



PRACTICES AND PERCEPTION REGARDING MENSTRUATION AMONGST RURAL ADOLESCENT GIRLS OF SAWANGI

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ABSTRACT

Background: onset of menstruation is one of the most important changes occurring among the girls during the adolescence. adolescence in girls has been recognized as a turbulent period which signifies the transition from girlhood to womanhood and considered as a landmark of female puberty. Menstruation is generally considered as unclean leading to isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions imposed on them in the family. hence the aim of the study is to-

- 1) to evaluate the perceptions and source of information related to menstruation amongst school going rural adolescent girls.
- 2) to determine the status of menstrual hygiene amongst school going rural adolescent and to propose any improvement.

Methods: A cross sectional study Carried out, 600 adolescent girls in the age group of 10- 19 years in one of the government run school in Wardha district were selected after institutional ethical committee permission and from school administration. The study period was of 6months. Girls were given a pretested questionnaire in local language. This was followed by a session educating the girls about the normal physiology of menstruation, the importance of maintaining hygienic practices during menstruation and basis of traditions involved.

Results: in our study of 600 adolescent girls 32.6% of girls got information about menstruation from their mother and 28% got information from friends. 31% girls thought that it was a natural curse from god that everyone gets while 44% had no idea about why it happens, while only 25% knew it is a natural process. 33.3% girls believed or were told that they should not go to any religious place while 12.3% girls did not prefer going to school. 62.7% girls faced different types of problems during menstruation out of which 51.06% girls had complain of abdominal pain followed by pain in whole body 30.3%. 55.6% used sanitary latrines at home while still 44.3% did not use. Since our being a rural area water problem is badly faced 51% girls used stored water at their homes. The most surprising problem seen was usage of cloth during menstruation as an absorbent 37% girls used old clothes and only 26% girls used sanitary napkins and 59.45% girls used the same cloth at least 3 times. Out of 37% girls who used the old cloth would prefer drying the cloth in dark, hidden areas i.e. 55.85%. 71% girls washed their external genital organs with soap and water while others only washed with water. 37.3% girls maintained privacy with all others but only shared with their mothers. 25.6% girls would wrap it in the paper and dispose it in dustbin with daily waste of the house, 24.7% girls disposed the waste in nearby draining channel, 24% girls preferred burning it or were told by their mothers to do it. 224 girls did not prefer going to school 33.03% girls gave the reason of no water facility and no proper area of disposal of the absorbent 27.6% girls faced discomfort and had fear of leakage. Out of 600, 444 girls who did not use sanitary napkins 54.4% girls said that disposal was the problem and 30.18% girls said the cost was the main hindrance for not using sanitary napkins.

Conclusions: Efforts to achieve millennium developmental goal should be vigorous especially for safe water and waste management.

Health care personnel too, recognise their responsibility to provide knowledge to help girls, confidentially deal with their menstrual health issue and to safeguard against infections

KEYWORDS: adolescent, menstruation, rural area

INTRODUCTION

Onset Of Menstruation Is One Of The Most Important Changes Occurring Among The Girls During The Adolescence. The First Menstruation (Menarche) Occurs Between 11 And 15 Years With A Mean Age Of 13 Years.¹

Adolescence In Girls Has Been Recognized As A Turbulent Period Which Signifies The Transition From Girlhood To Womanhood And Considered As A Landmark Of Female Puberty.²

Menstruation Is Generally Considered As Unclean Leading To Isolation Of The Menstruating Girls And Restrictions Imposed On Them In The Family. These Practices Have Reinforced Negative Attitude Toward Menstruation In Girls¹

High Quality Menstrual Hygiene Plays An Important Role In Prevention Of Not Only UTI And RTI But Also In Cancer Of Cervix Amongst Indian Women Population Where It's A Most Prevalent Genital Cancer.

Promoting Positive Attitudes Towards Management Of Menstruation And Related Problems Among The Adolescent Girls Is The Essential Need, Unfortunately Insufficiently Acknowledged.

Lack Of Adequate Water, Hygienic Practices And Sanitation Of Toilets For Girls; Make Them Vulnerable To Mental, Emotional And Physical Problem. So Also There Are Several Traditions, Myths, Misconceptions, Mystery And Superstition Prevailing About Menstruation In Rural Communities.

