

Socio Cultural Taboos and Restrictions during Menstruation followed by School going Adolescent Girls in a Semi Urban Area of Jaipur, Rajasthan

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Abstract

Objective: With this background the present study was designed as an attempt to unfurl the taboos related to menstruation prevalent amongst school going adolescent girls in a rural area. **Methods:** The present study was conducted among girl's middle and high schools of Achrol village which is a rural field practice area (RHTC) of NIMS. Study population included all adolescent school going girls of 10-19 years age group residing in Achrol vilage, Jaipur. **Results:** The study concluded that out of the 400 girls selected for the study, 325 were not allowed to enter the kitchen or cook food during menstruation. A majority i.e. 85% of the adolescent girls were not allowed to touch the pickle jar. **Conclusion:** It was concluded that unless the myths, misconceptions and customs which go against the girl child are changed it will be difficult to improve the nutritional, health, economic and social status of the girls.

Key words: Menstruation, Adolescent girls, Taboos, Beliefs, Patterns.

INTRODUCTION

Menarche is an abrupt signal that marks a change in social status from child to adult. Cross- culturally there is a wide range of significance attached with menarche. The attitude of societies towards menarche varies from delight and pride to fear and shame. The two main religions in India i.e. Hinduism and Islam, are the roots of many of these social customs and beliefs.^[1]

In various parts of India, there are several cultural traditions, myths and misconceptions related to menstruation, which make them vulnerable to genital tract infections. According to a study by Mudey *et al* in Wardha district, India (2010),^[2] menstruation is generally considered unclean leading to isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions imposed on them by the family. In India, certain taboos are followed, for example once the menstruation begins the girl is isolated from participating in day to day activities, first she should take a bath as soon as she wakes up from sleep for which there is a separate place where she has to take a separate mat for sleeping which should be washed every day. She isn't allowed to visit the temple, she shouldn't touch flowers, she shouldn't cook food or enter the kitchen. This practice was very strong in urban areas compared to rural areas.^[3] In another study carried out by Nair *et al* in 2007, it was observed that 92% of the girls were restricted from worshipping, 70% were



restricted in participating in household activities and 56% of the girls were not allowed to eat oily, cold or spicy food during menstruation.^[4] M.Sarika *et al* (2015) conducted a study among 100 Muslim females in Banihal,J&K and observed that 74% of the females faced restrictions related to food during menstruation.^[5]

METHODS

The study population included all adolescent school going girls of 10-19 years age group, residing in the field practice area of RHTC, Achrol. The study began in January 2015, till the estimate sample size was achieved that is in June 2016. The calculated sample size came out to be 288 adolescent girls, however it was decided to include 400 girls who were studying in Government and Private schools in Achrol. Ethical approval was granted by the ethical committee of NIMS Medical college and Hospital, Jaipur before the beginning of the study. Verbal and written consent was taken from each participant in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

174 (43.5%) who did not have any restrictions as shown in Figure 1. Figure 2 shows the restrictions regarding entry in the kitchen were seen in 75 (18.8%) girls, religious restrictions during menstruation were seen in 226 (56.5%) girls, whereas restrictions in physical activity during menstruation were seen in 220 (55.0%) adolescent girls.

Figure 3 shows distribution of adolescent girls according to their sleeping pattern during menstruation. 311 (77.7%) girls were allowed to sleep on the bed with a mattress, whereas 83 (20.8%) adolescent girls were made to sleep on a cot during menstruation. Subash *et al* (2011)³⁸ and Sarika *et al* (2015)⁸⁶ while studying the restrictions faced by the adolescent girls during menstruation observed that 73.6% and 71.0% of the adolescent girls were allowed to sleep on the normal cot, which is quite similar to the observations made in the present study. On enquiring about cooking food, maximum number of the adolescent girls i.e. 325 (81.2%) said that they were allowed to cook food during menstruation as depicted in Figure 4.

Table 1 shows distribution of girls according to practices during menstruation. 340 (85%) girls were not allowed to touch pickle due to fear of being spoilt. Whereas 236 (59%) were allowed to touch the food once it was cooked.

