



HYGIENIC PRACTICES AND ABSENTEEISM FROM SCHOOL DURING MENSTRUATION AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENT GIRLS OF URBAN AREA OF HAPUR, UTTAR PRADESH

Dr. Ridhi Mehra*

Senior Resident, Department of Community Medicine, North Delhi Municipal Corporation Medical College and Hindu Rao Hospital, Malka Ganj, Delhi, India. *Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period in their life cycle that requires specific and special attention. Menstruation not only affects girl's attendance but also attention, and achievement in schools. **Aims & Objectives:** To study hygiene practices and absenteeism during menstruation among school going adolescent girls of urban area of Hapur. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was carried out in school going adolescent girls of Hapur district to know their menstrual hygiene practices. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. All girls between the age group of 10-19 years who have attained menarche were selected and the sample size came out to be 220. Statistical analyses were done using percentage and Chi-square test. **Results:** Majority of the participants were 14-16 years old with the mean age of menarche at 13.5 ± 1.14 years. Most of the girls (48.6%) used sanitary napkin as menstrual absorbent. Statistically significant association was found between the absorbent material used and the socio-economic status of the family ($p=0.00235$). **Conclusions:** Adolescent girls should be made aware about menstruation and importance of maintaining its hygiene before attaining menarche. They should also be made aware about its linkages with their forthcoming reproductive health.

KEYWORDS : Absenteeism, adolescent, hygiene practices, menstruation

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide more than 1.2 billion are adolescents: this indicates that roughly one in every six persons is an adolescent¹. About 21% of Indian population is adolescents (about 243 million)². Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period in their life cycle that requires specific and special attention. This period is marked with onset of menarche³. Menstrual hygiene is most important, and still neglected area of concern. Menstruation not only affects girl's attendance but also attention, and achievement in schools. Because of the lack of knowledge, they end-up with repeated use of unclean menstrual absorbent which results in harbouring of micro-organisms that increases susceptibility to urinary, perineal, vaginal and pelvic infections. The absence of clean and private sanitation facilities lead to absenteeism from school during their menstruation. This study was conducted to study the menstrual hygiene practices and absenteeism from school during menstruation among adolescent girls of Hapur.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To study the hygiene practices and absenteeism during menstruation among school going adolescent girls of urban area of Hapur.

METHODOLOGY

A school based cross-sectional study was undertaken among the adolescent school going girls of Hapur who were purposively selected. All girls between the age group of 10-19 years who have attained menarche were selected. Total sample size came out to be 220. The study was conducted between 10th July to 10th September, 2021. Appropriate pre-designed and pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire was used. The questionnaire collected information on age, socioeconomic status, education of parents, age at menarche, sources of information on menstruation, absence from school during menstruation, reasons for absence, and availability of facilities for water, soap, toilets and sanitary pads in the school to help with good management of menstrual hygiene. Questions and concerns of the participants were also addressed at the end of the session.

Inclusion Criteria:

Includes adolescent girls of age group 10-19 years, who are attending classes 6th to 12th and have attained menarche.

Exclusion Criteria:

Girls who are not in the above mentioned age group or have

not attained menarche and are not willing to participate in study were excluded from the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

After completion of data collection, the data were entered in Microsoft Excel. Data were analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS) version 21.0. Results were described in percentage and proportions and displayed in appropriate tables and figures. For eliciting association between variables Chi-square test was used and the $p < 0.05$ was considered as statistically significant.

RESULTS

A pie chart showing the age distribution of study participants, almost two-third of girls are in age group of 14-16 years with mean age of 15.32 ± 1.4 years (Figure 1).

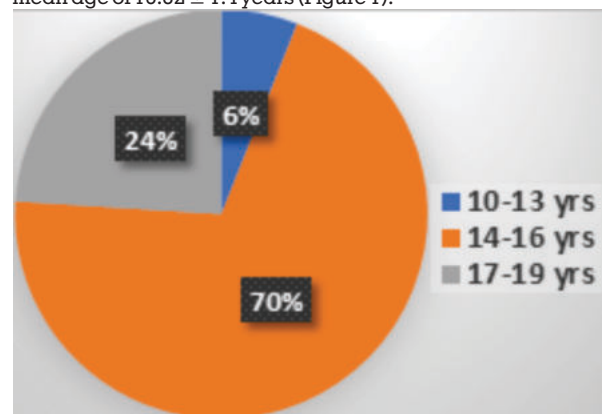


Figure 1: Age Distribution Of Study Participants

167 (75.9%) girls are of age group 13-15 years (13.5 ± 1.12) when they attained menarche. While only 5% girls attained it between 16- 19 years (Figure 2). According to modified B. J. Prasad classification 2016 most of the girls belong to lower middle class of socio-economic status (49%) and only 1.4% were in upper class.

48.6% (107) girls used sanitary pads as the absorbent material. Menstrual absorbents were disposed of in dustbins by 36.8% participants while 3.6% flushed it into the toilet. Only water is the most preferred (45.4%) agent used for cleaning, followed by soap and water (52.7%) and antiseptic solution

(1.8%) (Table1). Among 220 study participants, 52(23.6%) girls had any information regarding menarche and menstruation before attainment of menarche, whereas 168 girls (76.3%) did not know that information. Before menarche, 80.7% girls reported their mothers to be the primary source of information, 15.3% girls mentioned their friends and relatives. Only 3.8 % girls mentioned that teachers are their source of information.

