

Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice about Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene among College Students

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Abstract: *The onset of menstruation is the most important physical change that occurs among girls during adolescence. Menstrual hygiene management is an important issue for girls. Lack of education and communication regarding reproductive system further adds to the problem. Several studies have shown that the knowledge regarding menstrual cycle is not sufficient. Insufficient management of menstrual hygiene may result in symptoms involving genitourinary tracts. With this background, the present study was conducted. The objective of the study is to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practices in relation to menstrual cycle and factors influencing the same. A questionnaire related to knowledge, attitude and practice was developed and employed to collect data from pharmacy students at Ezhuthachan College of pharmaceutical sciences. A total of 110 girls were studied. Overall, the knowledge about menstrual cycle is good. Menstrual awareness was found in 88.1% of girls. Source of knowledge for most of the girls were mothers, followed by friends. 91.8% are using sanitary pads.*

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Practices, Menstrual Cycle, Menstrual Hygiene Management

1. Introduction

Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period which signifies the transition from girlhood to womanhood. 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]. Menstruation is a normal physiological process which still considered as something unclean or dirty in Indian society [2 - 4]. Due to poor knowledge in menstrual hygiene causes increased impact of vulnerability to reproductive tract infections [5]. Reproductive age of woman and girls need access to practice of using soft absorbent sanitarines and cleaning genital area during menstruation. Use of unclean napkins or cloth napkins during menses may cause reproductive tract infections [6, 7]. Hygienic practice are necessary during menstruation such as use of sanitary pads and washing of genital areas [8]. Many studies have revealed that most of the adolescent girls had incomplete and inaccurate information about the menstrual physiology and hygiene. It also revealed that mothers, television, friends, teachers and relatives were the main sources which provided information on menstruation to the adolescent girls. The interplay of socio - economic status, menstrual hygiene practices and RTI are noticeable. Today millions of women are sufferers of RTI and its complications and often the infection is transmitted to the offspring of the pregnant mother [9].]. The promotion of sanitary napkins as a mean for safe and hygienic option for management of menstruation, we certainly cannot ignore the growing burden

of non - biodegradable waste that is generated by it [10]. The present study was conducted with an objective to assess the knowledge regarding menstrual cycle, its management, and status of menstrual hygiene practices.

2. Methodology

The present study is a survey conducted among pharmacy students at Ezhuthachan College of Pharmaceutical Sciences. The survey was developed based on previous researches. A thorough review was conducted of relevant literature pertaining to knowledge, attitude and practices about menstrual hygiene.

Type of Study

This was a survey based on questionnaire about knowledge, attitude and practice.

Period of Study

The study duration was from 2018 - 2019 academic year.

Inclusion Criteria

The purpose of the study was explained and those willing to participate were included in the study. All the girls present were willing and gave consent for the study. Those girls who have not attained menarche were also subjected to the questionnaire with an intention to sensitize them about the issue.

Exclusion Criteria

Those girls not willing to participate in the study were excluded from the study.

Data Collection

A pre - designed, pre - tested, and semi - structured questioner were used for the collection of data by personal interviews method. A total of 110 girls were studied.

Statistical analysis

All data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Percentages were used to summarize all the responses generated from the survey. P value less than 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

3. Results**Knowledge of respondents on menstruation and menstrual hygiene**

The majority of the respondents (80.9%) had heard about menarche before menstruation and the main source of information was the respondents' mothers (64.5%). More than half of the respondents describe menstruation as a pathological process. About 70% said it is caused by hormones. Overall more than half (88.1%) of the respondents had good knowledge of menstruation and menstrual hygiene.

Table 1: Knowledge of respondents on menstruation

Variables	Frequency	Percent
What is menstruation		
Physiological process	44	40%
Pathological process	66	60%
Causes of menstruation		
Hormones	77	70%
Curse of God	5	4.50%
caused by disease	28	25.40%
Source of menstrual blood		
Uterus	89	80.90%
Vaginal	10	9.09%
Bladder	5	4.54%
Abdomen	6	5.45%
Normal cycle length		
21 - 35days	86	78.18%
>35days	24	21.80%
Ever heard about menstrual before menarche		
Yes	89	80.90%
No	21	19%
Source of information		
Mother	71	64.50%
Teacher	10	9.00%
Friends	12	10.90%
Books	11	10%
Media (TV, Radio)	6	5.45%
Knowledge Score		
Good	97	88.10%
Poor	13	11.81%

Attitude on menstruation and menstrual hygiene

About 66.3% of the respondents describe their response to their first menses as scary, discomfoting or emotionally disturbing. Majority of the respondents 95.45% had menstrual symptoms. Abdominal pains and anorexia were

the major symptoms experienced during menstruation among the respondents. Majority of the respondents experienced restriction during their menses. Major types of restriction experience were avoidance of celebration, festivities and prayers.

