

#409 PREVALENCE OF PAINFUL SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IN THE POSTPARTUM PERIOD

Filipa Pires¹ & Patrícia Silva¹

¹ ESTeSL - Escola Superior de Tecnologia da Saúde, Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

Hypothesis / aims of study

Sexual health is described as "a state of complete physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being related to sexuality, and not merely the absence of disease." It encompasses issues such as aspects of reproductive life but also the possibility of experiencing pleasurable and positive sexuality.¹ 85% of women who had a vaginal delivery have some type of perineal trauma.² Sexual changes in the postpartum period can manifest as a delay in the return to sexual relations, decreased desire and lubrication, dyspareunia, among others.³ This situation has a significant impact on the woman's quality of life. Untreated pain can become a chronic problem. Despite this, only 7-13% of women seek professional help. The WHO recommends that health professionals ask about the return to sexual relations and the possibility of dyspareunia as part of the postpartum evaluation, so that women are properly guided.⁴ Several studies have shown that pelvic physiotherapy intervention is effective in resolving this issue.

1. Identify pelvic floor dysfunctions reported by women in the first year postpartum.
2. Identify the prevalence of pain during sexual intercourse after childbirth and its impact on the quality of life of women.

Study design, materials and methods

This is a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted through the application of a questionnaire on an internet platform, between May and July 2022.

All women who had given birth in the last 12 months and had already resumed sexual relations were included, and those who did not resume sexual intercourse were excluded.

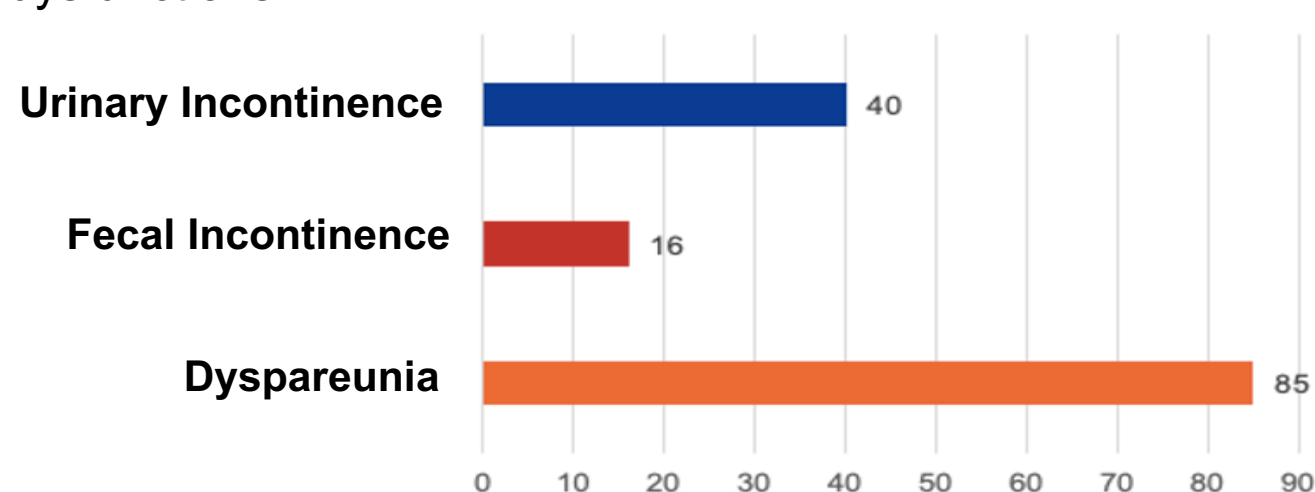
The questionnaire comprised questions about: parity, childbirth, breastfeeding, pain in sexual intercourses, whether women related this pain with childbirth and if this pain affected their quality of life. We also asked about the presence of other pelvic floor dysfunctions (urinary and fecal incontinence).

