

Original Article

KAP study of menstrual problems in adolescent females in an urban area of Meerut

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Abstract

Background: Menstruation is an important milestone that results in development of sexual and reproductive capacity of girls. Adolescent girls do not have adequate knowledge about the abnormalities and healthy practices to be followed during menstruation.

Objective: To find out the knowledge, attitude, practices regarding menstruation and treatment seeking behaviour for menstrual problems in adolescent females.

Material & methods: The present cross sectional study was carried out in an urban field practice area of Department of Community Medicine, LLRM Medical College, Meerut on adolescent girls. A sample of 384 was derived and girls were selected by systematic random sampling technique. Detailed information was collected on a predesigned and pretested questionnaire.

Results: 38.5% girls were aware of menstruation prior to its onset out of which 66.9% learned from their mother. Only 14.6% of the menstruating girls were aware of at least one menstrual disorder. Dysmenorrhoea was found to be the most frequently occurring problem (58.4%), followed by oligomenorrhoea (16.2%), menorrhagia (13.9%), premenstrual tension (13.6%), infrequent menstruation (12.3%) and polymenorrhoea (12.2%). Out of the 226(72.7%) girls having menstrual problems 77.9% did not seek any treatment for their problems. 55.2% of the menstruating girls were using sanitary pads during menstruation.

Conclusion: The adolescent girls are not well prepared and do not have adequate information regarding menstruation which is an important event of life.

Keywords: adolescent girl, menstrual problems, awareness, menstrual hygiene.

Introduction:

Despite extensive scientific knowledge of the biologic rhythms and physical changes associated with reproduction and despite the availability of excellent educational material about sexuality including menstruation, young peoples' knowledge of menstruation is inadequate. There is a lack of knowledge and awareness among adolescents about health issues and problems¹. Menstruation is an important milestone that results in development of sexual and reproductive capacity of girls. It is a very important part of the growing up process of adolescent girls. Lack of awareness about the problems related to menstruation leads to non treatment of the menstrual problems and may lead to reproductive failure. The present study has been carried out to gather information concerning the knowledge and attitudes of urban adolescents regarding menstruation and their treatment seeking behaviour.

Objectives

1. To find out the knowledge, attitude and practices regarding menstruation in adolescent females.
2. To study the treatment seeking behavior of adolescent females for menstrual problems.

Type of study: Community based cross sectional study

Place of study: The study was conducted among adolescent girls (10-19 years) residing in Suraj Kund which is a field practice area of Department of Community Medicine, LLRM Medical, Meerut.

Duration of study: The study was carried out from 1st February 2010 to 31st July 2010.

Study population: A sample size of 384 was derived by taking the prevalence of menstrual problems to be 50%, confidence level 95% and a relative precision of 10%.

Study tool: A predesigned and pretested questionnaire.

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Methodology: A house to house survey was done from locality to locality to cover the desired sample. Girls were selected by using systematic random sampling (every alternate girl) as there were approximately 800 girls in the study area. Detailed information regarding knowledge, attitude and practices was collected on a predesigned and pretested Performa. The information so collected was analyzed.

Results:

1. A maximum of girls belonged to Social Class II (45.1%), the other classes comprised of 14.8%, 22.9%, 14.6%, and 2.6% of Class I, Class III, Class IV and Class V respectively. Most of the girls belonged to Hindu religion (98.7%) and the rest belonged to Sikh religion (1.3%). The caste wise distribution of girls was 56.2%, 31.0% and 12.8% for the General, OBC and SC/ST categories respectively.
2. 80.2% of the total 384 adolescent girls had attained menarche. 39.9% of those who had attained menarche and 32.9% of the premenarchial adolescent girls had prior knowledge about menstruation. A total of 61.5% adolescent girls had no prior knowledge about menstruation.
3. Out of the total 148 girls having prior knowledge about menstruation, 66.9% acquired from their mother, 10.8% from their sister, 9.5% from their friend, 4.7% from their teachers and 8.1% from other sources which included aunt, grandmother, television and neighbour. (Table 1)
4. Only 14.6% of the menstruating adolescent girls were aware of at least one menstrual disorder. Most of them (13.3%) were aware about dysmenorrhoea followed by amenorrhoea (3.6%), menorrhagia (2.6%) and polymenorrhoea (2.6%) (Table 2)
5. Out of 311 (308 menstruating girls + 3 girls having primary amenorrhoea) 72.7% girls were suffering from at least one menstrual disorder the commonest being dysmenorrhoea (58.4%), followed by oligomenorrhoea (16.2%), menorrhagia (13.9%), premenstrual tension (13.6%), infrequent menstruation (12.3%), polymenorrhoea (8.8%), scanty menstruation (5.5%), amenorrhoea (2.6%) and menometrorrhagia (1.9%). (Table 2)

