



## Prevalence and treatment seeking behavior of college students regarding Menstrual and menstruation problems in Tamil Nadu

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### ABSTRACT

The female adolescent may encounter include dysmenorrhea, irregularities in menstrual flow and premenstrual symptoms. Three-fourth of girls was experience some problems with menstruation. An attempt is made to find out the prevalence of menstrual/menstruation abnormalities in college girls in Tamil Nadu Adi-Dravidar Welfare hostel and treatment seeking behaviour. A cross-sectional questionnaire study was conducted, 634 students were participated in the study, one-fifth were ITI students and the remaining were the Arts & Science. The hostel inmates suffered by any one of the menstruation problems for the last three months. The topmost menstruation problem indicated by the ADW hostel inmate was Hip-pain. Arts, Science and ITI students had self-medicated for their menstrual problems. Above one-fourth of the hostellers missed their classes due to their menses problems. Comprehensive education program on menarche and menstrual problems may necessary to help students for better and seek proper medical assistance.

**KEYWORDS :** - Menstrual, Menstruation problems, self-medication

**Introduction:** Onset of menstruation is the growth and development of an adolescent girl. It is a natural phenomenon. throughout the reproductive years of woman's life with or without discomfort. Menstrual cycle is the 28 days of cyclical shedding of endometrial hormone After menarche, dysmenorrhea, irregularities in menstrual flow and premenstrual symptoms. Three-fourth of girls were experience some problems associated with menstruation, Menstruation is still regarded as something unclean or dirty and the reaction to menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge. The 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, sometimes result into adverse health outcomes.

In this study to find out the prevalence of menstrual and menstruation problems among college students' and to examine their treatment seeking behaviour towards menstrual problems. It is also tries to assess the impact of college attendance.

**Methods:** This study was carried out among the college students who staying at Adi-Dravidar Welfare (ADW) hostels in Tamil Nadu. 150 students were considered for conducting the survey. Totally 15 hostels came under this category. It was decided to select one-fourth of the ADW hostels by simple random method. The interview was conducted proportionately selected sample population. Overall 687 ADW hostel inmates were selected as sample population however 634 students were considered for the study analysis Out of 634 students, about one-fifth of them staying at the ITI hostels and the remaining eighty percent of students were staying at the Arts & Science hostels.

**Results:** Socio demographic profile: The average age of the respondents was 19 years and majority of them were Hindus. Agricultural related activities were prime occupation of the study population. Overall, the respondents' parent's educational attainment was not satisfied- majority of them were illiterates. However, the differentials existed within father and mother with regard to their educational and occupational structures. The ITI hostel students reported relatively higher average monthly income (Rs. 5,467/-) than the Arts & Science hostel students (Rs. 4,546/-). It is found that there was statistically insignificant difference between the Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the respondents by their course.

Prevalence of Menstrual Problems: From missed periods to painful

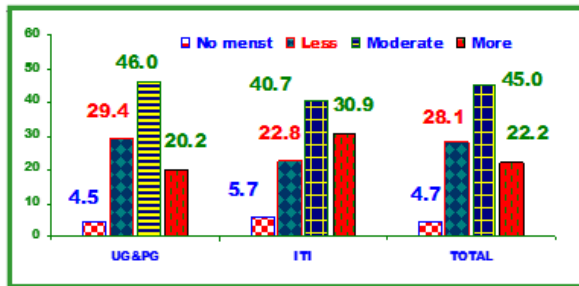
periods, menstrual cycle problems are common, but usually not serious. In the study area, the respondents were asked to report their menstrual problems experienced in the last three months (table 1). In the study area, more than eighty percent of the hostel students were suffered by any one of the menstrual problems for the last three months in the study area (88.3 percent).

Pain and discomfort just before and/or during menstruation that is severe enough to interfere with normal daily activities is called dysmenorrhea, or premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Symptoms of dysmenorrhea include lower abdominal cramps, intermittent sharp pain in the abdominal region, and lower back pain, as well as abdominal bloating, breast tenderness, headache, sleep problems, and mood swings. Data shows that painful periods was the major problem reported by a significant proportion of the hostel inmates in the study area (55.2 percent), followed by scanty bleeding and blood clots (36.9 percent and 35.0 percent respectively). Around one-fourth of the ADW hostel inmates indicate inter-menstrual bleeding and irregular periods as their next common problems during menses for the last three months.

Heavy or prolonged menstrual periods are called menorrhagia or hypermenorrhoea. These conditions are characterized by a menstrual period that lasts longer than 7 days or menstrual flow that soaks through one or more pads or tampons every hour for several hours. It is notice from the table that 22 percent of the hostel students stated the 'prolonged period' was their main problem faced during menstruation. Frequent/short Periods problem was noticed by 15 percent of the hostel inmates. The absence of menstrual periods (amenorrhoea) is a common type of menstrual problem. This condition involves an absence of menstruation for 3 months or longer in a sexually mature woman who is not pregnant or breastfeeding. It is observed that 10 percent of the hostel students not get menstrual periods during the last three months.

