



**ASRM 2025**  
Global Collaboration to  
Advance Reproductive Health  
San Antonio, Texas  
October 25-29, 2025

# Superwoman Schema and Fertility Care Experiences: Age-Related Differences in Help-Seeking Among Black Women with Infertility



L. CLARKE<sup>1</sup>, I. MORGAN<sup>1</sup>, L. JONES<sup>2</sup>, K. FRU<sup>3</sup>, T. JELLERETTE<sup>4</sup>, B. HARRIS<sup>5</sup>, M. THOMAS<sup>6</sup>, G. RICHARD-DAVIS<sup>1</sup> and C. ERVING<sup>7</sup>

1 Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA; 2 SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, Atlanta, GA; 3 Muna Fertility, Sandy Springs, GA; 4 Ferring Pharmaceuticals Inc., Parsippany, NJ; 5 Shady Grove Fertility, Richmond, VA; 6 University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, Cincinnati, OH; 7 The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

## PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

- Black women face disproportionately high infertility rates but access care at lower rates than other groups<sup>1,2</sup>
- Structural and psychosocial barriers contribute to delays or disengagement from care
- Superwoman Schema (SWS)—a culturally responsive stress framework—may influence fertility care-seeking
- Objective:** To examine SWS endorsement, age-related differences, and associations with fertility care experiences among Black women

## MATERIALS & METHODS

- Design:** Cross-sectional survey (Morehouse School of Medicine Fertility Equity Study, 2021–2023)<sup>3,4</sup>
- Sample:** 139 Black women, ages 25–45, with self-reported infertility
- Measure:** 35-item validated SWS scale (five domains)<sup>5</sup>
- Key variables:** Age, education, self-reported delays in seeking care, insurance coverage
- Analysis:** T-tests and multivariable logistic regression, adjusting for socioeconomic, marital, and parental status

## CONCLUSIONS

- Younger Black women endorsed SWS more strongly than older women, which may shape fertility care-seeking behaviors
- Addressing culturally specific stress frameworks in clinical care could improve patient engagement, reduce treatment delays, and support equitable outcomes

## RESULTS

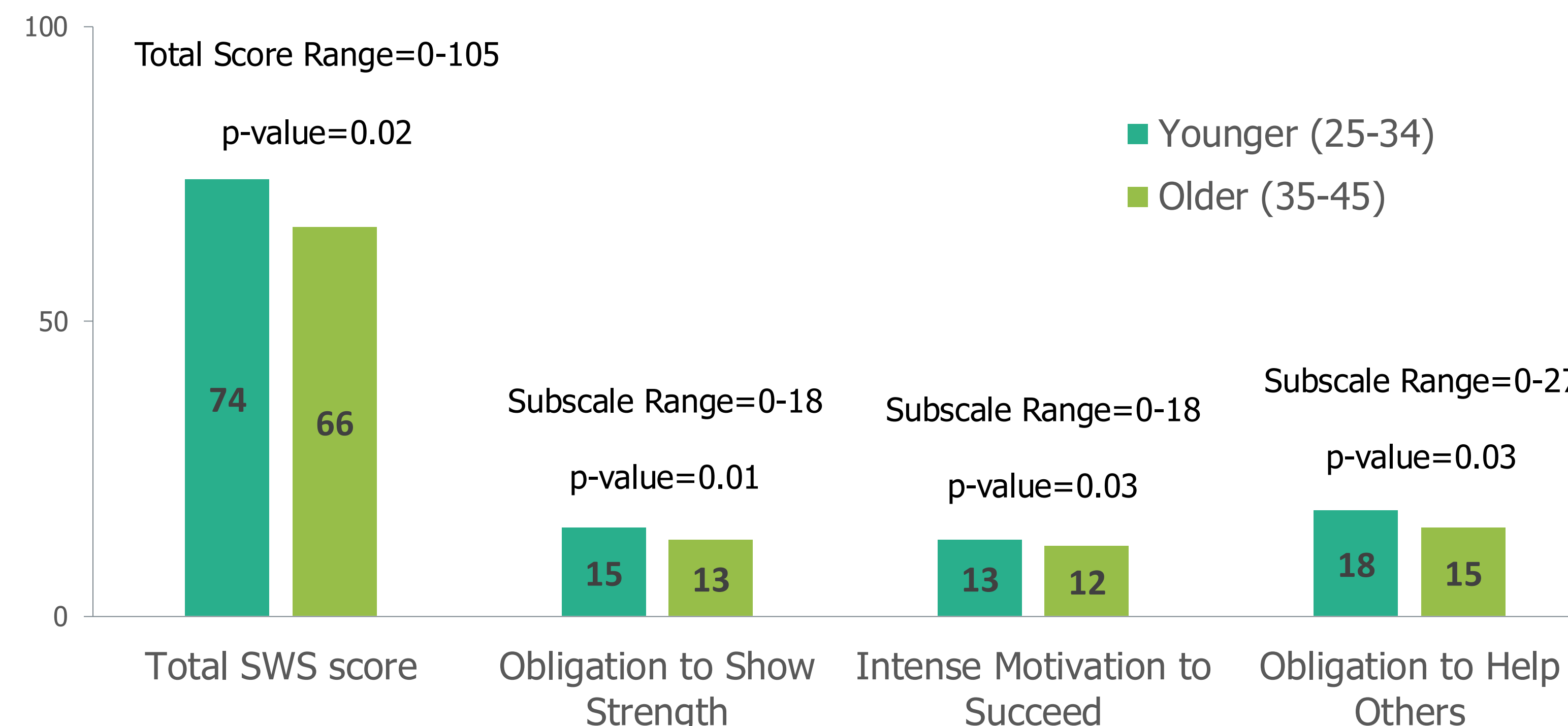
**Table 1: Superwoman Schema (SWS) Domains & Example Items**