Table 2: Attitude on menstruation and menstrual hygiene

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Reaction to first menses		
Happy	6	5.45%
Scared	73	66.30%
Discomfort	19	17.27%
Emotional Disturbance	12	10.90%
Presence of menstrual symptoms		
Yes	105	95.45%
No	5	4.54%
Do you attend college during menses		
Yes	71	64.54%
No	39	35.40%
If No why		
Presence of menstrual symptoms	21	53.84%
Fear of unexpected bleeding	13	33.30%
Lack of material or pad	5	12.80%
Do you experience restriction during menstruation		
Yes	101	91.80%
No	9	8.10%
*Types of restriction during menses		
Avoid celebration and festivities	33	30%
Avoid certain food	5	4.54%
Avoid housework	5	4.54%
Avoid prayers	67	60.90%

Practice and hygiene during menstruation

About eight percent of respondents used cloth as absorbent material during menses while 91.8% used sanitary pad. Ten percent of respondents changed the absorbent material once a day during menses and 66.3% changed the materials twice a day. Ten percent of respondents changed panties once during the period of menses and 91.81% changed it twice a day. Majority of the respondents 82.7% disposed the used absorbent material in dust bin while 79% wrap the used pad before disposing it. Majority of the respondents clean their genitalia during the period of menstruation. Overall 93.3% of the respondents had good practice while only 6.36% had poor practice.

Table 3: Practice during Menstruation

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Type of absorbent material use during menses		
Sanitary pad	101	91.80%
cloth	9	8.18%
Frequency of changing absorbent material during menses		
Once	11	10%
Twice	73	66.30%
Three or more times	26	22.63%
Frequency of changing panties during menses		
Once	7	6.36%
Twice	101	91.81%
Three or more times	2	1.81%
Method of disposing of used pad		
Dust bin	91	82.70%
Drain	7	6.36%

Toilet	12	10.90%
Types of pad wrap use for disposing of pad		
Papers	87	79%
Plastic bag	19	17.27%
Not wrap	4	3.63%
Do you clean your genitalia during menstruation?		
Yes	107	97.27%
No	3	2.72%
Practice		
Good	103	93.30%
Poor	7	6.36%

4. Discussion

Menstruation is an important pubertal development. A lot of misconceptions about this process translated into poor knowledge and hygienic practices on menstruation. Adequate knowledge on menstruation and its hygienic practices will prevent reproductive ill health. This study revealed high level of awareness on menarch and the main source of information were the respondents mother. The reason for this might be due to the fact that most of the respondents mother are educated in this study. In this study most of the respondents have good knowledge on menstruation and its hygienic practices. Hygienic practices are important to ensure prevention of diseases among college students. The use of reusable materials during menstruation increases the risk of infection if not properly cleaned and dried. Findings in this study revealed that majority of respondents in this study use sanitary pad during menses. Good menstrual hygiene practice include safe and sanitary disposal of absorbant materials used during mensus. In this study majority of respondents disposed the absorbent materials by wrapping and disposing it in the dustbin. The practice of non wrapping the absorbent materials disposing it in the toilet uncycky and can lead to breeding place for insects and vermites. This should be discourage. Overall the hygienic practice during menstruation was good as only 6% of respondents observed poor hygienic practice. There was positive association between parents level of education and good knowledge of menstruation and menstrual hygiene in this study. Mothers who are educated are likely to talk to there children about menstruation compared to mothers who were not. A positive association was also observed between good hygienic practice and living with parents. In this study restrictions were practiced by close to half of the respondents girls and this was mostly to avoid celebrations and festivities.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to ascertain knowledge & practices among college students. The study revealed that menstrual hygiene was satisfactory among a adolescents. Lack of sufficient knowledge & awareness among girls regarding menstruation can be due to low level of education among themselves & their mothers. The knowledge about menstrual cycle is found to be good with college students.

6. Acknowledgement

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7. Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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