



Knowledge and Practices Among Adolescent Girls Regarding Menstruation in Rural Areas of Aligarh

KEYWORDS

Control chart technique, Six sigma Concept, six sigma control limit.

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ABSTRACT *Background :* Most of the girls in their adolescent age lack knowledge regarding reproductive health including menstrual hygiene which may be due to many social barriers or cultural barriers.

Objectives: The present study was conducted to assess the knowledge and practices regarding menstruation and also to assess the type of material used as absorbent during menstruation

METHODOLOGY : A cross sectional study was carried out in Rural Health Training Centre, Jawan, attached to the Department of Community Medicine of J.N. Medical College, A.M.U., Aligarh . The study population includes all adolescent girls in the area of age group 13-19 years who had menarche for at least one year at the time of study. A total of 70 adolescent girls in the age group of 13-19 years, who gave verbal consent, were included. The study was conducted from March – April, 2016. The data was collected by personal interview on pre-tested semi-structured questionnaires .

Results: Most of the females (52.8 percent) under study were not aware about the source of bleeding . While 28.5% of females thought that bleeding occurred from bladder , 14.2% of females thought that bleeding occurred from uterus. Regarding knowledge of menstruation, most (60%) of the females under study were not aware before menarche. Mother (50%) was the main source of knowledge regarding menstrual cycle. While relatives and friends (14.28%) constitute the next common source of knowledge after mother in this study. Most of the females (57.1percent) under study were not aware about the cause of bleeding . 30% of females thought that it was physiological process while some thought it could be God given (7.14%). Some of them (2.85%) though it was due to sin. Regarding practices, most of the females under study used new cloth (34.2%) and 28.5% of them used old cloth as absorbent. Only 11.4% of them used sanitary pad as adsorbent.. 14.2% of females were not aware about sanitary pads and were not comfortable with it. Restrictions were also imposed during menstruation. Around 85.7% of the females under study were not allowed to visit religious places. 35.7% of them were not allowed to do routine house hold activity and 28.5% were restricted from going school.

CONCLUSION: The study reveals that lack of sufficient knowledge and awareness among girls regarding menstruation can be due to low level of education among themselves and their mothers. Education regarding reproductive health and hygiene should be given by Aaganwadi workers as well as included as a part of school curriculum. Education television programmes, trained school/health personnel, motivated school teachers, and knowledgeable parents can play a very important role in transmitting the critical messages of correct practices about menstrual hygiene to the adolescent girls of today

Introduction

About a quarter of India's population comprises of girls below 20 years¹. The beginning of menstruation in a girl is marked the start of reproductive life. Despite the fact that menstruation is a normal physiological process, it is considered as inconvenient or embarrassing. Menstruation is generally considered unclean. Isolation of the girls and restriction being imposed by family members bring negative attitude in the girls. Studies by Mensch et al. (1998) reveal that at menstruation, girls activity may be restricted and may be kept from food preparation and consumption, socializing, religious practice, mobility etc.. Most of the girls have little knowledge of menstruation². A study by Reddy et al. (2005) revealed that only one in seven of the adolescent girls had knowledge of menses prior to its onset³. Hygiene related practices of women during menstruation have little health impact in term of increased vulnerability of reproductive tract infection (RTI). Women having better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe practices are less vulnerable to RTI and its consequences^{4,5}. Therefore increased knowledge about menstruation escalate safe

practice. The present study was conducted to assess the knowledge and practices regarding menstruation and also to assess the type of material used as absorbent during menstruation and related aspects.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was carried out in Rural Health Training Centre, Jawan, attached to the Department of Community Medicine of J.N. Medical College, A.M.U., Aligarh. The approximately population of this area is around 17000. The study population includes all adolescent girls in the area of age group 13-19 years who had menarche for at least one year at the time of study. A total of 70 adolescent girls in the age group of 13-19 years, who gave verbal consent, were included. The study was conducted from March – April, 2016. The data was collected by personal interview on pre-tested semi-structures questionnaires which consisted of specific questions pertaining to awareness and practices regarding menstruation and related aspects. The confidentiality of information was assured and their verbal consent was taken before collecting data. The data

was analyzed with Microsoft Excel using SPSS software.

RESULTS

The present study was conducted in 70 adolescent girls of rural areas in Aligarh.

Regarding knowledge of menstruation, most (60%) of the females under study were not aware before menarche. Mother (50%) was the main source of knowledge regarding menstrual cycle. While relatives and friends (14.28%) constitute the next common source of knowledge after mother in this study.

Most of the females (52.8 percent) under study were not aware about the source of bleeding . While 28.5% of females thought that bleeding occurred from bladder ,14.2% of females thought that bleeding occurred from uterus. Very few of them thought that bleeding occurred from stomach and kidney. Most of the females (57.1percent) under study were not aware about the cause of bleeding . 30% of females thought that it was physiological process while some thought it could be God given (7.14%). Some of them(2.85%)though it was due to sin.Regarding practices, most of the females under study used new cloth (34.2%) and 28.5% of them used old cloth as absorbent .Only 11.4% of them used sanitary pad as adsorbent. Cost of sanitary pad was main factor for not using it.14.2% of females were not aware about sanitary pads and were not comfortable with it. Restrictions were also imposed during menstruation. Around 85.7% of the females under study were not allowed to visit religious places.35.7% of them were not allowed to do routine house hold activity and 28.5% were restricted from going school.

