

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Teenage Girls regarding Menstruation

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Abstract

Introduction: Knowledge about menstrual cycle and hygiene practices is very important for the teen-agers. It is an important issue among teenage girls and they need proper guidance to carry out proper hygiene during menstrual period. Lack of knowledge and practices regarding the hygiene among the teenage girls increase the critical issues. Thus, aim of the research was to analyze the knowledge attitude and practice of teen-age about menstruation.

Method: The descriptive cross-sectional design was used in the current study. This study population included 100 teenage girls studying in high school in Sargodha. Teenage girls' knowledge, attitude and practice were evaluated using a self-administered questionnaire. Non-probability convenient sampling technique was used, and SPSS 21 was used to analyze data.

Results: All the participants (100%) were studying in high school. However, majority of (80%) school age girls were not aware about menstruation and safe hygienic measures during menstrual periods. Out of total sample only 20% were aware about menstruation.

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Conclusion: *The current study was conducted on school age girls in Sargodha to assess their knowledge, attitude and practice during menstruation. Based on the finding of the study it is concluded that majority of school age girls were unaware about menstruation and they were not practicing proper hygienic measures during menstruation.*

Key words: menstruation, teenage girls, practice, attitude, knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a secondary sex character and major stage of puberty in girls. It is a natural and healthy event. It is important for the girls to fully understand the process of menstruation so that they can properly handle. Adolescent girls do not have knowledge about reproductive health and organs because of socio cultural barrier (Thakre et al., 2011). According to 1 study about 52% of the female population is of reproductive age and most of them are menstruating every month.

Menstrual cycle is the monthly series of changes a woman's body goes through in preparation for the possibility of pregnancy. It is under the control of hormones and normal physiology. Menstruation is a process in a woman of discharging blood and other material from lining of uterus at intervals of about one month. The average age of menarche is 13-year age of menarche varies by geography and race. Teenage is an important stage of development and it lies between 12 to 19 years of age. This stage includes main physical changes both in girls and boys. These changes increase in growth, development of secondary sex characters, changes in different organs and body configuration. The most important change of this period sexual and reproductive maturity. Menarche is the most important change in the life of a teenage girl.

Menarche is the first occurrence of menstruation and it is a land mark of puberty for a girl. Menarche symbols the start

of a lot of bodily, physical and mental variations in the survives of the teenage girls. Menarche is perceived as girl's sexual maturity and her readiness for marriage.

Menstrual disturbances are the commonest presenting complaint in the adolescent age group and unhygienic practices during menstruation can lead to untoward consequences like pelvic inflammatory diseases and even infertility. Special health care needs and requirements of women during monthly cycle of menstruation are collectively given the term "Menstrual hygiene".

Limited studies, led in developing countries, have exposed that girls frequently have same norms and beliefs. Most of the teenage girls gain information about menstruation from their mother or teacher. Parents don't discuss the related issue because of communal bans and negative attitude and this is the reason of lack of information among teenagers (Santina, Wehbe, Ziade, & Nehme, 2013). Occurrences of such awkward practices may be detected during menstrual cycle and eve some girls stop eating some foods and avoiding exercise as they assume that this will impede menstrual flow (Santina et al., 2013).

A study conducted in United States shows that menstruation produces a sudden change in life of a girl (Mensh, 1998). They restrict themselves from certain activities like cooking, eating some specific food and religious activities. They avoid socialization and social activities. Menstruation is considered offensive and little information is provided to teenagers and it results in malpractice and different types of illness in girls (Mensh, 1998). Similarly, study conducted in India shows that majority of girls were unaware about the composition of menstruation and experience loneliness during periods (Ahuja and Tiwari, 1995).

In addition, poor menstrual hygiene leading to serious problems like urinary tract infection and cervical cancers. Awareness about menstruation and menstrual practice is

necessary to prevent from life threatening illness. Good menstrual practice prevents teenage girls from gynecological problems. Hygienic measure i.e use of clean pads and suitable care of groin area are very important practice. Deprived menstrual cleanliness can cause UTIs and affect her reproductive health.

