

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME (PCOS) ON WOMEN: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

Biology

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ABSTRACT

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is one of the most prevalent endocrine disorders affecting women of reproductive age, and it significantly influences both physical and psychological health. This study investigates the relationship between the cardinal symptoms of PCOS—irregular menstrual cycles, hirsutism, acne, and alopecia—and psychological conditions such as depression and anxiety. Using a cross-sectional study design and a self-administered questionnaire, data were collected from women diagnosed with PCOS. The results highlight the severe psychological distress caused by PCOS, particularly related to body image and self-esteem issues. Furthermore, the study exposes the inadequate mental health support available for women with PCOS. The findings emphasize the need for integrated healthcare approaches that address both the physical and psychological aspects of PCOS.

KEYWORDS

PCOS, mental health, depression, anxiety, hirsutism, acne, irregular periods, body image, support, management

INTRODUCTION

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is a common endocrine disorder that affects approximately 5-20% of women of reproductive age globally. PCOS is characterized by a range of physical and metabolic abnormalities, including hyperandrogenism, menstrual irregularities, and polycystic ovarian morphology. These physical symptoms can severely impact a woman's appearance, self-image, and quality of life. Common manifestations include hirsutism (excessive facial and body hair), acne, alopecia (scalp hair loss), and weight gain.

In addition to the physical manifestations, PCOS has been shown to have a profound impact on psychological well-being, with many women experiencing depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem. The visible symptoms of PCOS often lead to body image issues and a loss of self-confidence, which can exacerbate mental health problems. Furthermore, metabolic issues such as insulin resistance and obesity are commonly associated with PCOS, and these factors can contribute to both physical and psychological distress.

Despite the significant mental health challenges faced by women with PCOS, research indicates a lack of adequate psychological support for this population. This study aims to explore the relationship between PCOS symptoms and psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety. The study also evaluates the availability and effectiveness of psychological interventions and identifies coping strategies used by women to manage the effects of PCOS.

Aim

To determine the extent to which PCOS symptoms impact the mental health of women, with a focus on depression, anxiety, and self-esteem.

Objectives

1. To establish the prevalence of key PCOS symptoms, including irregular menstrual cycles, hirsutism, acne, and alopecia.
2. To examine the relationship between these symptoms and mental health disorders, particularly depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.
3. To assess the level of psychological support and awareness available to women with PCOS.
4. To identify effective coping strategies employed by women to manage the physical and psychological challenges of PCOS.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials: A self-administered, standardized, and pilot-tested questionnaire that covered PCOS symptoms, menstrual irregularities, mental health status, body image, and support systems.

- Participants included women diagnosed with PCOS, aged between 18 and 40.

Methods

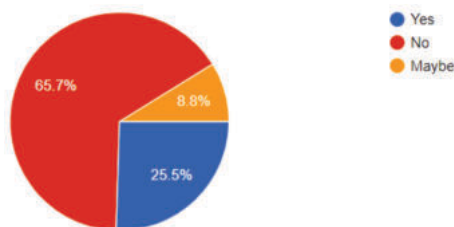
1. A cross-sectional study was conducted among 100 women diagnosed with PCOS using a self-administered questionnaire.
2. Data were collected on menstrual irregularities, hirsutism, acne,

and alopecia, as well as their psychological impact (depression, anxiety, and self-esteem).

3. Participants were also asked to share their experiences with healthcare support and the educational resources available to them.

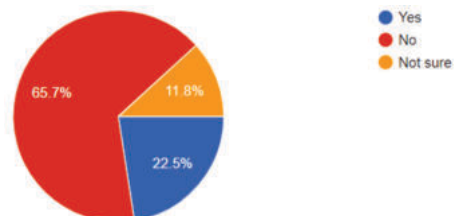
RESULTS

01) Menstrual Irregularities



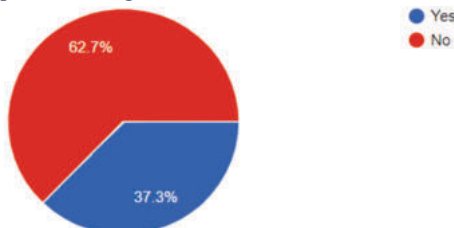
25.5% of participants reported frequent irregular menstrual cycles, while 28% experienced occasional irregularities. A significant number of participants (37%) reported headaches associated with their menstrual cycle.

