ISSN: 2456-9348
Vol (03) _Issue (12) Impact Factor: 4.520

iJETRM
International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management

A STUDY ON PRACTICES REGARDING MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE AMONG RURAL WOMEN

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ABSTRACT
Adolescence has been considered as a special period that requires specific care as it marks the beginning of menarche, an important turning point hence good hygienic practices during menstruation are crucial to maintain a healthy life. Menstruation and menstrual practices are still darken by socio-cultural conditions resulting in girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygiene health practices which results into severe health problems. The present study analyse the practices regarding menstrual health and hygiene among rural women respondents in Coimbatore district.The primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from various villages in Coimbatore district. The study reveals that lack of privacy is a major concern both in household and in schools. Also, ignorance, misconceptions, unsafe practices, and illiteracy of the mother and child regarding menstruation are the root causes of many problems. So, there is a big need to encourage adolescents at school levels to practice safe and hygienic behaviours.

KEYWORDS:
Health, Hygiene, Menstruation, Menarche

INTRODUCTION

In all centuries, menstruation has been an issue to all the women. Menstruation is also known as a period or monthly. It is the regular discharge of blood and mucosal tissue from the inner lining of the uterus through vagina. The first period usually begins between 12 to 15 years of age which is normal, a point in time known as menarche. The typical length of time between the first day of one period and the first day of the next is 21 to 45 days. Bleeding usually last around 2 to 7 days. Menstruation stops occurring after menopause, which usually occurs between 45 to 55 years of age. The women should be educated about the significance of menstruation and selection of a sanitary menstrual absorbent and its proper disposal. In rural areas women are not prepared and aware about menstruation so they face many difficulties and challenges at home, schools, and work places. In addition, women do not have access to sanitary products or they know very little about the types and method of using them or are unable to afford such products due to high cost. Awareness should be created to emphasize the use of reusable sanitary products or natural products.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women respondents of rural areas had been taken by various researchers for analysing the practices regarding menstrual health and hygiene. It is very important to make awareness among rural women about proper menstrual hygiene practices that can protect them from suffering. So the central question of the study is to analyse whether women have awareness about health hazards, problems that arise due to lack of proper

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menstrual hygiene practices. Also the study analyzes the respondent perception regarding menstruation and the factors that determine usage of menstrual products.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the socio-demographic profile of rural women respondents.
- To analyze the practices regarding menstrual health and hygiene among rural women respondents.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

There is a need to impart rural women accurate and adequate information about menstruation and how to maintain proper hygiene during the menstruation. So, this study will help the women to get knowledge about the menstrual health and hygiene practices.

METHODOLOGY

The study has been undertaken in four villages(Chinniyampalayam, Vellalore, Veerapandipirivu and Sulur) in Coimbatore district. The primary data were collected through a well structured questionnaire from 120 rural women respondents. The secondary data were collected from various sources namely books, journals, websites etc. The following statistical tools have been used to analyse the collected data with reference to the selected objectives of the study namely Percentage analysis, Descriptive analysisand One-way ANOVA.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis is a process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusion, and supporting decision making.

TABLE 1: SOCIO- DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Particulars	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Age		
11-20Years	41	33.9
21-30Years	32	26.4
31-40Years	23	19.9
41-50Years	24	19.8
Total	120	100.0
Educational Qualification		
Primary level	7	5.8
Secondary level	14	11.6
Higher secondary level	17	14.0
UG	69	57.0
Others	13	10.7
Total	120	100.0
Mother's Educational Qualification		
Primary level	35	28.9
Secondary level	33	27.3
Higher secondary level	33	27.3
UG	7	5.8
Others	12	9.9
Total	120	100.0
Occupation		
Home makers	48	39.7
Working women	32	27.2
Students	37	30.6
Others	3	2.5
Total	120	100.0

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Age of attaining puberty		
10-13	51	42.5
14-16	67	55.8
17-20	2	1.7
Total	120	100.0
Menarche		
Yes	60	50.0
No	60	50.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: Primary Data

It is evident from the table, 33.9 percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 11 to 20 years. Most of the respondents in the study area are completed UG degree level of education. Mother's education qualification will also influence the hygiene practice of the women respondents as most of the women respondents are dependent.Hence, majority of the respondent's mother 28.9 percent have completed thier primary level of education and 27percent of the respondents mother completed secondary and higher secondary level of education. Majority of the respondents are home makers and students. 55 percent of the respondents attained their puberty in the age group of 14 to16 years. 50 percent of the respondents had clear information about menstruation before attaining menarche.

Descriptive Analysis

The respondents were asked to rate the factors regarding menstrual health and hygiene practices. The scale consists of 10 items. Five point Liker Type Scales was constructed to measure the rate of factors of the respondents. The scale values ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Higher the rating more will be the agreed level. Mean ratings were found out for each item given below.

