



## TO ASSESS THE AWARENESS ABOUT MENSTRUATION AND PRACTICES ABOUT MENSTRUAL HYGIENE IN FEMALES OF CENTRE OF INDIAN PENINSULA NORTHEAST VIDHARBA

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### ABSTRACT:

**Context-** Awareness about menstruation and hygiene related practices are of consideration importance as it has health impact in terms of increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infection and its complications in Indian females.

**Aim-** To assess knowledge about menstruation and related hygiene practices may help in mitigating the suffering of millions of women.

**Study design-** This study is based on questionnaire method which is a cross sectional study. A pre-designed, pretested and structured questionnaire was used in the study. The data collection technique was a personal interview of the study subjects.

**Study Subjects-** Prepared questionnaire randomly distributed amongst 108 women of age between 10-50 years of North east Vidharba region belonging to different religions of India.

**Material and methods-** Primary and secondary data collection in consultation with medical experts in the form of questionnaire was prepared. It was examined for its relevance by using published literature.

Statistical analysis of the data was done using MS-Excel and online graph Pad Quick Calcs software. Values were expressed as Mean  $\pm$  SEM. Students t-test was applied to locate significant difference between different groups at 0.05 significant level.

**Result-** Majority of women of study area (83.96) think that hormones is a cause of menstruation and negligible percentages (0.94) think about the curse of god is a cause of menstruation. About (12) of women does not aware about the cause of menstruation. Among all the subjects (61.32) were having awareness of menarche. About half of the respondents were aware regarding menopause. A total of (48.11) of respondents have a good knowledge of normal duration of menstrual cycle and (55.66) know the 4-5 days is the normal duration of bleeding. Only (35.84) subjects know that uterus is the actual source of menstrual bleeding. Majority (86.79) of the respondents use sanitary pads as an absorbent during period of menstruation and (30.18) use old cloths. Most of the respondents (46.22) clean used cloth with the help of soap and water. Approximately (69.81) women restricted to do household activity, (50.60) restricted to social activity and (1.88) restricted to visit holy places.

**Conclusion-** Knowledge and awareness about menstruation, proper menstrual hygiene and correct perception can protect the women from suffering and reproductive tract infections. So also this study shows various myths and taboos associated with menstruation in our society.

**Keywords:-** Menstruation, hygiene, awareness practices..

### INTRODUCTION :

Menstrual hygiene is the personal hygiene during menstruation. It includes bathing daily for comfort, using clean, dry absorbent material and disposal of used pads/material in clean environmentally acceptable, safe methods and to

feel fresh, keep perineal area clean from anterior to posterior. (Eswi al. 2012) Menstrual hygiene is a very important risk factor for reproductive tract infections, is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent girls. Hygiene relates practices of school girls during

menstruation are of considerable importance, as it has a health impact in terms of increased vulnerability of reproductive tract infections. (Shokryet et al. 2012) Adinma (2008) reported that faulty perceptions or misconception on menstruation and menstrual cycle will lead to faulty menstrual practices. Menstrual education is a vital aspect of health education.

Social and cultural tabbos and restrictions existed for women during their menstrual period. Women in rural areas of Nepal were often separated from the house and were made to stay inside separate huts or cow sheds during the period of menstruation. They were also restricted from other activities like preparing food, socializing, travelling etc. In the very rural areas, girls were even restrained from attending school. Menstruation though being a natural process, often been dealt with secrecy in many parts of Nepal. Hence, knowledge and information about reproductive functioning and reproductive health problems amongst the adolescent was poor. (Adhikari, 2007)

Most of the adolescent girls in India have little knowledge about menstruation. Large numbers of rural and urban populations believe that menstruation contaminates the body and makes it unholy. As a consequence, the girl often sees herself as impure, unclean and dirty. According to the nutrition foundation of India, the average age of menarche is 13 years; yet 50% of girls aged 12-15 do not know about menstruation. This is true for rural as well as the urban poor areas. The lack of information can be attributed to a veil of secrecy that surrounds menarche.

