



MENSTRUAL-RELATED KNOWLEDGE AMONGST GIRLS ATTENDING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RURAL AREA.

Community Medicine

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ABSTRACT

The onset of menarche in adolescent age group is an important milestone of any female, hence good approach towards it and proper hygienic practices during menstruation are vital to maintain a healthy life. This study was designed to assess knowledge, beliefs, source of information regarding menstruation, and also to assess hygiene practice among them.

A cross-sectional study for 111 girls was carried out in secondary school in rural area. Data was collected using pre-tested questionnaire. Mean age of girls having their 1st menstrual was 12.41 years. 63% participants were aware about menstruation before average age of menarche. The most important sources of the information were mothers and teachers (79%). During menstrual cycle 82.9% were feeling moderate abdominal pain and 68.5% were complaining with low-back pain. 90% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation. 85.6% girls used dustbin for disposal of absorbent material.

Proper hygienic menstrual health is an important approach to women's good health, so it is important for all adolescent girls that they should sensitize with proper loud and clear awareness and practices.

KEYWORDS

Hygiene, menstrual cycle, menarche

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation, though a physiological phenomenon, has been entrapped in socio-cultural beliefs and myths like impure blood, food habits, physical activities and shower.^[1] In many parts of the developing countries, menstruation and related issues are supposed to be invisible and silent. This lack of information may result in inaccurate and unhealthy behavior during their menstrual period. Menstrual hygiene deals with the health issues and requirements of young girls during menstruation.^[2] Poor menstrual hygiene results in urogenital infections, urinary tract infections and long-term reproductive tract complications. On the other hand, good practices of menstrual hygiene, like washing genitals regularly, changing sanitary napkins on frequent intervals has reduced reproductive tract infections in the long term.^[3] UNICEF along with ministry of drinking water & sanitation has outlined the guidelines in December 2015.^[4]

An adolescent girl can be in a confused state of mind, due to changes occurring in the body, socio-cultural beliefs and myths. Menstruation and its related issues are still not discussed in the family or society,^[5] and are regarded as social taboos and topics of embarrassment or shyness.^[6]

Though it is necessary to educate community members at all levels,^[7] the adolescent girls can participate in study for assessing community-specific practices, socio-cultural beliefs and myths. Therefore, to increase knowledge about menstruation right from early days may accelerate safe practices and help in mitigating the suffering of many women. With this background study was conducted to evaluate the knowledge, beliefs and hygiene among the adolescent girls of the secondary school.

METHODOLOGY:

A cross-sectional, questionnaire-based study among 111 adolescent school girls age 10-15 years was conducted in secondary school in rural area in June 2019. A pre-designed, pre-tested questionnaire was prepared for data collection. The demographic data and menstrual cycle knowledge related questions were interviewed. Awareness of menstrual cycle, feeling, pains and symptoms, absorbent type, hygiene in menses were different aspects of questionnaire. Sensitization talk on the normal physiology of menstruation, safe hygienic practices during menstruation was conducted.

RESULTS:

Mean age of 111 girls having their 1st menstruation was 12.41 years.

Education of participant's mothers were more from secondary level was 87%. Father's education level was 66% in secondary school.

It was evident that 63% of all the participants were aware about menstruation before average age of menarche.

The most important sources of the information were mothers and teachers (79%). (Figure1).

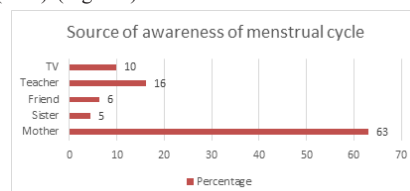


Figure1: Sources of awareness of menstrual cycle for girls

85% participants are accepted that menstrual cycle is natural event however 15% assumed it as a disease. Also 57(51%) participants were shown up with no feeling towards menses however 49% were showed reluctance in terms of fear, nuisance, trouble and shyness.

Among 111 girls 56% were having regular cycle. 93 (84%) were having interval of 1 to 1.5 months in their cycle, 18(16%) were having more than 2 months of interval gap in menses.

During menstruation, 67(60%) were feeling fatigue, 53(48%) feeling irritation and 33 (30%) feeling craving of food. 37(33%) participants experienced soreness in breast while 19 (17%) were not aware about soreness of breast. During menstruation 82.9% were feeling moderate abdominal pain, 84.7% feeling mild nausea, 74.8% troubled with sleep disturbance and 68.5% were complaining of low-back pain (Table 1).

