

ASSESSMENT OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRACTICES AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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Abstract

Context: : Menstruation and menstrual practices are still clouded by taboos and socio cultural restrictions leading to continuing ignorance of adolescent girls regarding scientific facts and hygienic health practices which sometimes results in adverse health outcomes. Isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions being imposed on them in the family have reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon. Menstrual hygiene and management will directly contribute the Millennium Development Goal (MDG-2) on universal education and MDG -3 on gender equality and women empowerment.

Aims: 1) To identify beliefs, perception regarding menstruation among study population
(2) To assess the knowledge and practices of menstrual hygiene among study population.

Settings and Design: Community based cross sectional observational study

Methods and Material: : A community based cross sectional observational study was conducted among 150 adolescent girls of Govt secondary high school in rural field practice area of Siddhartha Medical College, Vijayawada with the help of pre-designed structured questionnaire.

Statistical analysis used: Data was analyzed using Microsoft excel.

Results: Out 150 study population 109 (72.67%) girls were aware about menstruation before menarche. Mother was the first informant regarding menstruation in case of 70 (64.22%) girls. 86 (57.33%) girls believed it as a physiological process. 128 girls used sanitary pads during menstruation. For cleaning purpose 95 girls used both soap and water regarding restrictions practices 100 girls practiced different restrictions during menstruation conclusions menstrual hygiene, a very important risk for reproductive tract infections, is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent school girls. This can be achieved through the mothers, health staff, school teachers and educational television programmers.

Conclusions: Reproductive tract infections, which has become a silent epidemic that devastates women's life is closely interrelated with poor menstrual hygiene. Therefore, proper menstrual hygiene and correct perceptions and beliefs can protect the womenfolk from this suffering.

The adolescent girls should be educated about the facts of menstruation, physiological implications and proper hygienic practices. This can be achieved through the mothers, health staff, school teachers and educational television programs. All mothers irrespective of their educational status should be taught to break their inhibitions about discussing with their daughters regarding menstruation much before the age of menarche.

The study reveals the adolescent girls are ignorant about scientific perception about menstruation. This study reveals that about two third of study population are facing different types of restrictions during menstruation.

Thus the above findings reinforce the need to encourage safe and hygienic practices among adolescent girls and bringing them out of traditional beliefs, misconceptions and restrictions regarding menstruations.

Key-words: Adolescent girls, Menstrual Hygiene, Menarche, Reproductive tract infections, Sanitary pad.

Key Messages: Need to encourage safe and hygienic practices among adolescent girls and bringing them out of traditional beliefs, misconceptions and restrictions regarding menstruations.

INTRODUCTION:

Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period which signifies transition from girlhood to womanhood. WHO has defined adolescence as the age group of 10-19 years. Menstruation is

a phenomenon unique to the females. Isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions being imposed on them in the family, have reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon. The Oppression of Women has its effect on issues concerning reproductive health and other issues related to the reproductive system and its functions and

culture, ethnic group, social class or family. Most striking is the restricted control, which many girls have over their own mobility and behavior during menstruation due to their 'impurity' during menstruation, including the myths, misconceptions, superstitions and cultural and or religious taboos concerning menstrual blood and menstrual hygiene. Adolescent girls constitute a vulnerable group, particularly in India where female child is neglected one. Menstruation is still regarded as something unclean or dirty in Indian society. The reaction to menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge about the subject. The manner in which a girl learns about menstruation and its associated changes may have an impact on her response to the event of menarche. Although menstruation is a natural process, it is linked with several misconceptions and practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes. Adolescent girls often are reluctant to discuss this topic with their parents and often hesitate to seek help regarding their menstrual problems. Hygiene-related practices of women during menstruation are of considerable importance, as it has a health impact in terms of increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infections (RTI). The interplay of socio-economic status, menstrual hygiene practices and RTI are noticeable. Today millions of women are suffers of RTI and its complications and often the infection is transmitted to the offspring of the pregnant mother.

Many studies have revealed that most of the adolescent girls had incomplete and inaccurate information about the menstrual physiology and hygiene. It also revealed that mothers, television, friends, teachers and relatives were main sources which provided information on menstruation to the adolescent girls. Good hygienic practices such as the use of sanitary pads and adequate washing of the genital area are essential during menstruation. Menstrual hygiene and management will directly contribute the millennium development goal (MDG-2) on universal education and MDG -3 on gender equality and women empowerment. Menstrual hygiene is a priority intervention under RMNCH +A strategy.

Women having better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe practices are less consequences. Therefore, increased knowledge about menstruation right from childhood may escalate safe practices and may help in mitigating the suffering of millions of women. Data on their level of knowledge and practices are beneficial for planning programs for improving their awareness level.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS:

Type of study :

Community based cross sectional observational study.

