



## KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE STUDY ON MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AMONG THE UNMARRIED ADOLESCENT GIRLS (10-19) IN KASAVANAMPATTI VILLAGE IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescent population occupies 1/5th of the world's population and in India 20.9 % the population falls into the group. Adolescence is the period between 10-19 years of life (WHO). Menstruation is a vital part of the reproductive health of a female and the menstrual cycle starts in the adolescent period. Menstruation and menstrual practices are still bounded by socio-cultural restriction and taboos. These taboos and restrictions result the adolescent girls to remain ignorant of scientific facts of menstruation and hygienic practices, and suffer with Reproductive Tract Infections. The first menstruation is often horrifying and traumatic to an adolescent girl because it usually occurs without her knowing about it. Several research studies have revealed this gap and they indicated that there was a low level of awareness about menstruation among the girls. Increased knowledge about menstruation right from childhood may escalate safe practices and may help in mitigating the suffering of millions of women. Increase in knowledge and change in attitude and practice are mostly depend upon the information received, the group affiliation and education of the adolescent girls. The first information they receive about menstruation is from their mother followed by their peer group members. If the mothers are not literate and have little knowledge of the physiological cycle of menstruation then the adolescent may not receive right information of menstruation and hygienic practices. Hence this study aims 1. to find out the Knowledge, attitude and practice of menstrual hygiene, 2. the association between unawareness and poor menstrual hygiene practices of adolescent girls and the poor educational status of parents and 3. the myths, misconceptions and restriction practices imposed upon the adolescent girls. The study design is descriptive cross sectional study conducted in the rural area of Kasavanampatti village at Dindigul District by using structured questionnaire. 98 adolescent girls were the respondents of the study. The findings of the present study showed that the mothers of the adolescent girls were the primary source of information regarding menstruation, for the majority of the respondents. Mothers of adolescent girls were ignorant about informing daughters about menstruation prior to menarche. Lack of sufficient knowledge and awareness among adolescent girls regarding menstruation can be due to the low level of education among themselves and their mothers.

**KEYWORDS:** Adolescent population occupies , Knowledge, attitude and practice of menstrual hygiene.

### INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization (WHO) has defined Adolescence as the period between 10-19 years of life. Adolescence period in girls has been recognized as a special period which signifies the transition from childhood to adult-hood. This transition period is hazardous to the adolescent girls because they develop have to encounter behavioral



problem due to lack of accurate information. This is the period in which menarche and menstruation cycle starts. Menarche is the onset of first menstruation which occurs in an adolescent girl. Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to all females and occurs once in a month as a regular rhythmic period.

Menstruation is generally considered, in the Indian society, as impure and untouchable. Isolation of girls during menstruation and restrictions being imposed on them in the families had reinforced a negative attitude towards this phenomenon. Many studies have revealed that most of the adolescent girls had incomplete and inaccurate information about the menstrual physiology and hygiene. Good hygienic practices such as the use of sanitary pads and adequate washing of the genital area are essential during menstruation. Women and girls of the reproductive age need access to clean and soft, absorbent sanitary products which can, in the long run, protect their health. Hygiene-related practices of adolescent girls during menstruation are of considerable importance, as it has a health impact in terms of increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infections. The interplay of socioeconomic status, menstrual hygiene practices, and RTI are perceptible. Today millions of women are sufferers of RTI and its complications and often the infection is transmitted to the offspring of the pregnant mother. Women having better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe practices are less vulnerable to RTI and its consequences. Therefore, increased knowledge about menstruation right from childhood of the adolescent girls may escalate safe practices and help in mitigating the sufferings of the adolescent girls from RTI infections. With this background, the present study was undertaken to assess the knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding menstruation among the adolescent girls and also to study the relationship between the educational status of parents and the Knowledge, Attitude and the Practice (KAP) of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls.

## OBJECTIVES

The focus of the present study was unmarried adolescent girls in a rural area. The study concentrated on the following objectives:

1. To assess the knowledge, attitude and practice level of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls.
2. To enumerate the myths, misconceptions and restriction practices of menstrual hygiene imposed upon the adolescent girls.
3. To find out the association between unawareness and poor menstrual hygiene practices of adolescent girls and the poor educational status of parents.

## METHODOLOGY

The study design is descriptive cross sectional study conducted in the rural area of Kasavanampatti village of Dindigul District. A structured schedule was used as study tool to collect data from the respondents. Universal sampling method was adapted to the study. All the 98 unmarried adolescent girls, in the age group of 10-19 years, of the study area were the respondents of the study. The study tool had four sections. Section A: General particular Section, B: Questions for the assessment of knowledge level about menstruation, Section C: Questions for the assessment of attitude level about menstruation and Section D: Questions for the assessment of Practice level about menstruation. The Schedule was pretested to verify the clarity, absence of ambiguity, objectivity, sequence and simplicity. The schedule had been pretested among 10 adolescent girls of another village. Based on pretest necessary corrections and modifications were carried out accordingly before administer for collecting data. Period of the study was from March 2018 to May 2018.