Table 1: Symptoms severity during menstrual cycle

Symptoms severity	Percentage of symptoms severity during menstrual cycle			
	abdominal pain	Nausea	sleep disturbance	Low back pain
Mild	9.0	84.7	74.8	8.1
Moderate	82.9	11.7	22.5	23.4
Severe	8.1	3.6	2.7	68.5

In this study 90% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation. Out of 111 girls, 16 (14%) girls changed absorbent material once a day, 70(63%) girls twice a day, 25 (23%) girls changed it 3-5 times a day. 85% girl used dustbin for pad disposal and 16(14.4%) girls flushed it in toilet.

Table 2: Hygiene management by participants

Practice about menstrual hygiene management		
	Count	%
<i>Practice among menstruation</i>		
Used sanitary pad during menstruation	100	90
<i>Changing absorbent material</i>		
During bathing	16	14.4
1-2 times/day	70	63.1
3-5 times/day	25	22.5
<i>Cleaning of genital part</i>		
while bathing	69	62
Every time when going toilet	42	38
Cleaning of genital part with plain water	46	41.4
Cleaning of genital part with soap water	65	58.6

69 (62%) girls cleaned their genitals while bathing and 42 (38%) cleaned it every time when they go for toilet. 41.4% girls washed the genitals with only water and 58.6% girls with soap and water (Table 2).

Facilities like toilet availability and water source during menstrual cycle period was showed that 88% were having toilet facility and 93% getting water supply in toilet facilities.

DISCUSSION:

Many studies^[1,8,9] showing maximum sources of information of menstrual cycle were females in own family of girl though school teacher or health worker is to be needed as first source of information for imparting the right knowledge. In our study, mother was major source of information (63%) followed by teachers (16%) This reflects that mothers of adolescent girls should be necessary part of adolescent health programme.

Due to the lack of prior information about menstruation, girls experience different feelings such as fear, embarrassment during their vaginal bleeding.^[10] 49% participants showed reluctance towards menstrual cycle in terms of fear, trouble, shyness in this study.

85% participants are accepting that menstrual cycle is natural event however 15% assumed it as a disease in our study. On same line, in other studies,^[11, 11, 12] approximately 85% of girls were of the same opinion. However, in one study from Nagpur, this observation was present only among 18% of girls.^[13] This highlights the importance of perception of female towards menstrual cycle.

Pains and back-ache associated with periods, 82.9% were feeling moderate abdominal pain and 68.5% were complaining with low-back pain in our study. In accordance, in study from tribal area of Meghalaya,^[9] majority of the girls experienced abdominal pain, backache, and headache during periods.

During menstruation, hygiene related practices are considerable important factor as it affects health of female. Studies from various countries have underlined the common practices which have conquered among the adolescent girls.^[14] Also other research studies reported that more than three fourth of the girls reused cotton clothes after washing.^[15,16] In our study 90% used pads and 03% used clothes; whereas in different studies^[11,14] it was found that 62% girls used clothes while 38% used sanitary pads. Because of availability of sanitary pads and awareness through media, proportion of users of sanitary pad is higher in our study. 38% girls from this study clean their genital part each time while going to toilet. On same note, study done in Nagpur district, India^[17] found that one-third of girls cleaned their external genitalia two times or less a day.

22.5% school girls practiced changing of absorbent materials at least three times a day which is in accordance with the study done in Uganda.^[18] While other study done from Nigeria said that 70% of the girls changed absorbents at least three times per day.^[19] This might be due to time availability and requirement of girls. More than half of the adolescent girls are drying washed reusable clothes in direct sunlight in

previous studies conducted in India^[17] and Nigeria.^[18] Present study described that 85.6% respondents disposed used menstrual materials in dustbins.

CONCLUSION:

This study was conducted to ascertain knowledge of menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls. The study revealed that the knowledge on menstruation is poor and the hygiene practiced is often not optimal.

Proper menstrual hygiene and precise perception can protect the women from suffering. Every girl should be educated about the facts of menstruation, physiological effect and proper hygienic practices. Health education programme involving mothers is required to remove various misconceptions and taboos associated with menstruation and make it a pleasant experience for adolescent girls. Information, education and awareness programmes need to be strengthened to spread awareness regarding health.

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