

Original Research Article

Need For Counseling Services to Get Rid of Negativity Linked with Menstruation - A Study among Late Adolescent Rural Girls in Central India

Raut Prerana¹, Wagh VV², Choudhari SG³, Mudey AB⁴

¹Post Graduate Student, ²Professor, ³Assistant professor, ⁴Professor & Head,
Dept. of Community Medicine, J N Medical College DMIMS (DU), Sawangi (M), Wardha, Maharashtra, India.

Corresponding Author: Raut Prerana

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ABSTRACT

Background: The study of menstrual practices of adolescent girls unveils health issues that affect their adjustment to reproductive life and provides the basis for formulating health education strategies relevant for this crucial period in reproductive life. The present study was undertaken to assess the socio demographic profile, awareness, and perception/feeling about menstrual health among late adolescent girls.

Method: A community based cross-sectional study, was carried out in different schools & local colleges in Seloo village, Wardha(MS), India during July-December 2014. A total of 350 adolescent girls of late adolescent age group (15 to 19 years) were the study participants. A pretested, predesigned questionnaire used as data collection tool.

Result: Out of 350 adolescent girls, majority of the girls 211(60.3%) belonged to joint family and class IV socioeconomic status 241(68.9%). The mean age of menarche was 13.59±0.85 years. 183(52.28%) and 301(86%) of girls had correct knowledge about cause of menstruation and site of menstrual bleeding respectively. Among 350 girls, 274(78.3%) girls had negative reactions towards menstruation like feeling upset (34.57%), scared (23.43%), guilty (7.71%), and shameful (18%). The reasons contributing to negativity were mainly false cultural beliefs/myths, conduct of the surrounding individuals, society with the girls during the menstrual period, boredom with regard to restriction of physical activities, period of isolation, pain & discomfort associated with menstruation.

Conclusion: Though the majority of the rural adolescent girls had correct knowledge about the menstruation still a significant proportion of girls had negativity about the process of menstruation & social factors related to it.

Keywords: Adolescent, Awareness, Menstruation, Negativity.

INTRODUCTION

‘Adolescence’ in girls has been recognized as a special and delicate period with transition from girlhood to

womanhood. This transitional period is marked with the onset of ‘Menarche’ which is most turbulent and stressful period in a girl’s life. ⁽¹⁾ The first menstruation is often

horrifying and traumatic to an adolescent girl because it usually occurs without her knowing about it.

In most instances, a sense of shame, fear, anxiety and depression is born with puberty. ⁽²⁾ The factors which contribute to their feeling of humility and inferiority are the girl's discovery of her sexuality and the myths, mysteries and superstitions practiced during menstruation. Menstruation is generally considered as unclean leading to isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions imposed on them in the family. Adolescent girls develop negative attitude towards this natural physiological phenomenon.

The mere mention of the topic has been a taboo in the past and even to this date the cultural and social influences appear to be a major hurdle for advancement of the knowledge on this subject. Adolescent girls are reluctant to discuss this topic with their parents. Majority of them lack scientific knowledge about menstruation and often hesitate to seek help regarding menstrual problems. Unhygienic menstrual practices may affect their health such as increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infections, pelvic inflammatory diseases and other complications. ⁽³⁾

Learning about hygiene during menstruation is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent girls. It is known that attitudes to menstruation and menstrual practices developed at menarche may persist throughout life. ⁽⁴⁾ The study of menstrual practices of adolescent girls unveils health issues that affect their adjustment to reproductive life and provides the basis for formulating health education strategies relevant for this crucial period in reproductive life. ⁽⁵⁾

In this context, the present study is conducted among rural adolescent girls considering some of the basic issues of menstruation.

Objective: To assess the socio demographic profile, awareness, and perception/feelings about menstrual health among late adolescent girls (15- 19 years).

