



Reproductive Health Problems and Health Seeking Behaviour Among Adolescent Girls of Villupuram District, Tamilnadu

Dr.S.Sampathkumari

M.D., D.G.O., F.I.C.O.G FOGSI Adolescent Committee Chairperson and Associate professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Chengalpeta Medical College, Chengalpeta

Dr.D.Geetha

M.D., D.G.O 2 Senior Assistant Professor. Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Institute of Social Obstetrics and Govt. Kasturba Gandhi Hospital for Women and Children, Triplicane, Chennai-600005

Dr.D.Lakshmi

M.B.B.S 3 PG Student in Community Medicine, Rajah Muthiah Medical College, Annamalai Nagar, Chidambaram-608002,

ABSTRACT

Aim: To study the knowledge and health seeking behavior of adolescent girls for reproductive health and educate regarding the improvement of their health status and about family life..

KEYWORDS : Adolescent girls, reproductive health, menstrual cycle, itching

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents have unique reproductive and sexual health needs. Sexually transmitted infections, birth control, sex education, and teenage pregnancy are a few of the clinical and social issues. Despite the fact that adolescents represent almost one quarter of the Indian population, their reproductive health needs are poorly understood and ill served..During adolescence period, they are prone to develop reproductive health related problems which are generally neglected leading to further disease trouble A large variety of morbidities prevail among adolescents . Reproductive Tract Infection, Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV/AIDS have already appeared as serious problems. Adolescent girls, across the county, are a particularly disadvantaged group in relation to sexual and reproductive health due to cultural norms mandating early marriage and early child birth .Majority of adolescent girls in India are suffering from reproductive health morbidities. If not treated early, these morbidities could lead to various disabilities and consequently affect their valuable lives. Adolescent girls are likely of mothers in the subsequent 5-10 years and these morbidities may affect the well being of future generation. The aim of the study is to identify the reproductive health problems and health seeking behavior among adolescent girls in Villupuram town, Villupuram district..

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A house -to -house survey approach was adopted for the study. The study was conducted to collect the information on their general and reproductive health and associated factors, including the health care seeking behaviors involving 400 adolescent girls who were in the age group of 11-17 years and attained menarche. This study was carried out from May 2016 to October 2016. The interview was conducted at the residence of the girls using standardized data collection instruments. It included the information on knowledge related to menstruation, practices related to menstruation, frequency of change and disposal of sanitary pads, symptoms suggestive of RTIs, knowledge and practices related to emergency contraception.

RESULTS :

A total of 400 adolescent girls were included in the study. Many girls that is, 344 (86%) in the current study reported to have knowledge of menstruation prior to menarche. For 63.25% of girls mother was a source for this knowledge [TABLE-1] while only 19% of girls received the knowledge from school.

Table-1: Source of menstruation-related information (n = 400)

Source of information	Number of Adolescent Girls	percentage
Mother	253	63.25
Friends	24	6
School	76	19
No knowledge	47	11.75

Out of total 400 adolescent girls, [table-2] the most common menstrual related problem for 36% of girls was dysmenorrhoea. The study noted that for 82 (20.5%) girls menstruation related problems led to the loss of school or college days.

Table 2: Menstruation-related problems (n = 400)

Type of problem	Number of Adolescent girls	percentage
Irregular cycles	87	21.75
No menstrual related problem	157	39.25
Excessive Bleeding	12	3
Dysmenorrhoea	144	36

The 193 (48.25%) girls reported some form of restriction in activities during menstruation, most common and only reason for restriction in activity was for religious reason with or without other reasons.

Out of total 400 girls, 58 girls (14.5%) reported to be suffering from symptoms suggestive of RTIs Table-3. Out of these 58 girls, the most common symptom reported by 31 girls was itching followed by unusual vaginal discharge with or without lower abdominal pain reported by 14 girls.

Table 3: Symptoms related to reproductive tract infections (n = 58)

Type of symptom	No of adolescent Girls
Lower abdominal pain	12
Pain when urinating	17

Itching	31
Swollen glands	3
Unusual vaginal discharge	14

***Multiple Responses**

Responses to questions on practices related to menstruation revealed that cloth piece was still used for menstrual protection by 2% of girls while remaining 98% used sanitary napkins. Maximum girls changed the napkins twice or thrice in a day. Soaked sanitary pads were disposed sanitarily by 96% of girls.

Out of 400 girls 155 (38.75) girls were aware about emergency contraception Table-4. In this study among 155 girls ,128 girls (82.58%) received the knowledge from television and others from various sources.

Table 4: Awareness of Emergency Contraception (n = 400)

Awareness of Emergency contraception	Number of Adolescent girls	percentage
Yes	155	38.75
No	245	61.25

DISCUSSION:

Dysmenorrhoea is an important menstrual disorder in adolescence, and common in young women with ovulatory cycles. It has become an important public health problem among the female population. Current study revealed that out of total 400 adolescent girls, 243 (60.75%) girls reported some form of menstrual disorder and lower figures were quoted by Singh et al [1]. They reported that 44.6% of girls suffered from various menstrual problems, most common being dysmenorrhoea among 40.7% of girls and 2.3% suffered from irregular menses. Sharma et al [2] in his study on adolescent reported that dysmenorrhoea (67.2%) was the most common problem faced and that 17.24% had to miss class and 25% had to abstain from work. While Nair et al [3] noted that dysmenorrhoea was prevalent in 63.75% of adolescent girls. Similar number of adolescent girls, that is, 144 (36%) in the current study reported to be suffering from dysmenorrhoea.

Adolescent girls are mothers of tomorrow. A large number of them suffer due to RTIs and sexually transmitted diseases, which are recognized to be an important health problem in India. RTIs, which are preventable and treatable, are responsible for causing serious consequences of infertility, ectopic pregnancy, pregnancy wastage, low birth weight, etc [4]. In the current study, only 14.5% were suffering from symptoms suggestive of RTIs. In contrast to the study by Ram et al., [5] observed that 64% of the girls were suffering from RTI.

Purohit et al [6]. in their study on urban unmarried women reported that emergency contraceptives were known to about 87% of the respondents. These figures are higher than the current study where only 38.75% of the girls had knowledge. Purohit et al [6] also reported that almost 92% of the respondents had received the knowledge of emergency contraception from the television advertisement almost similar to current study where 82.58% received this knowledge from television. Jahnavi and Patra [7] in their cross-sectional survey found that 94.4% of respondents were aware of contraception.

CONCLUSION:

This study will help to understand socio-cultural factors underlying adolescent reproductive health and assess adolescent reproductive health needs and ways in which health and information services can be structured to respond to these needs in light of the social, cultural and economic constraints that adolescents face. This will also focus on adolescent health issues and explore the knowledge and attitudes about sexual & reproductive health among the population

in villupuram district. The overall findings indicate that the girls suffered the health consequences of their socio-economic status, poor personal hygiene and lack of nutrition. Improving awareness about self-care practices and care-seeking behaviour may prevent the reproductive morbidities that were the outcome of poor personal hygiene. Prevalence of RTI was found to be low and very less number of girls reported a history of sexual exposure. From the basis of the above results we can conclude that the knowledge of adolescent girls was average. Thus it becomes important to address the misconceptions regarding different aspects of reproductive health through health education. Reproductive health problems should be discussed among adolescents, especially for girls through adolescent health clubs, seminars and lectures at school and identify and solve their reproductive health problems. counselling should be done with the help of specialists from time to time. Such educational intervention programs must be given due importance, which will help the adolescent girls to take care of their own health and protect themselves from the risk of Reproductive health problems.

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