<b>Obligation to show strength</b> I have to be strong
<b>Obligation to suppress emotions</b> I display my emotions in privacy
<b>Resistance to being vulnerable</b> I wait until I am overwhelmed to ask for help
<b>Intense motivation to succeed</b> No matter how hard I work, I feel like I should do more
<b>Obligation to help others</b> I put everyone else's needs before mine

**Table 2: Study Participants (N=139)**

	n (%)
<b>Age</b>	
25-34 years	33 (24)
35-45 years	106 (76)
<b>Education</b>	
Less than bachelors	21 (15)
Bachelors or higher	118 (85)
<b>Time trying to conceive</b>	
<24 months	64 (47)
≥24 months	72 (53)
<b>Fertility coverage</b>	
None	26 (20)
Some	53 (42)
Full	49 (38)

**Figure 1: Younger Black Women (25-34 years) Report Statistically Significantly Higher SWS Scores and than Older Black Women (35-45 years)**



### Qualitatively, higher SWS scores were associated with

- Longer delays in seeking fertility care
- More negative experience with clinical teams

### Resources to Build Clinician Awareness

- Recognizing culturally specific stress responses, like SWS, may help clinicians tailor support strategies to improve early engagement and retention of Black women in fertility care
- FertilityEquity™** e-learning modules translate Fertility Equity Study insights into practice
- To date, over 300 clinicians and staff have accessed these modules to improve their understanding and engagement with their patients as they navigate infertility care

For more information about the Fertility Equity Study and FertilityEquity™ e-learning modules



## REFERENCES

1. Dongarwar D, et al. Systems Biology in Reproductive Medicine 2022;68(3):180–9. 2. Tierney K, Cai Y. Fertil Steril 2019;112(6):1136–1143.e4. 3. Morgan I, et al. Soc Sci Med. 2025;376:118082. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2025.118082. 4. Morehouse School of Medicine Center for Maternal Health Equity. The Fertility Equity Study. I <https://centerformaternalhealththequity.org/programs/the-fertility-equity-study/>, Accessed August 15, 2025. 5. Woods-Giscombe CL, et al. Issues Ment Health Nurs. 2019;40(8): 672–681. doi: 10.1080/01612840.2019.1584654

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Younger Black women (25-34) had greater SWS endorsement than older Black women (35-45)
- Obligations to present strength, succeed, and help others may be particularly salient
- Considering culturally responsive psychosocial stress frameworks like SWS can help providers tailor care and improve equity in infertility care experiences
- The FertilityEquity™ eLearning modules can help clinicians recognize and address the unique challenges faced by Black women as they navigate infertility care

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the participants of the Fertility Equity study for generously sharing their stories.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Lasha Clarke, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Obstetrics & Gynecology, Morehouse School of Medicine, LSCALARKE@msm.edu, centerformaternalhealththequity.org