Results and interpretation

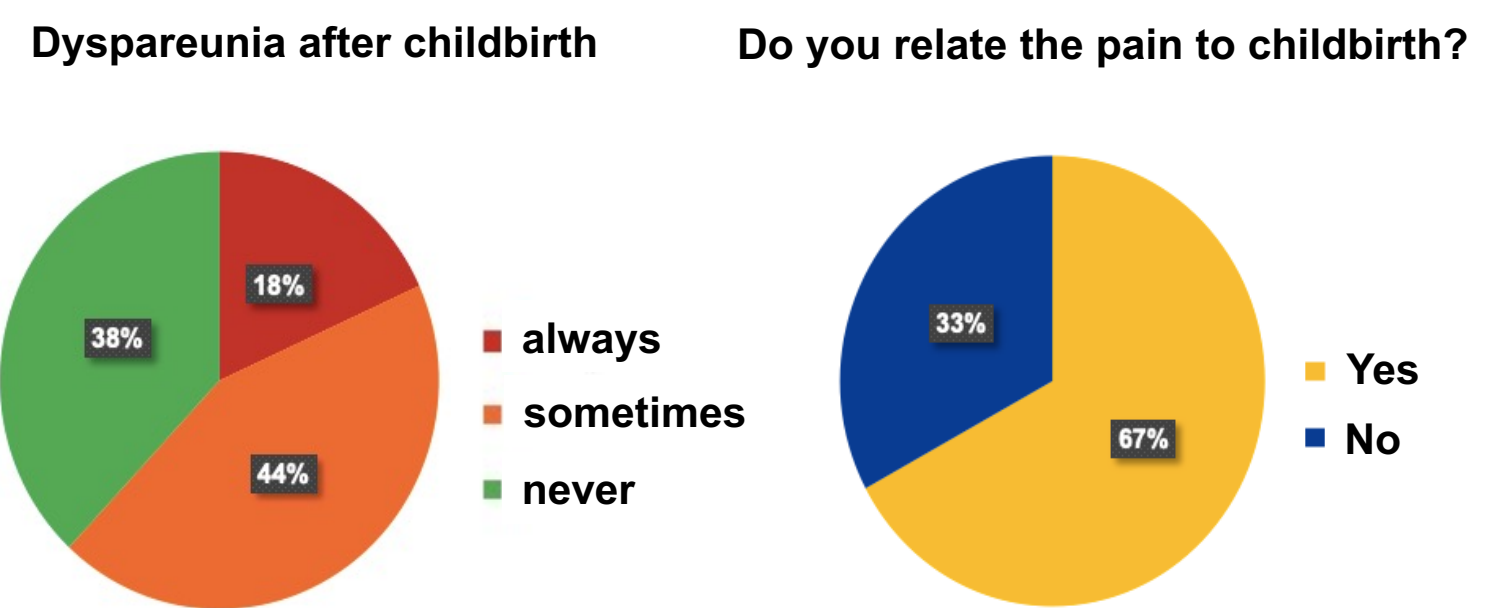
A sample of 141 women was collected, with 3 excluded for not having resumed sexual relations.

Data analysis was performed on 138 women, with an average age of 31.67±5.13 years.

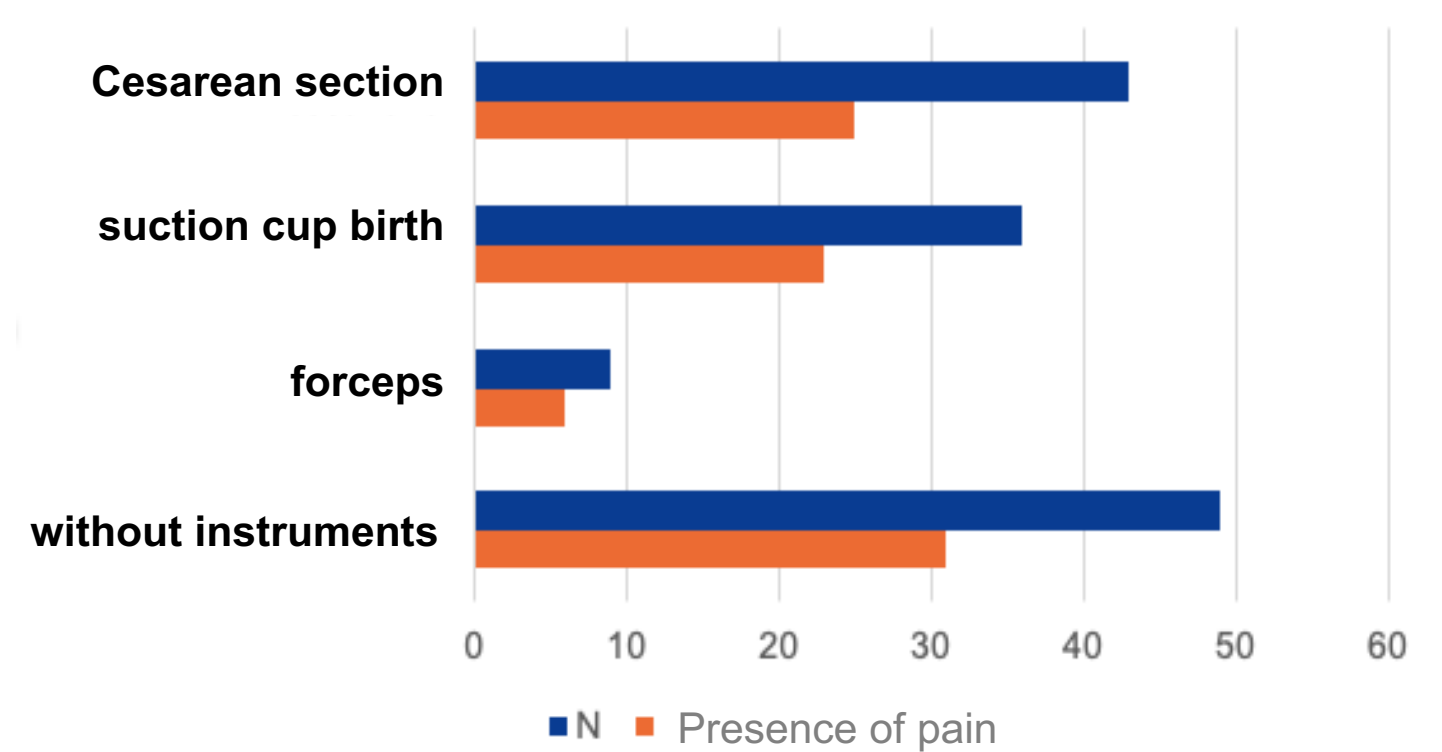
- Number of births:
 - 1 with 4 births;
 - 13 with 3 births;
 - 27 with 2 births;
 - 97 were primiparous.
- Number of women who reported postpartum pelvic floor dysfunctions:



