

Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Regarding Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescent Girls of Rural Community in Lahore, Pakistan

Asma Ashraf¹, Chanda Jabeen², Gulshan Umbreen³, Valentina Younas⁴

^{1,4}Post RN(BSN), Shalamar Institute of Health Science Lahore. ^{2,3}PhD (Scholar) Epidemiology & Public Health, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: Chanda Jabeen, PhD (Scholar) Epidemiology & Public Health, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan
Email: chandajabeen786@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Menstruation is a biological process in female adolescence. The management of menstrual hygiene refers to the utilization of sanitary products to manage menstruation, and absorb the menstrual blood of female adolescence on a monthly basis.

Objective: The current study was conducted to assess knowledge, attitude and practice of menstrual hygiene among female adolescent of rural community in Lahore, Pakistan.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study with a community focus was done. A structured questionnaire designed to gather data, covering participants' demographic characteristics as well as their knowledge, practice, and attitude regarding menstruation hygiene. The data has been analysed with Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 and descriptive statistics were performed.

Results: In the current study, majority of participants (99%) having knowledge that menstruation is a normal biological process for a female adolescence. In relation to the utilization of commercially manufactured sanitary pads as absorbents during menstruation, (45%) participants indicated their preference for commercially made sanitary pads, whereas the remaining participants (55%) stated that they do not use them.

Conclusion: The majority of the respondents had good knowledge, attitude, and practice of hygiene during menstruation, although a minority of them still have poor practice. The healthcare industry should assume a more significant role in promoting awareness about menstrual hygiene.

Keywords: Menstrual hygiene, knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Adolescent

INTRODUCTION

The onset of reproductive life is marked by menstruation, which is a natural physiological process. The joint Monitoring Program (JMP) by World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF has defined management of Menstrual hygiene refers to the utilization of sanitary products to manage menstruation, and absorb the menstrual blood of female adolescence on a monthly basis.¹ Girls in developing countries face challenges in effectively handling menstruation due to the absence of essential "WASH" (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities, adequate education, a conducive setting, and necessary assistance. This, in turn, impacts their fundamental human rights to, health, their privacy and education.² Women's menstrual health is influenced by their family's social, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Poor hygiene can increase the risk of UTIs, RTIs, and infertility for women. According to the World Health Organization, adolescence is the period of hormonal changes and bodily development for boys and girls between the ages of 10

and 19. Menstrual hygiene involves maintaining proper hygiene during the menstrual cycle, including wearing sanitary pads, washing the external genitalia, preventing foul smells, and changing pads regularly. Unsanitary habits during menstruation can cause urinary tract infections and gynaecological issues in adolescents.^{3,4} In low- and middle-income countries, more than half of girls lack understanding of menstrual hygiene management, with higher rates in rural areas.⁵ Although menstruation is a natural biological process, but it is associated with several misconceptions and poor practices, which can sometimes negative health outcomes and consequences.⁶ To answer to the rising international focus on empowering girls through the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this research intends to map the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors around menarche, menstrual hygiene, and menstrual health among female adolescence.⁷ Women and girls require information, facilities, and a cultural environment in which to regulate their menstrual cycles safely and with dignity.

However, the relevance of menstrual hygiene management is typically disregarded by development practitioners within the WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) sector and other related sectors, such as reproductive health in girls.⁸ Today's adolescent girls will be tomorrow's mothers, and the destiny of their family, society, and nation is in their hands. Since a lot of parents feel hesitant to discuss and educate their adolescent girls about menarche and menstruation hygiene, they often face problems such as embarrassment at the time of menarche and engage in unsafe and unhygienic practices during menstruation, which can lead to tract diseases such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)⁹. Therefore, focusing on adolescent reproductive health presents both an opportunity and a challenge for healthcare professionals. While adolescence is typically considered a healthy phase of life, many adolescents are less informed, less experienced, and less comfortable acquiring reproductive health care than adults.¹⁰ In this light, it is essential to investigate this matter to establish a baseline for information on knowledge, attitude, and practice in adolescents.

METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study with a community focus was done to assess the knowledge attitude and practice of menstrual hygiene among adolescents of rural community in Lahore, Pakistan. The study was conducted for the duration of three months in Karol war community. Participants in the current study were females between the age of 10 and 19 who had reached menarche, were willing to participate, and lived in the Karol War community. Similarly the female who had not achieve menarche were excluded from the present study. A total of 200 participants were selected through convenience sampling technique. An adopted structured questionnaire designed to gather data, covering participants' demographic characteristics as well as their knowledge, practice, and attitude regarding menstruation hygiene. Data was collected through the questionnaire. Questionnaire was translated into local language i.e. Urdu which were easily understood by the participants. A unique code was given to each questionnaire to keep the data confidential. An individual consent was attached with every questionnaire from taking permission from respondents. The data has been analysed with Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 and descriptive statistics were performed.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Data:

Among 200 respondents, 37% were between in 10-13 years of age, 51% were between in 14-16 years of age, 22%

were between 17-19 years of age. Regarding the educational status, it was found that 19.0% participants were illiterate, 39% were having Middle, 28% were matric qualification and 14% above matric.

Knowledge About Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescents Girls:

The majority of participants (99%) having knowledge that menstruation is a normal biological process for women. Moreover, a considerable percentage of respondents (95%) claimed to have knowledge about the factors that cause menstruation. When inquired about the source of blood during this process, 83% of participants demonstrated awareness regarding this aspect. Additionally, a majority of respondents (96%) recognized the significance of maintaining personal hygiene during menstruation. Furthermore, the findings suggest that a majority of participants (74%) possess knowledge regarding the characteristics of an effective menstrual absorbent. Additionally, a significant proportion (95.5%) of participants are knowledgeable about the normal menstrual cycle. Further details are in Table 1.

Table 1: Knowledge About Menstrual Hygiene in Adolescents Girls

Questions	Yes	No
Is menstruation is normal process for women?	195(97.5%)	5(2.5%)
Do you know cause of Menstruation?	192(96%)	8(4%)
What is an origin of Blood?	166(83%)	34(17%)
Is it important to take care of personal hygiene?	193(96.5%)	7(3.5%)
Do you know what is a good absorbent during menstruation?	148(74%)	52(26%)
Do you know what is a normal cycle length?	191(95.5%)	9(4.5%)
Have you ever heard about menstrual before menarche?	134(67%)	66(33%)
Is taking bath useful during menstruation?	139(69.5%)	61(30.5%)
Do you ever heard about menstrual before menarche?	142(71%)	58(29%)

Attitude About Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescent Girls:

The most of respondents (90%) mentioned having menstrual symptoms, with a smaller group (10%) stating they did not experience any symptoms. In terms of school attendance during menstruation, most respondents (63.5%) confirmed they attend school, while a notable minority (36.5%) stated they do not attend school during menstruation. A majority of the participants (56%) experi-

enced restriction during menstruation. Further-more, they have Believe that not maintaining hygiene during menstruation can cause disease. Further details are in Table 2.

Practice during Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescents

In relation to the utilization of commercially manufactured sanitary pads as absorbents during menstruation,

(45%) participants indicated their preference for commercially made sanitary pads, whereas the remaining participants (55%) stated that they do not use them. On the other hand, the majority of participants (55%) reported their preference for homemade reusable pads, while the remaining participants (45%) stated that they do not use them (Table 3).

Table 2 : Attitude About Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescent Girls

Questions	Yes	No
What is a reaction to first menses? Are you happy?	10(5%)	190(95%)
Do you have a presence of menstrual symptoms?	180(90%)	20(10%)
Do you attend school during menstruation?	127(63.5%)	73(36.5%)
Do you experience restriction during menstruation?	112(56%)	88(44%)
Can failing to maintain proper cleanliness during menstruation lead to disease?	140(70%)	60(30%)
Is it necessary to have access to clean water and use soap when cleaning the genital area?	155(77.5%)	45(22.5%)
Do you think cotton panties are the best sweat-absorbing material.?	134(67%)	66(33%)
Can washing your hands before cleaning your genitals help to prevent reproductive infections?	150(75%)	50(25%)
Is it enough to clean panties with water to remove the blood?	83(41.5%)	117(58.5%)
Is drying the panties inside the room the same as drying them outside?	88(44%)	112(56%)

