challenges of solo motherhood, while other women discussed the financial setbacks of fertility treatment:

So I am now thinking about going to a fertility clinic instead, but I've been told the costs are huge?

– (Emma)

My costs for the IVF are only around £6,000 (in addition to the IVF, a donor from my clinic, drugs for my treatment plan, four counselling sessions and 1 year storage if I freeze my eggs).

– (Annette)

These posts highlight some women's lack of knowledge on the fiscal reality of single parenthood and fertility treatment, and how this has affected their experience of pursuing this pathway. These extracts also demonstrate the practical factors involved in becoming a single mother by choice. It is clear that women looking into solo motherhood place emphasis on planning ahead for the financial practicalities.

Parenting donor-conceived children – disclosure, identity and emotional well-being

Women discussed parenting outside of the nuclear family model and the challenge of disclosing this to their donor-conceived children. One woman spoke about supporting her children in coming to terms with being a donor-conceived child:

I'm approaching the teen years at speed and one of the concerns/thoughts of my children is 'coping' with the differences of being donor children...especially having a single mum as a sole parent.

– (Erin)

Erin discusses her concerns around how her children will cope with living within an alternative family model and being different to their peers. Erin's post indicates that she does not want her children to feel as though they have missed out due to being brought up by a single mother. Christina cited similar concerns:

I guess I am going to have to prepare him for school and kids asking about his daddy. Do you ladies explain the donor situation to your little ones, or leave it as you don't have a daddy? At almost 4, it's tricky to know what he will understand.

– (Christina)

Both women use the forum to share and discuss ways that they can protect their children from feeling confused or uneasy about being a donor-conceived child. Women are facing the reality of not having a partner, and foresee the impact this may have on their children, which highlights the ethical dimensions of becoming a solo mother via sperm donation.

Choosing to have a second

Women who were already solo mothers spoke about their choice to extend their family for the second time through sperm donation. One woman expressed concerns about having another child and the impact this could have on her family:

I am torn as I would love for her [my daughter] to have a sibling and to have the experience of having another baby, but at the same time, I'm worried that it might backfire! But then again it might not, and could be the best decision I ever made and make our lives amazing... It's so hard isn't it?!

– (Olivia)

Despite Olivia's desire for another child, she presents her reservations in making this decision because of the uncertainty that surrounds being a single mother by choice and working through this decision-making process for the second time. Another woman also shared her conflicting feelings about having another child through sperm donation:

I just wonder if I am being selfish to risk everything I have with my beautiful girl. I have always told her how much she was wanted and that she was all I ever needed, and I worry that having a second would upset our dynamic and potentially leave her questioning whether she really was enough for mummy.

– (Jane)

It's definitely an issue I struggle with on an almost daily basis. I know that I would never regret having another child but I am aware that I will probably regret not having tried.

– (Jane)

Jane expresses her fears of changing the family dynamic if she were to have a second child, and of the impact this could have on her and her daughter's relationship. However, similar to first-time single mothers by choice, Jane also indicates that she does not want to regret *not* making this decision. These posts highlight the internal conflict that these women experience when they consider extending their family, despite already having gone through the process of solo motherhood. It could be assumed that seeking solo motherhood for the second time is easier due to their previous experience and familiarity with the process. However, women were more apprehensive to choose solo motherhood again, which could be attributed to the reality of fertility treatment and single parenting.

Others' perceptions:

Solo mothers discussed the challenges in managing others' perceptions of them. One woman explained that her friends overlook the hardships of solo motherhood:

I don't think they have a real depth of understanding of the emotional and physical toll of fertility treatment or the reality of being a single parent, which, although amazing, is bloody tough at times.

– (Jane)

Other people may misunderstand and underestimate what is involved in becoming a solo mother because of the unique challenges and hardships that this brings. Jane articulates the difficulty in managing these unrealistic perceptions of solo motherhood, which could place increased pressure on the family unit and a strain on close relationships. Another woman posted about the controversy and judgement that surrounds becoming a single mother by choice:

I started a similar thread a while ago but closed it after a mum wrote a very nasty comment about women choosing sperm donors being selfish.