02) Hirsutism and Acne

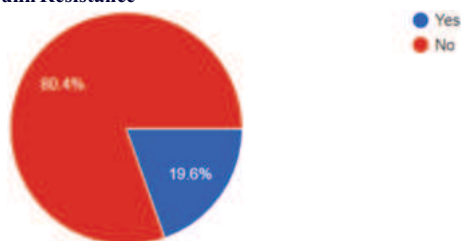


5% of participants reported excessive hair growth (hirsutism), while 24.5% suffered from persistent acne, which had not responded to conventional treatments.

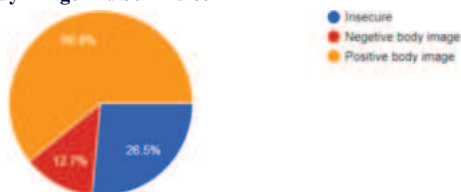
03) Alopecia and Weight Issues



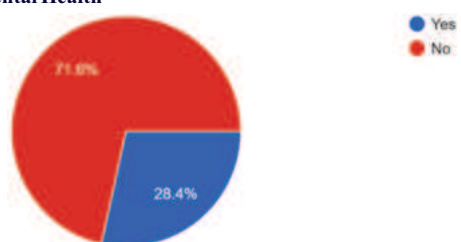
7% of participants experienced scalp hair loss, and 39.2% noted weight management issues, with the majority reporting weight gain or difficulty losing weight.

04) Insulin Resistance

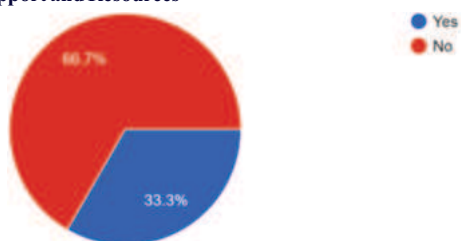
80.4% of respondents displayed signs of insulin resistance, a metabolic abnormality commonly associated with PCOS.

05) Body Image and Self-Esteem

13.5% of participants reported feeling physically unfit due to their body size, while 26% stated that PCOS symptoms led to a perceived loss of self-esteem or confidence. The participants rated their self-esteem as follows on the scale of 1 to 5: 5 = 13 participants, 4 = 71 participants, 3 = 56 participants, 2 = 46 participants, and 1 = 23 participants.

06) Mental Health

28.4% of participants reported feelings of sadness, anxiety, or low mood as a direct result of their PCOS symptoms.

07) Support and Resources

Only 3% of participants received psychological support from healthcare providers, while 49% believed that they would have benefited from more mental health resources and information.

08) Coping Strategies

The participants identified exercise, maintaining an active lifestyle, a healthy diet, and utilizing assistive devices like walkers as common coping strategies.

DISCUSSION

The study confirms that PCOS has a profound impact on the psychological well-being of affected women, particularly in relation to depression, anxiety, and poor body image. The visible symptoms of PCOS, such as hirsutism, acne, and weight gain, contribute to a negative self-image, which can exacerbate feelings of sadness, low self-esteem, and mental health disorders. Furthermore, the high prevalence of insulin resistance and other metabolic issues suggests that these physical health challenges play a role in the psychological burden of PCOS.

Despite the mental health challenges identified, the study reveals a

significant lack of psychological support for women with PCOS. Many participants reported feeling underserved by healthcare systems that focus primarily on physical symptoms, with inadequate attention given to the mental health implications. This gap highlights the need for integrated care models that address both the physical and psychological aspects of PCOS.

CONCLUSION

PCOS significantly impacts both the physical and psychological health of affected women, with a substantial number of participants reporting symptoms of depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem. The visible changes caused by PCOS, such as hirsutism, acne, and weight gain, negatively affect self-image and contribute to mental health disorders. Despite these challenges, most women with PCOS lack access to adequate psychological support and mental health resources.

The findings of this study underscore the need for more comprehensive healthcare approaches that address both the physical and psychological effects of PCOS. Greater attention to mental health issues in PCOS patients, along with improved educational resources and psychological support, could enhance the overall well-being of women dealing with this condition. Further research is needed to develop effective interventions that address the psychological burden associated with PCOS.

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