

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES ABOUT MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AMONG SCHOOL ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN AGROHA VILLAGE OF HARYANA

Seema Sharma¹, Seema Choudhary², Neelu Saluja³, D. R. Gaur⁴, Sneh Kumari⁵, S. M. Pandey⁶

¹Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Medical Education and Research, Agroha, Hisar, Haryana.

²Professor, Department of Community Medicine, MAMC, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Medical Education and Research, Agroha, Hisar, Haryana.

³Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine, MAMC, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Medical Education and Research, Agroha, Hisar, Haryana.

⁴Professor and HOD, Department of Community Medicine, MAMC, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Medical Education and Research, Agroha, Hisar, Haryana.

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, MAMC, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Medical Education and Research, Agroha, Hisar, Haryana.

⁶Assistant Professor (Stats), Department of Community Medicine, MAMC, Maharaja Agrasen Institute of Medical Education and Research, Agroha, Hisar, Haryana.

ABSTRACT

Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to the females. Adolescent girls often lack knowledge regarding reproductive health including menstrual hygiene which can be due to socio-cultural barriers in which they grow up. Learning about menstrual hygiene is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent girls.

OBJECTIVES

a) To assess the knowledge and practices of menstrual hygiene among rural school going adolescent girls; b) To assess the restrictions practiced by school adolescent girls during menstruation.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A cross-sectional study was carried out in Govt. Senior Secondary Girls School located near the Primary Health Centre, Agroha, Hisar. Total 150 adolescent girls (Aged 11-16 yrs.), who had attained menarche were only included in the study. A pre-designed pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire was prepared for collection of data.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Mean and Proportions.

RESULTS

In this study, 95.3% adolescent girls were aware of menstruation before menarche. In most of the cases mother was the most common source of information. Only 38.7% girls knew that bleeding occurs from uterus. A total of 71.3% girls were aware that the menstruation is a physiological process. Out of total, 80.7% girls used sanitary napkins during menstruation. In this study, 92% girls faced restrictions regarding religious matters. Eighty four percent adolescent girls took bath daily during menstruation and 90% washed their hands every time after visit to the toilet. Only 75.3% girls washed their external genitalia regularly.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study knowledge was better than the practice; therefore, the adolescent girls should be educated about the process and significance of menstruation as well as use of proper pads or absorbents and its proper disposal.

KEYWORDS

School Adolescent Girls, Menstruation, Menstrual Hygiene, Village.

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INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to the females. Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period, which signifies the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

Learning about menstrual hygiene is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent girls. Menstruation is generally considered as unclean in the Indian society. Isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions being imposed on them in the family, have reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon.¹ Social prohibitions and the negative attitude of parents in discussing the related issues openly have blocked the access of adolescent girls to the right kind of information, especially in the rural and tribal communities.²

Menstruation and menstrual practices are still clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions resulting in adolescent girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes. The present study was designed to assess the

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Seema Sharma,

Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine,
Maharaja Agrasen Medical College, Agroha,
Hisar, Haryana-125047.

E-mail: ss4_gunu@yahoo.co.in

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knowledge, beliefs and source of information regarding menstruation among the adolescent school girls of the secondary school and also to identify the status of menstrual hygiene among them.³

Menstrual hygiene is an issue that is insufficiently acknowledged and has not received adequate attention in the reproductive health as well as Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sectors in developing countries including India. Also, its relationship with and impact on achieving many Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Studies that make the issues visible to the concerned policymakers and informed practical actions are very much warranted.⁴ Menstruation is still regarded as something unclean or dirty in Indian society. The reaction to menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge about the subject.

The manner in which a girl learns about menstruation and its associated changes may have an impact on her response to the event of menarche.⁵ although menstruation is a natural process; it is linked with several misconceptions and practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes. Hygiene related practices of women during menstruation are of considerable importance, especially in terms of increased vulnerability to Reproductive Tract Infections (RTI).⁶

Therefore, increased knowledge about menstruation right from childhood may escalate safe practices and may help in mitigating the suffering of millions of women. With this background the present study was undertaken to assess the knowledge, beliefs and source of information regarding menstruation among the adolescent school girls of the Secondary school and also to identify the status of menstrual hygiene among them.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the knowledge and practices of menstrual hygiene among school going adolescent girls in Agroha village.
2. To assess the restrictions practised by school adolescent girls during menstruation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

One hundred and fifty adolescent girls between 11-16 years of age from a Govt. Girls Senior Secondary School of Agroha village were involved in this study. It was a cross-sectional school based study among adolescent girls. There was only a single girl's school near Primary Health Centre Agroha, which is a teaching and training rural health centre attached to Maharaja Agrasen Medical College Agroha. Hence, this school was purposively selected for the study. Total 150 adolescent girls (Aged 11-16 yrs.); who had attained menarche were included in this study. Adolescents who were present in the schools during the days of survey constituted the sample size. A pre-designed and pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire was prepared for collection of data.

The school authority was contacted and the purpose of the study was explained. After obtaining the permission from the school authorities, the school was visited as per pre-planned schedule for getting information from the adolescent girls. A list of adolescent girls who had attained menarche was prepared beforehand with the help of the school teachers. The adolescent girls were explained about the purpose of the study and were assured of confidentiality.

