

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE PRACTICES OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AMONG DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

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Abstract

The project titled “An Analytical Study On The Practices Of Menstrual Hygiene Among Different Age Groups” throws light upon the Menstrual practices carried out by women of age group eighteen to twenty-five and twenty-six to forty five. It aims on finding out the hygienic routine during their monthly periods. As a woman is usually compared to Mother Nature the scope of the study is also extended into finding out a sustainable routine that is also nature friendly. Menstrual hygiene is a symbol of healthy lifestyle and it should be taught to girls who attain puberty. In India due to socio-cultural and economic condition many rural and even urban girls are not aware of these practices. Due to many stigmas, to understand how girls do keep menstrual health is a real challenge to the researchers. Using a survey questionnaire, the investigators will collect data from fifty women in age group of eighteen-forty-five after getting their informal consent. The data will be coded into statistical software for statistics. There will be a significant difference in the menstrual practices among the different age groups. Results of the study will definitely have counselling and social implication and it will help health professionals and researchers to further applications.

Key Words: Menstrual hygiene, Counsellors, health practices, students, survey



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INTRODUCTION

The accepted definition of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is – “Women and adolescent girls use a clean material to absorb menstrual blood and this material can be changed in privacy as often as necessary in the course of menstruation.” It also includes the availability of menstrual facilities associated with a safe and dignified menstruation such as washing facilities, safe and affordable materials, apt knowledge, access to health services and hygienic disposal of used materials. Although this is known worldwide, poor hygiene and related health impacts are quite noticeable. Socio-cultural and economic stigmas pose a real challenge in menstruating hygiene management. Such taboos threaten these hygiene-related practices and make menstruating individuals vulnerable to severe health impacts. Also, engrossed in today’s busy world, self-negligence also plays a major role in this. Global

attention to menstrual health and hygiene is of considerable importance. Researchers and non-government organizations should come forward and educate people, especially the rural population, about menstruation, menstrual hygiene and related diseases in reproductive tracts due to its negligence. Emphasis should also be given on the usage of eco-friendly amenities to overcome the problems of disposal. The main aim of this study is to analyse the various practices of menstrual hygiene among different age groups.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- Menstrual hygiene must be promoted by implementing a course on menstruation and menstrual hygiene management.
- Non-government organizations should come forward to educate rural people about menstruation, menstrual hygiene management, importance of toilet in homes, diseases related reproductive tract due to poor hygiene and so forth
- Emphasis should be given on the use of reusable sanitary or cloth pads to overcome the problem of disposal
- Good hygienic practices such as use of sanitary pads are very essential during menstrual period. Women and girls of reproductive age need access to clean and soft absorbent sanitary products which in the long run protect their health from various infections

OBJECTIVES

- To find out the prevailing practices for menstrual hygiene among different age groups of menstruating individuals.
- To understand the usage of eco-friendly amenities and sustainable period supplies.
- To find out the usage of technology in the field of menstrual hygiene.

REVIEW OF RELATED WORKS

- A research paper published in Journal of Medical Research concluded that menstrual hygiene was satisfactory among adolescent girls but lack of proper knowledge and was still prevailing. Also, they projected that all mothers irrespective of their educational status should be taught to break their hesitancy on discussing the topic with their daughter before they reach the age of menarche.
- Another study conducted by a group of students from Dept. of Community Medicine and Dept. of Microbiology reported that menstrual hygiene was unsatisfactory among

adolescent girls and concluded that girls should be educated about the facts of menstruation and proper hygienic practices.

- A recent study on the same published by group of students from Dept. of Community Medicines reported that even though sanitary pad users were high, unhygienic practices were noticed; so more emphasize is needed to be given on awareness of menstrual hygiene practices among girls of menstruating age.

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Survey methodology was followed for the research and analytical study of menstrual hygiene among people. This survey was conducted in a self-administrated method, specifically to be completed by a respondent without the intervention of the researcher. Eleven questions were selected for the assessment by the team member. Google forms were created and distributed approximately to a population of three hundred people of different age group. Huge numbers of responses were obtained. Random responses were selected for the analysis. Analysis was done manually using the responses. A conclusion of the survey was reached through thorough contemplation agreeing with the aim, need and significance of the study.

