Does Size Matter? Perceptions of Indian Women About the Size of the Penis

Gajanan Shripad Bhat1 and Anuradha Shastry1

Abstract

Background: Many men express concerns about their penile size, with respect to its role in sexual satisfaction of their female partners. The evidence to the contrary exists in the Western literature. However, similar evidence is lacking in a conservative society like India.

Aim: This study aimed to evaluate the perception of Indian women about the size of the penis of their male partners with respect to sexual satisfaction.

Methodology: A questionnaire-based study was carried out using a 20-item questionnaire in a sample of 230 sexually active Indian women, who answered the questionnaire either using pen and paper or using social media platform such as WhatsApp. Both the univariate and multivariate regression analysis was done using GraphPad software (©2020 GraphPad Software, Inc, California, USA). A P value less than .05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: The study was conducted from January 2015 to December 2020. As per the accrued opinion of the women who participated in the study, there was no statistically significant correlation between the size of the penis and the sexual satisfaction.

Conclusion: There is hardly any literature on the perception of women from a conservative society like India about the size of the penis of their partners in relation to the sexual satisfaction. Hence, the data from this study, which is the first of its kind form the Indian subcontinent, can be the basis to allay fears of men expressing their concerns about the size of their penis in this part of the world.

Keywords
Penile size, sexual satisfaction, sexuality

Introduction

Concerns of men about the size of their penis are a well-known phenomenon and as treating doctors, we see many men seeking help in this matter.1,2 In the majority of the cases, such concerns are driven by the perceptions that the men have about the preferences of the women regarding the size of the penis.3 Such concerns are reinforced by the cultural influences, wherein the male genital represents manhood in some cultures and it represents masculinity, virility, and fertility in some other cultures.4,5 In addition to this, the men link sexual capacity, sexual functioning, as well as sexual satisfaction to the size of their penis.6,7 The ease of access to pornography, where the large penis positively correlates with exaggerated female sexual response, adds to the concerns of these men who are already upset with their genital size.8 These concerns drive the men for unscientific penis enlargement treatments.

The number of men visiting the andrologists, despite their penile size being normal, is on the rise over the years.9,10 In reality, the majority of the females do not consider the size of the penis as an important factor sexual satisfaction.11-13 The majority of these data are from the Western world. As such, there is no real data which speaks about the perception of women from a conservative society like India about the size of the penis of the men with respect to sexual satisfaction.

1 Department of Urology, Andrology and Sexual Medicine, TSS Shripad Hegde Kadave Institute of Medical Sciences, Sirsi, Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka, India

Corresponding author:
Gajanan Shripad Bhat, Department of Urology, Andrology and Sexual Medicine, TSS Shripad Hegde Kadave Institute of Medical Sciences, Sirsi, Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka 581402, India.
E-mail: gajubhatru@gmail.com
Hence, we decided to evaluate the perception of Indian women about the size of penis with respect to sexual intercourse and satisfaction using online questionnaire as well as personal interviews. The study presents the results of such research which is the first of its kind in the Indian population, where the female partners have opined about the size of the penis and its relation to sexual satisfaction in them.

**Materials and Methods**

After obtaining written informed consent from the participants and institutional review board approval, the study was initiated.

**Inclusion Criteria**

Sexually active females aged 18 years and above were included in the study.

**Exclusion Criteria**

Those who had comorbidities which affect the sexual function such as diabetes, those suffering from psychiatric disorders, and those on long-term pharmacotherapy were excluded.

The participants were excluded from the study, based on the answers given by the participants regarding the comorbidities and medication history.

**Participants and Methods**

The study participation was voluntary. None of the participants received any remuneration for participating in the study. Handouts containing details of the study were handed over by the investigator to the females aged 18 years or more, visiting the outpatient department of our institute as attenders of the patients or those who were visiting our outpatient department for nonsexual complaints. The participants were requested to answer a 20-item questionnaire as part of the study. Those who wished to answer the questionnaire in person were handed over the questionnaire. Those who were shy to answer the questionnaire in person were given the option of answering the question through social platform for conversation such as WhatsApp chat, if at all they wished to answer the questionnaire. Similar digital handouts were published in social media platforms to reach the participants from all over India and they were given the option of either returning the questionnaire filled or answer the questionnaire during personal chat with the investigator.