Table 3: Practice during Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescents

Questions	Yes	No
Do you use commercially manufactured sanitary pads as an absorbent during menstruation?	90(45%)	110(55%)
Do you use home made reusable pad?	110(55%)	90(45%)
Do you change your pad every 4-6 hours when menstruating?	80(40%)	120(60%)
Do you properly dispose of dirty pads during menstruation?	150(75%)	50(25%)
Do you clean your genitalia during menstruation?	187(93.5%)	13(6.5%)
Do you take bath during menstruation?	93(46.5%)	107(53.5%)
Do you wash hand before cleaning genital?	53(26.5%)	147(73.5%)
Do you wash your hands with soap and water after changing pads?	124(62%)	76(38%)
Do you wipe your genitals after every toilet visit during menstruation?	156(78%)	44(22%)

DISCUSSION:

Hygiene practice during menstruation is important action which needs to be done because it happens on a regular basis throughout a woman's lifetime, usually lasting for a period of 3-7 days every month. All 238 respondents (100.00%) believed that menstruation is a physiological process, however in a study done by

Sudeshna and Aparajita, 87% of study subjects believed that menstruation is a physiological process. Even though the study found that a vast number of girls replied correctly, the remaining 13% did not trust the statement¹¹, Another study conducted in India¹⁰ found that almost 50 (16.6%) of respondents felt that menstruation was caused by a curse from God. On the other way, in the current

study, 199 (99.5%) of respondents feel that menstruation is a biological process. In present study 193(96.5%) was know about care is important of personal hygiene¹². Several studies conducted in various countries of the world such as Indonesia, Nepal, and Afghanistan have reported similar findings. In Indonesia, 66.6% of participants demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding about menstrual hygiene¹³, while in Nepal, this percentage was 87.7% ¹⁴, and in Afghanistan, it was 53.3%.¹⁵ According to the responses of most participants, it was expressed that girls should refrain from bathing or cleansing their bodies while menstruating. This perspective may stem from the belief held by many in Pakistani society that menstruation is an unclean and dirty process. It is believed that taking a bath during this time can result in body swelling and increased bleeding.¹⁶ Similar observations were made in studies conducted in Saudi Arabia and India.^{17,18} The current study found that the majority of participants used reusable cloths/towels as menstruation absorbents, with a smaller fraction (45%) relying on disposable pads. This preference could be linked to financial restrictions, poor understanding, the comparatively low availability of disposable pads, unwillingness to purchase them from the market, and concerns about their disposal. These findings differ from earlier studies, particularly those conducted in Pakistan, where the majority of females were observed using disposable pads ¹⁹⁻²³. Many of the participants in this study were observed to follow certain good practices, including the utilization of soap with water for washing reusable material and then drying them under the sun-rays. This could be related to the widespread availability of water and soap in both schools and homes. These results are consistent with similar conclusions drawn from other studies. ²⁴⁻²⁶

Health professionals and nurses must be well trained to deliver reproductive health services in schools, primary health care settings, and the community. Health care providers must be properly prepared to provide education and parental involvement to improve quality of health care for adolescents in communities. Integrating family education can lead to safe reproductive health. Moreover, interventional study can be done in order to evaluate the outcomes of educational initiatives aimed at enhancing awareness, attitudes, and behaviors pertaining to menstrual hygiene. In this regard, nurses and female health workers can assume a vital role by disseminating current and trustworthy information via outreach programs. Such programmes have the potential to

improve the reproductive health of adolescents, young females, and the broader community at large.

The limitation of our study is that results cannot be generalized to all adolescent girls of urban area, as this study only included adolescents girls from rural community.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the participants had good knowledge, attitude, and practice of hygiene during menstruation, although a minority of them still have poor practice. The healthcare industry should assume a more significant role in promoting awareness regarding menstrual hygiene.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST / DISCLOSURE: Nil.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION:

GF: Data collection and helped in manuscript writing,

AA: Analysis and data interpretation.

CJ: Conceived, designed and data collection manuscript writing, statistical analysis and data interpretation final approval of manuscript.

GU: Critical Review and final approval of manuscript

VY: Helped in data collection and manuscript writing.

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