

A Study of the Knowledge and Practice Regarding Menstrual Hygiene in Rural Adolescent School Going Girls in an Indian Cosmopolitan City

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Abstract

Objective: To study the knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene in rural adolescent school going girls of Achrol, Jaipur- Rajasthan. **Methods and materials:** It is a cross-section school based study on adolescent girls between the ages of 10-19 years of age. The study period of data collection from January 2015 to June 2016. Sampling technique: Descriptive type of observational study. Sample size: 400 adolescent school girls. Statistical measures: percentages and proportions. **Results:** Out of the total 400 adolescent girls, it was found that majority of the girls i.e. 85.5% were using sanitary pads, most of them belonged to middle income group. Cleaning of genitals after urination and changing pads was seen in 73.5% and 73.2% of the adolescent girls respectively. 85.5% of the girls disposed their pads in the dustbin. However there were 14.5% girls who used cloth during menstruation and washed and reused it. **Conclusion:** Almost 90% i.e. 85.5% of the adolescent girls used sanitary pads instead of cloth and at least 75% i.e. 73.5% practiced cleaning of genitals after urination. Though a majority of the girls were aware of the use of proper menstrual absorbent and the proper disposal of the used pads, still proper training and health education (by family members, teachers, health educators and media) should be imparted so that there won't be any misconception regarding menstrual hygiene amongst the adolescent girls.

Key words: Knowledge And Practice, Adolescent Girls, Menstrual Hygiene, Practices, Rural India.

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a normal and natural process but young girls and their parents are often unaware of what represents normal menstruation. They are also unaware of the menstrual hygiene pattern. The menarche or time of onset of menstruation varies with race and family, but the average for most girls is from 10 to 14 years until 45 to 55 years. Many factors i.e. Geographical conditions, racial factors, nutritional standards, environmental influences and indulgence in strenuous physical activity can all affect the age of menarche and that is the reason the age at menarche varies in all girls. A woman will have approximately 500 periods in her lifetime. The estimated blood loss is between 50 ml and 200 ml.^[1]

Menstruation often represents an event with social and cultural implications.^[2] A number of studies conducted throughout Asia have specifically reported varying cultural beliefs



and practices related to menstruation. These beliefs and practices include the use of unhygienic sanitary materials, altered bathing, altered nutritional intake and restriction on women's social mobility and religious activities. In a study conducted in Egypt, almost half of the women held this belief that bathing was unhealthy; it prolongs the bleeding period, stops menstrual bleeding, and causes macerations of the skin. However, almost all of the women in the same study practiced thorough washing of their perineal area and used sanitary pads. The majority of the women changed their pad at fixed times of the day (i.e., once or twice; either in the morning, evening, or at night) rather than changing the pad when it was soaked.^[3]

Menstruation has always been surrounded by different perceptions throughout the world. Nowadays there is some openness towards menstruation, but differences in attitude still persist between different populations. There are differences between countries, cultures, religions and ethnic groups. In many low income countries, women and girls are restricted in mobility and behavior during menstruation due to their "impurity" during menstruation. In many parts of the world, menstruation is still related to a number of cultural taboos as well as feelings of shame and un-cleanliness. Even today menstruation is a secret of mother and daughter in many families. It is not discussed in the open.

Sympathetic and careful handling of the young girls experiencing first menstruation is of paramount importance. Menstrual hygiene can be promoted and achieved through information, education and communication (IEC) activities like television educational programs, compulsory sex education curriculums in schools and knowledgeable interactions of sociologists, health personnel, teachers and parents with adolescent girls.^[4]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was school based descriptive type of observational study on adolescent school girls aged between 10-19 years of age. It was carried out in Achrol village in schools near Rural Health Centre (NIMS), Jaipur. The study began in January 2015, till the estimated sample size was achieved i.e. in June 2016. The inclusion criteria included adolescent school going girls in the age groups of 10-19 years of age and only those who had attained menarche. Secondly the adolescent girls had to be residents of Achrol village. The exclusion criteria included girls who were above 19 years and below 10 years of age, those who had not attained menarche, those who were married and lastly those who refused to participate and were uncooperative.

Prior permission was taken from the Principals of the respective schools that were included in the study and knowledge regarding menstruation and menstrual hygiene practices was explained at the beginning of the study. Data was analyzed by using SPSS version 20. The study protocol was approved by Department of Community Medicine, NIMS Medical College, NIMS University, Jaipur, India.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Majority of the adolescent girls (63.0%) in the surveyed population were 13-15 years followed by 16-19 years (20.3%) and 10-12 years (16.7%) Table 1. In the study

Table 1: Distribution of adolescent girls according to age.

