



Menstrual Hygiene Practices Among Adolescent Girls

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ABSTRACT Menarche is a female's first menstruation that takes place in puberty, generally occurring sometime between ages of ten and eighteen. Menarche indicates that a females reproductive organ have become functionally active. This paper is to elicit the source of information and hygiene practices among adolescent girls.

KEYWORDS Menstruation, Hygiene

Introduction: During the menstruation, the uterus sheds its lining endometrial and discharges an unfertilized ovum along with blood mucous and tissues. How a young female feels about her first menstruation is greatly determined by familial and socio cultural practices and discourses that inform her understanding of the female body and its reproductive functions. Psychological studies shows that most females experience a mixture of embracement ,apprehension and excitement about menstruation.The anxieties associated with menarche may be lessened or alleviated by candid explanations of what a female might expect physically and by family and socioculture pattern that promotes menstruation as a positive experience and worthy of celebrations.The onset of menstruation is an important physiological change in adolescent girls.First menstruation is often a traumatic and very negative experience for young girls in most parts of India.(George 1994)

In a study conducted among 664 school girls aged 14-18 in Mansoura, Egypt by **El-Gilany et al.** mass media were the main source of information about menstrual hygiene, followed by mothers. Another study conducted by **Deo et al.** reported that 40 (42.5 percent) urban and 41 (55.4 percent) rural girls were aware about menstruation prior to attainment of menarche. In urban girls, mother was the main source of information about menstruation (27.5 percent), whereas it was teacher in the rural counterparts (27.01 percent). Other sources of information were friends, relatives and books. In a study conducted in Rajasthan by **Khanna et al.** nearly 92 percent of the girls were not aware about the natural phenomenon of menstruation during menarche among women and most of the girls got first information about menstruation from their mothers with other major informants being sisters and friends.

Given the increasing importance of reproductive health of adolescent girls, it is crucial to study issues related to menstrual practices, especially in the context of their socioeconomic environment. Equally crucial is to examine the association of menstrual practices with reproductive morbidity. The understanding of such issues will help health planners and providers to plan intervention strategies that promote healthy behaviour among adolescent girls.

MATERIAL AND METHOD Survey method is used to study the hygiene practices during menstruation of +2 level girls' students in Sagar district. Data have been collected from 341 Girls of class X & XI comprising, each category i.e. English Medium School and Hindi Medium School students of higher secondary (+2) level of Sagar district of Madhya Pradesh. The samples were selected with the willingness of girls to participate in the study.Null hypothesis is

used in this research to analyse the knowledge and attitude of two different variables viz. English medium students and Hindi medium girl students

PREINFORMATION OF MENSTRUATION: **Table 1** shows that 54.2 percent of girls were pre-informed about menstruation. 45.7 percent did not have knowledge of menstruation before it started. The major source of pre information of 48.1 percent girls was their mother and other family members ie 21.6 percent. Other source of information was Teacher (10.8 percent), books (10.8 percent), TV (5.9 percent) & Radio (2.7 percent).

In English medium students, 43.6 percent of girls were pre informed about menstruation. 56.3 percent did not have knowledge of menstruation before it started. The major source of pre information of 51.3 percent girls was their mother and other family members ie 18.0 percent. Other source of information of Premenstruation was Teacher (9.7 percent), Book (12.5 percent), TV (5.5 percent) & Radio (2.7 percent). In Hindi, medium students 64.2 percent of girls were pre informed about menstruation. 35.7 percent did not have knowledge of menstruation before it started. ($X^2 = 14.5, p < .01$) Significant difference is found as the computed X^2 statistically exceeds the critical value in the table for 0.01 probability level hence we reject the null hypothesis of equal distribution. It is interpreted that the awareness level is different in both the groups. The major source of pre information of 46.0 percent girls was their mother and other family members ie 23.8 percent. Other source of information was Teacher (11.5 percent), books (9.7 percent), TV (6.1percent) & Radio (2.6 percent). ($X^2 = 1.43 p > 0.05$), the difference of awareness was found to be statistically Non Significant hence, we accept the null hypothesis.

Studies indicate that the levels of information about menstruation, genital hygiene and related reproductive health issues are gradually increasing, it appears to be a very slow process (**Narayan et al. 2001**).