Understanding the health problems related to menstruation and the health seeking behaviour of the adolescent girls will help us in planning effective programme for this vulnerable group. Though we have adolescent reproductive and sexual health program (ARSH) in the public health sector, its utilization depends on attitude,

awareness and health seeking behaviour of adolescents. (Kusuma et al. 2016)

Research done in this field indicates that a large number of women and girls possess scant knowledge regarding the phenomenon, based on the information by peers and female family members. A study of Indian women shows that young girls are generally told nothing about menstruation until the first experience. Lack of information on menstrual preparedness and management is common amongst adolescent girls, while the shyness and embarrassment with which discussions about menstruation are avoided have made the situation even worse. In several cultures, various restrictions are imposed on women and girls during their menstruation period, thus resulting in poor personal hygiene and unsafe sanitary conditions leading gynaecological problems. Approximately half of the world's population has known from their own experience the importance of good menstrual hygiene, so as to be able to function optimally during the menstruation period. Another important issue centring on menstruation is the necessity to adopt a healthy behaviour, which includes appropriate nutrition and appropriate use of medications based on a physician's prescription. (Narayan et al. 2001)

Isolation of the menstruating girls and restrictions being imposed on them in the family, have reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon. (Dhingra et. al. 2009) Menstrual practices are clouded by taboos and social cultural restrictions even today, resulting in adolescent girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices, necessary for maintaining positive reproductive health. (Rajaretnam and Hallad, 2010) In India, restrictions are laid on young girls from participating in household and other religious activities during menstruation. These restrictions extend to eating certain foods like

jaggery and papaya as well. (Drakshayani & Venkata, 1994)

Considering the need, the present study was carried out in following aims and objectives- To study the hygiene practices related to menstruation and to analyse awareness about menstruation in North east of Vidharba region.

#### **MATERIAL AND METHODS-**

The present study is a cross sectional study.

##### **1. Study Area:**

Nagpur is located at the exact centre of the Indian peninsula. The city has the Zero Mile Stone locating the geographical centre of India, which was used by the British to measure all distances within the Indian subcontinent.

##### **2. Population of the study:**

The randomly selected sample size is about 106 girls and women of age between 10-50 years. The mixed population belonging to various communities like Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Jain.

##### **3. Study Design:**

The data collection technique was a personal interview of the study subjects.

##### **4. Data Collection:**

###### **a) Primary data collection:**

The questionnaire included topics which were related to awareness about menstruation, the sources of information regarding menstruation, the hygienic practices during menstruation and the restricted activities practiced during menstruation.

The menstrual hygiene questionnaire included queries about the type of absorbent which was used, its storage place, the use of clean or unclean napkins and the frequencies of changing and cleaning them. The information about personal hygiene included washing and bathing during menses, the practice of wearing stained clothes etc. The demographic information including family details and parent's education were enquired and then documented.

###### **b) Secondary data collection:**

The secondary data is collected by using published literature, journals, books, monographs, newspapers, websites and the data acquired by interviewing the officials involved in the health department.

##### **5. Data Analysis and Interpretation of Data:**

Statistical analysis of the data was done using MS-Excel and Online Graph Pad Quick Calcs Software. Values were expressed as Mean  $\pm$  SEM. Student's t-test was applied to locate significant difference between different groups at 0.05 significance level.

#### **OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS-**

The total respondents included in the present study are about 106 girls and women of Nagpur city. Among the total study population most of the respondents are below the age of 30 years (about 95%) and only about 8 % respondents are above the age of 30 years and it is in the range of 10 years to 50 years.

##### **1. Awareness about the menstruation-**

The awareness about menstruation among the study population was surveyed by using questionnaire method. Before filling the questionnaire the question was asked to the respondents for whether they know the menstruation or not. If they aware about the menstruation then the respondents allowed to fill the further questions related to awareness about the menstruation.

##### **a) Awareness about cause of menstruation-**

In the present study, the question was asked to know the awareness about the cause of menstruation. It was found that among the girls and women of the study area most of the respondents (83.96%) are think that, the hormones is a cause of menstruation and negligible percentages (0.94%) of the respondents are think about the curse of god is a cause of menstruation. About 12% respondent does not aware about the cause of menstruation and about 3.77% respondent specify the other cause of menstruation.

**b) Awareness about menarche-**

The question was asked for the awareness of menarche. Among the all population, 61.32% respondents are aware about the menarche and 38.67 % respondents are not aware about the menarche. The respondents who know about the menarche were allowed to respond for the awareness about the mean age of menarche.

**c) Awareness about menopause-**

In the present study we found that about half of the respondents aware about the menopause and half of the respondents were not aware about the menopause.

**d) Awareness about normal duration of menstrual cycle-**

26-30 days is the normal duration of menstrual cycle. About 48.11 % of respondents have a good knowledge of normal duration of menstrual cycle. Less amount of respondents (2.83%) are think 15-20 days is the normal duration of menstrual cycle and negligible respondents don't know the normal duration of menstrual cycle.

**e) Awareness about the duration of bleeding during menstruation-**

In the survey we found that, most of the respondents (55.66%) are know the normal duration of bleeding. 4-5 days is the normal duration of bleeding. Remaining of respondents have not known about the correct duration of bleeding during menstruation.

