

Perceptions regarding menstruation in adolescent girls in Aurangabad city, Maharashtra

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Abstract

Background: Adolescence is a transitional period of physical and physiological development from childhood to adulthood. It is a period of insanity where they have a limited knowledge. Hence, Menstrual hygiene practice is very important, as it also has a health impact in terms of increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infections. Therefore, authentic knowledge about menstruation right from childhood is of great importance. It can escalate safety against these infestations and sufferings in future reproductive phase of women's life can be avoided. **Objective:** To assess the perception regarding knowledge about menstruation and to assess the practice carried out during menstruation. **Methodologies:** This was a study carried out in schools of Aurangabad city; with a help of a pre-designed and pre-structured questionnaire on menstruation knowledge and practice. **Results:** In TOTAL 750 Adolescent girls were given a questionnaire regarding Menstrual knowledge and practice. It was analysed that 82.67 % Menstruating girls were from 16 yrs to 20yrs of age group in our study. Around 46.1% perceived discomfort feeling at the onset of menstruation. 87.6 % girls knew that Menstrual blood was hygienic. Still 30.9% girls used cloth material as absorbent during menstruation whereas 32.7% only used disposable napkin. 69.5 % girls took bath daily during menstruation. And 58.9% cleaned their genitalia during menstruation. Majority girls experienced health problems associated with menstruation. **Conclusion:** Study denoted lower level of knowledge about menstruation and poor menstrual hygiene practice was observed. Misconceptions myths still prevail in society. Schools should include education with regards to Menstruation and reproductive health and Menstrual hygiene should be a prime focus as a part of their curriculum.

Key Words: Adolescent Girls; Menstruation; Hygiene.

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INTRODUCTION

Menstruation, or period is defined as Vaginal bleeding that occurs as a part of a woman's monthly cycle. Every month your body prepares for pregnancy. If no pregnancy occurs the uterus or womb sheds its lining and the menstrual blood is partly blood and partly tissue from inside the uterus. It passes out of the body through vagina as menstrual bleeding. (WHO) has defined adolescence as The World Health Organisation age group of 10 – 19 years.^{1,4} According to UNICEF report, there are 1.2 billion adolescents between 10 – 19 years in the world which is 18% of the world's population and 88% are seen in developing countries⁴. Menarche is attained between 11 – 15 years³. It is a very important milestone in a girls

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life and handling it sympathetically is of utmost importance ^{1,3}. Hence it is the most important phenomenon in every women’s life adolescent is a transitional period of physical and psychological development from childhood to adulthood. Menstruation is many a times regarded as dirty and unclean in Indian Society. Explaining that it is physiological is needed, mostly done by mothers ³. Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is defined as “Women and adolescent girls using a clean material to absorb or collect menstrual blood which can be changed in privacy as often as needed during menstruation, using soap and water and using facilities to dispose used menstrual material ³. It is also a period of unsound mind or insanity where the resources of knowledge is limited hence menstrual hygiene practice is very important, as it has health impact in terms of increased vulnerability to the reproductive track infections. Which has also become a silent epidemic that is to be proving very destructive and devastates women's life it solely depends proper and healthy measures taken during menstrual cycle as apart of menstrual hygiene practice to escalate safety against infections and sufferings in future reproductive phase of womens life can be avoided. Poor personal hygiene and unsafe sanitary conditions have resulted in gynaecological problems in adolescent girls. Due to this, there is more incidence of infections in adolescents^{1,6}.This young population also seems to be confused due to differences at thoughts at home, Traditional beliefs and the scientific approach towards the practice besides menstruation is associated with cultural taboo in almost every society in the world and misconceptions still prevail at large in the society this imparts a negative response effecting the proper menstrual hygiene management and hence calls for urgent investigation in the matter of menstruating girls and to educate them with authentic and reliable knowledge and right strategies for menstrual hygiene practice as a part of education. Women having good knowledge of menstrual hygiene and safe practices during menstruation will be the ones who will practice proper sanitation during

menstrual cycles ⁶.This studies can be authenticated through publications through standard journals at large.

OBJECTIVE

- To assess the perception regarding knowledge about menstruation
- To assess the practice carried out during menstruation.
- Study to improvise the health issues in the adolescent age group.

METHODOLOGIES

- This was a study carried out in different schools and junior colleges of Aurangabad city; with a help of a pre-designed and pre-structured questionnaire on menstruation knowledge and practice during menstruation. Before proceeding for the study we conducted a menstrual hygiene awareness program, where we invited national faculties to talk and guide the student on menstrual hygiene and safe practice in menstruation. Talk on personality development was also conducted. Same awareness program was conducted in various schools and same work is still being continued. With collection of precise menstrual history. After officially taking permissions from the schools and junior colleges and also by obtaining the consent to share the information for research purpose from each individual we could collect a data sample size of 750 individuals. After collecting the data over a period of four months from June – September 2018. The data included socio demographic profile, menstrual information of girls, knowledge of hygiene, practice (material used) during menstruation and problems associated with menstruation.
- Sample Size - 750
- Type of Study - Cross sectional study.