TABLE 1 : AWARENESS REGARDING MENSTRUATION

Total girls	Pre-menstruation Information		Source of first information							
	No	Yes	TV	Radio	Books	Family members	Mother	Teacher	Other	
EMS (165)	93	72	4	2	9	13	37	7	0	0
%	56.3	43.6	5.5	2.7	12.5	18.0	51.3	9.7		

HMS (176)	63	113	7	3	11	27	52	13	0 0 0 0
%	35.7	64.2	6.1	2.6	9.7	23.8	46.0	11.5	
TOTAL (341)	156	185	11	5	20	40	89	20	
%	45.7	54.2	5.9	2.7	10.8	21.6	48.1	10.8	
X ² Value	X ² = 14.5 p < 0.01				X ² =1.43 p > 0.05				

EMS – English medium school, HMS- Hindi medium school

AGE OF MENARCHE & HYGIENE PRACTICE DURING MENSTRUATION:

Table 2 & 3 shows that age of menarche in girls is mostly between 12 to 14 years of age. The age of menarche of 24.3 percent girls is 12 years, 36.0 percent girls menarche age is 13 years and 28.1 percent have at 14 years, 8.5 percent have at 11 years and 2.9 percent have at 15 years of age.84.4 percent girls have their menses regular and 15.5 percent only have irregularity in menstrual cycle. As far as cleanliness’ and hygiene, practice is concerned cloth and sanitary napkins are the best choice of students. As 43.4 percent, girls are using cloths where as 53.3 percent use sanitary napkins, 2.6 percent use cotton and 0.5 percent girls use gauze. Regarding hygiene practices 16.7 percent girls change 1 pad per day, 58.3percent girls need 2 pads/ day and 21.7 percent girls changes 2 to 3 pads per day, 0.2 percent girls require more than 5 pads per day.

The 29.6 percent girls of **English medium** school girls have menarche at 12 years, 39.3 percent girls menarche age is 13 years and 17.5 percent have at 14 years 9.6 percent have at 11 years and 3.6 percent have at 15 years of age.84.2 percent girls have their menses regular and 15.7 percent only have irregularity in menstrual cycle. 35.7 percent girls are using cloths where as 61.8 percent use sanitary napkins, 1.2 percent use cotton and 1.2 percent girls use gauze. Regarding hygiene practices 23.6 percent girls change 1 pad per day, 55.7 percent girls need 2 pads/ day and 19.3 percent girls changes 2 to 3 pads per day, 1.2 percent girls require 4 pads per day. (Table 2 & 3).

In **Hindi medium**, 19.3 percent girls of school girls is have menarche at 12 years, 32.9 percent girls menarche age is 13 years and 38.0 percent have at 14 years 7.3 percent have at 11 years and 2.2 percent have at 15 years of age. (X² =18.5, p < 0.01). Significant difference for age of menarche between English medium and Hindi medium girls. 84.6 percent girls have their menses regular and 2.2 percent only have irregularity in menstrual cycle. (X² =0.11 p > 0.05 Non Significant)

Regarding hygiene practices 50.5 percent girls are using cloths where as 45.4percent use sanitary napkins, 3.9 percent use cotton. Regarding hygiene practices, 10.2 percent girls change one pad per day, 60.7 percent girls need 2 pads/ day and 23.8 percent girls changes 2 to 3 pads per day, 4.5 percent girls require 4-5 pads per day. (Table 2 & 3). X² =13.2, p < 0.01 Significant, null hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 2 : AGE OF MENARCHE AND PERSONAL MENSTRU-AL HYGIENE PRACTICES

Total girls	Age of menarche (in years)					Regularity in menses		Choice of personal hygiene			
	11	12	13	14	15	Regular	Irreg-ular	Gauze	Cloth	Cotton	Sani-tary nap-kins
EMS (165)	16	49	65	29	6	139	26	2	59	2	102
%	9.6	29.6	39.3	17.5	3.6	84.2	15.7	1.2	35.7	1.2	61.8
HMS (176)	13	34	58	67	4	149	27	0	89	7	80
%	7.3	19.3	32.9	38.0	2.2	84.6	15.3	0	50.5	3.9	45.4
TO-TAL (341)	29	83	123	96	10	288	53	2	148	9	182
%	8.5	24.3	36.0	28.1	2.9	84.4	15.5	0.5	43.4	2.6	53.3
X ² Val-ue	X ² = 18.5 p < 0.01					X ² = 0.11 p > 0.05		X ² = 13.2 p < 0.01			

TABLE 3: HYGIENE PRACTICES DURING MENSTRUATION

Total girls	Practices for changing pads(per day)				
	1 pad per day	2 pads per day	2-3 pads per day	4-5 pads per day	> 5 pads per day
EMS (165)	39	92	32	2	0
%	23.6	55.7	19.3	1.2	0
HMS (176)	18	107	42	8	1
%	10.2	60.7	23.8	4.5	0.5
TOTAL(341)	57	199	74	10	1
%	16.7	58.3	21.7	2.9	0.2
X ² Value	X ² = 13.2 p < 0.01				

EMS – English medium school, HMS- Hindi medium school

Constant efforts are needed to expedite the general aware-ness process, especially for the rural, poor and out-of-school girls. Unfortunately, 45.7 percent girls were ignorant about menstruation before menarche in this study. However, each girl child should be aware about menstruation. However, mother was the first informant only in case of 48.1 percent girls. This gap might be due to poor literacy and socio-eco-nomic status of mothers, which have fuelled the inhibitions a mother has to talk to her daughter regarding the vital physi-ological function and significance of hygienic practices and a healthy attitude towards menstruation.

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