The magnitude of menstrual problems experienced by the ADW hostel inmates for last three months was analyzed by constructing a prevalence of menstrual problem index. It reveals from table 1 that just 12 percent of the ADW hostel inmates not suffered by any menstrual problems and at the same time just seven percent of the inmates reported that they suffered by 5-7 listed menstrual problems. Little less than half of the hostel students suffered with any of two menstrual problems in the last three months (48.6 percent). About one-third of the respondents were fall in the moderate prevalence category. The magnitude of prevalence of menstrual problems does not differ much among the ITI and the Arts & Science hostel inmates.

**Prevalence of Menstruation Problems:** Although, the onset of menstruation is unique to females, menstruation problems are common (Lee, Chen, Lee and Kaur, 2006). Deep-rooted traditions do not allow adolescent girls to realize their rights in many parts of the world. In the study area, the respondents were asked whether they ever suffered with any menstruation problems in the past three months preceding the survey.



Data in table 2 shows that an overwhelmingly majority of the hostel inmates suffered by any one of the menstruation problems for the last three months (95.3 percent) in the study locations. The topmost menstruation problem indicated by the ADW hostel inmate was Hip Pain (71.1 percent), followed by Stomach ache (67.2 percent) and Backache (63.4 percent). More than half of the hostel inmates were suffered by weakness (57.3 percent) and Leg pain (52.8 percent) for the last three months during their period days. A significant proportion of the ADW hostel students reported that they were suffered by Giddiness (38.3 percent), Vomiting sensation (32.8 percent) and Headache (32.0 percent) during their menses time.

In order to assess the magnitude of menstruation problems experienced for last three months by the ADW hostel inmates a composite index was constructed. This prevalence of menstruation problem index has four levels. It reveals from the table 3 that just 5 percent of the ADW hostel inmates not suffered by any menstruation problems and at the same time more than one-fifth of the inmates reported (22 percent) that they suffered by 7-9 listed menstruation problems. About 45 percent of the hostel students suffered with any of 4-6 menstruation problems in the last three months. About 28percent of the respondents were fall in the less prevalence category. The magnitude of prevalence of menstruation problems is more among the ITI hostel inmates than the Arts & Science hostel students.

**Treatment seeking Behaviour:** The foregoing analysis has brought out the fact that a significant proportion of respondents have been suffering from menstrual related problems in the study area. This section focuses on care or treatment seeking behaviour of women, which is a measure to assess the importance given to reproductive health by the respondents. A significant proportion of inmates at both the Arts & Science and the ITI hostels (26.8 and 25.0 percent respectively) had self-medicated for their menstrual problems. Friends and relatives were next importance source of consultancy for their menstrual problems (16.2percent). Consultancy with private doctors was slightly higher than consultancy with public sector's Doctors (24.9 and 23.2 percent respectively). Private Doctor Consultancy was higher among the ITI hostel inmates than their counterpart. It can be concluded that the major place of treatment was private hospital beside the self medication. However, more than half of the inmates reported their menstrual problems were not cured.

During the survey, the ADW hostel students were asked to report whether they missed their classes due to menses problems. It is noticed from the table 4 that more than one-fourth of the hostel inmates missed their classes due to their menses problems (27.3 percent). Among the respondents who missed their classes were further asked to state the number of days missed. Little more than one-third of the hostellers missed at least one day and 30 percent of them reported that they missed about at least three days. It is noticed

from the table that average number of days missed in the last three months was slightly higher (2.69 days) for Arts & Science hostel inmates than ITI hostel students (2.23 days).

During the survey the hostel inmates were asked to report the specific reason for missing their classes. Data shows that menses pain occupied the foremost reason for their absence (83.8 percent), and it is followed by Discomfort due to menses (73.4 percent) and Fear of staining their clothes (57.2 percent). More than one-fifth of the respondents stated that their college not having privacy for their absence from classes. More than one-quarter of the ADW hostel inmates declared that menstruation make them stay at hostel (27.6 percent). More than three-fourth of the students reported that they were unable to play/participate in sports related activities because of their menses. Similarly around 70percent of the hostel inmates stated that the menses makes unable to walk them faraway.

In **conclusion**, it can be mentioned that prevalence of dysmenorrhoea and menstrual irregularity among college students is quite high. Their class attendance is reported to be affected by menstrual pain. It is also observed from the analysis that a significant proportion of students preferred self-medication for their menses related problems. It could be possible to improve menstrual discomforts management by including awareness programs. It is also suggested that a comprehensive education program on menarche and menstrual problems may help students to cope better and seek proper medical assistance.