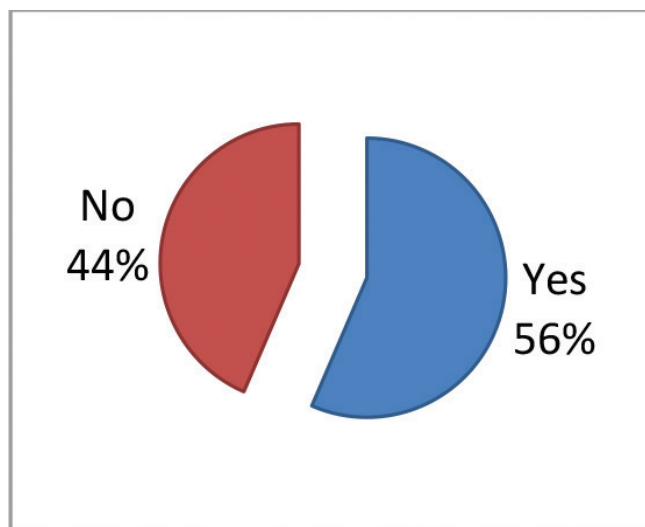


Figure 1: Distribution of adolescent girls according to rituals followed during menstruation

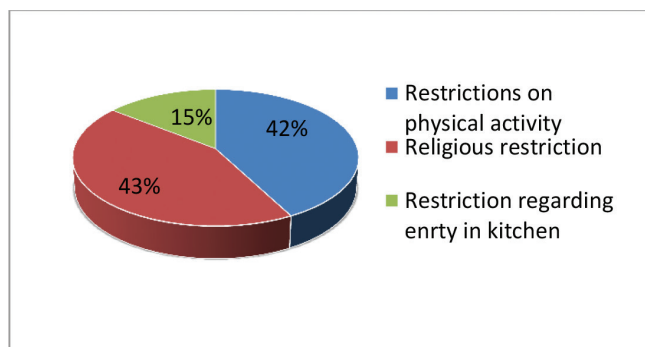


Figure 2: Nature of taboos

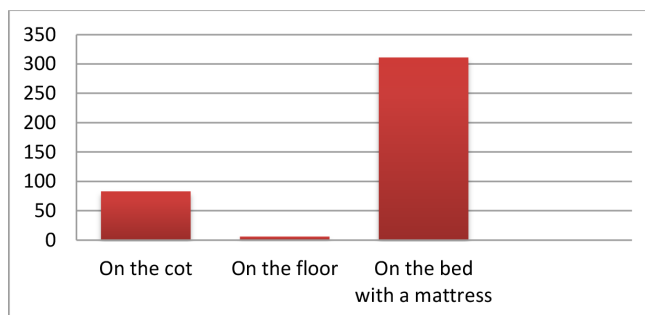


Figure 3: Distribution of adolescent girls according to their sleeping pattern during menstruation

CONCLUSION

Community awareness and involvement will be one of the important components of the Rajiv Gandhi scheme for empowerment of adolescent girls- SABLA. Unless the myths, misconceptions and customs which go against the girl child are changed it will be difficult to improve

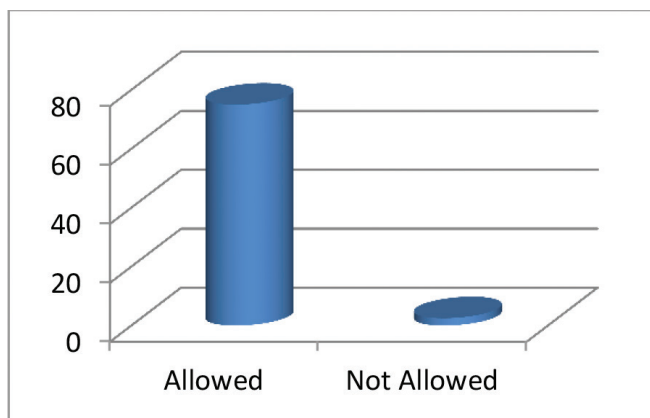


Figure 4: Cooking of food during menstruation

Table 1: Distribution of girls according to practices during menstruation

During menstruation	Allowed	Not Allowed
Touching cooked food	236	164
Touching the pickle jar	60	340

the nutritional, health, social and economic status of the adolescent girl. To achieve this involvement of Panchayats in improving awareness level of the community will be desirable. Sensitization programs for parents, adolescents

and community may be taken under IEC by involving NGOs/CBOs/Civil society organization/PRIs.

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