A verbal consent was obtained from the girls before administering the questionnaire. They were instructed on how

to fill the questionnaire. Adequate time was given to fill up the questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire, the students were asked to place their sheets in a box provided at the corner of the hall. After collection the whole data was compiled and analysed. Statistical analysis was done on the basis of mean and proportions.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows majority (42.7%) of adolescent girls were in 14-16 yrs. of age group Table 2 shows the distribution of adolescent girls as per their menarche. The mean age of menarche of the respondents was 12.7 years. Table 3 shows a total of 95.3% adolescent girls were aware of menstruation before their menarche. Mother was the most common source (52.5%) of knowledge of menstruation before their menarche. Only 38.7% girls knew that bleeding occurs from uterus. Out of total, 71.3% girls knew that the menstruation is a physiological process. Table 4 shows 80.7% girls used sanitary napkins during menstruation. Ninety two percent girls faced restrictions regarding religious matters during menstruation. Table 5 shows that 84% girls took bath daily during menstruation and 90% washed their hands every time after visit to the toilet. In this study, 75.3% girls washed their external genitalia regularly.

Age in Years	No.	%
11-12	30	20
13-14	56	37.3
14-16	64	42.7

Table 1: Age wise distribution of study subjects n=150

Age of Menarche (Years)	No.	%
11	21	14
12	65	43.3
13	35	23.3
14	24	16
15	5	3.3

Table 2: Distribution of school adolescent girls as per their age of Menarche (n=150)

*The mean age of menarche of the adolescent girls was 12.76±0.936 years.

Attributes	Number	Percentage
Awareness about menstruation before menarche	143	95.3
Source of knowledge of menstrual cycle before menarche		
Mother	75	52.5
Sister	33	23.1
Friend	35	24.5
Knowledge of organ from where bleeding occurs		
Uterus	58	38.7
Bladder	76	50.7
Do not know	16	10.7
Knowledge of cause of menstruation		
Physiological	107	71.3
God given	18	12
Do not know	25	16.7
What absorbent ideally to be used during menstruation		
Sanitary pads	132	88
Cloths	18	12

Table 3: Distribution of school adolescent girls according to their knowledge about menstruation (n=150)

Attributes	Number	Percentages
Type of Absorbent (n = 150)		
Sanitary pads	121	80.7
New cloths	07	4.7
Old washed cloths	22	14.7
Problems faced while using old washed cloth during washing and drying (n=22)		
Yes	16	72.7
No	6	27.3
Different restrictions imposed to adolescent girls during menstruation (n=150)*		
Religious matters		
Cooking and handling food items	138	92
Outdoor activities including games	68	45.3
	34	22.7
Table 4: Distribution of school adolescent girls according to their practices, problems and restrictions during menstruation		

* Multiple responses

Attributes	Number	Percentages
Daily Bath		
Yes	126	84
No	24	16
Hand Washing		
Regular*	135	90
Irregular	15	10
Cleaning of External Genitalia		
Regular** Irregular	113	75.3
	37	24.7
Table 5: Distribution of school adolescent girls according to their hygiene related practices during menstruation (n=150)		

* Regular: Hand washing every time after visit to the toilet during menstruation;

** Regular: Frequency of cleaning of external genitalia is ≥ 2 /day;

DISCUSSION

In this study, the mean age of menarche of the adolescent girls was 12.76 ± 0.936 years, whereas another studies conducted by Khanna et al.⁷ and by Kajal Jain et al.⁸ the mean age of menarche was 13.2 years 13.16 years, respectively. In this study 52.5% study subjects got information regarding menstruation before their menarche by their mother followed by their sister similar findings were found by Kajal Jain et al.⁸, whereas another study conducted by El-Gilany et al.⁹ mass media was the main source of information followed by mothers. Another study conducted by Deo et al.¹⁰ reported that 42.5% urban and 55.4% 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%), whereas it was teacher in the rural counterparts (27.01%).

However, in this study only 4.7% girls were ignorant about menstruation before menarche, but each and every girl child should be aware about menstruation and ideally a mother should be the main informant at this tender age. Present study also reported that 71.3% girls believed menstruation to be a physiological process, whereas in a similar study conducted in by Khanna et al.⁷, nearly 70%

believed that menstruation was not a natural process. In this study 38.7% girls knew about the origin of menstrual bleeding. Whereas research done in Andhra Pradesh University by Drakshayani et al.¹¹ reported that around 78.5% subjects knew menstrual bleeding originated from the uterus. In this study 88 % girls knew that sanitary pads are better than cloths however only 80.7 % girls used the sanitary pad during menstruation. A study by Dasgupta et al.¹² in a rural community showed that majority of the girls preferred cloth pieces rather than sanitary pads as menstrual absorbent. Only 11.25% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation.

In a study conducted by Khanna et al.⁷, three-fourths of the girls used old cloth during their periods and only one-fifth reported using readymade sanitary pads. In this study 14.7% girls used old cloth, while only 4.7% used new cloth during menstruation. These are due to differences in their sociocultural profile. It was also observed that the usual practice was to wash the cloth with soap after use and keep it at some secret place till the next menstrual period. To maintain privacy, these are sometimes hidden in unhygienic places. In this study although only 14.7% used old washed cloth and out of them 72.7% faced problems of lack of privacy while washing and drying cloth pieces used as absorbents during menstruation.

Regarding hygiene related practices during menstruation, 84% girls took daily bath during menstruation and 90% washed their hands every times after visit to the toilet during menstruation. Also 75.3% of study subjects cleaned their genitalia regularly. Educating young girls about the routine practice of taking a bath with warm water in the early days of menstrual period, would not only lead to the development of positive mental and social behaviours, but could also be effective in reducing hygiene related problems in the community.

LIMITATIONS

Considering the limitations of this study in terms of sampling method, additional studies may be needed using a wider geographic scope and a larger sample size.

CONCLUSION

Although knowledge was better than practice, so the girls should be educated about the process and significance of menstruation, use of proper pads or absorbents and its proper disposal. This can be achieved by giving them proper training and health education by teachers, family members, health educators and media; so that there would not be any misconception to the adolescent girls regarding menstrual hygiene.

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