

Study on Knowledge Attitudes and Practices Regarding menstrual Hygiene among Rural Women in Kerala

Sagar Borke¹

¹ Kannur Medical College

Received: 6 December 2013 Accepted: 3 January 2014 Published: 15 January 2014

Abstract

Background: Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to females. It carries with it the joy of being a mother and also the sorrow of guilt due to unclean feeling. Orthodox Indian culture does not allow open discussion about it and the associated problems. Aims: To measure the knowledge, attitude, practice regarding menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls women in rural area aged between 15-50 years, in Anjarakandy Panchayat of Kannur district of Kerala. Settings and design: It is a cross sectional study. The data was collected by interview method by MBBS students under the supervision of investigators. There were 217 women who could be contacted during our visit to 3 clusters (in 3 wards) of households of Anjarakandy Panchayat. The first house was randomly chosen subsequently each adjacent house was taken. All the eligible women who could be contacted during the allotted time were included. Material and Methods: The questionnaire consisted of both open ended closed ended questions. Statistical analysis: The collected data was tabulated in Microsoft excel and it was analyzed in SPSS version 11.0. Chisquare test, proportions and percentage was used for the data analysis. Results: Most (76

Index terms— menstruation, Kerala, sanitary pads.

1 M

infections are common in rural women thus affecting their health & productivity. 2 In most societies the basis of conduct norms & communication about menstruation is the belief that menstruation must remain hidden. Menstruation must be concealed verbally. Different religions have different beliefs about menstruation. Some religion describes a menstruating woman as ritually unclean. The taboo is so great that not only the woman. 29 women are prohibited inparticipating in routine life activities. during periods. She must be purified before she is allowed to return to her family. South Indian women who are menstruating are not allowed in the household for a period of 3 nights. Hygienic practices during menstruation remains poor in rural India. Government of India, under NRHM made arrangements to provide 322 lakh sanitary napkins but only 34% of these have been utilized in the country. When the data of State wise uptake was analyzed an astonishing fact was found out; >80% of these low cost sanitary pads were distributed in the state of Kerala. 3 Thus the present study was conducted among rural women in the Anjarakandy Panchayat, Kannur district of Kerala. It is a descriptive type of cross section study done at the field practice area of Kannur Medical College Anjarakandy.

2 II.

3 Objectives

To measure the knowledge, attitude, & practice regarding menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls & women in rural area aged between 15-50 years, in Anjarakandy Panchayat of Kannur district of Kerala.

4 III.

5 Materials & Methods

The data collection lasted for 2 months (April-May 2009). Women in the age group of 15-50 years of age were interviewed by 12 MBBS students. There were 217 women who could be contacted during our visit to 3 clusters (in 3 wards) of households of Anjarakandy Panchayat. We obtained the ethical consent from the institutional ethics committee of Kannur Medical College Anjarakandy. The first house was randomly chosen & subsequently each adjacent house was taken. All the Volume XIV Issue III Version I Year () Pie chart 1 clearly states that most (76%) ladies have a positive attitude towards menstrual hygiene. 1% said that it was not important to know about menstrual hygiene.

Table 2 describes the Knowledge, attitudes and practices about the ideal absorbent used by the girls. Main reason (35%) for not using sanitary napkins was economic reasons. However 29% of the women opined that they were not aware about it & another 29% opined that they did not like it. Further probing questions indicated that they were not aware regarding the method of its disposal. These points need to be addressed before suggesting the use of sanitary napkins. 68% of the women of the study population reuse their cloth during their periods. 43.67% of the women of the study population use soap to clean the reused cloth during their period. Also 31% of women were using dettol for cleaning the cloth before re-use. 76.5% of the women of the study population took bath twice per day during their periods. 99% of women were taking bath atleast once a day during the periods. 100% of the women clean their genitalia as well as wash their hands after changing pad/cloth. eligible women of these houses who could be contacted during the allotted time were included. Pre-tested questionnaire consisting of both open ended & closed ended questions was used for the study. Data was collected by questionnaire filled by participant under the supervision of investigators. The collected data was tabulated in Microsoft excel and it was analyzed in SPSS version 11.0 Table 1 shows the baseline demographic characteristics of the study population. 33.64% of the population belonged to 25-34 years age group. 76.1% were educated till high school and above. 42.8% were very poor. 74% were housewives. 76.5% were married. V.