Girls and women have less approach to health care settings in our culture and society. So, the girls have limited information and are confused about menstruation and it leads to unsafe hygienic measures during menstruation. Against this background, the current research was accepted to inspect the Knowledge of teenage girls regarding menstruation.

Globally May 28th, is celebrated as World menstrual hygiene day for creating awareness. If the adolescent girl is having knowledge, she will be able to practice hygienic practices during menstruation. Conceptual clarity about menstruation before the menarche is very necessary because their knowledge will help in developing positive attitude towards menstruation and could also lead to adoption of healthy practices (Bhudhagaonkar & Shinde, 2014).

However, limited attention is paid to this issue of teenage girls. A crucial point is that women and girls must gain awareness and positive attitude, services and the social situation to be able to manage menstruation with safety and dignity. Comprehensive characteristics of the menstrual practices among teenage girls are included in very few studies. It is therefore considered as relevant to investigate the menstruation related knowledge and practices among the teenage girls.

Problem Statement:

Improper hygiene during menstruation can lead to increased length of hospitalization, increased healthcare cost, risk of further associated complications and death (Jeong, Park, Lee, Song, & Lee, 2013). Internationally, considerable attention has

been paid to proper hygiene practices during menstrual period but in Pakistan, there are limited studies about knowledge, attitude and practice of teenage girls during menstruation. While standard guidelines on personal hygiene have been there since past two decades, yet very limited data is available about teenagers actual practice and how closely standard guidelines are followed in their practice. So, it was necessary to discover the knowledge and practice of personal hygiene during menstruation among teenagers in Sarghoda.

Significance of the study:

The lack of accurate understanding about menstruation is widespread. This is based on the restrictive practices forced by different societies on menstruating women. Due to unclear understanding of menstruation, it is misconstrued as unhealthy and impure by people in many societies (Yagnik, 2015). After extensive literature review it came to knowledge that cumulative body of knowledge on knowledge attitude and practice about menstruation is very limited. No such study ever conducted in backward area of Punjab and even in other provinces of Pakistan. So, this study aimed to generate body of knowledge which will serve as base for future health campaigns and health planning's.

Purpose of the study:

This study aimed to generate the body of knowledge related to menstruation knowledge attitude and practice. The purpose of current study was to explore that to which extent school age girls are adherent to standard guidelines of hygiene practice during menstruation.

Study objectives:

- To assess the knowledge about menstruation among school going girls
- To explore the attitude of girls about menstruation.

- To investigate the practices related to menstruation.

Research Questions:

- What is the level of knowledge about menstrual cycle in school age girls?
- What is the attitude of teenage girl about menstruation?
- What practices are being carried out by the girls related to menstruation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Menstruation is an important aspect of teenage girls and proper hygiene during menstrual cycle is needed to be healthy. Girls need to be aware of menstruation and hygienic practices regarding menstrual cycle to prevent genital infections and other related conditions during this period. Current chapter includes literature review associated with the knowledge, attitude, practice about menstruation among school age girls. Exploration method and linked to knowledge, attitude, practice about menstruation will be presented.

Awareness about menstruation and hygienic practices followed during menstrual cycle are of great importance because it has effect on girl's health as it increases the susceptibility to reproductive tract infections. Majority of the girls don't have clear concept about menstrual cycle and pubertal changes. The menstruation is generally associated with shame, fear, anxiety and depression. Knowledge about menstruation and safe practices could help in decreasing the infections and gynecological sufferings (Talwadekar et al., 2014).

Most of the girls did not know what happened when they experienced menstruation for the first time and therefore become scared. There is currently no education material on menstrual health management menstrual hygiene is considered as a ignored condition (El-Gilany, Badawi, & El-Fedawy, 2005).

The studies conducted in urban areas about knowledge attitude and practice of girls regarding menstruation, but similar type of studies is not available to conduct in rural area identify teenage girls' problem regarding menstruation and to know their practices. Few girls seek medical advice when they feel problem (Busari, 2012).