– (Sophia)

Sophia's post illustrates the negative perceptions that other people hold towards solo mothers, depicting them as self-serving and individualistic. This suggests that single mothers by choice are required to manage

not only their own internal conflict but also the conflicting views and opinions of wider society. Both posts demonstrate the misinformation and stigma that surrounds solo motherhood and the negative impact that this can have on women pursuing this unique pathway.

Theme 3: Support provided by the forum

Exchanging experiences and advice

All women utilised the online forum to communicate with others who have similar and relatable experiences. One woman posted about the challenges of seeking solo motherhood without peer support:

I don't know anyone else personally who has done this, so it would be great to have people to chat to about the challenges that arise.

– (Christina)

Christina's post reflects the unique and potentially isolating experience that these women go through. The forum provided a powerful opportunity for women to connect with others who were also pursuing this unique journey to motherhood. This is shown through other women's posts who sought advice through the forum thread:

It would be nice to find someone in the same position as me so we could share our experiences.

– (Emma)

I've just started to look into the whole sperm donor option, but it is all quite overwhelming so I'm hoping anyone on here that has gone down this route could give me any advice please. Thanks.

– (Heather)

These posts highlight the uncertainty of solo motherhood and the need to connect with others because of the complex and individual process of fertility treatment and single parenthood. This indicates that many women have felt isolated as a consequence of their unconventional choices. The validation and sense of belonging that 'Netmums' has offered has opened up communication for many women who may have otherwise felt alone in their decisions and experiences.

Hope

The findings also suggest that women experience the forum as a source of hope:

Thanks for sharing your story. It gives me hope.

– (Emma)

I was super happy to find this thread and to see so many of you being happy mums to donor-conceived children.

– (Jade)

These posts reflect the appreciation for the forum that has enabled them to communicate with people who have positive experiences of solo motherhood. The forum has provided hope for women and a space where they feel comfortable to share their concerns and apprehensions. The safety provided by the forum is in stark contrast to women feeling judged and stigmatised by others. This highlights the lack of information and accessible support available for women to talk to others who are considering solo motherhood.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences, concerns and advice offered and received by women pursuing solo motherhood via sperm donation by analysing messages posted on a parenting support forum. The current study contributes to the literature by broadening the understanding of how women use online forums to share their experiences and perspectives on becoming a solo mother, and providing an insight into their experiences.

Findings showed that making the choice to become a single mother was based on individual circumstances and the overwhelming desire to conceive a child rather than this being the ideal option. Women spent extended periods of time contemplating this choice, which involved factors of a deep desire for motherhood, partnership status, age and fertility health. Similarly, Murray and Golombok (2005) found that although most women were happy to be single mothers, over half of participants would have preferred to conceive in the context of a relationship. These motivations to become a single mother by choice were also found in a number of existing studies (Bock, 2000; Graham, 2018; Hertz, 2006; Jadva *et al.*, 2009; Mannis, 1999; Murray and Golombok, 2005). Ultimately, this theme emphasised the careful consideration of solo motherhood that was present in both first-time mothers and in mothers wanting to extend their family further. Furthermore, this contradicts the wider societal view that single mothers by choice do not fully consider the impact of their decision (Zadeh and Foster, 2016).

Becoming a single mother by choice is a complex process that generates its own unique challenges and obstacles. The current study's findings present the financial demands of conceiving through sperm donation and the emotional stress this can cause. Jadva *et al.* (2009) found that 38 per cent of solo mothers by choice reported having some financial difficulties. This was also present in the current study, which showed women planning for the financial challenges that could arise through fertility treatment and raising a child alone. Financial stress is common in relation to all fertility treatment, and some patients report having to rely on financial support from their family to secure their preferred treatment options (Hanna and Gough, 2020). Bock's (2000) findings concluded that high-technology infertility treatments are an option primarily for the well-insured or wealthy. However, Graham (2018) found that, although single mothers by choice acknowledged the importance of financial stability, women were able to cope even if they were not highly affluent. While financial burden was an area of concern for many women in the present study, this was a factor that was well-facilitated and carefully thought out when planning for solo motherhood.

