



A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE ON MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AMONG NURSING STUDENTS IN SELECTED NURSING COLLEGES IN KANCHIPURAM DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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Cite This Article: P. M. Joanna Rachel & Dr. Veena M Joseph, "A Descriptive Study to Assess the Knowledge and Practice on Menstrual Hygiene Among Nursing Students in Selected Nursing Colleges in Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu, India", International Journal of Current Research and Modern Education, Volume 2, Issue 2, Page Number 53-57, 2017.

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Abstract:

A descriptive study with a quantitative approach was found to be appropriate to assess the knowledge and practice of menstrual hygiene. The study was conducted in three nursing colleges in Kanchipuram district, Tamil Nadu, India. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 102 samples. The research tool consisted of a structured interview schedule to assess the demographic profile of the samples and structured questionnaires to assess the knowledge and practice of menstrual hygiene. The study findings revealed that only 3% of the samples have adequate knowledge on menstrual hygiene (> 75% score), 27% of the samples have moderately adequate knowledge (51-75% score) and 70% have inadequate knowledge on menstrual hygiene (< 50% score). It was also observed in the study that 50% of the samples have adequate practice of menstrual hygiene, 40% of the samples have moderately adequate practice and 10% of the samples have inadequate practice of menstrual hygiene.

Key Words: Knowledge on Menstrual Hygiene, Practice of Menstrual Hygiene & Student Population

Introduction and Background:

Menstruation is a normal process; however in most parts of the world, it remains a taboo and is rarely talked about (House et al. 2012)¹. Certain cultural practices and taboos around menstruation have a negative impact on the lives of women and girls.

It is reported that the risk of infection including sexually transmitted diseases is higher than normal during menstruation. Certain practices of menstruation are likely to increase the risk of infection such as: unclean rags if inserted into the vagina can introduce or support the growth of unwanted bacteria that could lead to infection; Douching upsets the normal balance of yeast in the vagina and makes infection more likely. The risk of passing on blood-borne disease (e.g. HIV or Hepatitis B) through unprotected sex is also increased during menstruation (Menstrupedia 2016)².

Menstrual hygiene is essential to ensure that one's everyday life is not interrupted by menstruation and also to promote ones well being.

Need of the Study:

Majority of the female population who are menstruating have no access to clean and safe sanitary products, or to a clean and private space to change menstrual cloths or pads and to wash (Menstrual Hygiene Management 2013)³.

Literary findings reveals that 1 out of every 3 girls in South Asia knew nothing about menstruation prior to attaining menarche, while 48% of the girls in Iran and 10% in India believed that menstruation is a disease (WASH United - Menstrual Hygiene Management 2016)⁴.

(Dasgupta. A, Sarkar M 2008)⁵ in their study on how hygienic is an adolescent girl ? Observed the following practices during menstruation - 18 (11.25%) girls used sanitary pads during menstruation, 68 (42.5%) girls used old cloth pieces and 10 (6.25%) girls used new cloth pieces. Sixty-four (40%) girls used both cloth pieces and sanitary pads during menstruation. Cleanliness of external genitalia was unsatisfactory (frequency of cleaning of external genitalia is 0-1/day) in case of 24 (15%) girls; For cleaning purpose, 156 (97.5%) girls used both soap and water; More than half of the respondents (51.25%) did not possess a covered toilet; Regarding the method of disposal of the used material, 118 (73.75%) girls reused cloth pieces and 92 (57.5%) girls properly disposed the cloth pieces or sanitary pads used, i.e. they wrap the used cloth piece or sanitary pad in a paper bag and disposed in a place used for solid waste disposal.

The above findings reveal their lack of awareness, their attitude and their unhygienic practices followed during menstruation and all of the above can affect their general health and have a negative bearing on their reproductive health in due course of time.

Therefore, it is the need of the hour to emphasize on the role of good Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) as a trigger for better, stronger development of women and girls: personal, educational and professional. Hence, this study is taken up to assess ones level of awareness and practice on menstrual hygiene and take the necessary steps to create an awareness and also promote hygienic practices during menstruation and thereby ensure normal reproductive health and well-being.