Girls are not aware about menarche before menstruation. Menstrual practices are culturally restricted due to inadequate knowledge about menstruation low self-esteem and poor confidence in girls. Due to unhygienic practices girls face various health related issues (Sharma et al., 2013). In a study conducted in India to assess knowledge and practice regarding menstruation it is reported that out of total sample (389 participants) 90% were not following the safe practices regarding menstruation and 67% were following their social beliefs in practices, 17% did not shower in first three days, 70% restrict their physical activity and 18% their social (Santina et al., 2013). Girls feel pain during menstruation, but they are not managing it properly. Due to dysmenorrhea daily activities of living affected and low progress during periods. Girls are used to fear because they don't discuss this issue with their parents as they feel shy to tell anyone that she is on periods (Poureslami & Osati-Ashtiani, 2002).

Girls are ignorant about menstrual related problem and not seek medical advice. During menstruation absenteeism from school is common. As this is a sensitive issue and girls feel shy about discussing it, so they keep on bearing pain and other menstrual related problems. Due to lack of awareness and discussion mostly girls suffer from heavy pain and bleeding during menstrual period and may suffer from vaginal or other genital infections. Majority of teenage girls have negative attitude toward menstruation as they don't like the period of menstruation. Girls feel uncomfortable during this period and try to avoid visits and attending school. They feel that this period is too bad as it affects their routine and causes mood

disturbance in them. The girls take it as a burden. Some of the girls feel afraid and some take it as curse of God. They wanted to be free from this period and think negatively about it although it is a natural phenomenon and is necessary for their healthy reproductive life.

In a study on puberty initiation among girls in United States explained that civilizations with inflexible norms have sturdiest menstrual prohibitions. Environmental factors influenced the girl's adjustment with periods and affected the early monarchical experience. The scholar also found that mothers were the principal source of information for the girls and they received partial information about menses in school especially on safety measures of menstruation. Physical and emotional preparation of girls could achieve a more positive attitude toward menses. The study further reveals that there was no significant relationship between menstrual signs and satisfactory mindset for menarche (**Capsi et al., 1993**).

The cleaning of the external genitalia was unsatisfactory in 58.09% of the urban girls and it was unsatisfactory in 79.45% of the rural girls. More girls from the urban areas maintained a satisfactory cleaning practice of the external genitalia as compared to the rural girls and this difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.001$). For the cleaning purpose, 225 (58.18%) girls used soap and water, 5 (1.29%) were utilizing water and antiseptics (Subhash, 2012). There was no statistically significant difference between the rural and urban girls with regards to the use of materials for the cleaning of the external genitalia during menstruation. A majority 135 (34.88%) stored it in the bathroom, 133(34.37%) of the girls did not store the absorbent, and 96 (24.81%) stored it with the routine cloth (Subhash, 2012).

Likewise, majority of the girls use home remedies to manage pain and excessive bleeding during menstrual period and they don't let their parents know about this problem because they feel shy and hesitate to discuss this sensitive

issue. They also don't seek medical attention and used to bear heavy bleeding and pain (Nidhi, 2013). Furthermore, majority of the girls don't bother proper hygienic practices during menstrual period. They are practicing according to their knowledge and culture. They follow their mothers or any other female member in the family while practicing. Some of the girls use sanitary pads which is a good hygienic practice, but some are using ordinary cloth that is not a healthy practice. Most of the girls avoid using washroom frequently during this period although it is quite beneficial to wash the genital area during these days. Due to their malpractice girls are suffering from genital infections and other related problems.

METHODOLOGY

Study design:

In this study, factual data related to knowledge, attitude and practice about menstruation among school students was collected. The cross-sectional and descriptive study design used in current study.

Measures:

In the current study the quantitative questionnaire regarding the knowledge, attitude and practices of school age girls about menstruation was developed to collect the data from the target population. The questionnaire consists of two sections (1) demographics and (2) consists of questions regarding knowledge, attitude and practices of school age girls about menstruation.

Target Population:

The target population of the current study was the school age girls of 10-20 years.