**f) Awareness about the source of menstrual blood-**

During our survey we found that very less number of people know about the source of menstrual bleeding and many of them have false information about it. Only 35.84 % know that uterus is the actual source of menstrual bleeding. 36.79 % have false information the vagina or bladder is the source of menstrual bleeding and rest of them don't have any information about it.

**Awareness and Practices about Menstruation Hygiene-****a) Type of absorbent used at the time of menstruation-**

As observed in our study, majority (86.79%) of the respondents use sanitary pads as an absorbent during period of menstruation and approximately 30.18% respondent's use old cloths. Difference in the usage of sanitary pads and cloths in rural and urban setting may be due to the easy availability of menstrual hygiene products in urban setting and also the media which make girls and women in urban area more aware about these products.

**b) Cleaning of a cloth as an absorbent after use-**

If girls or women use cloth as a pad, it is most important to clean it properly. Respondents who reused absorbents were also asked to describe absorbent hygienic practices: How absorbents were washed. Most of the respondents (46.22%) are clean used cloth with the help of soap and water and remaining respondents are clean used cloth with other material like only water, Dettol and detergent.

**Activities performed during menstruation-**

In our study, approximately 50% of the girls had some kind of restriction imposed on them during periods. 9.43% of respondents restricted to do household activity and attend social activities (20.75%). Most of the respondents were restricted to visit holy places (87.73%). Various studies have reported similar observations during periods in our country. All these studies show the various myths and taboos associated with menstruation in our society.

**DISCUSSION-**

A total of 106 study subjects were included in the present study and were assessed by the prestructured questionnaire and personal interview method. Majority of the girls know about the cause of menstruation (83.96%)

believed it to be a physiological process, likely referring to previous done researches in a similar study, 86.25% believed it to be a physiological process (Dasgupta and Sarkar, 2008). In a similar study carried out in Rajasthan by Khanna et al. (2005) nearly 70% believed that menstruation was not natural process. In our study we found that only 16.04% respondent think it is due to the curse of god, rest of the respondents don't know the cause of menstruation in Nagpur city. It is surprising that majority of the girls even did not know the sources of menstrual bleeding (65%). About 87% girls use sanitary napkin as absorbent is found in our survey. Girls felt that ideally old cloth should be used during menstruation in the study by Baridalyne and Reddaiah (2004).

Only one-third of the study subjects used clothes as absorbents. The easy availability of cloth and the high cost of sanitary napkins becomes a reason for preferring cloth over sanitary pads. During our survey study we noted that the majority of respondents (63.21%) did not know the sources of menstrual bleeding. About 86.79% respondents use sanitary napkins as an absorbent is found in Nagpur city.

It was observed that 89% girls thought menstruation to be a normal process which is in accordance with similar study conducted in West Bengal by Dasgupta et al (2008). Nearly 86.25% girls believed that menstruation was a natural process. It was sad to observe that only 40% of girls know about the right age of menarche, only 68% girls know about the source of menstrual blood and only 67% know about the right interval between the two menses. In our study it was observed that most of the respondents (83.96%) are know the hormone is cause of menstruation and it is a normal process which is in accordance with similar study conducted in Nagpur city.

There are 61.32% respondents are aware about the process of menarche, only 34.90% respondents know about the right age of menarche and 46.22% respondents are aware about the menopause, it is surprised that minimum of respondents have (30.18%) know about the right age of menopause. Only 36.79% respondent have a correct information about the source of menstrual bleeding. Only 48.11% know about the normal duration of menstrual cycle.

Detailed representation of the various kinds of restrictions placed on the girls during menstruation. These are followed in the same way as have been practiced by their mothers or other elderly female in the family, due to their ignorance and false perceptions about menstruation. The girls reported being unable to understand the reason for such discrimination and restrictions, practiced and followed without any valid reason, yet not having the courage to disobey their elders. Garg et al (2001) reported that the vast majority of girls in a Delhi slum continue to experience restrictions on cooking, work activities, sexual intercourse, bathing and religious practice during menstruation. The overall perception is that menstrual fluid is dirty and polluting which occasions much secrecy around its management. Understanding the health problems related to menstruation and the health seeking behaviour of the adolescent girls, their awareness about pregnancy and reproductive health will help us in planning programmes for this vulnerable group.

