

Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) about Menstruation, Menarche and Menstrual Hygiene among students of grades 8th, 9th and 10th of the Ch Rehmat Ali Trust Higher Secondary School, Township Lahore

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ABSTRACT

Background: Menstruation and menstrual practices are associated with taboos and socio-cultural restrictions. Good hygiene practices such as the use of sanitary pads and adequate washing of genital area are essential during menstruation.

Aims: To assess age at menarche. Knowledge, attitude and menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent girls of grade 8th, 9th, 10th in nearby high secondary school was analyzed.

Methodology: A cross sectional study was conducted among 100 adolescent girl students of age group 11-16 years, who had attained menarche. The students from grade 8 were (33%), 9(29%), 10 (38%) grade participated in the study. The students data was collected by using a structured questionnaire

Results: Mean age of menarche in our study was 13.54 years. Main source of information about menarche was from mother 50%. About 88% of the respondent's mother were literate and 12% were illiterate. About 77% of the respondents mother were housewives. 75% of the students had TV at home. 53% of the girls stated that there had been no class session related to menarche in school before the onset of puberty. About 42% of the girls had knowledge of menarche before onset of menstruation. 43% of the students did not had any knowledge of cause of menstruation and 38% did not know about the organ of origin of menstrual blood. 52% of students had knowledge about menarche before onset.

Conclusion: This study concluded that the knowledge about menstruation and menstrual hygiene in adolescent girls was inadequate leading to unhygienic practices which is a very important risk factor for reproductive tract infections.

Keywords: Menarche, menstrual hygiene, knowledge of menstruation, menstrual practices.

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is taken as a normal, physiological phenomena¹. The onset of menstruation is considered as one of the most important physiological changes occurring in adolescent girls², which usually starts at the age of 9-12 years³. Females experience this for 7 days every month from the age of maturity until menopause. It is an important issue concerning morbidity and mortality of female population as various physiological, pathological and psychological aspects are associated with their health and well-being. Practices related to personal hygiene, during menstruation are considered important for reproductive health, as poor hygiene practices increase chances of reproductive tract infections⁴.

Good menstrual hygiene practices include 1) regular change of clothing and under garments; 2) change of sanitary pad in every three to four hours; 3) daily shower, ; 4) adequate washing of genitalia after each voiding of urine and faeces; 5) continuing normal routine and daily activities and 6) maintaining a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables. Poor menstrual hygiene practices predispose to infections among adolescent girls⁵. The prevalence of reproductive tract infections are three times higher among girls with poor menstrual hygiene⁶.

Therefore, satisfactory knowledge related to menstruation, and good personal hygiene practices are considered important to decrease the risk of reproductive

tract infections⁷. The factors that affect person's hygiene are their socioeconomic status, health beliefs and motivation about importance of hygiene, and cultural behaviour⁸. In spite of having knowledge regarding good menstrual hygiene practices motivation is also required to maintain self-care. So, this study was conducted to assess the level of knowledge, attitude and practices about menstruation and menstrual hygiene among students of grade 8th, 9th and 10th of nearby Higher Sec. School Township, Lahore.

The main objective was to assess age at menarche, the myths and misconceptions, knowledge, and hygiene practices related to menstruation, among adolescent school girls of grades 8th, 9th and 10th, studying at Ch. Rehmat Ali Higher Secondary School Township, Lahore.

METHODOLOGY

The study conducted among adolescent girls, students of class 8,9,10 at Ch. Rehmat Ali Trust Higher Secondary school Township, Lahore. The school principal was requested to grant permission to conduct study after providing list of objectives, the intended benefit for participants and a sample questionnaire. The girls aged 11-16 year who had attained menarche were briefed about the study and 33 students from grade 8, 29 from grade 9 and 38 from grade 10 were selected on the basis of voluntary willingness to become participant after taking verbal and written consent. A structured questionnaire including dependent and independent variables of interest was filled by the researcher herself. It was a Cross Sectional Descriptive Study. Girls aged 11-16 years who had attained

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menarche from class 8th, 9th, 10th enrolled at Ch. Rehmat Ali Trust Higher Secondary School, Township, were included in the sampling frame. One hundred girls from grade 8th, 9th, 10th were selected. 33 students from grade 8, 29 students from grade 9 and 38 students from grade 10. Study was conducted from 1st May to 1st August 2017. Non Probability Convenient sampling technique used.