TABLE 1: Socio-demographic profile of girls

		Number [N=750]
Age-Group	≤ 15 year	348
	16-20 year	357
	21-25 year	45
Socio-Economic status	Grade 1 (>=6391)	156
	Grade 2 (3196-6390)	125
	Grade 3(1971-3195)	169
	Grade 4(959-1916)	106
	Grade 5(=<958)	194
Type of Family	Nuclear	574

Religion	Joint	176
	Hindu	488
	Muslim	212
	Other	50
Educational status	Secondary to Higher	56
	Middle	125
	Primary	269
	Illiterate	300
Marital status	Married	35
	Unmarried	694
	Widow	8
	Separated	13
	Homemakers	704
Occupation	Student	17
	Government Job	13
	Private Job	8
	Self Employment	8

In our study, 90.40% of the girls were between 16 – 20 years. In our study, 194 girls belong to lower economy class and 156 belong to higher economy class. In our study, 77% girls came from nuclear family and 23% belonged to joint family. In our study, 65% were Hindu and 28% were Muslim.

TABLE 2: Menstruation information of girls

		Number [N=750]	Percentage
What is menstruation	Physiological	545	72.7
	Pathological	117	15.6
	Curse	45	6.0
	Other	43	5.7
Have you started your period	Yes	708	94.5
	No	42	5.5
What was the reaction to your first menstruation	Happy	57	7.6
	Scared	172	23.0
	Discomfort	346	46.1
	Emotional Disturbance	158	21.2
	Other	16	2.1
Knows about menstruation before you started with it	Yes	653	87.1
	No	97	12.9
If knows then how [n=653]	School	81	10.8
	Parents	172	23.0
	Friends	293	39.1
	Media	106	14.2

In the present study, 72.70% of the girls thought that menstruation is physiological. In this study, 94.50% of the girls had attained menarche when the questionnaire was given. In our study, 46.10% of the girls experienced discomfort and 23% were scared when they started their first period. 87.10% of the girls knew about menstruation before they attained menarche in our study. In the present study, 39.10% and 23% of the girls had gathered information about menarche from friends and parents respectively.

Table 3: Knows about hygiene

		Number [N=750]	Percentage
Knows about menstruation Hygiene	YES	634	84.5
	NO	116	15.5
Knows about menstrual blood Unhygienic	YES	656	87.6
	NO	93	12.4
Use of absorbent material during period	YES	691	92.1
	NO	59	7.9

84.51% of the girls in our study knew about menstruation hygiene and 87.60% knew about menstrual blood. 92.10% of the girls used absorbent material for soakage of menstrual blood.

Table 4: Material use during menstruation of girls

		Number [N=750]	Percentage
	Napkin (soft paper)	245	32.7
	Rag made pad	132	17.6
absorbent material do you use during menstruation ?	Menstrual cups	70	9.3
	Tampons	47	6.3
	Clothes	232	30.9
	Other	24	3.2
	YES	316	42.1
Do you reuse cloth as pad?	NO	434	57.9
If you are reusing cloth as pad , how do you clean it? [n=316]	Soap and water	246	77.8
	Only Water	37	11.7
	Other	32	10.1
If you are using cloth, how do you dry the Cloths [n=316]	Sunlight	185	58.5
	Inside the house	107	33.9
	Other	24	7.6
	Once	435	58.0
How many times to you change pad/cloths?	Twice	149	19.9
	Three times	97	12.9
	More than that	69	9.2
	Dustbin	334	57.9
Where do you dispose your pads	Drain	170	22.7
	Toilet	90	12.0
	Open field	118	15.7
	Other	37	1.7

In our study, 32.7 % used sanitary napkins and 30.9 % used cloth as absorbent material. Cloth was reused as pad in 42.1 % which was a high figure. 58.5 % dried cloth in sunlight and 77.8 % used soap and water to clean it. 58 % of the girls changed pad only once indicating unhygienic practice and 9.2 % changed more than thrice. 57.9 % disposed pads in dustbin and 22.7 % in drain.