SAMPLE

The survey of menstrual hygiene practice was conducted among people of two different age groups - Eighteen to Twenty-five and Twenty-six to Forty-five. An inference on the hygienic practices of the entire population is made from this subset. Probability based sample was chosen for the survey.

INSTRUMENT

Survey Google Form: After reviewing theory the researchers planned a Google Form. The survey included anchor and enter your answer type questions. The purpose of the survey was not mentioned initially in order to avoid creating mentality and influencing the response. The form consisted of nine questions. The questions dealt with monthly hygiene routines and usage of various menstrual products.

DATA COLLECTION

The researchers created a Google Form and circulated it through communication platforms like WhatsApp and E-mail to women of two different age groups. The survey was conducted among fifty women of above and below forty-five years. The data was analysed and

summarized for effective study of menstrual hygiene. It was then recorded in Microsoft spread sheet.

ANALYSIS

After collecting data, it was fed into Microsoft Excel for further analysis. The percentage of responses as Agree/Disagree for all the items in Part A of the questionnaire for the age groups 18-25 and 26-45 are calculated separately. The responses are presented as Table I and Table II,

Table I. Percentage responses of age group 18-25 to the questionnaire on menstrual hygiene.

Item	Agree	Disagree
I experience regular periods	23 (92%)	2 (8%)
I change my pads after every 4-5 hours	17 (68%)	8 (32%)
I keep track of my blood flow	15 (60%)	10 (40%)
I have never used any other period supplies rather than pads	24 (96%)	1 (4%)
I always experience strong cramps during my cycle	12 (48%)	13 (52%)

In the first age group which is eighteen to twenty five 92% of the responses where that periods where experienced regularly by them. The remaining 8% disagreed with the statement. The next item which is changing pads after every 4-5 hours , 68% percent agreed while 32% disagreed. 60% percent agreed that they keep track of their blood flow. 40% disagreed to the same statement. The sample responded that 96% have never used any other supplies rather than pads and the rest disagrees to it. 48% agrees that they experience strong cramps during their cycle.

Table II. Percentage responses of age group 26-45 to the questionnaire on menstrual hygiene.

Item	Agree	Disagree
I experience regular periods	19 (76%)	6 (24%)
I change my pads after every 4-5 hours	24 (96%)	1 (4%)
I keep track of my blood flow	18 (72%)	7 (28%)
I have never used any other period supplies rather than pads	19 (76%)	6 (24%)
I always experience strong cramps during my cycle	8 (32%)	17 (68%)

In the second age group 76% responded that the experience regular periods where 24% disagreed. 96% of the sample agreed that they change their pads after every 4-5 hours. 72% agreed that they keep track of their blood flow while 28% disagreed to the statement. The next item was the use of other period supplies and 76% agreed that they have never used it, while 24 % disagreed. 32% of the sample experiences strong cramps during their cycle. 68% disagreed to the statement.

The responses in Part B is summed up and the percentage is calculated for each response. 50% of the sample is currently using Intimate washes as a part of their menstrual hygiene routine. A more sustainable product such as cotton\cloth pads are used by 36% and menstrual cups are used by 12 %.

The study shows that during each month every woman is using an average of 17 sanitary napkins for her cycle.

6% disagreed that they wash their intimate area often.

Some of the android and iOS applications used by the sample were Flo, My Calendar and Web med. It was shown that the majority (84%) is not using any applications to calculate their cycle.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The present study revealed that both the age groups follow a similar pattern of hygiene practices. Some of the practices such as changing pads after every 4-5 hours and washing the intimate area are widely practiced among the menstruating women regardless of their age group. Apart from sanitary napkins a large percentage of the sample are using intimate hygiene washes in their hygiene routine. An unforeseen result was the use of sustainable period products such as cloth pads which is conventional way or the modern approaches like menstrual cups is rare. It was found that the average use of sanitary napkins per month is about 17 for each woman aged 18-45. For the 355 million menstruating women all around India, removing the 64% who are deprived of sanitary napkins it is still a big number of sanitary napkins! This arrives at the conclusion that the hygiene practices we follow are not a result of any special education or training but through transition from elders or friends. Another shocking observation is that even in this modern era of well build ICT devices and smartphones, the majority of the sample were unaware about the existence of applications that you can download in your mobiles for predicting their cycles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proper awareness and sex education for both the genders before attaining puberty is the most important recommendation of the study. Also, Parental awareness especially in rural areas regarding their menstruating child's health is recommended.

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