6 Discussion

Menstruation is an extremely complex process involving different hormones, sexual organs, and nervous system. The present study has been compared in the light of literature available on the subject. Dasgupta A et al conducted a community based cross sectional study in 2008 among 160 women in West Bengal and found that 108(67.5%) girls were aware about menstruation prior to attainment of menarche. Mother was the 1st informant regarding menstruation in case of 60(37.5%) girls. 138(86.25%) girls believed that it is a physiological process. 78 (48.75%) girls knew the use of sanitary pads during menstruation. Regarding practices only 18(11.25%) girls used sanitary pads during menstruation. For cleaning purpose, 156(97.5%) girls used both soap & water. Regarding restrictions practiced 136(85%) girls practiced different restrictions during menstruation. In the current study we did not study the different restrictions, but 76% had a positive attitude towards menstrual bleeding. 30% of women in the current study who reused the cloth, cleaned it with dettol and/or soap. Using dettol is not an advisable practice nor is it necessary. Use of chemicals like dettol may be harmful if traces are left behind as it may cause rash/inflammation. So also if the soap is not thoroughly rinsed out by washing, it may cause irritation. There is a need to educate the women on these points.

7 Global

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

75.6% of women of the study population know that menstrual hygiene is very important. Another 21.7% opined that it was important. The attitude towards menstrual hygiene is favorable in the study population. This may be due to universality of education even in the remote rural area of Kerala state. The study also shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of sanitary napkins as compared to cloth in educated and uneducated group of ladies but not according to the occupation or marital status. The attitude needs to be reinforced through health awareness programmes to have sustained behavioral impact. These can be carried out at Primary health centres, subcentres, Maternal and Child Health clinics and also through medical auxiliaries like ASHAs and Anganwadi workers. Women from different neighbourhoods/ towns/ cities from the same state should be studied to come to a more authentic conclusion. Due to feasibility and time constraints we could not do this as a part of our exercise. Such multicentric studies can be done which will prove to be of great interest for the scientific community as a whole.

9 VII.

10 Limitations

We did not use qualitative methods of data collection due to paucity of time and money. We also did not use random sampling but since the population of Anjarakandy area was homogeneous there is no reason for bias in results.

97 The study thus clearly states the utilization of these services by the women even among rural women of Kerala.
98 60% of those women who did not use sanitary pads cited the reason as either they did not know or because they
99 did not like it. The main reason that we later found was that they were unaware of the disposal of these pads.
100 They can thus be educated on these issues of pad disposal.

101 Although the current study was quantitative study and not a focus group discussion still the findings can be
102 of wide scientific interest.

103 Adhikari P et al conducted a study in 2007 among 150 female students in Nepal & found that 94 % of them
104 were not properly maintaining menstrual hygiene. Only 6% of them knew that menstruation is a physiological
105 process. 36.7% knew that it was caused by hormones. 94% of them used pads during periods but only 11.3%
106 disposed it appropriately. Overall knowledge & practice were 40.6% & 12.9% respectively. They also recommended
107 that most of the girls spray water by touching onto gold; thus in turn following the age-old ancestral rules. 4 We
108 found that such practices were not so common in our study setting in rural Kerala. The ladies in the current
109 study setting disposed their pads appropriately.

110 Rao R et al conducted an interventional study in 2003-2004 among a stratified cluster of 791 students belonging
111 to 29 colleges in Karnataka & it was found that awareness regarding menstrual hygiene was about 77.2% before
112 started & it increased to 95.6% after the awareness program. 5 This study clearly showed that an educational
113 intervention program can bring about a desirable change in knowledge. 5 In the current study due to resource
114 constraints, in terms of funding we could not manage to take up any sort of interventions.