Sampling technique:

A non-probability convenient sampling technique was used in current study. Convenience is a sampling method in which selection is made on bias and subjects are selected on easy approach.

Setting:

Setting of the current study was the school age girls of high schools of Sargodha, Pakistan.

Sample size:

A Sample of 100 Female students of age 10 to 18 years who have attained menarche.

Data collection Tool:

A structured questionnaire was developed for measuring the KAP about menstruation. The questionnaire was developed after extensive literature study and experts view. Moreover, the questionnaire's reliability and validity were tested.

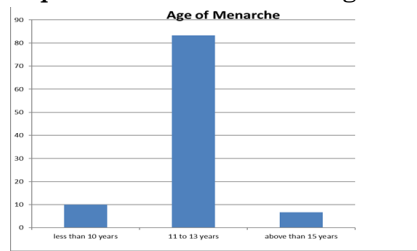
Data Analysis:

Data will be analyzed by using SPSS version 21.

RESULTS

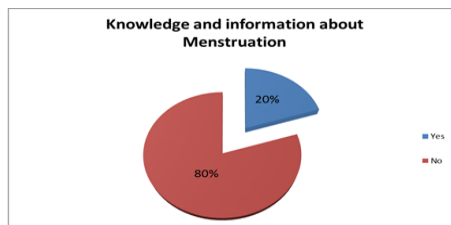
Current chapter is about results of study "Knowledge, Attitude and Practice about menstruation among school age girls". SPSS version 21 was utilized for data analysis. The demographic and other variables are shown in the form of Frequencies, Percentages, Graphs.

Graph no. 1: The 1st question was about the age of menarche.



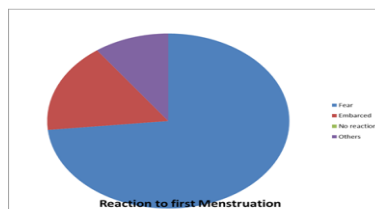
According to graph no. 1, majority of the girls (83.33%) have attained menarche between 11 to 13 years of age, 10% had reached menarche at < 10 years of age and 6.66% had attained menarche at above than 15 years of age. So mostly girls attained menarche between ages of 11 to 13 year which is critical phase of their life.

Graph no 2: 2nd question was about preliminary knowledge about menstruation before menarche



According to graph no. 2, majority of the girls (80%) were not aware about menstruation and 20% were aware about menstruation. Majority of the students do not have knowledge about the menstruation physiology before menarche. When they lack knowledge, it could lead to malpractices.

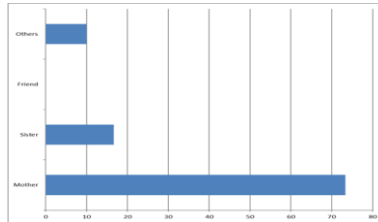
Graph no. 3: 3rd question was about the 1st reaction of participant about menarche



According to Graph no. 3, majority of Girl's (73.3%) reaction to first menstruation were afraid or fearful at first menstruation,

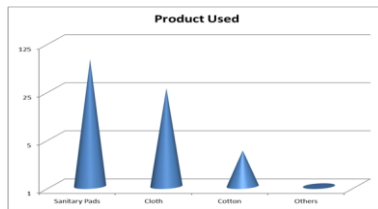
10% girls feel embraced at menarche and 16.6% girls showed no reaction to menstruation they remain normal in behave.

Graph no. 4: 4th question was about the source of knowledge for girls about menstruation



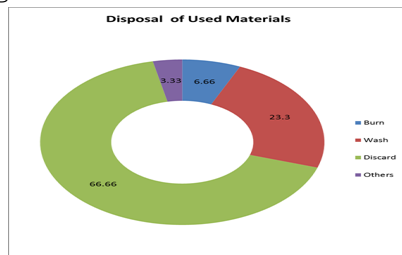
According to graph no. 4, majority of girls (73.3%) got information about menstruation from their mothers, 16.6% girl's source of information was their sisters and remaining 10% had gained information by someone else in family.