Table 5: Personal hygiene and problem associated with menstruation

		Number [N=750]	Percentage
	Daily	521	69.5
	First Day	67	8.9
	Second Day	107	14.3
Bath during period?	Not take any time	28	3.7
	Other	27	3.6
Do you clean your genitalia during menstruation	YES	442	58.9
	NO	308	41.1
How do you clean it?	Water and Soap	427	56.9
	Water	291	38.8
	Toilet paper	32	4.3
How many under wear do you change during period	Once	382	50.9
	Twice	267	35.6
	More than that	101	13.5
Do you have any problem associated with menstruation?	Headache	251	33.5
	Vomiting	33	4.4
	Weakness	306	40.8
	Anorexia	39	5.2
	Abdominal pain	295	39.3
	Back pain	278	37.1
	other	75	10.0

In our study, 69.5 % took bath daily and 3.7 % do not take bath any time. 58.9 % cleaned genitalia during menstruation and 56.9 % cleaned with soap and water. 50.9 % changed underwear once.

DISCUSSION

Transition from childhood to adulthood occurs during adolescence period when major biological changes like physical growth, sexual maturation, psycho social development occurs ¹. It is the most crucial period of life where it is very important to provide these girls with authentic and reliable knowledge. Menstrual hygiene is very important in reproductive life of every female. Poor menstrual hygiene will lead to many reproductive and urinary tract infections ⁶. To create awareness about menstrual hygiene and practices, assessing knowledge is very important/essential. So cultivating proper menstrual hygiene practice at this tender age is important as it safeguards and restores their reproductive health. Our study (Table-1) evaluated the perceptions regarding menstruation amongst the adolescent girls in our city. We found that there has been a positive correlation between the demographic and socio economic status. Overall our study demonstrated average knowledge about menstruation and their was still positive response in terms of attitude towards menstruation. In our study, 82.67% of girls were in between 16 - 20 years. In a study by Shanbhag D, Shilpa R, et.al. in 2012, 58.7% of girls were between 14 - 15 years and 32.4% in between 12 - 13 years ¹. In a study by Baishakni, Pana, et.al. in 2014, majority were between 13 - 18 years ². In a study by Dasgupta and M Sarkar in 2018, 76.25% ranged between 14 - 17 years (9). As this is a period of insanity schools can play an important role in providing then with proper health education and help them in molding and preparing them for safe and healthy future. Huge number of girls i.e. 77% comes from nuclear family and 23% of girls belong to a joint family as seen in table 1. Table 1 also shows a true picture of a typical Indian schools where students from all different cultures and socio-economic classes with different familial backgrounds study together. In table 1 65% girls come from Hindu families, 28% from Muslim families and 7% belongs to other religion. This table was also efficient to show the tradition of early marriage still existing in Indian scenario. Here out of this 750 girls 694 girls were unmarried and 35 girls were married and 8 were widow at such a tender age and 13 of them were separated. This table also denoted around 40% girls had mothers who were illiterate and near 30% girls had mothers who had perceived only primary education and 15% girls had mothers who had completed their secondary school education and less than 15% girls had mothers who were highly educated. The table 1 also applied kappu swamy scale to find out the economic background of these girl students. Which denoted 194 belongs to grade 5 (lower e class) and only 156 belongs to higher e class. Hence, making it more oblivious to compare between the

economical background to the quality of menstrual hygiene practice. In Our study according to table 2 of menstruation information of girls, there is a fair possibility that the knowledge about the menstruation these girls have is below average or superficial, less likely they understand the context between menstruation and pregnancy and contraceptive measures. Girls around 72.7% considered menstruation to be physiological. In the study by Shanbhag D, Shilpa R, et.al. in 2012, 72.7% considered menstruation to be physiological ¹. Even if majority considered menstruation to be physiological, 15% thought it was pathological, 6% still believed it was a curse. This table also shows 94.5% girls were menstruating, 46% girls reaction to the first menses was discomfort, 23% were scared, 21.2 % were emotionally disturbed which denotes the need of counseling/ guidance about menstruation. 39.1% acquired the knowledge from friend, 23% from parents, 14.2% from media, 10.8% from school. This shows that school and parents are lacking behind to provide them with proper and authentic knowledge of menstruation. An a need to talk openly about this physiological phenomenon of menstruation. According to table 3 which denotes there knowledge and practice about hygiene, 84.5% girls knew about menstrual hygiene, 15.5 % girls were yet not aware about it out of these 750 girls 87.6% knew that menstrual blood is not unhygienic and 12.4% thought that it was unhygienic. 92.1 % were using absorbent material to manage their menstrual flow. Table 4 was used to acquire the knowledge of practice of material used during menstruation, which is determined by various factors and customs. It is observed in our study 42.1% reused cloth and 77.8% cleaned with soap and water and 58.5% dried it in sunlight, in study by Shanbhag, et.al., 44.1% used sanitary pads and 34.7% used cloth ¹. In a study by Reena, 64% used sanitary napkin and 36% used cloth ³. In the study by Dasgupta and Sarkar, 42.5% used old cloth ⁷. In the study by Shanbhag, et.al., 71.7% reused cloth for 1 - 2 months and 7.9% for 5 - 6 months, similarly 31.3% used soap and water to clean and 28.6% used hot water. In this study, 68.4% dried it in sunlight(1). In the study by Dasgupta and Sarkar, 73.75% reused cloth (7) and hence, here lies the need to give them adequate knowledge about sterilization of material reused and personal hygiene, as this is a major cause for introduction of infections in to the genitourinary tract, which in turn gives rise to sufferings in future and long term problems. In our study in table 5, Personal Hygiene and Problems Associated with Menstruation. We observed the basics of hygiene like taking bath and washing hairs which is at most an important factor were not practiced by all of the menstruating girls. Only 69.5% girls took bath daily. This also happens to be governed by