115 Fernandes M has authored a report titled Menstrual Hygiene in South Asia a neglected issue for wash
116 programmes (water, sanitation, and hygiene) in 2008. The study was conducted on 2579 women in north India &
117 was found that 89% used cloth, 2% used cotton wool, 7% sanitary pads, & 2% ash as an absorbent. Majority of
118 participants quoted high cost & unavailability for not using sanitary pads. 14% of women suffered from menstrual
119 infection. 41% of women were unaware of menstrual hygiene. ?? The current study states that there was a
120 statistically significant difference in the use of sanitary napkins as an absorbent as compared to cloth in educated
121 and uneducated group of ladies but not according to the occupation or marital status. We 75.6% of women of
the study population know that menstrual hygiene is very important. Another 21.7%¹



Figure 1: E

122

¹© 2014 Global Journals Inc. (US) Study on Knowledge Attitudes and Practices Regarding menstrual Hygiene among Rural Women in Kerala

1

	Number of ladies	Percentage
Religion		
Christian	39	18%
Hindu	173	79.7%
Muslim	5	2.3%
Age in years		
15-24	62	28.57%
25-34	73	33.64%
35-44	61	28.12%
>45	21	9.67%
Educational status		
Primary & middle school	52	23.96%
High(Higher)secondary school	127	58.52%
Degree	33	15.4%
Professional course	1	0.46%
No response	4	1.84%
Income		
SES 1	93	42.85%
SES 2	48	22.11%
SES 3	25	11.52%
SES 4	10	4.60%
SES 5	28	12.89%
No response	13	5.99%
Occupation		
Student	43	19.8%
House wife	161	74.2%
Working	13	6%
Marital status		
Married	166	76.5%
Unmarried	51	23.5%

Figure 2: Table 1 :

2

FREQUENCY PERCENTAGE

Figure 3: Table 2 :

3

shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of sanitary napkins as compared to cloth in educated and uneducated group

of ladies but not according to the occupation or marital status.

	Relation b/w variables and absorbent used				Statistics
	SANITARY NAPKIN		CLOTH		
	No	%	No	%	
EDUCATION					Chi-square=5.93, d.f.=2, p=0.049
Professional	18	53	16	47	
Higher secondary/High school	66	52	61	48	
Primary	17	32.7	35	67.3	
No response	2	50	2	50	
OCCUPATION					Chi-square=0.501, d.f.=2, p=0.77
Student	20	46.6	23	53.4	
House wife	78	48.2	83	51.8	
Working women	5	38.5	8	61.5	
MARITAL STATUS					Chi-square=0.33, d.f.=1, p=0.565
Married	77	46.4	89	53.6	
Unmarried	26	50.9	25	49.1	
0	0		3	100	
? 1	29	74.3	10	25.7	
? 2	41	36.2	72	63.8	

Figure 4: Table 3

3

Year

Figure 5: Table 3 :

Available from:
 Year 2014
 Volume XIV Issue III Version I
 D D D D)
 (
 © 2014 Global Journals Inc. (US)

[Note: http]

Figure 6:

-
- 123 [Kathmandu University Medical Journal ()] , *Kathmandu University Medical Journal* 2007. 5 (3) p. .
- 124 [Kumar ()] *Adolescent Health Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Government of India Document*, R Kumar
125 . <http://mohfw.nic.in/NRHM/Review%20Meeting%20with%20State%20MD%20NRHM/AH.pdf> 2012
126 31st Oct; 1-20.
- 127 [Rao et al. ()] *Effectiveness of reproductive health education among rural adolescent girls: A school based*
128 *intervention study in Udupi Taluk*, R Rao , A Lena , N S Nair , V Kamath , A Kamath . 2008. Karnataka. 62
129 p. .
- 130 [Adhikar et al.] *Knowledge and practices regarding menstrual hygiene in rural adolescent girls of Nepal*, P Adhikar
131 , B Kadel , S Dhungel , A Mandal .
- 132 [Dasgupta and Sarkar ()] 'Menstrual Hygiene: how hygienic is the adolescent girl?'. A Dasgupta , M Sarkar .
133 *Ind J Comm Med* 2008. 33 (2) p. .
- 134 [Singh ()] *Place of menstruation in the reproductive life of women in rural north India*, A Singh . 2006. 31 p. .