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RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENOPHOBIA AND MENTAL HEALTH

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Abstract

Sex is a part of humane life as a natural drive to seek pleasure. The problems related to sex can affect the mental and social life of the person on many levels. Genophobia is a specific phobia in which a person fears sexual intercourse. It is usually caused by the traumatic experience of the person related to sex. The person may feel horrified or anxious when exposed to the trigger that makes a person vulnerable. It is not very common although many cases can be found. The treatment modality involves psychotherapy, exposure therapy, and other treatments. This article discusses the causes, symptoms, and treatment modalities of genophobia in a brief.

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Introduction:-

Sex is a natural drive just like the other natural drive like hunger, thirst, and rest. The impairment of this drive can harm the quality of life and other aspects of functioning.(1)Genophobia also known as coitophobia is the fear of sexual intercourse. Genophobia may be caused by actual or witnessing sexual trauma such as rape or traumatic sexual act in real life or in the media. Because of these their sexual drives threaten a sense of self-control or simply find the idea of sexual activity to be horrifying or disgusting. In some cases, the female may find the experience of sexual intercourse a painful experience which is also known as vaginismus. Even after treatment, some demonstrate a reluctance to engage in sexual intercourse.(2)

Epidemiology and need of study

Sex is considered a very private thing and nobody talks about it socially. In India, people are very reluctant to discuss issues related to sex. The disorders related to sex are very much prevalent in India.(3) Although genophobia comes under a psychiatric disorder rather than in sexual disorder the prevalence can be correlated with it as it is also submerged in the same.(4)Genophobia is studied under the heading of specific phobias in epidemiology. The prevalence of specific phobias is very high also associated with impairment and is an important factor in the development of mental disorders. The cross-national lifetime and 12-month prevalence rates of specific phobia were, respectively, 7.4% and 5.5%, being higher in females (9.8% and 7.7%) than in males (4.9% and 3.3%) and higher in high and higher-middle income countries than in low/lower-middle-income countries. Although the exact prevalence of genophobia is unknown and no literature was found noting the prevalence of genophobia in the Indian population.(5)

Causes

The following are causes of Genophobia

1. History of trauma: Unlike the other phobias the cause of genophobia is associated with trauma specifically related to sexual exploitation(6), that is the reason that women or girls having a history of rape, defiled, molestation, or sexual harassment are more reluctant to sexual intercourse and develop genophobia.(7)

2. The culture or religious factors: Many religions and cultures have their view toward sexual intercourse. The Sharan Africa culture attaches some sort of disgust to sexual intercourse outside the marriage. Sex is considered a sinful and shameful act that affects the attitude of people towards sexual intercourse. Some cultures even practice cutting the genitals which cause tremendous pain and lead to cause genophobia.(8)
3. Vaginismus: When vaginal penetration is attempted and vaginal muscle is clenched up involuntarily leads to pain that condition is vaginismus. This makes the intercourse more painful and less enjoyable sometimes even impossible for the female to bear the pain. Such fear can cause Genophobia.
4. Sexual dysfunction: Problems related to sex organs such as erectile dysfunction leads to embarrassment, guilt, shame, or stress. Depending upon how intense these feelings are the person may reluctant to have sexual intercourse and become fearful.
5. Dysmorphia or body shame: Having the shame of one's body is dysmorphia. The person may have overly conscious of one's body. It can negatively affect the psychology of a person towards sexual intercourse. The person may develop a fear of sexual intimacy because of a lack of pleasure and intense shame.(9)

Symptoms

There is a difference between fear and phobia. Phobia is irrational and extreme fear which is persistent and makes the person avoid the object or situation to which the fear is connected. Fear reactions are generally triggered by the situations or events that the person fears. The symptoms are characterized by the deep and persistent fear of that particular object or situation resulting in anxiety.(10)

The reaction includes:

1. Feeling of intense fear, anxiety, and panic when expose to the stimuli of the phobia or even the thought of a sexual encounter.
2. The person understands that the fear is atypical and extreme and that he can't control it
3. If the stimuli are persistent then symptoms maybe worsen.
4. Avoidance of the situations or objects that causes a fear reaction
5. Nausea, dizziness, difficulty in breathing, palpitation, or diaphoresis when expose to stimuli.

The other symptoms specific to the person involved:

1. Screaming or yelling at the partner during intimate moments
2. Running from relationships to avoid sex
3. Not involved in a romantic relationship or dating
4. Making excuses/avoiding circumstances just to avoid sex
5. Making oneself physically undesirable consciously or unconsciously.
6. Being isolated from the people
7. Freezing or being unable to move during sexual intercourse.

Treatment

There are a lot of treatment modalities that help in treating genophobia. Following are some treatment options available:

1. Vaginal dilators: It is safe and effective for stretching and lengthening vaginal tissue slowly which helps the women to get over the pain associated with it. It helped thousands of women to overcome the fear of pain. In a clinical trial, it was found that 80% of women have less pain by using dilators.
2. Psychotherapy: Cognitive behavioral therapy is beneficial for many patients. It helps the patient to change their view towards the problem. The therapist may involve different methods of thinking about the problem. The patient can learn to understand the triggers and response control. (11)
3. Exposure therapy: It is commonly used for phobic disorders. It is a type of psychotherapy where the person is exposed to the trigger to confront the fear in a safe environment and overcome it eventually.(12,13)

Nursesrole

Nurses' role in handling the patient with genophobia is not specified in any literature but the nurses can educate the client/ patient regarding sexual health. Nurses can also recognize the deficiency in knowledge of the client regarding the sexual practice and help them to improve their necessary skills and understanding of it. Sexual health is a basic right of every individual and nurses know about it so they can talk and handle the issue if arises. Sometimespaitentheseitate to talk about it,especially in the Indian scenario, people are very reluctant about sexual

health and information related to it. Nurses can perform the key role to educate the client about the rights and understanding of sexual practice.(14)

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