Title:

A descriptive study to assess the knowledge and practice on menstrual hygiene among nursing students in selected nursing colleges in Kanchipuram District, Tamil Nadu, India.

Objectives of the Study:

- ✓ To assess the knowledge on menstrual hygiene among the nursing students
- ✓ To assess the practice of menstrual hygiene among the nursing students

Methodology:

A descriptive study with a quantitative research approach was found to be appropriate to assess the knowledge and practice of menstrual hygiene among the nursing students.

Population and Sampling:

The population included all the female nursing students in the selected nursing colleges. A convenience sampling technique was used to select 102 samples with the following inclusion criteria viz., All the first year female nursing students who have attained menarche and willing to participate in the study.

Research Tool:

- ✓ A self administered questionnaire was developed to assess the demographic profile of the samples.
- ✓ A self administered questionnaire was constructed to assess the knowledge and practice of menstrual hygiene.

Scoring and Interpretation of Knowledge on Menstrual Hygiene:

Each right answer was given one mark

Categorization of Level of Knowledge on Menstrual Hygiene:

Adequate Knowledge >76%; Moderately Adequate Knowledge 51- 75 % and Inadequate Knowledge < 50 %

Scoring and Interpretation of Practice of Menstrual Hygiene:

The Practice responses was categorized and was presented in percentage

Tool Validity:

The constructed research tools were subjected to expert opinion and the content validity index was 95 %, as the validity index was good the same tool was used in the study.

Ethical Consideration:

The institutional ethical clearance was obtained from Chettinad Academy of Research and Education, Permission was obtained from the Heads of the selected Nursing Colleges where data collection was planned and informed consent was obtained from the samples.

Study Findings, Interpretation and Discussion:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for demographic information

Variables	Frequency & Percentage N (%)
Age	
18 years	61(59)
17 years	25(25)
19 years	16(16)
Residence	
Urban	49(48)
Rural	53(52)
Religion	
Hindu	82(80)
Christian	20(20)
Knowledge on menstruation before menarche	
Knew	39(38)
Didn't know	63(62)
Source of information on menstruation	
Mother	10(26)
Sister	9(23)
Friends	8(20)
Mass media	12(30)
Subjected to restrictions during menstruation	
Yes	45(44)
No	47(56)

Specific restrictions followed during menstruation	
Not allowed to visit Temple	25(44)
Not allowed into Pooja Room	21(21)
Not allowed to go out of home	2(4)
Not allowed to touch babies	1(2)
Not allowed to come inside the home	1(2)
Not allowed to come inside Kitchen	6(11)
Washing your own clothes	1(2)
Sleep in a separate place	2(4)
No non vegetarian foods	3(5)
No sweets	4(7)

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of level of knowledge on menstrual hygiene N = 102

Level of Knowledge on menstrual hygiene	Frequency & Percentage N (%)
Adequate knowledge (>76%)	3 (3)
Moderately Adequate Knowledge (51- 75 %)	28 (27)
Inadequate Knowledge (< 50 %)	71 (70)

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for practice of menstrual hygiene

Practice of Menstrual Hygiene	Frequency & Percentage N (%)
1. Which of the following material do you use as a menstrual absorbent?	
a. reusable cloth pad	5(3)
b. sanitary napkins	97(97)
c. Tampon	0(0)
2. How often do you change your undergarments during menstrual days?	
a. once a day	58(57)
b. Twice a day	44(43)
3. Do you have undergarments which you use only during menstruation?	
a. yes	53(52)
b. no	49(48)
4. What type of undergarment do you use during menstruation?	
a. cotton	75(74)
b. synthetic	27(26)
5. On an average how regularly do you change your pad?	
a. Once a day	9(9)
b. Twice a day	32(31)
c. Once in 6 hours	21(21)
d. once in 3-4hrs	40(39)
6. Do you wash your hands after changing the pad?	
a. yes	102(100)
b. no	0(0)
7. How do you clean your genitalia during menstruation?	
a. plain water	31(30)
b. warm water	14(14)
c. soap and water	10(10)
d. antiseptics	47(46)
8. How do you dispose your sanitary pads?	
a. wrap in paper and discard in dustbin	31(30)
b. discard used sanitary pad directly in dustbin	14(14)
c. flush sanitary pad in the toilet	47(46)
d. dispose into a well/lake	10(10)

