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A study on the awareness on menstrual hygiene among females of Dibrugarh District

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Abstract---Menstruation cycle is the sign of womanhood. It is a physiological process indicating the beginning of reproductive life. But, sometimes it is considered as an unclean phenomenon in the Indian society. Due to insufficient knowledge and social taboos, there are many myths prevailed in our Indian society. This paper aims to study the different myths about menstrual taboos in our society and the awareness about menstrual hygiene among females of teenage groups. The study showed that there are still many myths about menstruation prevalent in our society and the level of awareness is also low among the teenagers as well their parents.

Keywords---menstrual cycle, myths, awareness, teenagers.

Introduction

Menstruation is a physiological process that stipulates the onset of reproductive life. However, in Indian society, it is treated as something impure due to cultural taboos, insufficient and incorrect information among the adolescents' girls. The first menstruation is often traumatic for most of the girls as they are unknown or have no prior knowledge about it. Therefore, it is very necessary to provide them adequate knowledge on it. Several research studies had been done and found that mothers, television, friends and relatives were the main sources of knowledge about menstrual hygiene. Most of the girls also have inaccurate information.

Operational Definition

Menstrual hygiene management refers to management of hygiene associated with menstrual process. WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme has used the following definition of Menstrual Hygiene Management- "Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood."

Menstrual hygiene materials are the products used to catch menstrual flow such as pads, clothes or cups.

Menstrual facilities are those facilities most associated with a safe and dignified menstruation such as toilets and water infrastructure

Objectives of the study

1. To study the knowledge and practices of menstrual hygiene among adolescents girls.
2. To assess the restrictions practiced by adolescent girls during menstruation.

Methodology

This study is based on descriptive research study. A self-structured questionnaire was designed to collect data.

Sources of data

The source of data collection of our present study is primary data collected from 40 adolescents girls from a rural village.

Analysis and interpretation data

Table 1. Age at which menarche occurred

Pattern	No. (%)
Age at which menarche attained	
<12	8 (40%)
12-14	22 (55%)
>14	10 (25%)
Duration of blood flow in days	6 (15%)
<2	21 (52.5%)
2-5	13 (32.5%)
>5	

From this table, it is cleared that most of the girls attained their menarche between 12-14 years. And 52.5% of girls have blood flow between 2-5 days. 32.5% girls have blood flow more than 5% which is an issue of concern.

Table 2. Sources of menstruation

Attributes	No (%)
Knew about menstruation before menarche	18 (45%)
Yes	22 (55%)
No	
Source of knowledge of menstrual cycle before menarche	5
Mother	(27.77%)
Teacher	2
	(11.11%)
Relatives	3 (7.5%)
Friends	5
Social media	(12.5%)
	3 (7.5%)
Knowledge of cause of menstruation	
God given	12 (30%)
Physiological	8 (20%)
Do not know	20 (50%)

It is evident from this table that majority of the girls that is 55% of girls had no knowledge about menstruation before menarche. From these 55%, the main source of menstruation was mother that is 27.77%. 12.5% the girls got knowledge from their friends and 11.1% from teachers and 7.5% from social media. It is also revealed from the table that 50% of the girls did not know about the causes of menstruation and 30% of the girls thought it to be god given and only 8% of them knew that it is a physiological process.

Table 3. Hygiene practises of the respondents during menstruation

Hygiene practices during menstruation	No. (%)
Daily bath	
Yes	32(80%)
No	8(20%)
Cleaning of external genital area	
Regular	32 (80%)
Irregular	8 (20%)
Facility for separate bathroom	
Yes	15 (37.5%)
No	25(62.5%)

From this table we can interpret that 80% girls took bath daily and 20% do not take bath daily. 80% clean their external vagina regularly and 20% of girls do not clean their external vagina regularly. Additionally, 62.5% of the girls do not have facility of separate bathroom and only 37.5% have facility for separate bathroom.

Table 4. Distrubution of respondents according to their practices during menstruation

Attributes	No(%)
Type of absorbent	
Sanitary pad	8 (20%)
New cloth	10(25%)
Old washed clothes	22 (55%)
Problems faced while using cloth during washing and drying	
Yes	(20 66.66%)
No	10 (22.22%)
Type of problem faced while using cloth during washing and drying	12 (60%)
Lack of privacy	8 (40%)
Drying	
Reasons for not using sanitary pads	
Difficulty in discard	5 (16.66%)
Costly	10 (33.33%)
Do not know about it	5 (16.66%)
Don't feel comfortable with it	10(33.33%)
Different restrictions imposed among girls during menstruation	40 (100%)
Prohibition in entering religious places	35 (87.5%)
Prohibition in entering kitchen	15 (37.5%)
Attending school	

From the above table, we can observe that only 20% of the girls use sanitary pads during menstruation. 55 % use old washed clothes and 25% use new clothes during menstruation. From these 80% girls who use clothes, out of them 66.66% of them face problems during washing and drying the clothes. From these problems, the major problem is difficulty in discard and don't feel comfortable with it (33.33%). 5% have problem of discard and other 5% have no knowledge about it. It is also observed from the table that 100% of the girls were prohibited from entering religious temples during their periods . 87.5% were prohibited from entering the kitchen and 37.5% were restricted from entering the school.

General Findings and Discussion

1. Most of the girls lack prior knowledge about menarche before menstruation and whoever knows, mothers being the main source of knowledge. Menstruation is a natural process which is the sign of womanhood; therefore, it is very necessary to provide education about it through school curriculum, different platform of social media.
2. Most of the girls use clothes instead of sanitary napkins. Used of unhealthy clothes may cause infections in the vaginal part. Therefore, proper use and

disposal of sanitary napkins must be taught. The cost of napkins should be minimised as lower as possible so that every needy has access to it.

3. Menstrual health and hygiene should be included in the educational curriculum from the secondary levels.
4. Proper water and bathroom facilities should be available both at home and school.
5. Certain restrictions imposed during menstruation should be banned as this affects the psychological aspects of the girl-child

Conclusion

In a conclusion of the above discussion, we can conclude that still status of knowledge about menstruation is not satisfactory. First of all, it should be treated as a natural process. And a girl during menstruation, should be treated as a normal person. Care should be taken for her emotional as well as physiological safety and well-being. In a patriarchal family, the status of women is still lower in many societies; and women during menstruation are more humiliated in many societies which adversely impact their emotional well-being. Therefore, more and more education and awareness is necessary in this regard.

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