

Study on Awareness and Practices of Menstruation amongst Unmarried Female Adolescents in a Semi Urban Area of Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

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Abstract

Objective: This school based cross sectional study was conducted amongst 400 primary and secondary school girls in a semi urban village i.e Achrol near Jaipur city to determine their awareness on menstruation and practices during menstruation. Only girls from the local permanent population who were residents of the village and had attained menstruation before the inception of the study were included. **Methods:** The 400 adolescent girls were interviewed through a house to house survey, using a pretested questionnaire. The study population included all adolescent school going girls who were residing in the study area between the age group of 10-19 years. **Results:** 85.5% adolescent girls used sanitary pads as compared to only 14.5% using cloth during menstruation. 85.5% girls said that they disposed pads in the dustbin and a majority i.e. 98.8% girls had prior information about menstruation. **Conclusion:** it was concluded that almost all the girls had prior knowledge regarding menstruation and a majority of the adolescent girls were using proper material i.e sanitary pads during menstruation.

Key words: Adolescent, Awareness, Knowledge, Practices, Attitude, Menstruation.

INTRODUCTION

The process of menstruation is a normal and natural phenomenon, but young girls and their parents are often unaware of what represents normal menstrual patterns and they are also unaware of the menstrual hygiene pattern. It is important to educate young girls and their parents regarding when to expect the first period, the range of the normal cycle length and the ability to differentiate between normal and abnormal menstruation. A woman on an average undergoes 400 menstrual cycles prior to menopause and that average menstrual cycle lasts for about 5 days.^[1]

The onset of menstruation represents a landmark event in the puberty development of the adolescent girl.

Menstrual patterns are affected by a number of host and environmental factors. Menstrual disorders are also responsible for emotional, physical, behavioural and dietary practice changes. Rigid adherence of traditional norms and practices, ignorance about menstruation, inadequate health care facilities separately for unmarried girls also restricted their treatment seeking behaviour.^[2] In various parts of India, there are several cultural traditions, myths and misconceptions related to menstruation, which make them vulnerable to genital tract infections. According to a study in Ward have

district, India carried out by Mudey *et al.*^[3] menstruation is generally considered as unclean leading to isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions imposed on them in the family. In India, certain taboos are followed, for example- once menstruation begins the girl is isolated from participating in day to day activities, she shouldn't go to the temple, she shouldn't touch cooked food, infants and plants. Surprisingly the practice of the above-mentioned taboos was very strong in urban areas as compared to rural areas.

Misconceptions on menstruation, amongst adolescents, cut across cultures and countries. Studies conducted in both developed and developing countries indicate the varying degree to which adolescents exhibit a faulty perception

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of menstruation and Menstrual cycle.^[4] Only 39.3% of the respondents in the study carried out by Adinma ED perceived menstruation to be a physiological process. This is only slightly higher than that reported by Tiwari *et al.* 31% in India. These figures are surprisingly much lower than 66.2% earlier reported by Drakshayani^[5] and Venkata also from India, although the latter had conducted their survey on only 65 adolescent girls in contradistinction to Tiwari *et al.* 900 and Adinma *et al.* 550 adolescent school girls. A study conducted by Kamaljeet K *et al.*^[6] 2012 in Amritsar, Punjab on social belief about menstruation found that 73.7% girls believe that menstruation is a natural physiological process, 16.6% believe that it is a curse by God and 4.7% believe it is an abnormal process.

Whereas a similar study conducted in Rajasthan by Khanna *et al.*^[7] observed that 70% of the girls believed that menstruation was not a natural process.

METHODOLOGY

School based cross sectional study was carried out from January 2015 till the estimated sample size was achieved till June 2016 in a semi urban area of Jaipur i.e Achrol. The desired sample was achieved by selecting students from 5 primary and middle schools. The girls who attained menarche were included in the study. The girls who were residing outside Achrol were not included in the study. The upper age limit was 19 years and lower age limit was 10 years to be included in the study. Adolescent girls with some genetic disorder or those who were incapable to provide informed consent were excluded from the study.

The sample size was determined using a formula for estimation of single population proportion with the assumption of 95% confidence interval, 5% margin of error and prevalence of Menstrual disorders at 75%.