Graph no. 5: 6th was about products used for handling menstrual blood flow



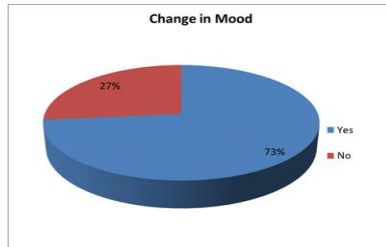
According to graph no. 6, majority of girls (70%) of our community use sanitary pads, 26.6% use cloth material for socking of menstrual blood, 1% girls use cotton and 3.33% girls use other materials for menstruation blood flow.

Graph no.6: 7th question was about handling of material which is used for absorbing menstrual blood



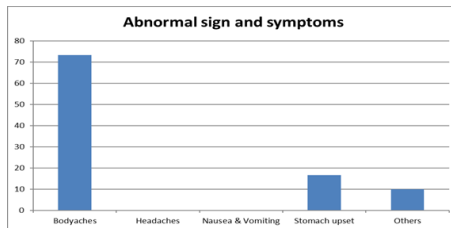
According to Graph no.7, majority of the girls (66.66%) discard cloth or pad which is used during menstruation, 23.3% girls wash the used cloth during menstruation, 6.6% burn the cloth or pad which is used during periods and 1% use other method to discard the pad or cloth used during menstruation to sock the blood.

Graph no. 8: 8th question was about Effect of menstruation on mood



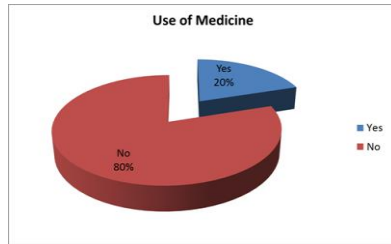
According to graph no. 8, majority of the girls (73.3%) suffer from mood swings during menstruation and remaining 26.66% commented that they have emotional stability while menstruation.

Graph no 9: 9th question was about abnormal sign and symptoms related to menstruation



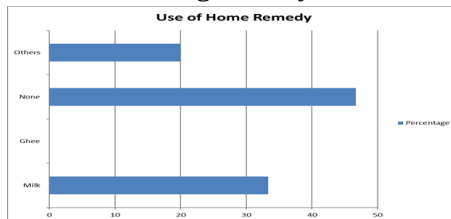
According to Graph no.9, majority of girls (73.3%) experience body aches, 16.6% girls experience stomach upset, and 10% girls experience other sign and symptoms.

Graph no 10: 10th question was about Use of medicine to treat symptoms



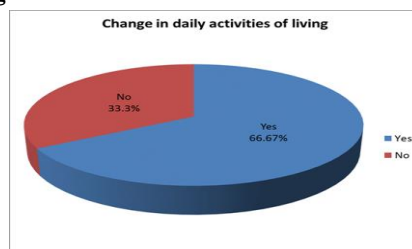
According to Graph no. 10, majority of the girls (80%) were not using any intervention to manage symptoms and used to suffer from symptoms related to menstruation. Other 20% were using medicine.

Graph no 11: 11th question was about question was asked about the use of home remedies for dealing with dysmenorrhea



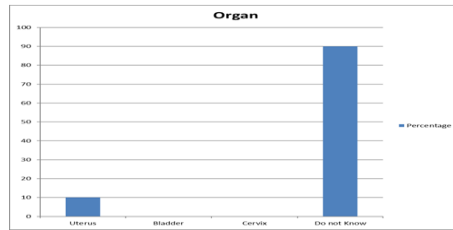
According to Graph no. 11, majority of girls (46.6%) were not using any remedy for pain relief, 33% of the girls were using hot milk for relieving pain and 20% were using other method.

