

Review Article

To Study the knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls: A review study

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ABSTRACT:

Adolescent girls face different physical conversions, sexual changes and psychological pressures associated with growth and maturity, menstruation being one of them. Menstruation is still clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions resulting in ignorance of scientific facts and hygienic health practices. Since response to menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge about issues, menstrual hygiene education has shown to be effective in improving health by developing good knowledge, attitude and practice among adolescent girls. Study is in progress and after the empirical evaluation; on knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene will be helpful for adolescent girls. It is necessary to increase the awareness of the menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls. So there is a need to conduct a study for knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls.

Keywords: menstrual hygiene, adolescent girls, knowledge and practice

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INTRODUCTION

School life is the first experience of living outside the home which mould the school children to prepare themselves to lead a life, according to their growth and development and changing needs of the society. School is the best forum for the students to acquire knowledge, skill and attitude in various aspects of their life style pattern. The health of the child is the basement for healthy nation. In the school life the concept of prevention and health promotion are inevitable to bring the child with a good health. The personal hygiene is the fundamental step for the children to learn in order to prevent diseases and promote health.

Each child undergo many changes when the growth and development takes place over a period of time. These development changes are common among both girls and boys; one of such physiological changes among girl is attaining menarche. It marks beginning of a multitude of physical, physiological and psychological changes in the lives of the adolescent girls. Generally menarche indicates the girls maturity and the readiness for marriage and sexual activity.

According to the report by **UNICEF (2016)** there are 243 million adolescence comprising 20% of total population in India, which clearly shows that India has got more young people. It includes 10% of school girls aged between 12 to 14 years and majority of them lives, in rural areas. They do not know to take care of themselves in hygienic way during the time of menstruation which adversely affects their health.

Reproductive health is a crucial part of general health and a central feature of human development. Reproductive health deals with the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life. Reproductive health is a universal concern, but is of special importance for women particularly during the reproductive years. Personal hygiene during menstruation explored including bathing and showering, and buying and using sanitary protection products.¹ WHO has defined Adolescence as the period between 10-19 years of life. Adolescent girls constitute about 1/5th total female population in the world. Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period in their life cycle that requires specific and special attention. This period is marked with onset of menarche.^{1,2}

STUDY AREA

This study was done in the Department of nursing, Malwanchal university, Indor, Madhya Pradesh.

MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to all females. Women having a better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe menstrual practices are less vulnerable to reproductive tract infections and its consequences.² The menstrual cycle, under the control of the endocrine system, is necessary for reproduction. It is commonly divided into three phases: the follicular phase, ovulation, and the luteal phase; although some sources use a different set of phases: menstruation, proliferative phase, and secretory phase. Menstrual cycles are counted from the first day of menstrual bleeding.³ In the menstrual cycle, changes occur in the female reproductive system as well as other systems. A woman's first menstruation is termed menarche, and occurs typically around age 12-13. The average age of menarche is about 12.5 years. But is normal anywhere between ages 8 and 16.

SANITARY NAPKIN

It refers to the sanitary pad in an absorbent item worn by a school girl to absorb menstrual blood.

SCHOOL GIRLS

It refers to the school girls those who attained menarche, aged between 12 and 14 years and studying in VIII (or) IX standard.

MENARCHE

It refers to the first occurrence of menstruation usually between the ages of 10 and 15 years among school girls and continues as monthly discharge of blood through the vaginal canal.

FACTOR AFFECTING THE MENARCHE

Factors such as heredity, diet and overall health can accelerate or delay menarche. The end of a woman's reproductive phase is called the menopause, which commonly occurs somewhere between the ages of 45 and 55.⁴ In World Health Organization report is, poor menstrual hygiene in developing countries has been an insufficiently acknowledged problem. In several cultures there are taboos concerning blood, menstruating girls and women and menstrual hygiene. Approximately 50% of the world's population knows from their own experience how important good menstrual hygiene is to be able to function optimally during the menstruation period. Yet this is hardly realized by in particular politicians, programmers and policy makers. This is also surprising in view of the explicit relation of this issue to water and sanitation and the distribution of all kinds of diseases, which can be reduced considerably by good hygiene.⁵ The problem concerning menstruation and participation in the higher forms of

primary (grade 4 & 5) and secondary education has several aspects. Sanitary facilities and waste management at schools, including the hygienic disposal of sanitary napkins and other protection alternatives, are so poor and unsafe that girls and female teachers prefer not to use these during their menstruation period. These problems are reinforced by local customs and cultural and/ or religious traditions and taboos concerning menstruation, especially in rural areas.⁶

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

Menstrual hygiene, a very important risk factor for reproductive tract infections, is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent girls. Educational television programmes, trained school nurses/health personnel, motivated school teachers and knowledgeable parents can play a very important role in transmitting the vital message of correct menstrual hygiene to the adolescent girl of today.⁶