The selection of the schools was done randomly. To collect data self administered questionnaires was employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

98.8% adolescent girls had been informed about menarche before its onset and the major source of information was mother i.e. 80.2% followed by elder sister i.e. 18.5%. In the present study 74.8% girls perceived that menstruation was a normal process, while 22.4% perceived it to be a dirty process and 2.0% girls replied that it helped purging of body impurities.

Regarding the attitude towards rituals followed by the family during menstruation it was found to be favorable in majority of the girls, i.e. 68.8% against not favorable by only 31.2% girls. On enquiring about the reaction towards first menstruation, majority felt it to be a usual phenomenon i.e. 52.2% followed by scared i.e. 45.0%. 1.8% and 0.8% adolescent girls also felt irritated/ discomfort and other feelings like disgust, hate etc.

This study revealed that mother was the most common person with whom adolescent girls shared the information about the occurrence of menstruation every month, i.e. 84.8 %, followed by relatives and family, elder sister and friends as seen in 12.5%, 1.5% and 1.3% girls respectively. Majority of the adolescent girls i.e. 85.5% were using sanitary pads, most of them i.e. 79.5% belonged to middle income group. Cleaning of genitals after urination and changing pads were seen in 73.5% and 73.2% of the adolescent girls respectively. Regarding disposal of sanitary pads/ cloth used during menstruation, 85.5% said that they disposed the pads in the dustbin. However there were 14.5% girls who used cloth during menstruation, they used to wash and reuse it.

Table 1 shows the distribution of adolescent girls according to knowledge about menarche and mental preparedness for menarche. Out of the 400 adolescent girls, 395 (98.8%) girls had prior information about menstruation. The mother was the main informant in case of 321 (80.2%), followed by the respondents sister i.e. 74 (18.5%). Regarding the first reaction to menstruation, a majority, i.e.324 (81%) of the girls said it was normal followed by a minority i.e.76 (19%) that had fear when it first happened. 299 (74.8%) girls perceived that menstruation was a normal process, while 90 (22.4%) perceived it to be a dirty process and 8 (2.0%) girls replied that it helped in purging of body impurities. On enquiring about the relationship of menstruation with child birth, 344 (86.0%) girls replied in affirmative.

Table 2 shows the distribution of adolescent girls according to Practices during Menstruation.

Out of 400 adolescent girls, a majority i.e. 342 (85.5%) used sanitary pads as compared to only 58 (14.5%) using cloth during menstruation. Cleaning of genitals after urination and changing pads were seen in 294 (73.4%) and 293 (73.2%) of the adolescent girls respectively. Regarding disposal of sanitary pads/ cloth used during menstruation, 342 (85.5%) said that they disposed pads in the dustbin. However there were 58 (14.5%) girls who used cloth during menstruation and they used to wash it and reuse it.

Table 1: Distribution of adolescent girls according to knowledge about menarche.

Variables (n=400)		Respondents	
		No	%
Information about menarche	Yes	395	98.8
	No	5	1.2
Source of information	Mother	321	80.2
	Sister	74	18.5
	Other	5	1.3
Feelings at the time of first menstruation	Normal	324	81.0
	Fear	76	19.0
Feelings regarding the process of menstruation	Normal physiology	299	74.8
	Dirty	90	22.4
	Purging of body impurities	8	2.0
	Other	3	0.8
Menstruation related to child birth	Yes	344	86.0
	No	56	14.0

Table 2: Distribution of adolescent girls according to Practices during Menstruation.

Menstrual Practices (n=400)		
		%
Use of material during menstruation	Sanitary Pad	342
	Cloth	58
Cleaning of external genitalia after urination	Yes	294
	No	106
Cleaning of external genitalia after changing pads	Yes	293
	No	107
Disposal of pads/ cloth	In dustbin	342
	Washing and reusing cloth	58

CONCLUSION

A majority i.e. 342 (85.5%) used sanitary pads as compared to only 58 (14.5%) using cloth during menstruation. 85.5% said that they disposed pads in the dustbin. However there were 58 (14.5%) girls who used cloth during menstruation and they used to wash it and reuse it.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared.

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