

Health Education Camps on Menstrual Hygiene Problems and Management among the Adolescent Girls - A Community-Based Study

Dr. B. Kavya¹, Dr. K. Sunitha²

¹Senior Resident, RIMS, Kadapa and ²Assistant Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, S.V. Medical College, Tirupati, India
Corresponding Author: Dr K Sunitha, Mail id: drsunitha09[at]gmail.com

Abstract: *Menstruation is a natural process, but it is still a taboo in Indian society. Menstruation is surrounded by various psychological and religious barriers due to lack of knowledge about the scientific process of menstruation. Many girls residing in slum areas are unaware of what actually happens during menstrual cycle. Although menstruation is a natural process, it is linked with several perceptions and practices within the community, which sometimes may result in adverse health outcomes. Poor genital hygiene negatively affects adolescents' health. Most girls are unaware and unprepared for menarche as they are not informed about menstruation. Health education camps on menstrual hygiene problems and management among the adolescent girls-a community-based study was planned to assess the effectiveness of the camps in creating awareness among the adolescent girls and to study the practical problems in management of menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls. This study revealed that though the menstrual hygiene was unsatisfactory among adolescent girls, the awareness levels after the camps have been increased significantly. Since, majority of the girls were working, number of camps and awareness programmes need to be increased to educate the girls along with the whole family for a healthy and safe hygiene practices. Large number of napkins may be made available at affordable price is also need of the hour for girls.*

Keywords: Menstrual hygiene, sanitary napkins, Adolescent girls

1. Introduction

Menstruation is a natural process, but it is still a taboo in Indian society. Menstruation is surrounded by various psychological and religious barriers due to lack of knowledge about the scientific process of menstruation. Many girls residing in slum areas are unaware of what actually happens during menstrual cycle. Although menstruation is a natural process, it is linked with several perceptions and practices within the community, which sometimes may result in adverse health outcomes.² Poor genital hygiene negatively affects adolescents' health. Most girls are unaware and unprepared for menarche as they are not informed about menstruation. **Menstrual Hygiene Day** is an annual awareness day on **May 28** to highlight the importance of good menstrual hygiene management. It was selected on 28th to acknowledge that 28 days is the average length of the menstrual cycle.

2. Menstrual Hygiene Management

The United Nations defines adequate menstrual hygiene management as "women and adolescent girls using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect blood that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials."

To assess the impact of the camps conducted and the effectiveness of the camps in improving the knowledge, beliefs, practices of menstrual hygiene, problems and the restrictions practiced by adolescent girls during menstruation.

Aim: To assess the impact of the menstrual hygiene camps.

Objectives:

- ✓ To assess the effectiveness of the camps in creating awareness among the adolescent girls.
- ✓ To study the practical problems in management of menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls.

Methodology

Study Design: Community based Cross-sectional study
Study Area: Urban slum, Tirupati
Study subjects: 100 Adolescent girls
Study tool: Questionnaire containing 25 questions
Sampling method: Convenient sampling
Data Analysis: Microsoft excel sheet

Inclusion Criteria

Adolescent girls who are willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Those who are not willing to participate.

Questionnaire for evaluating menstrual hygiene problems and impact of camps

1). Age-

- a) <13yrs
- b) 14-16yrs
- c) >16yrs

- 2). Education-
- a) No schooling
 - b) Primary schooling
 - c) Secondary schooling
 - d) Higher secondary
- 3). Mother's education
- a) Illiterate
 - b) Primary
 - c) Secondary
 - d) Higher secondary
- 4). Family income (modified B G Prasad)
- a) Class V
 - b) Class IV
 - c) Class III
 - d) Class II
 - e) Class I
- 5). Are you aware of menstruation before attaining menarche
- a) Yes b) No
- 6). Awareness was first created by
- a) Mother
 - b) School teacher
 - c) Friends
 - e) Sister/relatives
 - d) Camps
 - e) Multimedia channels
- 7). Did you understand the content shown in TV channels?
- a) Yes b) No
- 8). Did u understand what is menstruation and why it occur
- a) Yes b) No
- 9). Any camp was conducted in your village/area
- a) Yes b) No
- 10). Awareness was created in the camps regarding (tick any/all)
- a) Why and how menstruation occurs
 - b) Safety level of diff absorbents
 - c) Method of disposal d) Hygiene practises
- 11). Have your knowledge increased after the camps and programmes
- a) Yes b) No
- 12). Material used
- a) Sanitary pad
 - b) New cloth
 - c) Old Cloth
 - d) Both pad and cloth
- 13). Reason to use cloth
- a) Non availability of sanitary napkins near locality
 - b) No knowledge how to use sanitary napkins
 - c) Dint have money to buy sanitary napkins
 - d) Shyness to buy sanitary napkins
- 14). Washed with material
- a) Water and detergents
 - b) Water only
- 15). Drying of cloth
- a) Outside in sunlight
 - b) Inside house
- 16). Frequency of changing of pads/cloth
- a) Not changed for entire day
 - b) Changes once in a day
 - c) >Once in a day
- 17). Reasons for not changing the soaked material
- a) Non-availability of sanitary napkins
 - b) No place to change
 - c) No place to dispose the napkins
 - d) Not aware to change it more than once in a day
- 18). Difficulty in using sanitary pads
- a) Dint know how to use b) Cannot dispose after the use
- 19). Disposal of sanitary pads
- a) Openly throw in public dustbin
 - b) Paper wrapped and throw in public dustbin
 - c) Put the pad in toilet and Flush off
 - d) Others if any (specify)
- 20). Washing of genitalia during menstruation
- a) Frequent b) Infrequent
- 21). Infrequent washing of genitalia due to
- a) Intermittent supply of water
 - b) Common toilets
 - c) Lack of awareness
 - d) Any other reason
- 22). Is privacy maintained
- a) Yes
 - b) No