- 62% of the women (85) reported experiencing pain during sexual intercourse after the last childbirth.

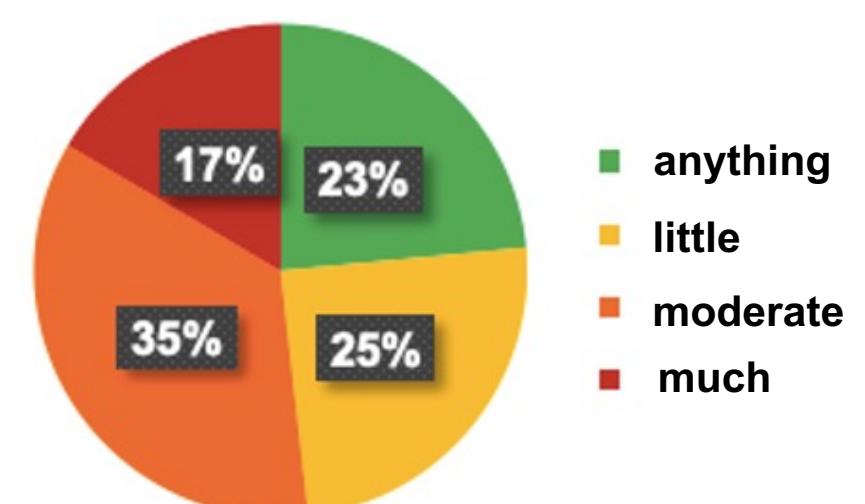


- Relationship between pain during sexual intercourse after the last childbirth and the type of delivery



- 58.1% of women who had a cesarean section and 63.9%, 66.7%, and 63.3% of women who had vaginal deliveries with vacuum extraction, forceps, and without instruments (respectively) reported dyspareunia.

- Interference of postpartum dyspareunia on quality of life



- Of the women who reported pain:

41.2% (35) did not seek help from any healthcare professional, 34.1% (29) consulted a physiotherapist, 23.5% (20) consulted a gynecologist, and 1.2% (1) consulted a physician from another specialty.

Conclusions

The results suggest that the presence of pain during sexual intercourse is quite frequent and has impact on women's quality of life. The majority of women attribute this complaint to their childbirth. The high presence of pelvic floor dysfunctions in the postpartum period should be a topic of discussion among healthcare professionals in order to guide these women towards the best resolution of their complaints.

References

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- (3) Khajehi M, Doherty M, Tilley PJM, and Sauer K. Prevalence and risk factors of sexual dysfunction in postpartum Australian women. *J Sex Med* 2015;12:1415–1426.
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