Demographics of Sampled Participants (Presented in Table 1):

- ✓ Majority of the samples (59%) were in the age group of 18 years, 52% of the samples were from rural set up and 80% of the samples were Hindus
- ✓ 52% of the samples didn't have any previous knowledge of menstruation before attaining menarche

- ✓ Major source of information on menstruation was from Mass Media to an extent of 30%, while 26% of them received information from their mother, 23% from sisters and only 20% from their friends.
- ✓ 56% of the samples did not practice any restrictions during menstruation while 44 % of them followed some restrictions during menstruation. Among the samples that practiced restrictions during menstruation, it was observed that 44 % of them were not allowed to visit the temple, while 21 % of them were not permitted in the Pooja room.

Level of Knowledge on Menstrual Hygiene (Presented in Table 2):

- ✓ 70% of the samples have inadequate knowledge on menstrual hygiene while 27% of the samples have moderately adequate knowledge on menstrual hygiene and only 3% of the samples have adequate knowledge on menstrual hygiene.

Practice of Menstrual Hygiene (Presented in Table 3):

- ✓ With regard to the type of menstrual absorbent used it was observed in the present study that majority of the nursing students nearly 97% of them reported using sanitary pads during their menstruation. However Dasgupta and M Sarkar 2008³ in their study observed that only 11.25% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation. Similarly (Khanna et al 2005)⁶ in their study reported that three-fourths of the girls in Rajasthan used old cloth during their periods and only one-fifth reported using readymade sanitary pads. A study in Africa also found use of sanitary pads as low as 18% amongst Tanzanian women with the remainder using cloth or toilet paper (Baisley K, Changalucha J, Weiss HA, Mugeye K, Everett D, et al 2009)⁷.
- ✓ In the study it was observed that 57% of the samples reported changing their undergarments once a day during menstruation while 43% of the samples changed their undergarments only once a day during menstruation. It was also observed in the study that 52% of the samples used separate undergarments during menstruation and 74% of the samples have reported using only cotton undergarments during menstruation.
- ✓ 39% of the samples in the study reported changing their pads once in 3-4 hours while 21% of them once in 6 hours, 31% reported changing their pads twice a day and only 9% changed their pads once a day. While Dr. Neelima Sharma, Dr. Pooja Sharma, Dr. Neha Sharma, Dr. R.R. Wavare, Dr. Bishal Gautam, Dr. Madan Sharma 2013⁸ reported in their study that 72% (n=126) reported changing their pads every 6 hours during the first 2 days of their menstrual cycles.
- ✓ 100% of the respondents have reported that they wash their hands after changing their pads.
- ✓ It was observed that 30% of the samples reported that they wash their genitalia with plain water during menstruation, 14% of the samples wash their genitalia with warm water during menstruation, 46% of the samples use soap and water to wash their genitalia during menstruation and 10% of the samples use antiseptics water to wash their genitalia during menstruation. In a similar study by P.J.Parameaswari, P. M. Udayshankar, S. Cynthia, M. D. Vidhyashree, A. Abiselvi and Syed Iqbal Sultan 2014⁹ it was reported that nearly 87 % of the respondents reported cleaning their genitalia with plain Luke warm water during menstruation.
- ✓ 89% of the samples reported disposing their used napkins by wrapping it in paper and then discarding in dustbin while 11% of the samples disposed their used napkins by discarding it directly into the dustbin. Subhangi Nayak et al 2016¹⁰ in their study observed that 72 % girls disposed the used absorbent in Public dustbin while 14% of girls wrapped the used absorbent in paper and then discarded it.

Conclusion:

This study was taken up to assess level of awareness on menstrual hygiene and practice of menstrual hygiene among nursing students as they are responsible to educate the public and ensure that women in the reproductive age group are aware of the right practices related to menstrual hygiene thereby ensure normal reproductive health and well being.

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