Age in years	Number	Percentage
10-12	67	16.7
13-15	252	63.0
16-19	81	20.3
Total	400	100.0

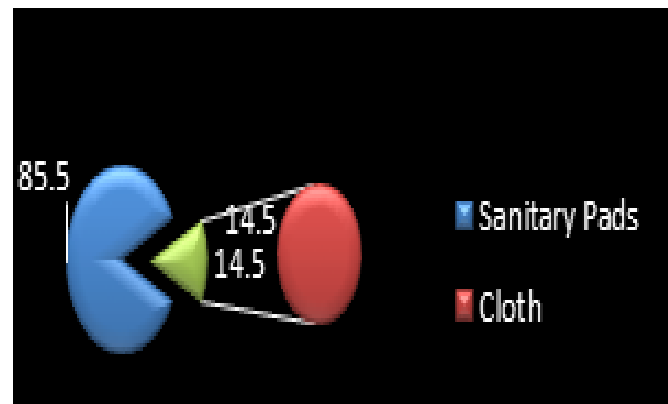


Figure 1: Pie diagram of adolescent girls according to material used during menstruation.

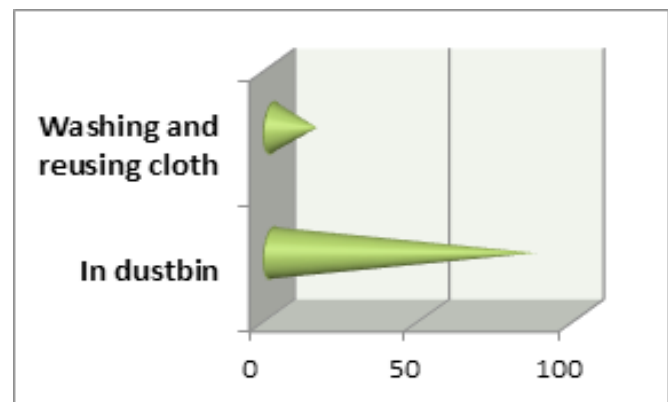


Figure 2: Bar diagram of adolescent girls according to disposal of material used during menstruation.

population, it was observed that majority of the adolescent girls (98.3%) were Hindus, followed by Muslims (1.7%). Also little less than 40.0% of the adolescent girls (38.7%) were from other backward caste, while 31.8% & 17.0% were from Scheduled Cast (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) category respectively. This tallies well with the findings of Census of Rajasthan 2011 where Achrol has 23.7% SC and 9.03% ST.

In this study majority of the adolescent girls i.e. 342 (85.5%) Figure 1, who were using sanitary pads, most of them i.e. 318 (79.5%) belonged to middle income group. Though there were 56 (14.0%) adolescent girls also who belonged to middle income group and were using cloth during menstruation. Cleaning of genitals after urination and changing pads was seen in 294 (73.5%) and 293 (73.2%) of the adolescent girls respectively. Regarding disposal of sanitary pads/ cloth used during menstruation, 342 (85.5%) said that they disposed the pads in the dustbin. However, there were 58 (14.5%) girls who used cloth during menstruation, they used to wash and reuse it (Figure 2). Subhash *et al*^[5] in his study on menstrual hygiene showed that 60.58% of the girls used sanitary pads and cleaning of genitals after urination and changing pads was seen in 58.18% and 40.57% respectively. With respect to the method of disposal, a majority of the girls i.e. 62.20% burned it and 39.79% threw it with the routine waste. The increased use of sanitary pads i.e. 85.5% and the increased number of girls washing genitals after urination and changing pads i.e. 73.4% & 73.2% in the present study is because Achrol is situated on Jaipur-Delhi National Highway and is very near to several educational institutes in Kukas, Amber Tehsil and Chandwaji Tehsil due that they have strong urban influence as a lot of students reside temporarily.

CONCLUSION

Steps should be taken to make Parents/ Teachers/ Health workers motivate and improve the knowledge and practices regarding menstruation amongst these girls. And the government should also focus on this topic by giving different programs on televisions, Radios and Newspapers. Though this study is done in a small sample, but we are

successful to find out the standard of the rural young girls of Achrol village, Jaipur. Though a majority of the girls were aware of the use of proper menstrual absorbent and the proper disposal of the used pads, still proper training and health education (by family members, teachers, health educators and media) should be imparted so that there won't be any misconception regarding menstrual hygiene amongst the adolescent girls.

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Nil

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nil

ABBREVIATION USED

IEC: Information education communication; SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Science; ST: Schedule caste; SC: Schedule tribe.

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