



International Journal of Home Science

ISSN: 2395-7476
IJHS 2023; 9(2): 195-198
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www.homesciencejournal.com
Received: 01-03-2023
Accepted: 05-04-2023

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Menstrual awareness and hygiene practices among college going girls

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Abstract

Background: Menstrual hygiene is a critical aspect of the wellbeing and empowerment of females. Menstruation is a natural physiological process experienced by females. Additionally, the study addresses the prevalent misconception that often hinder adequate menstrual hygiene practices among college going girls in India. It sheds light on the myths and cultural beliefs associated with menstruation. Yet it continue to be surrounded by myths, stigma and inadequate knowledge.

Objectives: The present study was carried out to assess knowledge about menstrual awareness and hygiene practices among college going girls.

Materials and Methods: This was an institutional based cross- section, questionnaire bases study. Close-ended questionnaire was designed and pretested. The present study was conducted among 60 girls randomly selected from Government Post Graduate College for Women, Sector -14 Panchkula.

Result: Total 60 girls participated in the study majority of the respondents were in the age group of 18 to 25 years. A most of the respondents (80%) live in urban area. Fathers of most of the girls (43.4%) are service holders. Their parental education was good, majority were graduate (66.6%) and (23.3%) above graduate. Eighty percent of respondents had menarche between the age ranges of 12-15 years. Most of the girls mentioned that they had their cycle between 3-5 days, whereas 10% of respondents above 5 days. Eighty six percent of the study population had regular menstrual cycle and 85% of the respondents believed that vagina is the source of bleeding and Majority of girls (98.3%) believed causes of menses are hormones. More than 4/5th of the respondents did enter temple during menstruation, 78.3% answered that they did not allow preparing preserved food items, 70% girls prohibited to wash hairs during menstruation. Regarding practices, 91.6% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation. For cleaning purpose 76.6% girls use water. In case of 80% of the respondents mother was the first informant.

Conclusion: Majority of college going girls had good knowledge regarding menstruation. Correct hygienic practices were followed by them. The common source of information regarding menstruation was their mother. This study reveals that menstrual hygiene practices followed by college going girls were satisfactory.

Keywords: College going girls, menstruation, hygiene, awareness, practices, population

Introduction

Menstruation a natural biological process is a crucial aspect of a woman's reproductive health. It is a monthly cycle that involves the shedding of the uterine lining, accompanied by vaginal bleeding. While menstruation is a natural occurrence, it has often been a topic shrouded in secrecy and surrounded by social stigma in many societies, including India. This lack of awareness and understanding about menstruation has profound implications for the lives of college-going girls in India, affecting their physical well-being, educational opportunities, and overall quality of life. Hence, it is essential to promote menstrual hygiene awareness among college-going girls to empower them with accurate information, debunk myths and misconceptions, and ensure their well-being and rights.

Menstruation is a normal physiological process that occurs in females, typically beginning during puberty and continuing until menopause. It involves the release of an egg from the ovaries, followed by the preparation of the uterus to nurture a potential pregnancy. If fertilization does not occur, the uterus sheds its lining, resulting in vaginal bleeding known as menstruation. This cycle repeats approximately every 28 days, although it can vary from person to person.

The age at which menstruation begins, known as menarche, varies among individuals. In India, girls typically experience menarche between the ages of 10 and 15 years with an average age of around 13 years. It is a significant milestone in a girl's life as it signifies the onset of her reproductive capabilities. However the age of menarche can be influenced by various factors such as genetics, nutrition, and overall health. It is important to educate girls about menstruation before they reach menarche so that they are prepared and equipped with the knowledge to manage their menstrual cycle effectively.

Menstruation has long been surrounded by myths and misconceptions in Indian society. These myths have contributed to the social stigma and lack of awareness about menstruation, leading to negative consequences for women and girls. It is crucial to debunk these myths and promote accurate information to ensure the well-being and empowerment of women. Here are some prevalent myths related to menstruation in India:

- **Menstruating women are impure:** One of the most pervasive common myths is that menstruating women are impure and should be segregated from the rest of the household. This myth has deep cultural and religious roots and has led to discriminatory practices against women during their periods. Menstruating women are often considered untouchable and are prohibited from entering religious spaces, cooking, or participating in certain rituals.
- **Menstruation is a curse:** Another myth is that menstruation is a curse or punishment for sins committed in past lives. This misconception can have severe psychological effects on girls, leading to feelings of shame, guilt, and self-doubt.
- **Menstrual blood is dirty:** Many girls are taught that menstrual blood is impure or dirty, which can lead to unhygienic practices like using unsanitary materials for absorption or inadequate personal hygiene during menstruation.
- **Menstrual pain is normal:** Pain and discomfort during menstruation, known as dysmenorrhea, is often dismissed as being "normal" or insignificant. This misconception can prevent girls from seeking medical help and finding relief from menstrual pain. These practices reinforce the idea that menstruation is shameful and dirty, which can have a significant impact on women's self-esteem and overall well-being.
- **Menstruation is a Curse:** Another common myth is the belief that menstruation is a curse or punishment. This myth perpetuates the idea that women's bodies are inherently flawed or sinful, leading to feelings of shame and guilt. It can also contribute to the marginalization of women and restrict their participation in social and cultural activities. By perpetuating this myth, society reinforces the negative associations with menstruation, hindering girls and women from embracing their natural bodily processes. Some women and girls resort to using old rags, newspapers, or even ash to manage their periods, risking their health and well-being. It is essential to debunk this myth and educate girls and women about proper menstrual hygiene practices, emphasizing the use of clean and hygienic sanitary products.
- **Menstruation should not be discussed:** Menstruation is often considered a taboo subject in many Indian households. There is a prevalent belief that discussing menstruation openly is inappropriate or embarrassing. This lack of conversation hinders the dissemination of accurate information about menstrual health and hygiene.