METHODS

A Cross Sectional Study Carried Out, 600 Adolescent Girls In The Age Group Of 10- 19 Years In One Of The Government Run School In Wardha District Were Selected After Institutional Ethical Committee Permission And From School Administration. The Study Period Was Of 6months. Girls Were Given A Pretested Questionnaire In Local Language. This Was Followed By A Session Educating The Girls About The Normal Physiology Of Menstruation, The Importance Of Maintaining Hygienic Practices During Menstruation And Basis Of Traditions Involved.

RESULTS

Table No 1

Source Of Information	No Of Cases N=600	Percentage
Mother And Family Members	196	32.6%
Friends And Relatives	168	28%
Teacher And School	96	16%
Media And Magazines	72	12%
Books	68	11.3%

In 32.6% Mother And Family Members Were Source Of Information

Table No 2- Perception About Cause Of Bleeding

Causes Of Bleeding	No Of Casesn=600	Percentage
Natural Curse	186	31%
Normal Physiology	150	25%
Dont Know	264	44%

44% Girls Dint Know About The Cause Of Bleeding

Table No 3- Perception About Social Communication

Social Communication	No Of Cases N=600	Percentage
Dirty Phenomenon	180	30%
Should Not Visit Religious Places	200	93.3%
Should Not Go To School	74	12.3%
Had No Such Belief/Had Social Communication	146	4.3%

93.3% Girls Believed That They Should Not Visit Religious Places.

Table No 4- Problems Faced During Menstruation

Problems Faced During Menstruation	Number N=600	Percentage
Yes	376	62.6%
No	224	37.3%

62.6% Girls Faced Problems During Menstruation.

Table No 5- Type Of Problem (N=376)

Type Of Problem	Number	Percentage
Abdominal Pain	192	51.06%
Waist Pain	22	5.8%
Pain In Whole Body	114	30.3%
Vomiting	6	1%
Giddiness	42	7%

Abdominal Pain Was The Most Common Symptom Which Accounted For 51.06%

Table No 6

Use Of Sanitary Latrine At Home	No Of Cases N=600	Percentage
Yes	334	55.66%
No	266	44.33%

Use Of Sanitary Napkins Was Among Only 55.66%

Table No 7-Use Of Water

Use Of Water	No Of Cases N=600	Percentage
Running	294	49%
Stored	306	51%

51% Houses Still Use Stored Water.

Table No 8-Use Of Material

Use Of Material	No Of Cases N=600	Percentage
Sanitary Napkins	156	26%
New Cloth	78	13%
Reuse Old Cloth	222	37%
Alternate Use	144	24%

Use Of Old Cloth Was Seen In 37%,While Only 26% Preferred To Use Sanitary Napkin.

Table No 9- Reuse Of Cloth

Reuse Of Cloth	No Of Cases N=222	Percentage
<3 Times	132	59.45%
>3 Times	90	40.54%

59.45% Used The Same Cloth In Next Cycle.

Table No 10-Drying Of Cloth

Drying Of Cloth	No Of Cases N=222	Percentage
Dark Hidden Places	124	55.85%
Sun Drying	98	44.14%
Total	222	100%

Dark Hidden Places Were The Preferred Area For Drying Of Clothes Among 55.85%

Table No 11-Washing Of External Genital Area

Means Of Washing	Number(N=600)	Percentage
Soap And Water	426	71%
Only Water	174	29%

29% Girls Used Only Water To Wash The Genital Area

Table No 12-Privacy Maintain

Privacy	Number (N=600)	Percentage
With All Except Mother	224	37.3%
With Friends	122	20.3%
With Relatives/Family	172	28.6%
Not At All	82	13.6%
Total	600	100%

37.3% Girls Maintained Their Privacy With All Except Their Mothers.

Table No 12- Disposal Of Absorbent

Place Of Disposal	No Of Cases (N=600)	Percentages
In Dustbin	154	25.6%
In Latrine	36	6%
In Field Or Open Space	118	19.7%
In Nearby Drainage Channel	148	24.7%
Burning/Others	144	24%
Total	600	100%

25.6% Girls Disposed Their Absorbent In The Dustbins, While 24% Used Burning Method.