MATERIALS & METHODS

A community based cross sectional study was carried out amongst the adolescent girls in different schools & local colleges of Seloo village, which is catchment area of Rural Health and Training Centre, run by Department of Community Medicine, a J N Medical College, Sawangi, Wardha, a constituent college under DMIMS Deemed University. After calculating sample size of 342 individuals, with lowest prevalence of dysmenorrhea as 53% ⁽⁶⁻⁸⁾ and allowable error 10%, the study population were selected randomly till the required estimated sample size of 342 were achieved & included 350 participants approximately. The study duration was from July to December 2014. Adolescent girls of age ranging from 15 to 19 years, and willing to participate in study were included as study subjects. Those girls unwilling and not satisfying the inclusion criteria were excluded from the study. A pretested, predesigned questionnaire used as a data collection tool. Questions were asked in local language by the investigators. Data was collected and entered in MS excel sheet and analyzed in terms of percentage, frequency. A prior permission of the 'Institutional ethical committee' was obtained for this study.

RESULTS

A total of 350 girls of late adolescent age group (15 to 19 years), were recruited for the study of which majority of 129 (36.86%) girls belonged to age group of 17-18 years with the mean age of 16.54 ± 0.99 years. Mothers of the majority of adolescent girls i.e. 327(93.4%) were literate. Maximum number of the respondents belonged to joint family 211(60.3%) and

were of class IV socioeconomic status 241(68.9%), as per modified B. G. Prasad's classification.

Among 350 participants, 201(57.42%) girls were correctly knowing that menstruation is a physiological process. 183(52.28%) and 301(86%) girls had exact knowledge about cause of menstruation and site of menstrual bleeding respectively. Most of adolescent girl attended the menarche at the age of 12-14 years with mean age as 13.59 ± 0.85 years. Maximum i.e. 96% of adolescent girls had menstrual bleeding for 2-7 days. The mean duration of menstrual bleeding was 4.45 ± 1.26 days. 92.29% of those girls had duration of menstrual cycle 21-35 days with the mean inter- menstrual interval as 31.40 ± 7.53 days.

Table No. 1: Distribution of respondents according to their age, education of mother, type of family & socioeconomic status.

Variables	Adolescent girls (n=350)	Percentage
Age of respondent (in years)		
15-16	67	19.14%
16-17	90	25.71%
17-18	129	36.86%
18-19	64	18.28%
Educational status of respondent		
10 th	85	24.28%
11 th	95	27.14%
12 th	112	32.00%
Undergraduate	58	16.57%
Mother's Educational Status		
Illiterate	23	6.60%
Primary school	49	14.00%
Middle school	56	16.00%
Secondary	128	36.60%
Higher secondary	85	24.30%
Graduate	6	1.71%
Post Graduate	3	0.90%
Type of family		
Joint	211	60.29%
Nuclear	139	39.71%
Socio economic class		
I	7	2.00%
II	12	3.43%
III	44	12.57%
IV	241	68.86%
V	46	13.14%

Table 2: Distribution of the respondent according to their knowledge about menstrual cycle & source of information.

Knowledge	Adolescent girls (n= 350)	Percentage
What is menstruation		
Physiological process	201	57.42%
Pathological process	51	14.57%
Don't know	98	28.00%
Causes of menstruation		
Ageing	54	15.43%
Due to Hormone	183	52.28%
Don't know	113	32.28%
Site of menstrual bleeding		
Uterus	301	86.00%
Stomach	06	1.71%
Don't know	43	12.29%
Source of information about menstruation* (Multiple response)		
Mother	197	56.28%
Friend/ Elder sister	58	16.57%
Teacher	34	09.71%
Television/ Media	59	16.85%
Health staff	33	09.42%
None	06	01.71%
Reaction towards menarche		
Normal	76	21.71%
Upset	121	34.57%
Scared	82	23.43%
Guilt	27	07.71%
Shameful	63	18.00%
*Multiple response with regard to negative perception/feelings		
Reasons for negative perception (n=274)*Multiple responses		
Feeling discomfort/ Pain/weakness	67	24.45%
Societal beliefs/myths	60	21.89%
Restrictions of going to certain places- School, Temple, neighborhood, Family functions	39	14.23%
Conduct of surrounding people	48	17.51%
Fear of staining on the clothes	84	30.65%