Inclusion criteria: Adolescent girls of grade 8th, 9th, 10th who were willing to participate in the study were included in the study. After brief introduction, the students completed the questionnaire without specifying their identity. The data was analysed by SPSS 13.0. Data was described in terms of frequencies and percentages for categorical variables.

RESULTS

The mean Age of students was 13.54 years. Student were of age 13 (21%), 14(25%),15(22%) years.

Table 1 - Age of respondents in years.

Age	Frequency	%
11years	11	11.0
12years	14	14.0
13years	21	21.0
14years	25	25.0
15years	22	22.0
16years	7	7.0

Students from class 8th (33%) 9th (29%) 10th (38%) grade, Mothers of most respondents were literate with the percentage of primary education (7%), middle (3%), matric (30%), FA (22%), BA/BSC (26%) and 12% of mothers were illiterate.

Table 2:- Knowledge about menarche before its onset

Knowledge about menarche	Frequency	%
No	48	48.0
Yes	52	52.0

According to the study 52% of student had knowledge about menarche before onset, out of which 47% students had class sessions related to menarche while 48% did not had any knowledge about menarche before its onset. 31% of school girls had menarche at age of 12 year, while 24% of the girls did not know their exact age at menarche. Source of information about menstruation were Mothers in 50% of girls, in 20% cases the source was media, 10% books and 16% teacher. According to the results, problems associated with menstruation in respondent were weakness (33% of the respondents), back pain (29%), headache(24%), vomiting(12%) and pain in legs (2%).

Table 3: Knowledge about the cause of menstruation

Knowledge about cause	Frequency	%
Curse of God	29	29.0
Disease	1	1.0
Hormones	27	27.0
Don't know	43	43.0

43% of the respondent of the study didn't had any knowledge about the cause of menstruation 29% considered it as a curse of God ,and 27% said its of hormonal origin . 38% of the respondent didn't had any knowledge about the organ involved with of the origin of menstruation, 30% said organ of origin of menstrual blood was uterus , 6% said it was the bladder, and 20% said it was from abdomen. According to 12% of respondents age of menarche was at 11 years, 40% said as 13 years, and

16% said 13years,while 32% didn't had any knowledge. 29% of the respondents answered that the normal duration of menstrual flow was 5 days, 26% said 7days, 20% 6days, 1% 3days while 24% did not know the normal duration. 51% of respondent girls had knowledge about menstrual hygiene , while 49% of the respondents had no knowledge regarding hygienic practices during menstruation.36% of respondents of the study used cloth with cotton during menstruation, while 64% used sanitary pads. 71% of adolescent girls changed sanitary pads twice a day, while 29% changed 3 or more pads /day .35% of adolescent girl used same material in next menstrual cycle while 65% girls didn't use the same material. According to study, 44% of respondent cleaned their cloth with water while, 35% with soap & water and 21% with detergent. 95% of adolescent girls disposed off sanitary pads in dustbins, 3% in open field and 2% in the drains.61% of adolescent girls changed panty daily, while 39% changed it twice a day.

Table 4: Bathing during menstruation

Bath taken	Frequency	%
Don't take bath	43	43.0
first day	32	32.0
second day	13	13.0
Daily	12	12.0

