

Chapter-14

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING MENSTRUAL PRACTICES AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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INTRODUCTION

Menstrual hygiene management refers to the practice wherein women and adolescent girls utilize sanitary materials for managing menstruation, enabling discreet changes as required during the menstrual period [1]. It involves washing the body with soap and water as necessary and having access to proper facilities for the disposal of used menstrual management materials.

Nevertheless, menstrual hygiene encompasses more than just managing the menstrual period; it also involves addressing societal beliefs and taboos associated with the issue. Taboos and socio-cultural restrictions continue to shroud menstruation and menstrual practices, leading to a lack of awareness among adolescent girls regarding scientific facts and hygienic health practices. This lack of knowledge can sometimes lead to adverse health outcomes. Menstruation is viewed as a polluting factor within Hindu culture, contributing to the perception of menstruating girls and women as untouchable in many places. Such attitudes and practices are detrimental to fostering a positive self-image among girls [2,3].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate different factors influencing menstrual practices among adolescent girls.
2. To understand the level of awareness regarding menstrual hygiene management.
3. To recognize various myths and taboos associated with menstruation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research took place in the Panna district and lasted for one month. The study focused on girls aged 10-19 years. A total of 200 participants were chosen through the use of a simple random sampling technique.

The data collection process involved the use of a semi-structured questionnaire and employed various approaches, including questionnaire-based surveys, interviews with adolescent girls from the region, and obtaining information from internet sources.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The average age of menarche was 13.7 years. Roughly 52% of girls possessed information about menstruation before encountering their first menstrual period. Their primary sources of information about menstruation were their mothers, sisters, or friends. Girls above the poverty line predominantly used sanitary pads and were aware of proper hygiene management. However, those below the poverty line faced challenges affording pads, leading them to use rags or torn sarees during their periods. Cultural beliefs and guidance from elders influenced around 94% of girls to wash their hair on a specific day. They were restricted from participating in social or religious activities, such as temple prayers, cooking, or entering the kitchen during menstruation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that cultural beliefs and practices significantly influenced girls' knowledge of menstrual cycles. A substantial number of girls perceived menstruation as something unclean that should be kept hidden. This pointed to the conclusion that the societal taboo surrounding menstruation fostered silence, resulting in a lack of accurate knowledge about the process. Girls often adhered to various myths and cultural traditions, causing stress and tension.

To address this, there was a crucial need for increased awareness about menstrual hygiene, encouraging girls to use sanitary pads. The government should have taken steps to make sanitary products affordable for those who could not purchase them. School teachers played a pivotal role in educating students about the menstrual cycle. Moreover, the taboo against cooking during menstruation should have been eradicated, and proper counseling for girls was essential.

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