**Table 1. Questionnaire Used in the Study**

| S. No | Questions                                                                 | Options/Answers                                      |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Age in years                                                              | Daily/Thrice weekly/Weekly/Rarely                    |
| 2     | Use of social media                                                       | Married/Divorced/Single                              |
| 3     | Current relationship status and duration of this relationship (in years)   | Uneducated/Primary school/High school/College/Postgraduate/Doctorate |
| 4     | Educational status                                                        |                                                      |
| 5     | Profession (Mention your profession, including housewife)                 |                                                      |
| 6     | Approximate annual income in Rupees (Family)                              |                                                      |
| 7     | Born and brought up in                                                    | Rural area/Urban area                                |
| 8     | Present area of residence                                                 | Rural area/Urban area                                |
| 9     | Do you like the look of your partners’ erect penis?                       | Yes/No/No comments                                   |
| 10    | Which one do you think is more important for you—length or thickness of the erect penis? | Length/Thick or Both length and thickness/No comments/Don’t know |
| 11    | Do you think the size of the erect penis is important to your sexual enjoyment? | Yes/No/No comments/Don’t know                         |
| 12    | What do you think the desirable length of an erect penis should be (in inches)? |                                                      |
| 13    | What do you think the desirable girth of an erect penis should be (in inches)? |                                                      |
| 14    | What do you think about your current partner’s penis length?              | Good/Too long/Too short/Good/No comments/Don’t know |
| 15    | What do you think about your current partner’s penis thickness?           | Good/Less/More/No comments/Don’t know                 |
| 16    | How happy are you with your current partner, in general?                  | Extremely happy/Happy/OK/Unhappy/No comments         |
| 17    | How happy are you with your current sex life?                             | Extremely happy/Happy/OK/Unhappy/No comments         |
| 18    | Have you had any concerns with your sex life?                             | Yes/No/No comments/Don’t know                         |
| 19    | Have you sought help for your sex life?                                   | Yes—from health professionals/Yes—from partner and friends/Yes—from the Internet/Neve/No comments |
| 20    | According to you, what is it that makes your sex life so much joyful and satisfactory? | Foreplay/Oral sex/ Sexual intercourse/ Interpersonal relationship/ Penile size/No comments |
Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study is shown in Table 1. The original questionnaire was in English language. For the participants who wished to answer the questionnaire in Kannada (vernacular), Kannada translated version was used. The content validity and test-retest reliability of the English as well as the vernacular language questionnaire was assessed separately in a pilot study containing 10 sexually active women employees of a college, neighboring our institute. The survey questionnaire had a validity coefficient of 0.85 and 0.82 for English and vernacular versions, respectively. Similarly, the test-retest reliability was 0.91 and 0.86 for English and vernacular versions, respectively. The questionnaire referred to sexual activities and sexual experiences over the past 12 months.

Statistical Analysis

The questionnaire was intended to assess the perceptions of the participants about the size of the penis as well as its relation to the factors such as religious affiliation, educational status, place of residence, and interpersonal relationship in relation to sexual satisfaction. It included multiple options from which the participant was allowed to choose only one option. Hence, univariate as well as multivariate regression analysis was used to assess the effect of the above-named variables on sexual satisfaction. The mean and standard deviation were derived for demographic variables. The data analysis was done using GraphPad software (©2020 GraphPad Software, Inc, USA). A $P$ value less than .05 was considered statistically significant.

Results

The study period was 4 years, which extended from January 1, 2015 to December 31, 2020. The sample size was 230. The study was conducted in a semi-urban setting for those who answered the questionnaires in person using pen and paper. The study setting didn’t apply for those who answered digital handouts. The participant flow diagram is given in Figure 1.

Of these 230 participants, 87 participants answered the questionnaire through pen and paper method during personal interview with the investigator. Remaining 143 participants answered the questionnaire through WhatsApp chat. English language questionnaires were answered by 192 participants and the remaining 38 participants answered the questionnaire in vernacular, that is, Kannada.

The details of the demographic data are summarized in Table 2. Table 3 summarizes the participants’ answers to the questions in the questionnaire.