## Data Analysis

The collected data were computed and tabulated in Microsoft excel and analyzed.

## RESULTS

### Literacy level of Mothers

The study chose universal sampling method. The mean age of the respondents i.e. 98 adolescent girls of this study village was 15 years. All of them (100%) were Hindus. 68 (69.3%) mothers of the

respondents were illiterate, 16(16.3%) had studied up to fifth standard and 14 (14.2%) up to secondary level.( Figure 1.)

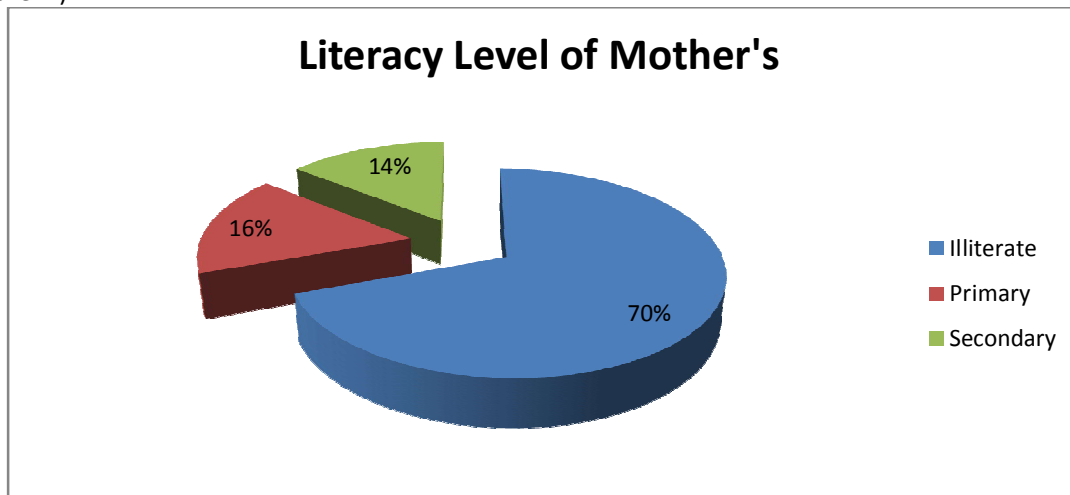


Figure 1: Mother’s Education of the respondent Adolescent Girls

61.2% girls have attained menarche in between the age of 12-14 years while 20.4% girls have attained menarche before reaching the age of 12 years. 27.5% of girls have reported blood flow for more than 5 days during menstruation period. 55.1% girls responded that the length of their menstrual cycle was 28 to 32 days. 19.3% girls had reported excessive quantity of blood flow. (Table-1)

Table: 1 menstrual pattern in adolescent girls (N-98)

Pattern	No (%)
<b>Age at which menarche attained</b>	
<12	20(20.4%)
12-14	60(61.2%)
>14	18(18.3%)
<b>Duration of menstruation</b>	
<2	29(29.5%)
2-5	42(42.8%)
>5	27(27.5%)
<b>Length of cycle in days</b>	
<25	21(21.5%)
25-28	54(55.0%)
>28	23(23.5%)
<b>Quantity of blood flow</b>	
Normal	51(52.0%)
Excessive	19(19.3%)
Less	28(28.5%)

Regarding knowledge about menstruation 48.9% of the respondents have reponded that they knew about what is menstruation even before menarche. Mothers were the first source of information to 46.9% girls followed by sister 13.2%, friends 19.3% and relatives. Out of 98 respondents only 16 adolescent girls (16.3%) had correct knowledge of uterus is the organ from where the bleeding occurs and others have no knowledge regarding the organ from where bleeding occurs. Majority of the girls had knowledge that

menstruation is a normal physiological process. While 24.4% had no knowledge about cause of menstruation.(Table2)

**Table: 2 Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge about menstruation.**

<b>Attributes</b>	<b>No%</b>
<b>Know about menstruation before menarche</b>	
Yes	48(48.9%)
No	50(51.0%)
<b>Source of knowledge of menstrual cycle before menarche</b>	
Mother	46(46.9%)
Teacher	5 (5.1%)
Friend	19(19.3%)
Relatives	12(12.2%)
Sister	13(13.2%)
Do not know	3(3.0%)
<b>Knowledge of organ from where bleeding occurs</b>	
Uterus	16(16.3%)
Kidney	5 (5.1%)
Bladder	14(14.2%)
Stomach	9(9.1%)
Do not know	54(55.1%)
<b>Knowledge of cause of menstruation</b>	
Physiological	56(57.1%)
God given	18(18.3%)
Do not know	24(24.4%)