PHYSIOLOGICAL PHENOMENON

Menstruation is a physiological phenomenon which is unique to females that begins in adolescence. Most of the girls receive their gynecological information from their mothers, religious books, older sister or a peer. However such information was generally given after menarche rather than before. The social stigma attached to menstruation causes many girls and women to carry out dangerous hygiene practices. Lacking a platform to share menstrual hygiene problems, girls and women often suffer from discomfort and infection. In the existing Indian cultural milieu, there are several traditions, myths, misconceptions, mystery and superstition prevailing about menstruation. She may be discouraged from somatic, outdoor activities, discontinue bathing, and she may be encouraged to stay at home for a day from school or the office. The menstruating woman in some religion is not allowed to pray and touch their religious materials. Due to these restrictions women often manage menstruation with methods that could be unhygienic or inconvenient, particularly in poorer settings. Without good information, young girls may be frightened at the onset of their period and may be anxious about the process. Hence there is a need to provide healthy family life education to the woman particularly the adolescent girls.^{7,8}

EFFECT ON HEALTH

Hygiene-related practices of women during menstruation are of considerable importance, as it has a health impact in terms of increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infections (RTI). The interplay of socio-economic status, menstrual hygiene practices and RTI are noticeable. Today millions of women are sufferers of RTI and its complications. Inappropriate menstrual hygiene experience and adverse effect of menstruation on schooling and social life, use of

unhygienic material as menstrual absorbent and unacceptable methods of disposal for menstrual absorbents were more common in girls. More girls who had no training disposed of their menstrual absorbents in farms and road side or by recycled them by washing than those who were trained.^{9,10}

LENGTH OF MENSTRUAL CYCLE

The length of an average menstrual cycle lasts 3 - 5 days counting from the first day of one period to the first day of the next. Normal cycles can vary 23 - 35 days. The number of days a woman menstruates varies. Periods lasting 3 - 5 days are average and some are as long as 7 days and during each month that a small amount of bloody fluid flows from vagina. The flow begins slowly - it doesn't spurt or gush-and is heavier during the first few days. The flow gradually lessens and then stops. Although, it may seem like you are losing a lot of blood but you're really not. The total amount of flow over an entire period is only about 1/4 cup. A woman spends approximately 2,100 days menstruating. That's almost six years of her life. These six years spread over a productive life of 50 years and can potentially decide how healthy a woman's life will be.¹¹⁻¹⁴

It's also normal that the duration of the period may vary. Sometimes a girl may bleed for 2 days and sometimes it may last a week. That's because the level of hormones the body manufactures can be different from one cycle to the next and this affects the amount and length of bleeding. Some girls' periods arrive like clockwork. Others get theirs at slightly different times each month. Many girls get regular period most of the time, but occasionally skip a period or get an extra period during times of pressure or stress. While both the print and visual media are full of advertisements about sanitary napkin, rural communities still struggle for basic information on the menstrual cycle. An average woman will use close to 15,000 napkins during her productive life period.^{9,15}

MENSTRUATION AS SOCIAL STIGMA IN INDIAN SOCIETY

Menstruation has often been dealt with secrecy in many cultures. And this custom leads poor and inadequate sanitary facilities. Girls not wish to attend the school during menstruation due to poor sanitation facilities and using of homemade cloth. As a result, they grow up with low self-esteem and disempowerment from poor educational attainment. In some studies, were found that students are often not aware of basic hygienic practices, such as washing hands before and after toilet use, drying the genital area, bathing position, preferred color and type of underwear and menstrual hygiene. Adolescent girls constitute a vulnerable group, particularly in India where female child is neglected one. Menstruation is still regarded as something unclean or dirty in Indian society. The reaction to

menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge about the subject. Although menstruation is a natural process, it is linked with several misconceptions and practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes.^{9,10}

Menstruation is generally considered social stigma in Indian society. Isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions imposed on them in the family have reinforced negative attitude among girls. Several studies have reported restrictions in daily activities such as not being allowed to take bath, change clothes, comb hair and enter holy places. Apart from these, dietary restrictions during menstrual period are also imposed.^{11,16}

ROLE OF EDUCATION

Majority of the mothers and girls gladly accept the menstrual education from the school. The best place to translate the plans concerning menstrual hygiene is the educational institutions. Menstruation in India has traditionally been associated with myths and taboos and adolescent girls find it extremely difficult to even discuss the issue with their parents or elders in the family.

Educational package regarding menstrual hygiene help to promote it. Most of the studies showed in previous year that, health teaching to the girls regarding importance of menstrual hygiene helps not only increase their knowledge but also promote in good practice management of menstrual hygiene. Health teaching on menstrual hygiene should be emphasis to every adolescent girl as an important component of school health. Though Menstruation is natural phenomena, many girls suffer from diseases because of ignorance and unhygienic practice.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Study is in progress and after the empirical evaluation; on knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene will be helpful for adolescent girls. It is necessary to increase the awareness of the menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls. So there is a need to conduct a study for knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls.

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