Table No 13-Reason For Not Going To School

Reason For Not Going To School	No Of Cases N=224	Percentage
Told By Mother	14	6.25%
Physical Discomfort And Fear Of Leakage	62	27.6%
No Water/Privacy In School	74	33.03%
No Disposal Facility	74	33.03%
Total	224	100

37.3% Girls Dint Prefer To Go To The School ,Among Which No Water And Privacy Was The Main Reason 33.03% Followed By Discomfort And Fear Of Leakage Was The Reason Given By 27.6%

Table No 14- Hindrance For Use Of Sanitary Napkin

Hindrance	No Of Cases N=444	Percentage
Cost	134	30.18%
Disposal Problem	242	54.5%
Do Not Want To Tell	68	15.31%
Total	444	100%

54.5% Girls Gaved The Reason Of No Proper Facility Of Disposal As The Hindrance Factor For Not Using Sanitary Napkins.

DISCUSSION

In Our Study Of 600 Adolescent Girls 32.6% Of Girls Got Information About Menstruation From Their Mother And 28% Got Information From Friends. 31% Girls Thought That It Was A Natural Curse From God That Everyone Gets While 44% Had No Idea About Why It Happens; While Only 25% Knew It Is A Natural Process. 33.3% Girls Believed Or Were Told That They Should Not Go To Any Religious Place While 12.3% Girls Did Not Prefer Going To School.62.7% Girls Faced Different Types Of Problems During Menstruation Out Of Which 51.06% Girls Had Complain Of Abdominal Pain Followed By Pain In Whole Body 30.3%.55.6% Used Sanitary Latrines At Home While Still 44.3% DiD Not Use. Since Our Being A Rural Area Water Problem Is Badly Faced 51% Girls Used Stored Water At Their Homes. The Most Surprising Problem Seen Was Usage Of Cloth During Menstruation As An Absorbent 37% Girls Used Old Clothes And Only 26% Girls Used Sanitary Napkins And 59.45% Girls Used The Same Cloth At Least 3 Times. Out Of 37% Girls Who Used The Old Cloth Would Prefer Drying The Cloth In Dark, Hidden Areas I.E55.85%. 71% Girls Washed Their External Genital Organs With Soap And

Water While Others Only Washed With Water.37.3% Girls Maintained Privacy With All Others But Only Shared With Their Mothers .25.6% Girls Would Wrap It In The Paper And Dispose It In Dustbin With Daily Waste Of The House,24.7% Girls Disposed The Waste In Nearby Draining Channel, 24% Girls Preferred Burning It Or Were Told By Their Mothers To Do It.224 Girls Did Not Prefer Going To School 33.03% Girls Gaved The Reason Of No Water Facility And No Proper Area Of Disposal Of The Absorbent 27.6% Girls Faced Discomfort And Had Fear Of Leakage. Out Of 600,444 Girls Who Did Not Use Sanitary Napkins 54.4% Girls Said That Disposal Was The Problem And 30.18% Girls Said The Cost Was The Main Hindrance For Not Using Sanitary Napkins.

A Cross Sectional Study Was Carried Out In Educational Year 1999-2000. Swami Ramanandteerth Rural Medical College Ambajogi.They Concluded That InUrbanarea Girls Mother Was The Main Source Of Information About Menstruation (27.5%), While It Was Teacher In The Rural Counterparts (27.01%). Other Sources Of Information Were Friends, Relative And Books. The Number Of Girls Not Practicing Any Taboo Was Significantly More Among Rural Girls (21.6%) As Compared To Urban Girls (4.3%). (Z=3.6, P<0.01). No Entry In Kitchen And Prohibition On Touching Others Were Practiced Significantly More In Urban Than In Rural Girls. Restriction Of Activity Was Significantly More In Rural Girls Than In Urban Girls (Z=2.2, P<0.05) There Was No Significant Difference Between Urban And Rural Girls As Far As Types Of Restrictions WereConcerned. Majority Of Urban As Well As Rural Girls In Present Study Preferred Cloth Pieces To The Sanitary Pads To Deal With The Menstrual Flow.3