Multivariate as well as univariate analysis was performed keeping happiness with sex life as well as joyful sex as dependent variables. The independent variables analyzed were age, relationship duration, relationship status, religious affiliation, use of social media, educational status, professional status, annual income, place of residence and place of birth, size of the penis, desired length and girth of the penis, and opinion about their partner’s penis (size, look, length, and girth). It was found that none of the abovementioned factors

Table 2. Demographic Data of the Participants

| Categories                      | Data                  |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Age in years                    | 31.65 ± 7.16          |
| Length of relationship in years  | 5.57 ± 4.22           |
| Religious affiliation           |                       |
| Hindu:                          | 168 (73%)             |
| Sikh:                           | 3 (1.3%)              |
| Christian:                      | 30 (13%)              |
| Others:                         | 2 (0.9%)              |
| Muslim:                         | 17 (7%)               |
| Jain:                           | 10 (4%)               |
| Relationship status             |                       |
| Married:                        | 171 (74%)             |
| Single but in sexual relation:  | 42 (18%)              |
| Divorced but in sexual relation:| 17 (7%)               |
| Educational status              |                       |
| Uneducated:                     | 9 (4%), primary school:|
|                                 | 21 (9%)               |
| High school:                    | 28 (12%), college:    |
|                                 | 139 (60%)             |
| Postgraduate:                   | 22 (10%)              |
| Doctorate/professional courses: | 11 (5%)               |
| Profession                      |                       |
| Housewife:                      | 113 (49%), executive job:|
|                                 | 23 (10%)              |
| Some clerical work:             | 72 (31%), self-employed:|
|                                 | 22 (10%)              |
| Annual income                   |                       |
| (including household income)    |                       |
| (in rs) lakhs per annum         |                       |
| less than 5 lakhs:              | 129 (56%)             |
| 5-15 lakhs:                     | 91 (40%), more than 15 lakhs:|
|                                 | 10 (4%)               |
| Born and brought up in rural/urban area |           |
| Rural:                          | 131 (57%), urban: 99 (43%) |
| Rural:                          | 92 (40%), urban: 138 (60%) |
| Present place of residence (rural/urban): |               |
| North India:                    | 28 (12%), East India: 7 (3%) |
| South India:                    | 161 (70%), West India: 34 (15%) |
| Use of social media             |                       |
| Daily:                          | 43 (19%), weekly: 30 (13%) |
| thrice weekly:                  | 76 (33%), rarely: 30 (13%) |
| twice weekly:                   | 51 (22%)              |

Figure 1. Participant Flow Diagram
affected sexual satisfaction or joyful sex in a statistically significant manner.

Similarly, univariate as well as multivariate analysis were performed keeping the perception of the size of the penis as the dependent variable, and age, relationship duration, relationship status, religious affiliation, use of social media, educational status, professional status, place of residence as well as place of birth, look of partner’s penis, perceptions about length and girth of penis, complaints about sexual life, and annual income as independent variables. During multivariate analysis, it was found that none of the abovementioned factors affected the perception of the participants about their partner’s penile size. However, on univariate analysis, those who used social media more frequently (P value = .000675), those who were born and brought up in an urban area (P value = .001478), those who were staying in urban area (P value = .008666), those who disliked partner’s erect penis looks (P value = .000326), those who reported the length and girth matters (P value = .00017), and those who had complaint about sexual life (P value = .000558) were more likely to opine that size of the penis matters and this was statistically significant.

On post hoc analysis, the power of the study at an effect size of 0.3 was 0.9846, suggesting that the study had adequate power to detect statistically significant differences at a P value of .05.

**Discussion**

We are discussing here the results of the study, which studied perception of Indian women about the size of the penis in relation to sexual satisfaction and joyful sex with their partners. It also addresses the myth of the small penis syndrome, an anxious inquiry by the males about their penile size, which is one of the most common complaints other than sexual dysfunction, faced by the treating doctor.

Masters and Johnson\textsuperscript{14} opined that size of the penis has nothing to do with the sexual satisfaction in females, considering the fact that the vagina adapts to any size or shape of the penis. Though the majority of our participants opined that the size of the penis is not important, those who opined that the size of the penis as an important parameter, felt
length was more important than width, which is in contrast to Eisenman’s study,12 wherein in a college setting, females felt girth more important than the length of the penis. The women in the Netherlands had an opinion similar to our study as reported by Francken et al.11 Though Mautz et al15 opined that height and penile size were the major determinants of sexual attraction as well as the factors that determine the sexual satisfaction, our study found that the size of the penis had nothing to do with happiness in general as well as happiness with sexual life in particular.

Drasa et al16 and Costa and Miller17 opined that longer penises are known to produce more consistent orgasms compared to the average size or shorter ones. However, we could not find such an association in Indian population, wherein the size of the penis had no relation to sexual satisfaction, which is linked to orgasm.