According to the results, 43%of the adolescent girls didn't take bath during menstruation. 32%took bath on the 1st day 13% girls on the 2nd day while 12% took bath daily. 53% of girls cleaned their genitalia only with water, 39% with soap & water and 8% used tissue papers. 68% of adolescent did not observe any sort of restriction during their cycle, 7% didn't take fatty food,19% didn't had cold water, and 6% didn't perform any sort of heavy activity during menstruation. 46% of girls said that their menstrual problem did not interference with their school attendance, while 37% of the respondents missed one day during each menstrual cycle, 11% missed 2 days and 6% missed 3 days in every cycle.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the mean age of menarche was 13.54 years which is similar to another study conducted in different populations (urban, rural and tribal) of various places of India.⁹ A culture of silence surrounds menarche, an event which takes many young girls almost by surprise but through this study it was found that 52% of the girls had knowledge about menarche before its onset. Yet this knowledge was not acquired through any health education session, 53% of the students stated that no class related to menarche had been conducted in the school. In this study 52% of the students had prior knowledge of menstruation, but in a study conducted on rural adolescent girls of Nepal, only 40.6% had knowledge regarding menstruation¹⁰. The plausible reason for unawareness among adolescent school girls was lack of educational background. Generally it is desirable that the first-hand knowledge to be imparted by the mothers, the school teachers or qualified health educators so that adequate and the right knowledge is given to the young girls¹¹ In contrast to evidence from India, Hong Kong and New Zealand where school teachers of respondents were the major source of information this study showed that menstrual habits, knowledge and

awareness about menstruation was mainly inculcated by mothers in 50% (n=50) of students. It was seen that the information provided was not adequate enough as 43% of the students did not have any knowledge about cause of menstruation and 23% stated that it was a Curse from God. The inadequacy of information can also be seen that only 30% of the students had any knowledge about the physiological phenomena related to menstruation. 51% of the adolescent girls in this study had received information about menstrual hygiene which is more than the two studies conducted in Iran, in one 22% of adolescent girls and in the other 33% did not receive any knowledge about menstrual hygiene prior to puberty^{12,13} Although 64% of the girls used disposable sanitary pads and 95% disposed them off them in the dustbin. Only 42% of the adolescent girls changed sanitary pad twice a day, 36% of the respondents used cotton cloth as absorbent material, 35% used the same material after washing in the next menstrual cycle, and 44% of the respondents cleaned the cloth with water only. Only 39% of the girls cleaned their genitalia with soap and water and 43% of the girls don't take bath during menstruation, still the practices of the menstrual hygiene did not attain standards described by UNICEF¹⁴

The use of cloth is due to poor social-economic conditions but it is essential that reused cloth to be properly washed. Limited knowledge can result in many unhygienic practices like reusing same cloth again and again without proper washing, which can lead to many health problems. 51% of the girls had knowledge about menstrual hygiene and were maintaining it as well, while in a study conducted in Nepal it was seen that adolescent girls were not properly maintaining menstrual hygiene¹⁵ Although a study in Delhi¹⁶, the women were taught to use clean cotton cloth and were aware of consequences of using dirty cloth. The current study revealed that 68% of the adolescent didn't observe any restriction during menstruation. The problems faced by 29% of the girls during menstruation was back pain, this effects the daily routine of majority of the girls leading to 37% of the girls being absent from school for one day during every menstrual cycle. This leads to 14% of the girls using medicine during menstruation. The commonly used medicine is Tab. Panadol. The educational status and occupation of mother was found to be independent predictor of knowledge about cause and duration of menstruation, however it did not have any effect on the knowledge of menstrual hygiene. Females whose mother had attended school had higher odds of having good knowledge about menstruation as compared to those students whose mother had never attended formal education.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that knowledge about menstruation and menstrual hygiene in adolescent school girls was inadequate leading to unhygienic practices which is a very important risk factor leading to reproductive tract infections. Before bringing any change in menstrual practices, girls should be educated about the facts of menstruation and its physiological implications. This can be achieved through educational television programmes, compulsory sex education in school curriculum and well educated parents especially mothers, so that the girls do not have any

hesitation while discussing certain problems and myths related to this phenomena

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the school should provide information regarding Menarche, cause of menstruation and menstrual hygiene before its onset by conducting regular health sessions by qualified health educators and school teachers. The government should work towards further developing and disseminating educational programmes targeted towards both parents and adolescents on the unmet needs of adolescents. Measurement of prevalence and impact of unhygienic practices on health in adolescent girls can be done by further studies. Proper health and sex education should be added in the school curriculum from class 4 onwards.

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