23). Any social Restrictions were followed?

- a) Yes
b) No

24). Restrictions like:

- a) Should not attend religious places
b) Should not play
c) Should not attend school
d) Should not touch the other people
e) Should not eat certain foods

25) Problems faced during schools/hostels/workplaces

- a) Nowhere to wash or change
b) Cannot dispose
c) Fear of stain
d) Feeling uncomfortable

3. Results

- Out of 100 study subjects, 84 girls attended the camps conducted and among them 80% has understood about the hygiene. Only 3 out of 100 subjects were aware about the menstruation before attaining menarche. As per the classification, majorly 48% girls having age more than 16 years, 28% girls having age between 13-16 years and remaining girls 24% are below 13 years of age. [Table 1]. Among the population, primary schooling [55%], no schooling [24%] and secondary education [21%]. Family income majority of them comes under class IV [89%]. Awareness created among the girls by the mother is lion share [82%], school teacher [9%], multimedia channels [4%], camps [3%] and sisters and relatives [2%] [Table 2].

Table 1: Age wise distribution of study population based on socio-demographic factors

Age	Percentage
< 13 Years	24
13-16 Years	28
>16 Years	48
Education status	Percentage
No schooling	24
Primary education	55
Secondary education	21
Family income	Percentage
Class III	11
Class IV	89

Table 2: Awareness about Menstruation

Awareness about Menstruation was created by	Percentages
Mother	82
School teacher	9
Sister/relatives	2
Camps	3
Multi-media channels	4

Table 3: Type of absorbent used, method of drying and frequency of changing absorbents

Cloth washed with material	Percentages
Water and detergents	69.69
Water only	30.31
Drying of cloth	Percentages
Outside in the sunlight	36.36
Inside the home	63.63

Frequency of changing the absorbents	
Not changed for the entire day	73
Once in a day	21
More than once in a day	6

Washing of genitalia during menstruation	Percentages
Frequent	35
Infrequent	65
Infrequent washing of genitalia due to	-
Intermittent supply of water	50
Common toilets	27
Lack of awareness	19
Is privacy maintained for change of absorbents and frequent washing	-
Yes	37
No	63

During the study, awareness with regard to safety levels of different absorbents [96%], method of disposal [94%], how and why menstruation occurs [87%] and hygiene practices [90%] was increased after the camp was conducted.[Fig.1]

Study on causes for non - usage of sanitary napkins revealed that Shyness to purchase [9%], Non availability of napkins [15%], lack of money [50%], unaware about usage of napkins [26%]. Among the factors, lack of money is major contributing factor for non – usage of sanitary napkins. [Fig.2]

Study revealed that majority of the girls disposing the napkins in the open [55%], followed by the girls are wrapped in paper [25%] and remaining girls are disposing the napkins in toilet and flushing with water [20%].[Fig.3]

Study conducted on social restrictions revealed that restricted in attending religious places contributing 97%, restricted in playing [93%], restricted to attend schools [67%], restricted to touch other people [93%] and restricted to eat certain foods [95%].[Fig.4]

4. Discussion

- This study shows that there was a significant increase in the level of awareness among the subjects after attending the camps. Though the awareness was increased, there was no improvement in the hygiene management. This is mainly due to lack of money, non-availability of the resources and lack of privacy. In this study, about 67% of the girls used sanitary pad, whereas 33% cotton cloth. Similarly, in a study in Delhi, 63.3% of the girls used sanitary pads, whereas cloth was used by 25.3%.⁶ In this study, 30% of the girls reused the same old cloth after washing, whereas it was 51.3% in one of the study.[6] In a study conducted among girls in Kenya, cotton wool, plastic bags, mattresses, dried leaves, cow dung, and

paper from school classrooms were used.⁷ In our study, 73% of the subjects has not changed the absorbent throughout the day and it was mainly due to non-availability of the absorbents with infrequent washing of genitalia when compared to another study by Patle and Kubde, 43.75% of the urban girls and 61.96% of the rural girls changed more than once a day and 56.25% of urban girls and 38.04% of rural girls reported frequent washing of genitalia.⁹ In this study, almost every girl followed some or the other restrictions. In another study carried out in slum and non-slum areas by Rokade and Kumavat, the commonest restriction reported in both the groups was related to religious activity – 68% in slum and 70.16% in non-slum girls.⁸ At workplaces/schools, 43% of the subjects had difficulty in disposing the absorbents while 21% had fear of stain.