Among 350 girls, 274(78.28%) girls had negative reactions towards menstruation like feeling upset 121(34.57%), scared 82(23.43%), guilty 27(7.71%) and shameful 63(18%). The reasons for their negative feeling during or with regard to menstruation were found to be like, 67(24.45%) girls feel discomfort, pain, weakness during menstrual bleeding, 60(21.89%) had negative feeling due to different social myths and beliefs linked with menstruation. 39(14.23%) adolescent girls had depressing thought for menstruation due to different restrictions like restriction for going to school, temple, kitchen, family functions during the menstrual period. While 48(17.51%) & 84(30.65%) girls had negative feeling or thoughts due to strange conduct of surrounding people especially elderly women & fear of staining on cloths during the menstruation respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to the absorbent material used during menstruation & reasons for not using sanitary napkin during menstruation.

Absorbent material	Adolescent girls (n= 350)	Percentage
None	01	0.28%
Cloth	53	15.14%
Sanitary napkin	296	84.57%
Reasons for not using sanitary napkins (n=54)		
Expensive	21	38.89%
Felt shy	23	42.60%
Other	10	18.51%

Out of 350 girls, 54(15.42%) girls were not using sanitary napkin during menstruation because of the reasons like feeling shy about its use 23(42.6%), expensive cost of napkins 21(38.89%) and 10(18.51%) girls didn't practice use of sanitary napkins due to other reasons like irritation, itching, scanty blood flow etc. 220(74%) girls practicing the use of napkins were following proper disposal method I.e. they wrap the used disposable sanitary pads in a paper bag and dispose it by burning.

DISCUSSION

In the present study the mean age of study subjects was 16.54±0.99 years & majority of adolescent girls were Hindus (91.7%). This finding are in concordance with the study carried out among adolescent girls in the rural colleges of Udupi, Karnataka by Rao RSP *et al*, in (2008).⁽⁹⁾

The present study showed that a fair proportion of these rural adolescent girls were having correct knowledge about menstruation. It was observed that 201(57.42%) of girls were knowing that menstruation is a physiological process. 52.28% and 86% of adolescent girls had correct knowledge about cause of menstruation and about the site of menstruation bleeding respectively, and these findings were similar to studies carried out by Echendu DA *et al* in, (2008),⁽¹⁰⁾ Adhikari P *et al* in, (2007),⁽¹¹⁾ Oche MO *et al* in, (2012).⁽¹²⁾

In the present study, it was observed that, a significant proportion of adolescent girls (78.3%) had negative reactions towards menstruation like a sense of being upset (34.57%), scared (23.43%), guilty (7.71%) and experiencing menstruation as a shameful event (18%). Many other studies like by Dasgupta A *et al*. in (1972),⁽¹³⁾ Deo PS *et al*, in (2005),⁽²⁾ El-Gilany A *et al* in (2005)⁽¹⁴⁾ highlighted such type of negative reactions, feelings or thoughts in the minds of adolescent girls about menstruation. In the present study, amongst the reasons contributing to this negativity were mainly social factors, practices, myths, beliefs associated with menstruation. For overcoming this issue the health education or awareness campaigns targeted towards adolescent girls need to be supplemented with the positive change at entire society level with regard to the topic of menstruation and false beliefs associated with it.

In present study, maximum i.e. 96% of adolescent girls had menstrual bleeding for 2-7 days with the mean duration as

4.45±1.26 days while 92.29% of girls had the duration of menstrual cycle as 21-35 days with mean inter-menstrual interval 31.40±7.53 days. The similar finding were quoted by Rao RA in (1963) ⁽¹⁵⁾ & Prasad BG *et al* (1972). ⁽¹⁶⁾ Present study showed that majority (84.57%) of respondents was using sanitary pads during menstruation followed by (15.1%) using clothes. Only one girl reported about not using any kind of absorbent material during menstrual bleeding because her menstrual bleed is very scanty. Comparable findings were found by Esimai OA *et al*, in Northwestern Nigeria, in (2010) ⁽⁷⁾

CONCLUSION

Though the majority of the rural adolescent girls had correct knowledge about the menstruation still the minds of significant proportion of these girls had negativity about the process of menstruation & factors related to it.

Recommendation:

This points out the need for counseling, behavior change communication services to this target group as well as to the society members in order to get rid of various false beliefs, myths associated with menstruation since a long time.

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