The majority of our participants didn’t feel that the size of the penis has anything to do with sexual satisfaction. According to the participants of our study, better interpersonal relationship was associated with more happiness in their sex life. We found that women who used social media more frequently were more likely to consider the size of the penis as more important for sexual satisfaction. This was expected as they were more likely to be exposed to unscientific literature associating sexual satisfaction with penile size. Those born, brought up, as well as staying in an urban area were more likely to have concerns toward the size of the penis as shown in our study. This was also expected as they were more likely to be due to exposure to false propaganda about relation of sexual satisfaction to penile size. As expected, those who disliked the look of their partners’ penis also felt that penile size matters.

Strengths and Limitations

We have conducted the study using adequate sample size to address a very sensitive issue in a traditional oriental society. We have used a time tested method of questionnaire method to address this issue. This is the strength of the study.

However, use of the questionnaire method has its own drawbacks, as it depends on the self-reporting of the participants and has no objective crosscheck mechanism. This is the only limitation of the study.

Implications of the Study

Anxiety about the size of the penis is one of the most common complaints with which the patient confronts the treating doctor. Till now, we had no evidence either for or against such perceptions of the males in a conservative society like India. Our study results prove that Indian women do not consider size of the penis of their male partner as an important determinant of sexual satisfaction. This scientific evidence, which is the first of its kind on this subject from India, can help the treating doctor to allay the anxiety of men complaining of small penis in India.

Conclusion

Our study found that Indian females do not consider the size of the penis of their partners as the determinant of their sexual satisfaction. We also found that the factors that address the interpersonal relationship positively were the ones who affected the joy of sexual life positively.

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Written informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Gajanan Shripad Bhat https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2067-9383

References

1. Johnston L, McLellan T, McKinlay A. (Perceived) size really does matter: male dissatisfaction with penis size. Psychol Men Masc. 2014;15(2):225-228.
2. Tiggermann M, Martins Y, Churchett L. Beyond muscles: unexplored parts of men’s body image. J Health Psychol. 2008;13(8):1163-1172.
3. Veale D, Eshkevari E, Read J, et al. Beliefs about penis size: validation of a scale for men ashamed about their penis size. J Sex Me. 2014;11(1):84-92.
4. Kilmarin C. The masculine self. 2nd ed. McGraw-Hill Higher Education; 2000.
5. Wylie KR, Eardley I. Penile size and the “small penis syndrome.” BJU Int. 2007;99:1449-1455.
6. Faith MS, Schare ML. The role of body image in sexually avoidant behaviour. Arch Sex Behav. 1993;22:345-346.
7. Ackard DM, Kearney-Cooke A, Peterson CB. Effect of body image and self-image on women’s sexual behaviours. Int J Eat Disord. 2000;28:422-429.
8. Cranney S. Internet pornography use and sexual body image in a Dutch sample. Int J Sex Health. 2015;27(3):316-323.
9. Dillon BE, Chama NB, Honig SC. Penile size and penile enlargement surgery: a review. *Int J Impot Res*. 2008;20(6):519-529.

10. Mondaini N, Ponchietti R, Gontero P, et al. Penile length is normal in most men seeking penile lengthening procedures. *Int J Impot Res*. 2002;14(4):283-286.

11. Francken AB, van de Wiel HB, van Driel MF, et al. What importance do women attribute to the size of the penis? *Eur Urol*. 2002;42(5):426-431.

12. Eisenman R. Penis size: survey of female perceptions of sexual satisfaction. *BMC Women’s Health*. 2001;1(1):1.

13. Prause N, Park J, Leung S, Miller G. Women’s preferences for penis size: a new research method using selection among 3D models. *PLoS One*. 2015;10(9):e0133079.

14. Masters WH, Johnson VE. The sexual response cycle of the human female. III. The clitoris: anatomic and clinical consideration. *West J Surg Obstet Gynecol*. 1962;70:240-257.

15. Mautz BS, Wong BB, Peters RA, et al. Penis size interacts with body shape and height to influence male attractiveness. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2013;110(17):6925-6930.

16. Drasa K, Dani E, Vasili V. 288 Which female prefer longer penises? *J Sex Med*. 2017;14(1):S86.

17. Costa RM, Miller GF. Women who prefer longer penises are more likely to have vaginal orgasms (but not clitoral orgasms): implications for an evolutionary theory of vaginal orgasm. *J Sex Med*. 2012;9(12):3079-3088.