**Table No. 1**Percentage distribution of Students staying at ADW hostels by incidence of Menstrual Problems

Menstrual Problems	Students		Total
	Arts & Science	ITI	
<b>Painful Periods</b>			
Yes	55.0	56.1	55.2
<b>Scanty bleedings*** 13.111</b>			
Yes	40.3	22.8	36.9
<b>Blood clots</b>			
Yes	35.8	31.7	35.0
<b>Inter-menstrual bleedings</b>			
Yes	23.9	29.3	24.9
<b>Irregular periods</b>			
Yes	24.1	26.0	24.4
<b>Prolonged bleedings</b>			
Yes	21.9	21.1	21.8
<b>Frequent / short Periods * 6.466</b>			
Yes	12.9	22.0	14.7
<b>No Periods</b>			
Yes	9.4	13.8	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>634</b>
<b>Magnitude of Menstrual problem Index</b>			
No Menstrual problems	11.9	10.6	11.7
Less prevalence of menstrual problems (1-2)	48.7	48.0	48.6
Moderate prevalence of menstrual problems (3-4)	32.3	35.0	32.8
More prevalence of menstrual problems (5-7)	7.0	6.5	6.9

\*\*\*, \* refers to significant at 1%, 10% level respectively (chi-square results –Students and Menstrual problems) NS refers to insignificant

**Table No. 2** Percentage distribution of Students staying at ADW hostels by incidence of Menstruation Problems

Menstruation Problems	Students		Total
	Arts & Science	ITI	
<b>Hip pain</b>			

Yes	70.5	74.0	71.1
<b>Stomach ache</b>			
Yes	67.3	66.7	67.2
<b>Backache</b>			
Yes	63.0	65.0	63.4
<b>Weakness</b>			
Yes	56.0	62.6	57.3
<b>Leg pain</b>			
Yes	52.4	54.5	52.8
<b>Bleeding</b>			
Yes	43.2	48.8	44.3
<b>Giddiness</b>			
Yes	37.6	41.5	38.3
<b>Vomiting sensation</b>			
Yes	32.3	35.0	32.8
<b>Headache** 8.592</b>			
Yes	29.4	43.1	32.0
<b>Magnitude of Menstruation problem Index</b>			
No Menstruation problems	4.5	5.7	4.7
Less menstruation problems (1-3)	29.4	22.8	28.1
Moderate problems (4-6)	46.0	40.7	45.0
More problems (7-9)	20.2	30.9	22.2

NS refers to insignificant (chi-square results –Students and menstruation problems)

**Table No. 3 Percentage distribution of Students staying at ADW hostels by their Care Seeking behaviour**

Menstrual Problems	Students		Total
	Arts & Science	ITI	
<b>Any menstrual problem last three months</b>			
Yes	29.2	29.3	29.2
No	70.8	70.7	70.8
<b>If yes, consult with</b>			
Govt. Hospital	22.8	25.0	23.2
Private Hospital	23.5	30.6	24.9
Friends/Relatives	18.1	8.3	16.2
Self-treatment	26.8	25.0	26.5
Not consult	8.7	11.1	9.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Problems cured</b>			
Yes	47.8	46.9	47.6
No	52.2	53.1	52.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>168</b>

**Table No. 4 Percentage distribution of Students staying at ADW hostels by Impact of menstruation on daily activities**

Impact of menstruation on daily activities	Students		Total
	Arts & Science	ITI	
<b>Missed classes due to Menes problems</b>			
Yes	28.4	22.8	27.3
No	71.6	77.2	72.7
<b>No. of days missed last three months</b>			
1 day missed	34.5	32.1	34.1
2 days missed	22.1	28.6	23.1
3 days missed	29.0	28.6	28.9
More than 3 days missed	14.5	10.7	13.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Average no. of days missed</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>2.23</b>	<b>2.57</b>
<b>Reason for missing classes (multiple response)</b>			

Because of menses pain	86.9	67.9	83.8
Discomfort due to menses	75.9	60.7	73.4
Fear of staining my clothes	58.6	50.0	57.2
No facility to dispose napkins	31.0	10.7	27.7
No pad to change	29.0	21.4	27.7
Others make fun	24.8	14.3	23.1
No privacy at college	25.5	10.7	23.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Menses makes stay at hostel</b>			
Yes	28.8	22.8	27.6
No	71.2	77.2	72.4
<b>Menses makes unable to play sports * 6.496</b>			
Yes	66.7	54.5	64.4
No	33.3	45.5	35.6
<b>Menses makes unable to walk farway *** 16.598</b>			
Yes	74.0	55.3	70.3
No	26.0	44.7	29.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>634</b>

\*\*\*, \* refers to significant at 1%, 10% level respectively (chi-square results –Students and Menstrual impact)

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