TABLE 2: FACTORS REGARDING MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE PRACTICES

Factors regarding menstrual health and hygiene practices:	**N**	**Min**	**Max**	**Mean**	**SD**
Napkin is more comfortable than cloth.	120	1	5	4.47	.777
Mood swings during periods.	120	1	5	3.35	1.281
Changing pads frequently can cause skin irritation.	120	1	5	3.41	1.338
Healthy and hygienic food products are needed during menstruation.	120	1	5	3.63	1.250
Medicines taken during menstruation do not affect the health.	120	1	5	3.31	1.466
Frequent switching between brands makes uncomfortable.	120	1	5	2.62	1.342
Understanding the menstruation theory of science helps women to realize that menstruation is a scientific reaction in a body.	120	1	5	1.92	1.026
Comfortable to discuss menstrual issues with parents and friends.	120	1	5	3.20	1.424
Reaction to first menstruation is embarrassment.	120	1	5	3.62	1.167
Wrapping the napkin well before discarding.	120	1	5	4.42	.826

Source: Computed

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It is seen from the above table that the highest mean rating is 4.47 for the item "Napkin is more comfortable than cloth" that is on average the agreed level of the respondents is between agree and strongly agree .The next highest mean rating is 4.42 for the item "Wrapping the napkin well before discarding". The lowest mean rating is 1.92 "Understanding the menstruation theory of science helps women to realise that menstruation is a scientific reaction in a body" that is the respondents on average have their agreed level between strongly disagree and disagree. It is also seen from the table that the ratings were the most of the items vary between a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 4.

The items namely "Mood swings during periods" "Changing pads frequently can cause skin irritation" "Healthy and hygiene food products are needed during menstruation" "Medicines taken during menstruation does not affect the health" "Frequent switching between brands makes uncomfortable" "Comfortable to discuss menstrual issues with parents and friends" " Reaction to first menstruation is embarrassment" have neutral level above agree.

One-Way ANOVA

ANOVA is applied with the null hypothesis to find the difference in the overall score on repayment risks based on the selected socio-demographic factors.

Ho: There has been no significant difference between the selected demographic factors of the women respondents and factors regarding menstrual health and hygiene practices.

TABLE 3: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS VS FACTORS REGARDING MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE PRACTICES

Socio-demographic factors	Particulars	Repayment Risk			Table Value	F	Sig
		N	Mean	SD			
Age	11 to 20 years	41	2.29	.423	2.680	.394	NS
	21 to 30 years	32	2.36	.488			
	31 to 40 years	23	2.23	.381			
	41 to 50 years	24	2.32	.482			
Educational qualification	Primary Level	7	2.26	.645	2.447	.473	NS
	Secondary Level	14	2.44	.622			
	Higher Secondary Level	17	2.31	.363			
	UG	69	2.27	.396			
Mother`s educational qualification	Primary level	35	2.23	.486	2.447	1.209	NS
	Secondary level	33	2.24	.390			
	Higher secondary level	33	2.37	.370			
	UG	7	2.31	.344			
Occupation	Homemakers	49	2.27	.484	3.071	.454	NS
	Working women	33	2.28	.448			
	Students	38	2.36	.384			
Age of attaining puberty	10-13years	51	2.30	.454	3.071	.816	NS
	14-16years	67	2.29	.435			
	17-20years	2	2.70	.424			

Source: Computed Ns – Not significant * - Significant at 5% level ** - Significant at 1% level

It is seen from the above table the average score is found to be high (2.36) among age group of the respondents between 21 to 30 years and found to be low (2.23) among the age group of 31 to 40 years of the respondents. The mean score are found to be high among the respondents educational level as Secondary level (2.44). In case of mother's educational qualification the mean is found to be high (2.37) for higher secondary level of education and low (2.23) for primary level of education. The mean score is found to be high (2.36) for the respondents whose occupation is student and low (2.27) for the respondents whose occupation is homemakers. The average score is found to be high (2.70) for the respondents who attained puberty between 17 to 20 years.

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The ANOVA result shows that there is a no significant difference in the mean score of factors regarding menstrual health and hygiene practices with regards to age, educational qualification, mother's educational qualification, occupation and age of attaining puberty. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance.

CONCLUSION

Menstrual hygiene should be promoted by implementing a course on menstruation and menstrual hygiene management. Teachers should be educated and trained to impart knowledge about menstruation and menstrual hygiene management among students. Social and electronic media also play an important role to make the girls and women aware about the latest menstrual products, different manufacturers, government policies, and so forth. Subsidies should be given on menstrual products so that every girl/women can afford them easily. Non-government organizations should come forward to educate rural people about menstruation, menstrual hygiene management, importance of toilets at homes, hand washing, diseases related to reproductive tract due to poor hygiene, and so forth. Emphases should be given on the use of reusable sanitary or cloth pads to overcome the problem of disposal. Girls and women should be aware of the consequences of disposing used menstrual products in open or flushing them in toilets. Dustbins with proper lids should be placed in the toilets. This study reveals that lack of privacy is a major concern both in household and in schools. Also, ignorance, misconceptions, unsafe practices, and illiteracy of the mother and child regarding menstruation are the root causes of many problems. So, there is a big need to encourage adolescents at school levels to practice safe and hygienic behaviours.

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