Out 98 respondents 39 had used sanitary pad as absorbent during their menstrual period. The rest of 44 girls were using cloths. 15 respondents had used both sanitary pad and cloths. Out of this 42.8% girls had said that cost of sanitary pad was the reason for not using sanitary pads and 21.4% said discarding of sanitary pad as a reason. When the question of restriction imposed upon them was asked, 87.7% of respondents replied that they had restrictions to enter religious place/temple during menstruation. 44.8% had restriction to carryout routine household work, 9.1% had certain types of foods restriction etc. (Table3)

**Table: 3 Distribution of respondents according to their practices during menstruation**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>No%</b>
<b>Type of absorbent</b>	
Sanitary pad	39(39.7%)
New cloth	28(28.5%)
Old washed cloth	16(16.3%)
Pad + Old washed cloth	8(8.1%)
Pad +New cloth	7(7.1%)
<b>Problems faced while using cloth during washing and drying</b>	
Yes	56(57.1%)

No	42(42.8%)
<b>Reason for not using sanitary pads</b>	
Difficulty in discard	21(21.4%)
Costly	42(42.8%)
Don't feel comfortable with it	35(35.7%)
<b>Restriction among adolescent girls during menstruation</b>	
Religious place /temple/religious occasion	86(87.7%)
Routine household work	44(44.8%)
Playing	18(18.3%)
Attending school	6(6.1%)
Certain type of food	9(9.1%)

Table No.4 shows that 96.9% adolescent girls had bath at least one time in a day. 62(63.2%) of respondents had responded that they will wash their external genital organs only with water. Only 36(36.7%) had the practice of washing their external genital organs with soap and water while 82(83.6%) of girl respondents having the practice of washing their hands with soap and water. This analysis reveals that the accurate knowledge of menstrual hygiene practices had not reached the adolescent girls. The low level of knowledge among respondents about organ involved in menstruation and the menstrual hygienic practices such as washing genital areas with soap and water during menstruation, taking bath at least two times in a day, changing pads once in six hours and washing and drying the used cloth in the sunlight, shows that their mothers did not have told these practices to their children since they themselves unaware about these menstrual hygienic practices due to their low literacy level (70% of mothers are illiterate-Figure-1). Hence the literacy level of the adolescent mothers may have association in the KAP of menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to their hygienic practices during menstruation**

Hygienic practices during menstruation	No%
<b>Daily bath</b>	
Yes	95(96.9%)
No	3(3.0%)
<b>Hand washing</b>	
Regular	56(57.1%)
Irregular	42(42.8%)
Hand washing with water	16(16.3%)
Soap & water	82(83.6%)
Cleaning of external genitals with water	62(63.2%)
soap &water	36(36.7%)

**DISCUSSIONS**

The present study showed that the mothers of the adolescent girls were the primary source of information regarding menstruation, for the majority of the respondents. Similar studies done by Damor and Kantharia, Jaikhani, Jogdand and Yerpude found that the main source of information regarding menstruation was the mother. In the present study, a majority of the girls knew that menstruation was a normal physiological process. Kamath et al in Udipitaluk reported that 72.2% of urban and 68.9% of rural adolescent girls knew that menstruation was a normal physiological process. These findings are consistent

with the present study. In the present study 60.2 % respondents were using both cloth and pad and 39.8% respondents are using sanitary pad and the respondents had said that difficulty in discarding the used pad, discomfort and high cost are the reason for not using sanitary pad. A study done by Damor and Kantharia among adolescent girls in an urban setting had elicited that 52.34% adolescent has used only sanitary napkins as menstrual absorbent while 44.53% used both cloth and pad. This finding is consistent with the present study.

### LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this study was the sample size. The study was conducted in a small village hence the sample size was very limited and there was some difficulty in getting the responses from a few adolescent girls and also from their mothers due to their myths and misconception about menstruation.

### CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to ascertain knowledge attitude and practices among rural adolescent girls. The study revealed that menstrual hygiene practices among the adolescent girls have to be improved. Lack of sufficient knowledge and awareness among adolescent girls regarding menstruation can be due to the low level of education among themselves and their mothers. Mothers of adolescent girls were ignorant about informing daughters about menstruation prior to menarche. All mothers irrespective of their educational status should be taught to break their inhibitions about discussing with their daughters regarding menstruation before the age of menarche. Better hygiene practices can be adopted by making sanitary pads available at affordable prices for which the local self-help group women may be encouraged, trained and supported to prepare the low-cost sanitary pads. Incorrect restrictions myths and beliefs associated with menstruation can be removed by the help of teachers and parents if appropriate, adequate health education is given. In this way, there will be a successful implementation of educational programmes by health personnel, school teachers and knowledgeable parents can play a vital role in transmitting the messages about menstrual hygiene to the adolescent girls.

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