5. Conclusions

This study revealed that though the menstrual hygiene was unsatisfactory among adolescent girls, the awareness levels after the camps have been increased significantly. Since, majority of the girls were working, number of camps and awareness programmes need to be increased to educate the girls along with the whole family for a healthy and safe hygiene practices. Large number of napkins may be made available at affordable price is also need of the hour for girls.

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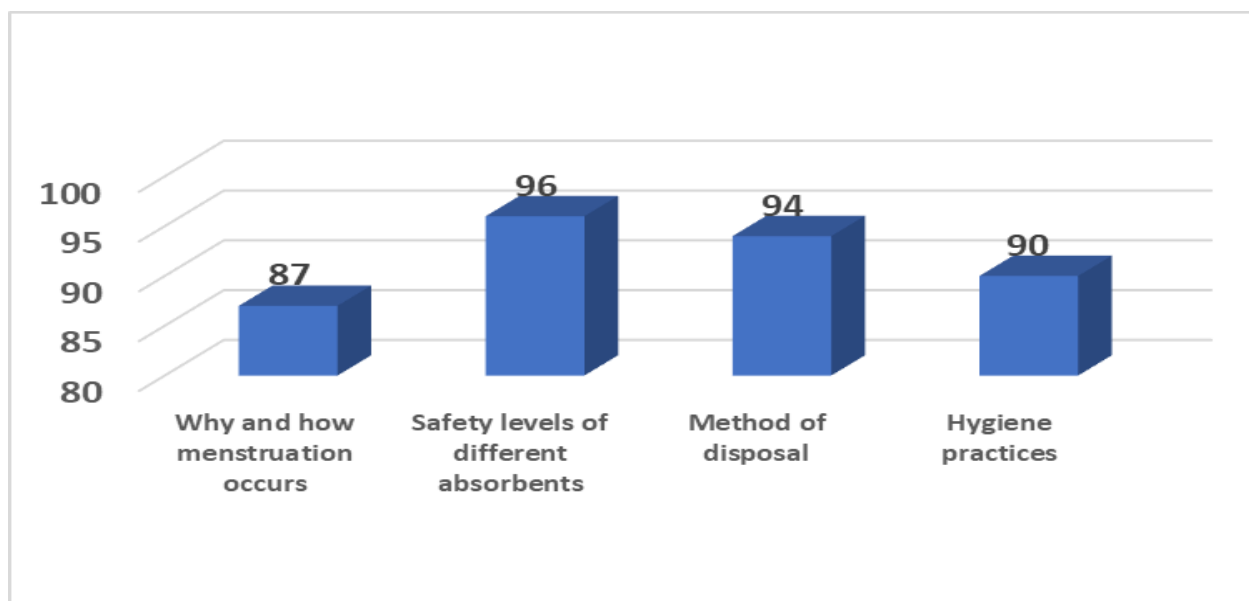


