

CHAPTER: 05

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICES (KAP) OF MENSTRUATION AND MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AMONG MARRIED WOMEN OF RURAL POPULATION OF SABARKANTHA DISTRICT, GUJARAT

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INTRODUCTION

For millions of adolescent girls and women around the world, the menstrual cycle—which lasts, on average, 3,000 days during a woman's lifetime—is an important part of existence. Despite recent developments in the hygiene and sanitation sector, the demands and challenges experienced by many young women and girls in managing their menstrual hygiene are unfortunately often disregarded, especially in poor nations. Women in the reproductive age group are largely ignorant of scientific facts and hygienic health practices since menstruation and its related behaviours are still fraught with taboos and sociocultural constraints. This lack of awareness contributes to adverse health outcomes [1]. Numerous taboos are associated with menstruation, significantly impacting women's and young girls' control over their mobility and behavior during menstruation due to perceived contamination associated with menstrual cycles. This includes myths, misunderstandings, superstitions, and (social and religious) taboos related to menstrual blood and menstrual hygiene [2]. It is also noteworthy that discussions by parents regarding reproductive health, sexuality, and all related matters are universally treated as a forbidden area. In the Bible, there is a clear reference to the impurity of women during their menstrual cycle. In the Jewish tradition, menstruating women, and everything they touch are considered unclean. Among Hindus, menstruation is deemed polluting. During the menstrual cycle, women and young girls are prohibited from visiting a temple, praying, or cooking. They are not allowed to touch anyone and must stay away from their family, as they are considered unclean [3].

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To evaluate the KAP related to menstruation and menstrual hygiene among married women aged 15 to 49 living in the rural regions of Sabarkantha District, Gujarat.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was structured as a cross-sectional observational study, carried out in the rural region of Sabarkantha district in Gujarat. The study spanned a period of three months, from February 4th to May 4th, 2019. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 200 married women aged between 15 to 49 years. Data collection involved the use of a semi-structured questionnaire, covering demographic information (such as age, education, and occupation), as well as knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Microsoft Excel and SPSS were utilized for data analysis. Inclusion criteria involved married women within the specified age range, while exclusion criteria encompassed those experiencing menopause, hysterectomy, pregnancy, chronic illness, or any gynecological problems.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In this study, 65 married women considered menstruation as a physiological phenomenon, and only 41 percent had prior knowledge about it before personally encountering it. Their understanding of the organ from which menstrual blood originates was lacking, with 52% believing it comes through the urine tube, 32% identifying the uterus, and 11% expressing uncertainty. The participants had a moderate level of knowledge about menstrual hygiene, with 49% being informed and 51% lacking knowledge. About 27% of women experienced lower abdominal pain during menstruation, and changes in their sleeping arrangements and work routines were noted. During menstruation, 95% of women refrained from kitchen work and worship activities.

Out of the 200 participants, 48% employed ready-made phalalin cloth, 33% chose sanitary pads, 12% depended on old home cloth, and 7% used both sanitary pads and ready-made cloth. Incorrect practices in cleaning cloth were observed, as only 41% washed the cloth with soap and water, while 59% washed it solely with water. While 75% of women dried their cloth in the sun, only 30% of them used two pads or cloths in a day, and 65% of them only used one pad or cloth. Also, 65% of women

did not clean their genitalia while they were menstruating. As a result, married women in the rural society lacked awareness regarding menstruation hygiene, and the reason why sanitary pads were not used was because of their expense. Ninety percent of moms strongly agreed that nutritious foods are expensive. This statement reflects their thoughts towards the expense of these items.

CONCLUSION

The study identified gaps in menstruation and menstrual hygiene knowledge and behavior. For instance, only 32% of women were aware of the true source of menstrual blood, with 52% mistakenly thinking it originates from the urinary tube. Improper cleaning methods were also observed, as only 41% of women washed their clothes with soap and water, while 59% used only water. While 75% of women dried their clothes in the sun, only 30% used two pads or clothes in a day, and 65% used only one pad or cloth. Additionally, 65% of women did not wash their genitalia while menstruating. The study indicated that married women in rural areas lacked adequate understanding of menstrual hygiene, and many were unable to use sanitary pads due to their high cost. Therefore, improving the rural population's understanding of menstrual hygiene is imperative.

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