A Cross Sectional Study Was Done In Four Selected High Schools In Rural Areas In Three Districts Of Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural And Kolar Around Bangalore City. The Data Was Collected During The Period Of January To March 2011 Which Concluded That A Large Of Majority Of 99.6% Of The Students Had Heard Of Menstruation And 57.9% Had Acquired This Knowledge Before Attaining Menarche. The Most Common Source Of Information Was The Mother. Even Though The Term "Menstruation" Was Heard By Most Of The Study Population, The Actual Knowledge Regarding The Process Of Menstruation Was Unsatisfactory. Personal Hygiene Practices Were Also Found To Be Unsatisfactory. Avoidance Of Certain Foods And Practices During The Time Of Menstruation Was Some Of The Cultural Factors In Play. Reproductive Tract Infections, Which Has Become A Silent Epidemic That Devastates Women's Life Is Closely Interrelated With Poor Menstrual Hygiene. Therefore, Proper Menstrual Hygiene And Correct Perceptions And Beliefs Can Protect The Women From This Suffering.4

A Cross Sectional Study Was Done On 332 Girls Of Wardha District Which Concluded That The Mean Age Of The Adolescent Girls Found Was 14.25 Years. Majority Of Girls Received Information Regarding Menstruation From Their Mothers (40.67%) Followed By Television Movies (23.67%) And Friends (19.00%). Only 10.33% Girls Received Information From Their Teacher. 43.67% Of Girls Were Scared At The Time Of Their First Menstrual Cycle. Another 14.33% Girls Were Irritated & Disgusted. Regarding Restrictions, 87% Of The Girls Responded That They Do Not Attend Religious Functions During Menstruation, And 12.67% Girls Do Not Attend The Schools. Surprisingly 17% Girls Reported That They Do Not Have Any Restrictions & 28.67% Do Not Hesitate To Disclose About Menstruation In Spite Of All Cultural Milieu &Rural Area. Majority Of The Girls Were Using Cloth (46.67%) And Only 15.67% Were Using Sanitary Napkins. Amongst Those Who Used Cloth, 65.70% Were Found To Be Suffering From Genital Infections As Compared To 12.30% In Those Who Used Sanitary Napkins. Cleaning Of External Genitalia Was Not Satisfactory (Frequency Of Cleaning Of External Genitalia Is Nil Or < 2 Times /Day) In 34.33% (103) Of The Girls. Only 59.33% (178) Girls Used Both Soap And Water For Cleaning The Genitalia. The Percentage Of Girls Reusing The Cloth Was 40.33%

(121). Only 56.57% Girls Satisfactory Disposed The Used Cloth Pieces Or Sanitary Napkins. Pain In Abdomen (67%) Was Found To Be The Most Frequent Complaint During Menstruation Followed By Headache / Irritation (25.67%), Loss Of Appetite (12.67%) & Leg Cramps (10.33%). 17.67% Of The Adolescent Girls Reported Excess Bleeding; 70.63% Had 3-6 Days Duration Of Menstrual Cycle And 10.33% Had More Than Six Days Duration Of Menstrual Cycle.⁵

Across Sectional Study Was Conducted In January- March, 2011 On 387 School Going Girls. The Present Study Was Undertaken Among Adolescent School Going Girls In The Field Practice Area Of The Rural Health Unit And Training Centre, Saoner, In The Nagpur District. Which Concluded That Only 36.95% Of The Girls Were Aware Of Menstruation Before Menarche. The Major Source Of Information About Menstruation For Them Was Found To Be Their Mothers. More Than Three Fourth Of The Girls In The Study Were Not Aware Of The Cause And The Source Of The Bleeding. A Majority Of Them Had Knowledge About The Use Of Sanitary Pads. The Mean Age Of Menarche In The Study Subjects Was 12.85 ± 0.867 Years; Sanitary Pads Were Used By 49.35% Of The Selected Girls. The Practice Of The Use Of Old Clothes Was Reported In 45.74% Of The Subjects. Satisfactory Cleaning Of The External Genitalia Was Practised By 33.85% Of The Girls. Three Fourth Of The Study Girls Practised Various Restrictions During Menstruation. Some Menstrual Hygiene Indices Have Shown A Significant Difference In The Rural And Urban Girls.⁶

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