Figure 1: Awareness created during the camps

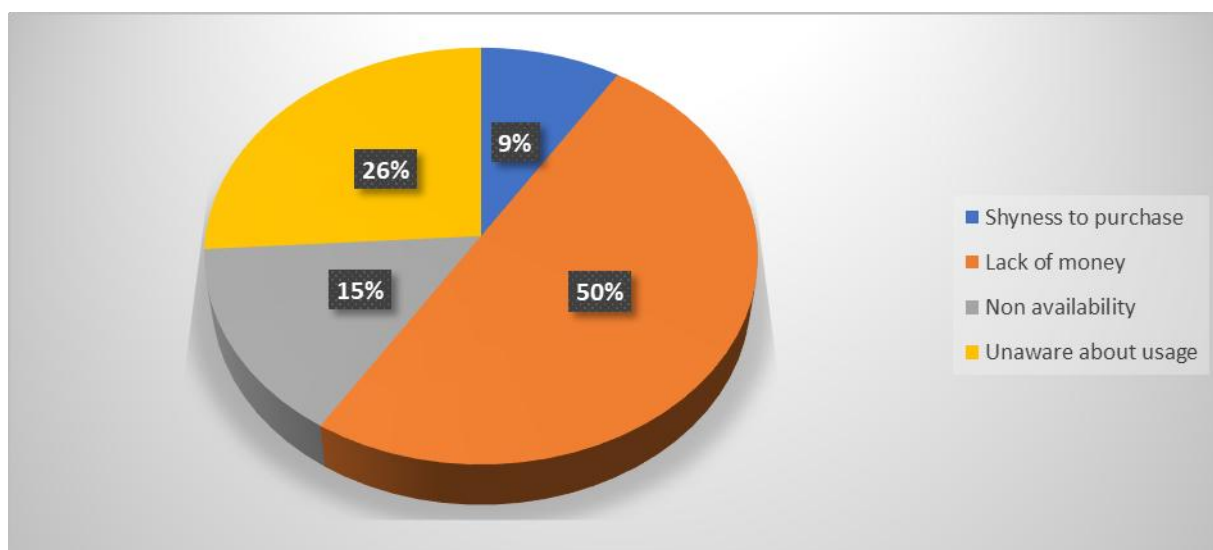


Figure 2: Causes for non - usage of sanitary napkins

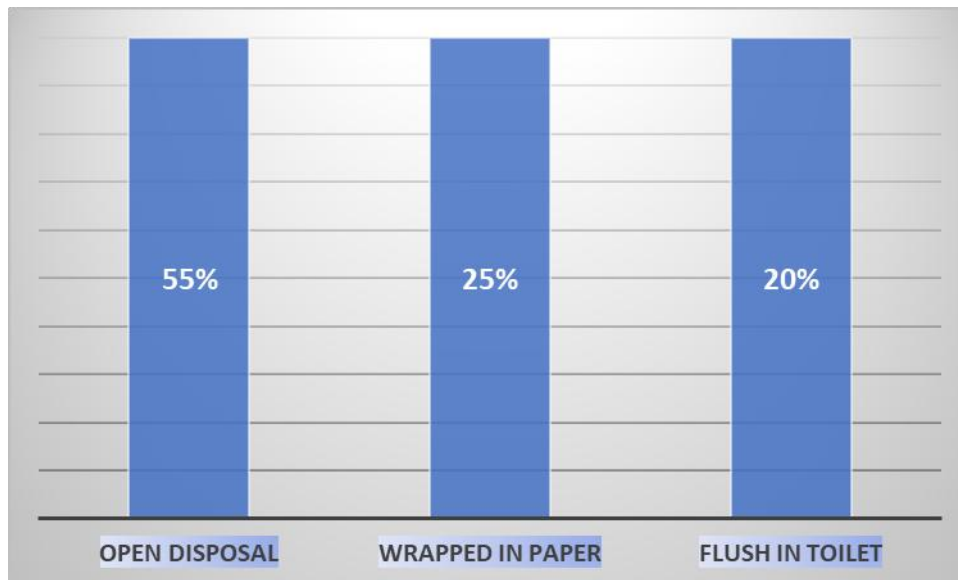


Figure 3: Method of disposal of sanitary napkins

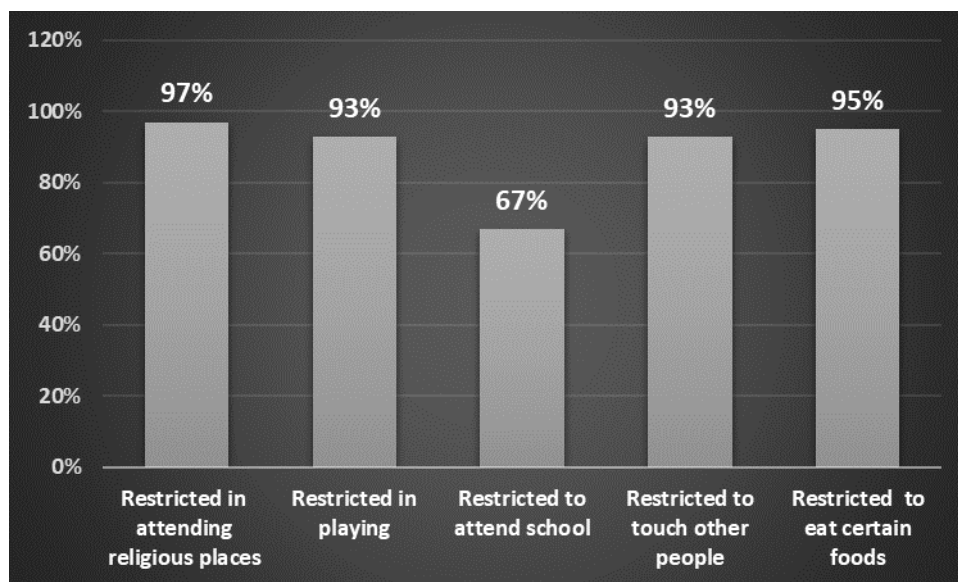


Figure 4: Social restrictions