Table-1: Distribution of respondents according to the knowledge of menstruation

Attributes	No. (%)
Knew about menstruation before menarche	
Yes	28 (40%)
No	42 (60%)
Source of knowledge of menstrual cycle	
Mother	35 (50)
Relatives	10 (14.28%)
Friends	10 (14.28%)
Teacher	05 (7.14%)
Sister	05 (7.14%)
Do not know	05 (7.14%)
Knowledge of organ from where bleeding occurs	
Uterus	10 (14.2%)
Kidney	01 (1.4%)
Bladder	20 (28.5%)
Stomach	02 (2.8%)
Do not know	37 (52.8%)

Knowledge of cause of menstruation	21 (30.0%)
Physiological	05 (7.14%)
God given	02 (2.85%)
Result of sin	02 (2.85%)
Due to some disease	40 (57.1%)
Do not know	
Any toxin in menstrual blood	
Yes	15 (21.4%)
No	55 (78.5%)

Table-2: Distribution of respondents according to their practices during menstruation

Attributes	No. (%)
Type of absorbent	
Sanitary pad	08 (11.4%)
New cloth	24 (34.2%)
Old washed cloth	20 (28.5%)
Pad + old washed cloth	15 (21.41%)
Pad + new cloth	03 (4.28%)
Problems faced while using cloth during washing and drying	
Yes	25 (35.7%)
No	45 (64.2%)
Reasons for not using sanitary pads	
No reason	20 (28.5%)
Difficulty in discard	05 (7.14%)
Costly	25 (35.7%)
Don't know about it	10 (14.2%)
Don't feel comfortable with it	10 (14.2%)
Different restriction among adolescent girls during menstruation*	
Religious place/temple/religious occasion	60 (85.7%)
Routine household work	25 (35.7%)
Playing	05 (7.14%)
Attending school	20 (28.5%)
Certain types of foods	03 (4.28%)

*multiple responses

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted in rural areas to find out the knowledge and practices of menstruation. 70 girls participated between the age group of 13-19 years. Regarding the knowledge of organ from where bleeding occurs, most of them were not aware of the organ of bleeding(52.8 percent). While 2.8% thought the bleeding was from stomach, 14.2% thought it was from uterus and 28.5% thought from bladder. It was observed by Yasmin⁶ in a study of urban community of West Bengal that 63.3% of females thought bleeding occurred from uterus. Similarly, Khanna et al.⁷ reported that 33.1% of females thought menstruation as a physiological process. While in our study,30 percent of females thought menstruation was a physiological process. Regarding the practices, most of the girls used new cloth as absorbent (34.2%), 28.5% of the girls used old wash cloths. Only 11.4% of the girls used sanitary pad. It was observed in other studies⁸⁻¹¹ also that majority of the girls used clothes rather than sanitary pad as menstrual absorbent.A study by Dasgupta et al ¹⁸ in a

rural community showed that majority of the girls preferred cloth pieces rather than sanitary pads as menstrual absorbent. Dasgupta et al showed only 11.25% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation. In another study carried out in Nagpur by Patle RA et al., 43.4% girls in rural areas were using sanitary pads. Use of old piece of cloth was higher among rural group (52.43%) with frequency of changing the pads being 2-3 times a day.¹⁹ A study conducted by Baishakhi Paria²⁰ et al showed that 36% girls in the urban and 54.88% girls in the rural area were using cloth. Khanna et al.⁷ observed three-fourths of the girl used old clothes during periods and only 1/5th used readymade sanitary pad. A study conducted in West Bengal, showed that 92% and 8% females were using cloth and sanitary pads respectively during menstruation.²¹ Cost was the main factor for not using sanitary pad. Difference in use of sanitary napkin is possibly due to number of factors like availability, accessibility, cost, exposure to media, customs, storage and disposal issues. It was also observed that there were restrictions for the girls during menstruation. Around 85.7% of the girls under study were not allowed to go to religious places by the temple. 35.7% of them were not allowed to do routine household work. While 28.5% of the females were not allowed to attend schools. This was observed in other studies also.¹²⁻¹⁷ 85% of the girls practiced different restrictions during menstruation.¹⁸ Most of the girls (90.36%) practiced changing their pads 2-4 times a day. Gupta et al have emphasized a need of developing information, education and communication strategies to focus on rising awareness on reproductive health.²²

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that lack of sufficient knowledge and awareness among girls regarding menstruation can be due to low level of education among themselves and their mothers. Education regarding reproductive health and hygiene should be given by Aanganwadi workers as well as included as a part of school curriculum. Education television programmes, trained school/health personnel, motivated school teachers, and knowledgeable parents can play a very important role in transmitting the critical messages of correct practices about menstrual hygiene to the adolescent girls of today. New policies should be implemented for improving the level of information among girls. Restrictions should be restricted on the girls during menstrual cycle. Mother role is very important in giving education to the girls. So mothers should themselves be aware about reproductive hygiene and diseases caused due to unhygienic conditions. Provision of sanitary pads free of cost or at subsidized rate through public distribution system can be kept in mind at priority basis to help this segment of population which will lead to good reproductive health.

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