

STUDY OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENIC PRACTICES AND REPRODUCTIVE TRACT INFECTION AMONG THE ADOLESCENTS GIRLS

Praveen Gautam¹, Nirmala Kiron²

¹- Associate Professor, Department Of PSM, GRMC Gwalior. M.P.

²- PG Student, Department Of PSM, GRMC Gwalior M.P.

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Corresponding Author

Dr. Nirmala Kiron,
Post Graduate Student,
Department Of PSM, GRMC
Gwalior MP
EMAIL-dr.nirmala.kiron@gmail.
com
Mob. No- 9871365095

Abstract:

Introduction: Puberty, which is considered as the time of change for the adolescents, is a challenge for young girls because of menstruation. Though it is a natural phenomenon and girls are exposed to very little knowledge about menstruation.

Objective: This study conducted to know the level of knowledge, attitude and practices during menstruation and RTI among the adolescents girls.

Methods and Material: A Cross Sectional Study was conducted among 200 adolescent girls. Data was collected by using a pretested, semi-structured questionnaire.

Results: The study reported that majority of the girls attained menarche at the age of 13 yrs (51%), and Sanitary pads usage during menstruation was seen in (97%) and Mother was the source of information about menstruation before menarche for most of them.

Conclusion: Proper knowledge, attitude and hygienic practices in menstruation are not seen among the study participants, for whom a suitable planned health education needed. Early awareness can prevent students from suffering from the various reproductive tract infections

Key words: Adolescents, Menstruation, Sanitary pad, RTI

Introduction

The word "Adolescent" is derived from the Latin word "adolescere" which means to grow to maturity that indicates the defining features of adolescence¹ Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. WHO defines adolescence as period between 10 yrs-19yrs.² Adolescent girls are about 1/5th of total female population in world.³ Insufficient, incorrect information regarding menstruation is often a cause of unnecessary restrictions in the daily normal activities of the menstruating girls creating various psychological

issues. Besides, the lack of knowledge and awareness also lead to some poor personal hygienic practices during menstruation leading to many reproductive tract infections.⁴ Poor menstrual hygiene causes great impact in increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infections (RTI). Currently millions of women sufferers from RTI and infection is transmitted to the offspring. Women having knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene are less vulnerable to RTI. Therefore, knowledge about menstruation from adolescent period help in decreased suffering of millions of women.⁵ Various studies indicate that a huge information gap exists among rural

and urban adolescent girls regarding menstrual hygiene. India is a country of contrasts, with extreme wealth and poverty and gender-related disparities, resulting in significant variation in health and social indicators among girls and women.⁶ Of the 113 million adolescent girls, 68 million attend about 1.4 million schools, with poor MHM practices and cultural taboos considered to be impediments to their school attendance.^{7,8}

Most of the girls receive their gynecological information from their mothers, religious books, older sister, or a peer. However, such information was generally given after menarche rather than before. Hence, there is a need to provide healthy family life education to the woman particularly the adolescent girls. This study was planned to assess the knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene and RTI among Adolescent girls.

Aims and objectives

1. To assess the knowledge and practice regarding menstrual hygiene.
2. To assess awareness about RTI/STI among Adolescents.

Methodology

Inclusion criteria

- School going Adolescents.
- Healthy students.

Exclusion criteria

- Adolescent suffering from some chronic disease.
- Students who didn't want to participate in study.

Study design- Cross-sectional study

Study area- Educational institute of Gwalior city.

Study period- Nov. 2017 to January 2018

Sampling method –Purposive sampling, 200 school going adolescents.

Study tool –Data was collected using self-administered questionnaire

Written informed consent was taken from Institute authority. The questionnaire was distributed to the children in their classrooms during a prearranged time. The children were asked to read the questionnaire and answer it to the best of their ability. Before the commencement of the study, they were explained the purpose and nature of the study and their verbal consent was taken.

This pre-designed, pretested and structured questionnaire were included questions related to the awareness about menstruation, the sources of information regarding menstruation, the hygienic practices during menstruation. It also included questions regarding Reproductive tract infections. The demographic information including family details, parent's education and occupation.

The chronological age and the age at menarche were also elucidated. The menstrual hygiene questionnaire included type of absorbent which was used.

Data entry and analysis was done by using MS Excel software.

Result

Total 200 adolescent girls were included in the study. Numerous similar studies have been conducted nationally and internationally on the knowledge and awareness regarding menstrual hygiene in the past.

Table 1 show: Out of 200, maximum girls 51% attended the menarche at 13 years of age followed by 20.5% at 14 years. More participants 68% belong to nuclear family followed by joint family 61%. Only 4.5% mothers are illiterate and 95.5% mothers are literate. 28.5% mother who are working and 71.5% mother are house maker.