Graph no 12: 12th question was about Effect of periods on daily activities of living



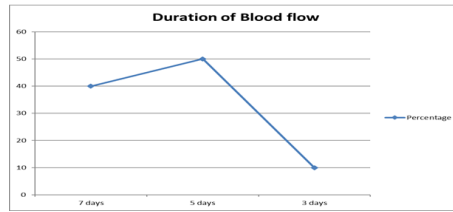
According to Graph no. 12, majority of girls (66.67%) were complaining that periods disturb their routine activities and 33.33% participants said that periods do not affect on activities of daily living.

Graph no 13: 13th question was about Knowledge about the organ from which blood flow occur.



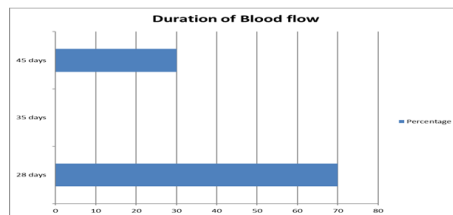
According to Graph no. 13, majority of the girls (90%) did not know that from where this blood come from and 10% responded that uterus.

Graph no 14: 14th question was about Duration of menstrual blood flow



According to graph no. 14, majority of the girls (50%) responded they have menstrual bleeding or flow for 5 days, 40% responded that their menstrual flow remains for 7 days and 10% responded that flow remains for 3 days.

Graph no 15: 15th question was about Gap between the menstrual cycles



According to Graph no. 15, majority of the girls (70%) responded that normal gap between two cycles is 28 days and 30% responded that there is 45 days gap between 2 cycles.

DISCUSSION

Menstruation is an important change among girls during their teenage. It is a natural process and includes many misconception and practices which leads to hostile health consequence. Current study highlights the important issue related to knowledge and practices during menses among teenagers. Girls are not aware about menarche before menstruation, family and teachers should provide information to make girls aware about this issue. Mostly girl's fearful to first menstruation if they were informed prior they will consider it normal. Girls feel embraced when we teach them they will consider it normal physiology. Girls even don't know menstruation is normal process.

Girls are not aware about hygienic measures during menstruation. They were not properly aware how to discard pads with safe method. Mood swings during menstruation is normal for every girl but our society not understand it appropriately. Girls feel pain during menstruation but hiding it from parents. Girls Only use home remedies to treat the symptoms. Menstruation effect on daily activities of living because our girls were not properly managing it. Girls were not aware from which organ menstruation occurs. Girls were not aware about the normal duration between two periods.

There is also a need to empower mothers and teachers to function as primary sources of information on menstruation including reproductive health as they are accessible to handle adolescent issues (kamath, 2013).

The results of current study are in line with Subhash (2012) who reported that majority of the girls had attained menarche between 13-14 years of age. Another study showed maximum girls had achieved menstruation between 13-15 years of age. In the Nidhi Raiti study, the average age at menarche was found to be 12 years, whereas the mean age for menarche was considered to be 12 and 13 years, as reported by

other researchers. However, in urban areas, the center age of menarche among the girls was earlier (12.85 ± 0.867) years, as against the earlier reported age of 12-14 years in India and these studies agree with our findings.

Moreover, current study showed that only 20% were aware about menstruation that disagreed with Subhash study who reported that 39% girls but it agreed with Carlson's study who reported that 22% adolescent girls were aware about menstruation and proper hygienic measures during menstrual period.

CONCLUSION:

Current study conducted on school age girls in Sargodha to assess their knowledge, attitude and practice during menstruation. Based on the finding of the study it is concluded that majority of school age girls were unaware about menstruation and they were not practicing proper hygienic measures during menstruation. Knowledge about safe hygienic practices is essential. Teaching and training on safe practices is needed for healthy menstruation.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

- The major study limitation is that sample size is too short that it is difficult to generalize to the whole population of Sargodha
- Sampling approach was convenience which give not equal chance to everyone to be a study participant
- The time for study was too short 3 months are not enough for careful and sound study

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The findings could not be generalized to whole population. so further studies should be done with large

probability sample and should be interventional in nature.

- An awareness campaign should be started in schools because physical health is necessary for education.
- School health services should be initiated which will focus on primary health education of girls about menstruation so that they better prepared to accept these changes in their body and can enjoy their normal physiology with ease.

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