



AWARENESS OF MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE AMONGST ADOLESCENT GIRLS OF ICDS, URBAN PROJECTIN INDORE

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ABSTRACT

Menstruation is generally considered as unclean in the Indian society. Isolation of the menstruating girls has reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon. There is a substantial lacuna in the knowledge about menstruation among adolescent girls. Keeping this view in mind, the present study was carried out to assess knowledge and awareness regarding menstrual hygiene and health among adolescent girls. A sample of 240 schools going adolescent female (11-19 years) taking the benefits of ICDS services at aganwadi centers in urban blocks were selected. Data was collected using pretested self-administered questionnaires and analyzed statistically. Physiological implication of menstruation was known to 80% girls. Awareness of hygienic practices like using sanitary pads were found in 91% of the girls. Also, only 78.0% of the school girls were aware of the hormonal cause of menstruation. The awareness of frequency of changing the absorbent was good in 84.8% girls. Awareness of suitable method of disposing soiled menstrual absorbents includes dumping with domestic wastes (43.75%); burning (56.25%) was found in girls. All girls (98%) are aware of taking care of their health by eating nutrient dense foods. Adolescent school girls in urban-1 ICDS area of Indore had fair knowledge of menstruation physiological process and menstrual hygiene practices like using low cost sanitary pad being provided to them at aganwadi centers under Udita Corner Projects (97%) however, majority of the girls were unaware of correct and safe method of disposing absorbent material (sanitary pad). Extending Udita Corner would be helpful to maintain hygiene and breaking stigma of menstruation in adolescent girls.



KEYWORDS : Indian society, Isolation , adolescent girls.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence in girls is the transition from girlhood to womanhood. Menstruation is generally considered as unclean in the Indian society [1]. This amalgamated by gender inequality and affects physical and emotional development of girls resulting in low self-esteem and has reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon [2]. To break menstrual stigma, 'Menstrual Hygiene Day' has been celebrated on 28th May each year from 2014. Menstruation hygiene is still a taboo subject that many girls are uncomfortable discussing in public.

Adolescent girls generally unaware about physiological changes associated with the onset of puberty [3]. They have incomplete and inaccurate information about the menstruation. There is a link between poor menstrual hygiene (re-using cloths that have not been adequately cleaned and dried, and not being able to wash regularly) and urinary or reproductive tract infections and other illnesses. Keeping this in mind, the present study was carried out to assess knowledge and awareness related to menstrual hygiene and health among adolescent girls.

METHODS AND MATERIAL

A cross-sectional design was used to study a sample of 240 schools going adolescent female (11-19 years) which were taking the benefits of ICDS services at Aganwadi centers in Urban ICDS No. 1 of BNS(Bal Niketan Sangha) of Indore district. Data on the adolescent girl’s knowledge regarding menstruation was collected in three categories using pretested self-administered questionnaires:-

- Awareness of physiological process of menstrual cycle
- Awareness regarding diet and physical activity during menstruation
- Awareness of menstrual Hygiene and practices among adolescent’s girls

Awareness of menstrual physiological process was observed by assessing the knowledge of age of menstruation in women’s life, duration of menstrual cycle and periods and menstrual flow blood type.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, 240 adolescent girls of urban ICDS slums under 11-19 years were included. All the 240 school girls responded positively giving a response rate of 100%. Table 1 illustrates the knowledge of menstruation physiology among girls.

Table 1. Adolescent’s knowledge of Menstrual Physiological implication

Parameters of Awareness	Percentage(%)
Awareness of menarche before attaining	83
Knowledge regarding duration of a normal menstrual cycle	86
Awareness of the duration for a normal period	91
Awareness of age of menopause	83
Awareness of menstrual flow type	64
Awareness of cause of menstrual flow	78

It was observed that most of the girls (83.0%) were unaware that during adolescent they will experience monthly /cyclical flow of blood (menstruation) before attaining menarche in their life. However, knowledge of menstruation i.e. duration of menstrual cycle which is 28 days was well known to 86% girls and 83% girls were aware of age of menopause in female’s life span and about 91% of the subjects knew the duration of a normal menses i.e. 2 to 7 days.

In the present study, majority (78.0%) of the school girls were aware of the hormonal cause of menstruation. Collective knowledge of age at menarche, menstrual cycle and duration of menstrual flow in adolescents is also required for dispelling stigma that arise from an unexpected appearance of blood from vagina at menarche.[1].