The perceptions of single mothers by choice was discussed in the forum among posters. Negative opinions expressed by others pose as an obstacle in women's experiences of pursuing solo motherhood and feed into the stigmatising attitudes perpetuated by the UK media. Zadeh and Foster's (2016) study observed that single women who use donor sperm are labelled as 'socially deviant' and having 'digressed from traditional reproduction'. These perspectives highlight the ethical dimensions of becoming a single mother by choice and the internal conflict that arises from women who fear being judged and branded as 'selfish' for conceiving a child without a father (Graham, 2018). Furthermore, the projections of negativity from others could lead to feelings of shame among women if they feel that they are falling short of what is expected of them as a 'good mother' (Goffman, 1963). Previous research suggested that women feel as if the lack of a father needed to be compensated for by going above and beyond for their child (Graham, 2018). Similarly, in the current study, many women expressed concern around how their child will feel about being donor conceived and wanted to protect them from feeling 'less than'. These findings relate to the internal and external conflict that surrounds making the choice to become a solo mother. The stigma surrounding solo motherhood also demonstrates the importance of intra-community support through online forums, which offer 'freedom' to discuss aspects that might otherwise be hidden from social view.

In the current study, the online forum provided encouragement and strong intra-community support for those pursuing solo motherhood. Women expressed their appreciation to be able to talk to others going through similar experiences and being able to relate to them through each step of the process. This demonstrates the value of online support to this group of women, who may have otherwise felt unconnected and isolated. Exchanging experiences and advice through the online forum instilled confidence in group members and allowed them to feel accepted, which opened up further discussions and conversation. These findings offer a unique contribution to existing literature by exploring intra-community support among women who may not ordinarily be recruited for research. Hanna and Gough came to similar conclusions when exploring men's accounts of infertility through online forum discussions. Findings showed that the online forum offered a space to share experiences, which helped men manage the difficulties of infertility and the impact this had on their relationships (Hanna and Gough, 2017). This highlights the importance of online forums and how this relates to fertility issues more broadly.

Despite the contribution of this study, it is important to address its limitations and possibilities for future research. The findings in this study only relate to the specific forum threads analysed, which subsequently restricts the research from making wider claims regarding the experiences of all choice mothers. It is possible that forum users represent a specific group of choice mothers who are more likely to proactively seek support and advice online. It would be beneficial to examine a larger spread of data among different forums and websites, or to conduct one-to-one interviews and focus groups to explore the wider perspectives of single mothers by choice. In addition, future research should focus on gaining a more rounded perspective through interviews and focus groups by addressing the improvements to inform healthcare practices, particularly in facilitating and enabling intra-community support.

Conclusion

This study has provided new insight into how online forums may constitute a source of inspiration, hope and support for solo mothers. This research has addressed the gap in the literature regarding intra-community support and has offered a unique insight into the use of online forums among women who have chosen an unconventional pathway to motherhood. Findings showed that decisions on becoming a solo mother were shaped by a deep desire for motherhood, partnership status, age and fertility health. Moreover, women carefully planned for the potential challenges and used the online forum as a space to share experiences, concerns and advice. This research has highlighted the stigma attached to solo mothers and the need for further support. Future research should continue to investigate solo motherhood, and employ various sampling techniques to gain a broader insight into choice mother's experiences and concerns.

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Endnotes

[1] <https://www.netmums.com/>

[2] Spelling and grammar have been corrected for all quotations used in this study. Additionally, abbreviations have been removed and replaced by their lengthened alternative. Content and meanings have been left unchanged.

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Glossary

Assisted reproductive technology (ART): Any treatment that is used to enhance fertility.

Donor-conceived child: A child conceived using donated sperm, donated eggs or donated embryos.

Donor insemination (DI): When donor sperm is injected directly into the womb to achieve fertilisation and pregnancy.

In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF): When an egg is fertilised outside of the body. Eggs are removed from the ovaries and fertilised with sperm in a laboratory. The fertilised egg (embryo) is then returned to the womb to grow and develop.

Single mothers by choice: Someone who decides to become a mother knowing that they will be the sole parent of the child.

Sperm donation: A procedure in which a man donates semen, which contains sperm, that is used to help an individual or couple to conceive a baby.

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