In our study, we observed that there are about 9.43% respondents are restricted on household activity, 20.75% respondents are restricted on social activity and vast majority (87.73%) of respondents in Nagpur city to experience restriction on visit holy places. All these studies show the various myths and taboos associated with menstruation in our society which can only be removed by health education and

empowering the female child as these practices may have religious sentiments too. (Dixit et al, 2016 and Garg & Anand, 2015)

It was seen in present study that 86.79% used pads and 30.18% used clothes. The use of pads was higher which was probably due to the fact that availability was high in these areas and also due to influence of television which has increased awareness regarding availability and use of sanitary napkins. It was observed that the usual practice was to wash cloth with soap and water after use and dry it at some secret place like house corner. However, in some previous surveys and studies, the practice of using sanitary pads during menstruation was found to be very dismal. (Nagraj et al. 2016; Anand et al. 2015 and Nielsen et al. 2010) It was observed in a previous study and a meta-analysis also revealed the same fact that sanitary pad use was more common in urban areas (Thakare et al. 2011)

It is seen in the current study that, 2.83% girls washed their cloths only with water and 6.60% washed their cloths with others material like Dettol, increased to 46.22% girls washing their cloths with soap and water. In a study conducted by (Dipali et al. 2010) 60 (51.28%) girls washed their cloths only with water and 57(48.72%) washed their cloths with soap and water, increased to 102 (87.18%) girls washing their cloths with soap and water.

#### CONCLUSION-

- About half of the respondents have knowledge and aware about the menopause and half of the respondents were not aware about the menopause. Of which most of them are known about mean age of menopause.
- Very less number of people know about the source of menstrual bleeding and many of them have false information about it which can be achieved through educational television programs for school/nurses health personnel

and compulsory sex education in school curriculum.

#### SUGGESTIONS-

- The awareness programmes regarding the menstrual hygiene and practices should be organized regularly in school and colleges to aware the girls about menstruation and menstrual hygiene before the onset of menarche.
- Parents should feel free to talk about menstruation with the young girls so that they know more about menstruation.
- It is important to change the behaviour of the society about the menstruation and the girls are in menstrual period, so that they work normally with the other peoples during the menstrual period also.
- More NGO, organizations, societies, Government representatives, School, Colleges and Media should involve in the awareness programme specially in the Nagpur, Maharashtra, India.

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**Table 1: Age of the respondents**

Sr. No.	Age group	No. of respondents	%
1	10-20	52	49.05 %
2	21-30	45	42.45 %
3	31-40	3	2.83 %
4	41-50	6	5.66 %

**Table 2: Awareness about cause of menstruation**

Sr. No.	Cause of menstruation	No. of respondents	%
1	Hormones	89	83.96 %
2	Curse of god	1	0.94 %
3	Others	4	3.77 %
4	Don't know	13	12.26 %

**Table 3: Awareness about the menarche**

Sr. No.	Awareness	No. of respondents	%
1	Yes	65	61.32 %
2	No	41	38.67 %

**Table 4: Awareness about menopause**

Sr. No.	Awareness	No. of respondents	%
1	Yes	49	46.22 %
2	No	57	53.77 %

**Table 5: Awareness about the normal duration of menstruation**

Sr. No.	Normal duration of menstrual cycle	No. of respondents	%
1	15-20 days	3	2.83 %
2	21-25 days	43	40.56 %
3	26-30 days	51	48.11 %
4	More than 30 days	7	6.60 %
5	Don't know	2	1.88 %

**Table 6: Awareness about the duration of bleeding during menstruation**

Sr. No.	Duration of bleeding	No. of respondents	%
1	1-3 days	22	20.75 %
2	4-5 days	59	55.66 %
3	6-7 days	21	19.81 %
4	8-9 days	2	1.88 %
5	10 or more days	0	0 %

6	Don't know	2	1.88 %
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**Table 7: Awareness about the duration of bleeding during menstruation**

Sr. No.	Source of menstrual blood	No. of respondents	%
1	Uterus	38	35.84 %
2	Vagina	39	36.79 %
3	Bladder	9	8.49 %
4	Other	1	0.94 %
5	Don't know	21	19.81 %

**Table 8: Type of absorbent used at the time of menstruation**

Sr. No.	Type of absorbent used	No. of respondents	%
1	Sanitary pads	92	86.79 %
2	Old cloths	32	30.18 %
3	Napkins	18	16.98 %
4	Other	2	1.88 %

**Table 9: Cleaning of a cloth as an absorbent after use**

Sr. No.	Cleaning of a cloth as an absorbent after use	No. of respondents	%
1	Soap and water	49	46.22 %
2	Only water	3	2.83 %
3	Other (Specify)	7	6.60 %

**Table 10: Activities performed during menstruation**

Sr. No.	Activities performed during menstruation	Household activities	Social activities	Visit holy places
1	Yes	69.81%	50.60%	1.88%
2	No	9.43%	20.75%	87.73%
3	Sometimes	19.81%	21.69%	9.43%