6. Only 3.5% of these girls consulted a gynaecologist for their problem. 4.9% visited a quack and 13.7% visited a homeopathic doctor. 77.9% girls with menstrual problems did not seek any treatment. (Table 3)
7. Out of the total menstruating girls, 55.2% used sanitary pads, 36.7% used piece of old cloth, 6.2% used homemade cotton pads and only 1.9% used clean cloth washed and sun dried for menstruation. (Table 4)

Table 1 Distribution of girls according to source of knowledge about menstruation

Source	Number	Percentage
Mother	99	25.8
Sister	16	4.2
Friend	14	3.6
Teachers	7	1.8
Others	12	3.1
Not aware	236	61.5
Total	384	100.0

Table 2 Awareness and prevalence of menstrual problems (Multiple response)

Menstrual problem	Aware Number (%)	Prevalence Number (%)
Dysmenorrhoea	41 (13.3)	180 (58.4)
Amenorrhoea	11 (3.6)	8* (2.6)
Scanty menstruation	1 (0.3)	17 (5.5)
Premenstrual tension	0 (0)	42 (13.6)
Oligomenorrhoea	3 (0.9)	50 (16.2)
Menorrhagia	8 (2.6)	43 (14.0)
Polymenorrhoea	8 (2.6)	29 (9.4)
Polymenorrhagia	0 (0)	2 (0.6)
Menometrorrhagia	0 (0)	6 (1.9)
Infrequent menstruation	0 (0)	38 (12.3)
Not aware/No problem	263 (85.4)	85 (27.6)
Base	308	311*

*includes 3 girls with primary amenorrhoea

Table 3 Treatment seeking behaviour of adolescent girls for menstrual problems

	Number	%
Gynaecologist	8	3.5
Quack	11	4.9
Homeopathic doctor	31	13.7
No treatment	176	77.9
Total	226	99.9

Table 4 Hygienic practices during menstruation

Methods	Number of girls (%)
Sanitary pads	170 (55.2)
Clean cloth washed and sun dried	6 (1.9)
Homemade cotton pads	19 (6.2)
Piece of old cloth	113 (36.7)
Total	308

Discussion:

This study found that only 32.9% of girls were aware of menstruation prior to its onset which is comparable to 29% as reported by Nair et al (2007)^[1] where as Gupta and Sarkar (2008)^[2] showed that a higher percentage (67.5%) of girls were aware of menstruation prior to attainment of menarche.

In the present study the source of information about menstruation was mainly mother (66.7%). Other sources being sister (9.3%), friend (9.3%), teachers (4.5%) and others (aunt, grandmother, television, neighbour) (9.9%). Similar findings were reported by Singh et al (2006)^[3] and Nair et al (2007)^[1] where mother was the source of information in 64.9% and 41% girls respectively.

It was unfortunate that only 14.6% of the total menstruating girls were aware of at least one menstrual disorder. The results are comparable to a study by Sharma and Gupta (2003)^[4] conducted in Dharan who found that only 8% students knew only very little about menstrual abnormalities, the rest were ignorant about it.

This study found that 72.7% of the menstruating girls were suffering from at least one menstrual disorder out of which only 22.1% sought any treatment. 3.5% consulted a gynaecologist, 13.7% a homeopathic doctor

and 4.9% consulted a quack. Singh et al (1999)^[5] showed that a lower percentage of girls (44.6%) suffered from various menstrual problems, out of which 5.2% consulted a doctor, 22.4% took medications from the chemist shops and 3.4% took herbal medicines from traditional medical practitioner. Kulkarni and Durge (2011)^[6] found that out of 65.18% of adolescent girls suffering from one or more reproductive morbidities, only 33.67% girls sought health care and 62.33% girls remained silent without seeking health care.

This study found that out of the total menstruating girls, 55.2% used sanitary pads, 1.9% used clean cloth, 6.2% used homemade cotton pads and 36.7% used old piece of cloth to soak menstrual blood in contrast to a study by Khanna et al (2000)^[7] conducted in Rajasthan, who found that majority of girls (64.2%) used old cloth, 30.7% used readymade sanitary pads, 4.8% used new cloth and 0.3% used homemade cotton pads to soak menstrual blood.

Conclusion:

The adolescent girls are not well prepared for menstruation as only 32.9% are aware of it prior to its onset. The primary source of information in them is their mother. Still fewer girls (14.6%) are aware of the various menstrual disorders. Lack of awareness to menstrual disorders leads to poor treatment seeking behaviour. 226 (72.7%) of the menstruating girls were suffering from at least one menstrual disorder of which only 50 (22.1%) sought any treatment. 55.2% menstruating girls were using sanitary pads and 36.7% were still using piece of old cloth to soak menstrual blood.

Health education sessions regarding menstrual health and its morbidities should be conducted in schools and colleges and in communities. It can be included as a part of school health programme. Emphasis should be given to make them aware about the importance of seeking of health care.

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