It is crucial to create safe spaces for open dialogue about menstruation, breaking the silence and empowering women and girls to discuss their experiences, seek support, and access necessary resources.

Addressing these myths is essential for promoting menstrual hygiene awareness, empowering women and girls, and breaking the cycle of misinformation and social stigma. Education plays a pivotal role in debunking these myths, promoting open dialogue, and fostering a supportive environment where menstruation is seen as a natural and healthy bodily process. By challenging these misconceptions, we can ensure that menstruation ceases to be a source of shame and becomes a topic of empowerment, leading to better health, education, and overall well-being for women and girls in India. Menstrual hygiene practices play a vital role in promoting the well-being and dignity of women and girls during their menstrual cycles. Menstruation is a natural and normal bodily process that requires proper hygiene management to ensure comfort, health, and the prevention of infections. Menstrual hygiene practices encompass a range of behaviors and habits aimed at maintaining cleanliness and comfort during menstruation. It is important to use clean water, mild soap, and suitable sanitary products to maintain proper hygiene during menstruation. It involves the use of hygienic and absorbent menstrual products, such as sanitary pads, tampons, or menstrual cups.

Moreover, it includes regular changing of these products to prevent leakage, odor, and potential infections. Access to appropriate menstrual hygiene products is vital for maintaining hygiene and preventing infections. Awareness campaigns focus on informing women and girls about the various sanitary products available, such as pads, tampons, menstrual cups, and reusable cloth pads. They highlight the importance of using clean and reliable products, changing them regularly, and proper disposal methods. Additionally, menstrual hygiene awareness involves addressing the socio-economic barriers that hinder access to menstrual hygiene products and facilities.

Objectives

The present study was carried out with following objectives

- To assess knowledge about menstrual awareness among college going girls
- To determine hygiene practices among college going girls.

Materials and Methods

Locale of research: The present study was conducted among college girls of Government Post Graduate College for Women, Sector-14 of Panchkula district of Haryana.

Sample size: 60 College going girls.

Research tool

A close-ended structured questionnaire was developed in English language in the Google form. It was pre tested on selected respondents. Questionnaire was divided into following sub heads: Socio demographic profile, knowledge regarding menstruation, physiological features related to menstruation, Hygiene practices.

Sixty college going girls were selected for the study from age group (17 to 25years). Purpose of the study was explained and questionnaire was briefed to the girls. Google forms (questionnaire) were filled by interview. The data thus collected was entered into MS Excel and analyzed using

percentage method.

Statistical analysis: Percentage= (no. of responses / total no. of respondents) × 100.

Result and Discussion

The data related to Socio demographic profile of college going girls has been depicted in table 1. Majority of the respondents (88.3%) were in the age group of 18-25 years followed by 10% in the age group of less than 18 years. Eighty percent of the respondents belonged to urban area.

Table 1: Socio demographic profile of respondents

Socio-demographic profile (N=60)	Number of responses	Percentage
Age group (in years)		
Less than 18	6	10
18-25	53	88.3
Above 25	1	1.6
Residency		
Urban	48	80
Rural	12	20
Religion		
Hindu	44	73.7
Muslim	3	5
Sikh	13	21.6
Christian	0	
Other	0	
Birth order		
First	31	51.6
In between	8	13.3
Last	21	35
Educational qualification of Father		
Illiterate	4	6.6
Below matric	3	5
Matric	10	16.6
Secondary	11	18.3
Graduate	23	38.3
Above Graduate	9	15
Occupation of Father		
Business	10	16.6
Government job	15	25
Private service	26	43.3
Other	9	15
Education qualification of Mother		
Illiterate	9	15
Below matric	2	3.3
Matric	14	23.3
Secondary	13	21.6
Graduate	17	28.3
Above Graduate	5	8.3
Occupation of Mother		
Business	3	5
Government job	8	13.3
Private service	16	26.6
Other	33	55
Type of family		
Nuclear family	37	61.6
Joint family	23	38.3
Marital status		
Married	7	11.6
Unmarried	53	88.3
Income per month (in Rupee)		
Below 25,000	15	25
26,000-50,000	32	53.3
Above 50,000	13	21.6

Most of the girls (73.3%) were Hindu, 21.6% were Sikh,

whereas only 5% girls were Muslims. Majority of study population (88.3%) were unmarried. Fathers of most of the girls (43.4%) were service holders, followed by businessmen (16.6%). Twenty five percent had annual income below Rs/ 25,000 belonged to low income group followed by 55.3% had annual income between Rs 26,000 - 50,000 belonged to middle income group, whereas only 13(21.6%) had income above Rs 50,000 i.e. high income group. The education of their parents was good, majorities (66.6%) were graduates and (23.3%) were above graduate. Mothers of most of the respondents were (55%) housewives. Data in Table 2 shows that most of the respondents (80%) have experienced their menarche (the first occurrence of menstruation) within an age range of 12 - 15 years.