Table - 1
Socio-demographic details of study participants
(n=200)

| S.N. | Demographic Variable | (n=200) % age |
|------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1. | Age (in Yrs) | |
| | 12-13 | 59 (29.5) |
| | 14-15 | 96 (48) |
| | 16-17 | 45 (22.5) |
| 2. | Study participants | |
| | 9th | 38 (19) |
| | 10th | 51 (25.5) |
| | 11th | 49 (24.5) |
| | 12th | 62 (31) |
| 3. | Type of Family | |
| | Nuclear | 136 (68) |
| | Joint | 62 (61) |
| | Single | 3 (1.5) |
| 4. | Education of mother | |
| | Illiterate | 9 (4.5) |
| | Primary school | 32 (16) |
| | Secondary school | 95 (47.5) |
| | Graduate | 64 (32) |
| 5. | Age at Menarche | |
| | 11 | 9 (4.5) |
| | 12 | 37 (18.5) |
| | 13 | 102 (51) |
| | 14 | 41 (20.5) |
| | 15 | 11 (5.5) |
| | 16 | 0 (0) |
| 6. | Mother occupation | |
| | Working | 57 (28.5%) |
| | House Maker | 143 (71.5%) |
| 7. | Religion | |
| | Hindu | 196 (98%) |
| | Others | 4 (2%) |

Table:2
Menstrual hygiene practice and information

| | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 1. | Material used during menstrual periods | |
| | Sanitary napkins | 194 (97) |
| | Cloth | 6 (3) |
| | Menstrual cup/Tampon | 0 (0) |
| 2. | Frequency of changing absorbent | |
| | Twice a day | 52 (26) |
| | Thrice a day | 64 (32) |
| | Depending on bleeding | 84 (42) |
| 3. | Cleaning of genitalia | |
| | Water | 47 (23.5) |
| | Soap n Water | 151 (75.5) |
| | Intimate vaginal wash | 2 (1) |
| 4. | Frequency of bath | |
| | Once a day | 146 (73) |
| | Twice a day | 50 (50) |
| | Don't take bath | 4 (2) |

| | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 5. | Source of information regarding menarche | |
| | Mother | 132 (66) |
| | Sister | 41 (20.5) |
| | Friends | 22 (11) |
| | Teacher | 5 (2.5) |
| 6. | Cause of Menstruation | |
| | Physiological | 157 (78.5) |
| | Not known | 23 (11.5) |

Table 2: sanitary pad usage was highest among the materials used during menstruation (97%), followed by usage of cloth (3%).32% participants used to change the absorbent thrice a day, most of them are using only water and soap for cleaning external genitalia (75.5%),only 23.5% are using water,very few 1% know about intimate vaginal wash. Majority of them (73%) take bath once a day. And most of them (66%) got the information about menstruation before menarche from their mothers followed by sister (20.5%) ,Majority of them believed that the cause of menstruation was physiological (78.5%).Similar study carried out by Varma et al¹⁰ in 2011 found that majority of girls (87.3%) used old plain cloth during menstruation and only 10.6 % used commercially available sanitary napkin. In comparison to above study, our study finding definitely showing increase in the use of sanitary napkins which is a good practice and it may because of more awareness through media and marketing. The role of the mothers in imparting knowledge on menstruation was important factor that was observed in this study.

Table: 3
Association between Socio-demographic factors and Sanitary Napkins usage

| | Variable | Sanitary Napkins Usage | | P-Value |
|----|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------|
| | | Yes | No | |
| 1. | Age (yrs) | | | 0.01020 |
| | 12-13 | 55 (27.5) | 4 (2) | |
| | 14-15 | 94 (47) | 2 (1) | |
| | 16- 17 | 45 (22.5) | 0 (0) | |
| 2. | Mothers education | | | 0.0000* |
| | Literate | 185 (92.5) | 1 (0.5) | |
| | Illiterate | 9 (4.5) | 5 (2.5) | |
| 3. | Mother | | | 0.790 |
| | Working Housemaker | 55 (27.5) 139 (69.5) | 2 (1) 4 (2) | |
| 4. | Religion | | | 0.0091* |
| | Hindu | 191 (95.5) | 5 (2.5) | |
| | Others | 3 (1.5) | 1 (0.5) | |

(*p<0.05 is considered as significant)

Table 3 shows the association between various socio-demographic factors and usage of sanitary napkins. Study

participant's mother's occupation participant's religion was found to be statistically significant in relation to sanitary pad usage. We also observed that sanitary pad usage was more among 14-15 years age groups but it was not significant.

Table: 4
Awareness about Symptoms of RTI

| S.N. | Symptoms of RTI | Awareness (n) % |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Vaginal discharge | 42 (21) |
| 2. | Rashes in perineum | 98 (49) |
| 3. | Itching | 112 (56%) |
| 4. | Pain in Lower Abdomen | 53 (26.5) |
| 5. | Burning Micturation | 9 (4.5) |
| 6. | Fever | 17 (8.5) |

Table 4: Show Most of the participants(56%) aware about symptoms of RTI that was Itching followed by rashes in perineum(49%).Participants was not aware about most of the symptoms of RTI.

Conclusion

Hygiene practices and knowledge were inadequate. Menstrual hygiene practices have shown marginal improvement in the usage of clean sanitary napkins. Information on reproductive health needs to be provided to girls before attaining menarche. Health education for girls regarding menstruation and its safe practice from mothers,sister and teacher are going to improve the health. Policy makers, health professionals, women rights activists have a responsibility towards achieving this goal. Awareness regarding the need for information on healthy menstrual practices is very important by this number of RTI cases can be reduce. The present study shows that majority of the students have lack of knowledge regarding menstruation and hygiene practices and RTI. Teachers also hesitate to educate the students. School curriculum also lack topic pertaining to adolescent growth and about hygienic practices. This study reveals that though use of sanitary napkins has increased, menstrual hygiene is not very satisfactory among girls.

Recommendations

The mothers, family members and teachers should educated girls regarding menstrual health hygiene practice and RTI. Health talks in schools can be helpful to improve

menstrual hygiene practices and increase knowledge about Reproductive tract infection. Sanitary napkins can be made available at cheap rate so that majority of them will use it during menstruation.

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