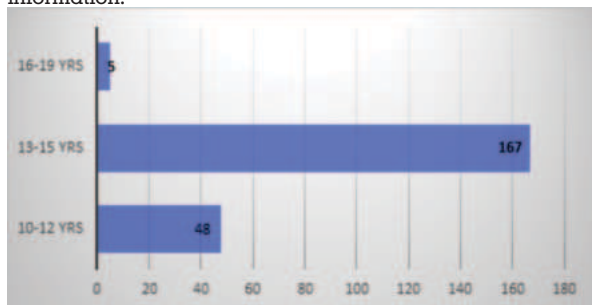


Figure 2: Age of attainment of menarche (years)

Table 1: Hygiene Practices Among Adolescent Girls During Menstruation

Type of absorbent used during menstruation (n=220) (%)		
Sanitary pads	107	48.6
Fresh cloth	22	10
Old cloth	56	25.4
Mixed use	35	15.9
Number of times absorbent changed (n=220) (per day)		
Once daily	70	31.8
More than once daily	132	60
Once in 2-3 days	18	8.1
Disposal of used menstrual absorbent (n=220)		
Open	109	49.5
Waste bin	81	36.8
Sanitary latrine	8	3.6
Well/lake	22	10
Agent used for cleaning purpose (n=220)		
Only water	100	45.4
Soap and water	116	52.7
Dettol	4	1.8

96 (43.63%) out of 220 girls who attained menarche used to remain absent from school during menstruation.

44 girls faced problems regarding menstrual hygiene privacy in schools. 88 (40%) participants felt uncomfortable during menstruation. Fear of getting stained was mentioned by 22% of adolescent girls as one of the reasons and 19.3 % girls were not comfortable in sitting beside boys (Table 2).

Table 2: Problems Faced In School During Menstruation

Problems	n(%)
Menstrual hygiene privacy in school (n=220)	
Yes	176(80)
No	44(20)
Supply of sanitary pads (n=220)	
Yes	7(3.1)
No	209(95)
Sometimes	4(1.8)
Feel comfortable in school (n=220)	
Yes	132(60)
No	88(40)
Reasons of being uncomfortable (n=88)	
Abdominal pain	42(47.7)
Fear of getting stained	22(25)
Uneasiness	4(4.5)
Sitting besides boys during menstruation	17(19.3)
Unsanitary toilet	3(3.4)

It was concluded that there is significant association between the absorbent material used and the socio-economic status of the family. ($\chi^2=14.44$, $df=3$, $p=0.00235$)

Table 3: Association Between The Absorbent Material Used And The Socio-economic Status Of The Family

SES	Absorbent used				Total
	Sanitary pads n(%)	New cloth piece n(%)	Old cloth piece n(%)	Mixed use n(%)	
Upper, upper middle and middle	29(67.4)	2(4.65)	7(16.2)	5(11.6)	43(100)
Lower middle and lower	78(44)	20(11.3)	49(27.6)	30(16.9)	177(100)
Total	107(48.6)	22(10)	56(25.4)	35(15.9)	220(100)

DISCUSSION

The mean age of menarche in our study was found to be 13.5 years (S.D. 1.12). The results are almost same as by Balat et al⁴. In their study, the mean age of menarche was 13.4 years. In the present study maximum number of girls had attained menarche between 13-15 years (56.67%) of age. The onset of puberty is influenced by many factors like geographic location, general health, nutritional status, and psychological state. Adolescent girls should be taught about menstruation and menstrual hygiene in today's world to achieve better health in the reproductive years ahead.

The main source of information was the mother of the girl. In a study conducted by Kamath⁵ et al, most participants believed mother to be the best source of information. In another study conducted in Shimla by Mahajan⁶ et al mother was the most important source of information in 61% girls. However it was interesting to note that only 3.8% girls obtained information from their teachers in present study. Teachers are shy to talk on this topic can be one of the reasons.

It was amazing to note that most of the girls (48.6%) use sanitary pads as menstrual absorbent during menstruation and only 10% use fresh cloth. 65.17% of the girls in urban school were using sanitary pads in a study conducted by Senapathi⁷ et al. Most of the study participants (60%) changed absorbent material 2-3 times a day. In a similar study conducted by Shoor⁸, 77 girls (76%) changed absorbents 2-3 times a day. In a study by Parikh⁹ et al, 73% girls changed the absorbent material twice in a day, and 10.2% changed it only once in a day. There is need for more awareness regarding frequent changing of absorbent materials as it can lead to reproductive tract infections.

In this present study only water is the most preferred (45.4%) agent used for cleaning. Only water (53.7%) were the most common agents followed by soap and water (46.3%) used for cleaning genitalia in a study conducted by Mathiyalagen¹⁰ et al. 43.63% girls who attained menarche remain absent from school during menstruation. In a similar study conducted by Vashisht¹¹ et al 40% girls remained absent from school during their menstruation.

CONCLUSION

There is need to educate adolescent girls about the safe and hygienic practices regarding menstruation to enable them to lead a healthy and reproductive life. More emphasis should be given on adequate changing times of soaked absorbent, adequate number of times of cleaning of external genitalia, sanitary material used for cleaning purpose, method of disposal of used menstrual absorbent among absorbent girls in this area. There is also need to empower teachers as they can be important source of information regarding menstrual health to students. There is also need to improve basic facilities at school to cut down absenteeism.

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Ethical Approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee.

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