Table 2: Physiological features related to menstruation

Physiological features related to menstruation (N=60)	Number	Percentage
Age of menarche (in years)		
Below 12	11	18.3
13-15	48	80
Above 15	1	1.6
Regularity in menstrual cycle		
Regular	52	86.6
Irregular	8	13.3
Duration of menstrual flow		
Below 3 days	8	13.3
3-5 days	46	76.6
Above 5 days	6	10
Pain during menstruation		
Yes	46	76.6
No	14	23.3
Take bath daily		
Yes	59	98.3
No	1	1.6
Rinsing the genital area at least twice a day		
Yes	56	93.3
No	4	6.6
Use of clean clothes		
Yes	57	95
No	3	5
Dry clothes in sunlight		
Yes	59	98.3
No	1	1.6

Majority of the respondents (86.6%) of the study population had regular menstrual cycles and 13.3% experienced irregular menstrual cycle. On enquiring the duration of menstrual cycle, 76.6% mentioned that they had their cycle between 3-5 days, 13.3% said below 3 days, whereas only 6(10%) said above 5 days. It was seen that 76.6% of the girls experienced pain during menstruation. Majority of respondents (95%) used clean and washed clothes during menstruation. Table 3 shows that 85% of the respondents believed that vagina is the source of bleeding, 6.6% believe that uterus is the source of bleeding. Vast majority of the study population (98.3%) mentioned that hormones are the cause of menses, whereas only 1(1.6%) girls believed it is a curse of God. Many restrictions are being followed during menstruation in India.

Table 3: Knowledge regarding menstruation

Knowledge regarding menstruation (N=60)	Number	Percentage
Source of bleeding		
Bladder	2	3.3
Uterus	4	6.6
Vagina	51	85
Abdomen	3	5
Causes of menses		
Hormones	59	98.3
Curse	1	1.6
Disease		
Not allow to prepare preserved food like pickles		
True	47	78.3
False	13	21.6
Entering in the temple is prohibited		
True	49	81.6
False	11	18.3
Not allowed to touch men		
True	14	23.3
False	46	76.6
Entering in the kitchen is prohibited		
True	40	66.6
False	20	33.3
Not allowed to wash hairs		
True	42	70
False	18	30

Only 1(1.6%) girls believe it is a curse of God. Many restrictions were followed during menstruation in India. More than half 78.3% girls did not allowed to prepare preserved food like pickle, jam, murabba and chutney etc., 81.6% were not allowed to enter temple, 23.3% were not allowed to touch men. 70% of girls are prohibited to wash their hairs during menstruation.

Table 4 shows Practices of menstrual hygiene play an important role during menstruation. 55 (1.6%) girls used sanitary pads during their menstruation.

Table 4: Menstrual Hygiene Practices

Menstrual Hygiene practices (N=60)	Number	Percentage
Absorbents used during menstruation		
Piece of clothe	2	3.3
Sanitary pads	55	91.6
Tampons	1	1.6
Menstrual cups	2	3.3
Cotton		
No. of times absorbent change in a day		
Once	3	5
Twice	30	50
Thrice or more	27	45
Cleaning of genitals		
Soap	14	23.3
Water	46	76.6
Disposal of used absorbents		
Pad should be collected and burnt	8	13.3
Pad should be wrapped and put in dustbin	52	86.6
Source of knowledge of menstruation before the beginning of the menstrual period		
Mother	48	80
Elder sister	7	11.6
Friend	5	8.3
Teacher	Nil	Nil
Media	Nil	Nil
Other	Nil	Nil

2(3.3%) girls used piece of clothes, 2(3.3%) used menstruation cup, whereas only 1(1.6%) girls used tampons.

No of times respondent change absorbent in a day; 50% twice a day, 45% thrice or more and 5% once in a day. Majority of girls (76.6%) cleaned their genitalia with water, 23.3% girls used soap. Eighty six percent of girls disposed of their absorbent by wrapping and putting in dustbin. Among 60 (80%) respondents mother was the first informant of menstruation, other source of information 8.3% was friends and 11.6% was their Elder sister.

Conclusion

The data reveals insights into the menstrual health and hygiene practices among college-going girls. Majority of girls had good knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene. It highlights the prevalence of certain beliefs, restrictions, and the use of various menstrual hygiene products. These findings emphasize the need for comprehensive menstrual health education, access to hygienic products, and the promotion of open discussions to address misconceptions and improve the well-being of menstruating individuals.

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