The most widespread taboos observed among girls related to menstruation was that menstrual blood loosed during period is impure or waste type as it looks dirty and gives foul smell when comes in contact with air. It leads up to beliefs like a women’s body is polluted during menses so they should be secluded. Scientifically, the menstrual blood is a uterine lining made of tissue and blood vessels and it nourishes the embryo if the egg (ovum) gets fertilized by the male sperm.

Table 2 Awareness of hygiene related practices during Menstruation

Parameters of Awareness	Percentage(%)
Awareness of suitable absorbent material	91
Awareness of frequency of changing absorbent material(3-4times/day)	84
Awareness of suitable disposal method for soiled absorbent material	56

Awareness of low cost sanitary pad availability in Udita-corner	97
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Table 2 shows the hygiene related practices in adolescent girls during menstruation which are of utmost importance, as they affect their health by increasing their vulnerability to infections, especially of the urinary tract. In this study, hygienic awareness was assessed by the type of used material for the absorbance of menstrual flow and frequency of changing the cloth/pad. Methods disposal of cloth/pad were also analyzed among girls that is frequently practiced either by dumping in waste or burning it. The type of absorbent material which is used is of primary concern, since reuse of the material could be a cause for infection if it is improperly cleaned.

It was observed that almost (91.5%) the school girls knew correctly that sanitary pad is the best sanitary absorbent recommended for adolescents. The major cause behind this successful healthy practices in slum urban girls was “Udita Corner” in every aaganwadi centers that has been set up by Women & Child Development(WCD) to make available the sanitary pad to the low socioeconomically status girls at much lower cost than market price. Only 7.5% of the girls were still using cloths due to low money constrain and unawareness. The frequency of changing the absorbent during menstrual period was 5-6 hour per day in 84.8% girls they were aware of duration of changing pad/cloth to maintain the hygiene and only 15.2% girls were changing the pad in every 7-8 hour of the day, it also indicates the heavy or medium menstrual blood flow pattern which vary among the girls.

The various methods of disposing soiled menstrual absorbents among girls include dumping in domestic wastes (43.75%); burning (46.25%) while other 10% flush it in toilet. It represents the lacuna in healthy hygienic practices among girls which needs immediate focus to uproot this practice as it is becoming a major issue to handle bio-medical waste contaminated with blood and body fluid among the garbage collectors and Municipal Corporation.

Table 3 Awareness of Health and Nutrition among Adolescent Girls during Menstruation

Parameters of Awareness	Percentage(%)
Awareness of consumption of Healthy diet during menses	98
Awareness of role of citrus food and taboo	24
Awareness of importance physical activity during menses	56
Awareness of iron rich food and iron loss during menses	58

Nutritional Health awareness during menstruation was evaluated among girls by assessing their eating behavior and their knowledge of nutritional requirement (table 3). Almost all girls (98%) are aware of taking care of their health by eating nutrient dense foods like milk and milk products and green leafy vegetables. In our society myth of avoiding citrus food like alma, lemon and tomatoes is still prevalent in 76% of the girls during their menses as they were unaware of the nutritional value of these foods which are vitamin C rich. Also, around 52% of the adolescent girls were unaware of the iron loss and its requirement during periods. Near 44% of the respondent were avoiding all type of physical activity during their periods due to the myth that it is harmful for the body whereas moderate activity or exercise during menses releases endorphin hormone which act as natural painkiller.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that among the adolescent school girls in urban-1ICDS area of Indore had fair knowledge of menstruation physiological process and menstrual hygiene practices as 92.5% of the girls are using low cost sanitary pads being provided by Udita Corner in aaganwadi centers of ICDS. It shows huge success rate of “Udita Corner Program” for adolescent girls to develop the knowledge of menstruation and hygiene practices breaking the stigma among adolescent girls through aaganwadi workers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescent school girls should be educated about the facts of menstruation, physiological implication, about the significance of menstruation and above all about proper hygienic practices and selection of disposable sanitary menstrual absorbent and make her feel free to discuss menstrual matters as majority of the girls were unaware of correct and safe method of disposing soiled absorbent material (sanitary pad/cloth) in the present study. Awareness regarding the requirement of healthy diet during menstrual age is also observed as various myths and taboos are still prevalent in our society. Udit Corner should be extended to all the adolescent girls going institute like schools, hostels, boarding schools, colleges, and sport clubs and in public toilets to maintain healthy practices among them.

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