cultural believes. Amongst these girls in our study 58.9% girls cleaned their genitalia during menstruation, 56.9% used soap and water. In a study by Baishakni, Pana, et.al., 47.63% in urban area and 37.96% in rural area cleaned ext. genitalia 2 times/day². In a study by Shasidhar, 36% cleaned genitalia occasionally and 50% not at all (6). In a study by Pagadpalur, 97% bathed daily and 26% cleaned genitalia daily⁶. In our study 50.9% girls changed their undergarments during their period and 35.6% girls changed only twice, this shows significantly poor hygiene practice was observed amongst this girls which in turn could be harmful for their health. In the present study, 33.5% had headache and 39.3% had abdominal pain associated with menstruation. In a study by Taroj, 77.6% had abdominal pain and 28.5% has headache. This also calls for urgent need of proper counseling regarding the minor elements associated with the menstruation. In our study, 57.9% disposed pads in dustbin and 22.7% in drain. In the study by Shasidhar, 80% disposed in dustbin and 17% in toilet⁶. In a study by Pagadpalur, 97% bathed daily and 26% cleaned genitalia daily⁶. In the study by Reena, 69% threw in dustbin and 19% in toilet³. The world is already facing global warming issues in this the survival and health of society is in danger, hence times to acknowledged the population about proper disposal of disposable material used in menstrual hygiene practice. which would be helpful in avoiding pollution and infection that are caused as a consequences of improper disposal of the used material.

CONCLUSION

As per this study we thought that educating school girls should be an important part of the curriculum. They should be explained about the normal physiology of menstruation by gynaecologist. Where they are given opportunity to ask their queries. This should also include teaching of menstrual hygiene and use of sanitary napkins for safety of their health. Education of parents and teachers should be taken into account.

It was seen in our study that 82.67% of the participants were between 16 – 20 years. Majority of them believed that menstruation was physiological and had started menstruating before the study. Around 46.1% had feeling of discomfort and 23% were scared at the start of menstruation. Majority had knowledge about menstruation before that attained menarche. The common sources of information were friends and mother. Regarding menstrual hygiene, 84.5% knew about it and 92.1% used absorbent material for menstruation.

Majority used napkins and cloth as absorbent material and 42.1% reused cloth. Majority dried reused cloth in sunlight and disposed in dustbin. 9.5% took bath daily and 58.9% cleaned genitalia during menstruation. It is

saddening that many did not clean external genitalia during menstruation and majority changed underwear only once.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Girls should be educated regarding menstrual hygiene by their mothers, teachers.

School teachers play very important role in imparting knowledge and good hygienic practices.

Some lectures regarding adolescent issues could be taken by gynaecologist in schools.

Use of sanitary napkins to a large extent should be encouraged through parents, teachers and media.

Mothers should break inhibitions of discussing things about menstruation with their daughters.

Study denoted lower level of knowledge about menstruation. Majority of girls acquired the knowledge of menstruation from friends, parents. Although schools and media play an vital role in creating the awareness amongst the society, they still lacked behind.

Poor menstrual hygiene practice was still observed. The study of personal hygiene practices were found to be unsatisfactory and Misconceptions and ignorance, false perceptions, unsafe practices regarding menstruation and myths still continue prevail in our society.

All the parents especially mothers irrespective of their educational status should be thought to break the barriers about opening up freely with their daughters about menstruation much before they start menstruating.

With the above study we conclude that; the Schools should include education with regards to Menstruation and reproductive health, Menstrual hygiene should be a prime focus with regards to health issue's. Proper education with the view to bring them out of traditional beliefs misconception, myths and restrictions with regards to menstruations should be reinforced. Awareness program to be encouraged by schools involving the doctors, parents and teachers interaction with the girls.

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