

CHAPTER: 02

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES ABOUT MENSTRUATION AND MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN DINDORI DISTRICT, MADHYA PRADESH

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents constitute a substantial segment of the population, residing in diverse circumstances with varied health needs [1]. These demographics face numerous health challenges, encompassing issues such as undernutrition [2], early marriage, early childbearing, obesity, smoking, alcohol and substance abuse. Engagement in early and unsafe sexual practices elevates the risks of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases. Additionally, concerns include exposure to violence, injuries, and unsafe work environments [3]. In the context of India, a significant percentage of girls (43% to 88%) resort to washing and reusing cotton cloths instead of using disposable pads [4]. The hygiene practices adopted by adolescent girls during menstruation can significantly impact their health, with studies indicating that approximately 15% of them report symptoms of reproductive tract infections/sexually transmitted infections (RTI/STI) [5].

Adolescence in girls signifies the transition from girlhood to womanhood, marking the onset of female puberty. This critical phase, spanning ages 10 to 19, involves significant physiological, behavioral, and psychological changes, with the initiation of menstruation being the most notable. Recognizing the pivotal role of mothers, it becomes imperative to equip them with accurate and relevant information on reproductive health to impart this knowledge to their growing daughters. Mothers are encouraged to promote personal hygiene practices among their daughters. Additionally, teachers, who may lack the necessary skills for reproductive health education, including menstrual hygiene, play a crucial role in this regard [6].

RESEARCH QUESTION

What was the prevailing understanding of menstrual practices among adolescent girls, and what were their behaviors and habits related to menstruation and menstrual hygiene at that time?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the awareness of menstrual history and menstruation among adolescent girls.
2. To examine the current menstrual practices of adolescent girls in the sampled district.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed a cross-sectional descriptive study design to characterize the prevailing features in the adolescent population. The study focused on the adolescent female population attending AFHCs and RKSK in Dindori district. The duration of the study spanned one month, from April 16th to May 16th, 2018. The study population comprised adolescent girls aged between 10 and 19 years attending AFHCs and RKSK in Dindori district, who had experienced menarche, were unmarried, present during the study survey, and willing to participate. Exclusion criteria were applied to adolescent girls not willing to participate. A purposive sampling method was used to achieve the desired sample size of n=195, with data collected through face-to-face interviews using a standard structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The socio-demographic variables, including education, parents' education, and occupation, are discussed as indicators of family background. The study reveals that around 93.8 percent of girls are currently pursuing higher education, emphasizing the positive correlation between education and healthy menstrual practices. The occupation analysis shows that approximately 62 percent of fathers are farmers, while 53.8 percent of mothers are housewives, indicating a prevalence of lower socioeconomic backgrounds among the respondents. The average age at menarche is reported to be around 14 years, with 39.5 percent of girls attaining menarche at this age. Physical symptoms during menstruation, interval between two menses, duration of menses, and amount of bleeding are explored, offering insights into the respondents' experiences. Additionally, the analysis addresses

knowledge about menstruation, awareness about other girls' menstrual history, awareness about menstruation before menarche, and the sources of information. The majority of respondents lack awareness about menstruation and associated reproductive organs. The source of information is primarily mothers or family members. The type of absorbent used during menses, frequency of change, method of disposal, and drying practices are also examined. The findings highlight the predominant use of cloth as an absorbent and the suboptimal frequency of changing cloth or pads, raising concerns about potential health risks. The method of disposal primarily involves burning, posing environmental challenges. Furthermore, the drying practices of cloth materials, such as drying indoors without sunlight, may contribute to incomplete drying and potential health issues. Overall, the data analysis underscores the need for targeted interventions to improve awareness, education, and menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent girls in the studied population.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there was a pressing need to enhance the overall knowledge and awareness of adolescent girls, as 80 percent of the respondent's lacked awareness about menstruation and menstrual reproductive biology. Encouraging the exclusive use of sanitary pads was identified as a priority. The observed low frequency of changing pads or cloth, occurring only once a day, raised concerns. Additionally, around one-fourth of the respondents reported drying cloths inside the house without sunlight, indicating a potential area for improvement in hygienic practices.

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