Duration of study :

October and November 2015

Study setting :

The study undertaken at government secondary high school and Z.P high school.

Sampling method :

Convenient sampling

Study population :

150 adolescent school girls of rural field practice area of Siddhartha Medical College, Vijayawada.

Study tool :

A pre-designed, structured, closed ended, self-administered Questionnaire.

After taking permission from the school authority, the class teacher and students were briefly explained the purpose of study and rapport was built up with the girl students and verbal consent was obtained from them. The pre-designed, structured, closed ended questionnaire included topics related to menstruation, hygiene practices during menstruation and restrictions practiced during menstruation. At the end of the study, after collection of the questionnaire from the students, health education regarding menstruation and healthy practices was imported to the girls through lectures and all their queries were answered satisfactorily by the research worker.

TABLE 1 : age wise distribution of girls

AGE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF GIRLS		
Age in Years	Number	Percentage
11	3	2.00%
12	18	12.00%
13	43	28.67%
14	44	29.33%
15	34	22.67%
16	8	5.33%
Total	150	100.00%

RESULTS:

The present study shows that the awareness about the age at menarche. Among the study populations 70 % were Hindus, where as 31 % girls were Muslim. Mothers of most of the girls were housewives .

TABLE 2: Information about menarche (n = 150)

Information	No	Percent-age
A . Awareness about age at Menarche	44	29.33%
B . Awareness about menstruation before menarche	109	72.67 %
C . Source of information before menarche		
Mother	70	64.22%
Friend	29	26.66 %
Sister	06	5. 5%
Teacher	02	1.83 %
None	02	1.83 %

Table 2 shows that 109 (72.67 %) girls were aware about menstruation prior to onset of menarche.44 (29.33 %) of girls are aware that normal age at menarche was at 14 years. Mother was the first informant only incase of 70 (64.22 %) girls, other sources of information were friends, sister and teacher in case of 29 (26.61%), 6(5.5%) and 2 (1.83 %) girls respectively.

TABLE 3: Perception about menstruation (n =150)

PERCEPTION	No	PERCENTAGE
Cause of menstruation		
Physiological	86	57.33 %
Curse	14	9.33%
Sin	07	4.67 %
Don't know	43	28.67 5

Table 3: shows that 86 girls believe the menstruation physiological process.14 girls believed it as a curse of God and 7 girls believed it as a sin. Most of the girls (54.67 %) did not know the organ of menstrual bleeding.

TABLE 4: Knowledge about organ of menstrual bleed

Uterus	19	12.66 %
Urethra	49	32.67 %
Don't know	82	54.67 %

TABLE 5: practice of menstrual hygiene (n = 150)

Menstrual hygiene	No	Percentage
<i>Use of material during menstruation</i>		
Sanitary pad	128	85.33 %
New cloth	17	11.33 %
Old cloth	05	3.335
<i>Material used for genital cleaning</i>		
Water + soap	95	63.33 %
Water only	31	20.67 %
Water + antiseptic	24	16.00 %

Table 5: showing practices during menstruation that 128 girls are used sanitary pads during menstruation. For cleaning purpose 95 girls used both soap and water.

Table 6: shows the restrictions practiced during menstruation. 50 % girls did not practice any restriction .100 girls (66.67%) practiced different restrictions during menstruation .

TABLE 6 : Restrictions practices during menstruation (n =150)

Restrictions	No	Percentage
Not practiced	50	33.33%
Practiced	100	66.67 %

DISCUSSION:

This study shows 27.33 % girls were ignorant about menstruation before menarche. In a study conducted by Dipali Nemade et al 100% girls were aware of menstruation [12]. In this study mother was the first informant in 64.22 % girls. In study conducted by a Dasgupta et al 1 mother is the main source of information (37.5%) regarding menstruation before menarche. In a study conducted by Dipali Nemade et al mother is the source of information in 43.3% girls [12]. In this study that 57.33 % girls believes it is to be a physiological process where as in a similar study conducted in Rajasthan khanna et al 270 % believe that menstruation was not a natural process. In the present study 54.67 % girls did not know about the organ of menstrual bleeding. This study shows that 85.33% girls preferred sanitary pad as menstrual absorbent. In a study conducted by a Das Gupta et al 11.25 % girls used sanitary pad during menstruation. In this study 63.33% of girls are using soap and water for cleaning genitalia. In a study conducted by Dipali Nemade et al 29.95% girls are using soap and water for cleaning the genitalia [12]. Different restrictions were practiced by two thirds of girls in this study. In a study conducted by Dipali Nemade 100% of girls are facing discrimination during menstruation.[12]

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