

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRACTICES AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS ENROLLED AT ANGANWADI CENTRES OF CHANDIGARH

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Abstract: Menstruation is a physiological process but it is associated with number of superstitions. Dearth of good menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent girls makes them vulnerable to reproductive tract infections. This study aimed at assessing practices related to menstrual hygiene.

Method: This study was conducted among out-school and in-school adolescent girls enrolled at Anganwadi Centres of Chandigarh. Sample of 50 respondents was selected by proportionate stratified random sampling. Interview schedule was used for collecting data.

Results: 67.7% in-school girls take bath daily and 73.7% out-school girls avoid washing hairs during menstruation. More than 60.0% respondents of both groups don't change under garment whenever gets stained. 63.2% out-school use cloth and 74.2% in-school girls use sanitary napkins as menstrual absorbent. None of the respondent use cloth after wash during menstruation. 15.8% out-school and 22.6% in-school girls change menstrual absorbent thrice in a day. 100.0% out-school wash hands after changing pad/cloth and 100.0% in-school girls use soap for washing hands. Majority of the respondents in both groups had average level of menstrual hygiene practices.

Key words: Adolescent Girls, Anganwadi Centre, Chandigarh, Menstrual Hygiene, Practices

Introduction: Menstruation is a physiological process but it is associated with number of superstitions and restrictions. A study on various population groups from different parts of the world had portrayed that there are various beliefs such as not to wash hair, not to take bath, avoiding cooking and not to visit religious places during menstruation, which people trail. Women follow such beliefs dint of fear of increase or decrease of menstrual flow, early menopause and impurity concept associated to menstruation [1]. Dearth of good menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent girls increase their susceptibility to infections [2]. Good menstrual hygiene practices are essential to be undertaken such as taking bath at least once in a day, wearing clean undergarments [3], change of sanitary pads every 3 to 5 hours [4], wash hands with soaps every time when change pad etc.

Significance of the study: Researchers from various disciplines have conducted studies on school going and college going adolescent girls. Comparative studies have also been conducted on rural, urban and tribal areas for assessing menstrual hygiene practices. To the best of author's knowledge, the present study is the first comparative study, done among out-school and in-school adolescent girls on assessing menstrual hygiene practices. The significance of the present study lies in the comparison done among out-school and in-school adolescent girls wherein out-school adolescent girls are those who either dropped schooling or never attended school and in-school adolescent girls are those who are attending school for attaining education.

Objective: The objective of this study was to assess the practices regarding menstrual hygiene of out-school and in-school adolescent girls enrolled at Anganwadi centres of Chandigarh.

Methods: The present study was conducted among out-school and in-school adolescent girls, of age group between 14 to 18 years, enrolled at Anganwadi Centres of Chandigarh.

Sample was selected on the basis of random sampling at two stages. Firstly, to select anganwadi centres and secondly, to select respondents from both groups (out-school and in-school adolescent girls). Selected sample size was 50 (19 out-school and 31 in-school adolescent girls).

Data was collected by using interview schedule. In interview schedule, questions on assessing practices on menstrual hygiene were asked. p-value was calculated at 95% confidence interval using chi square tests. p-value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: 47.4 % out-school and 67.7 % in-school adolescent girls take bath daily during menstruation. More than half of the out-school adolescent girls and little less than one third in-school adolescent girls avoid taking bath daily during menstruation, as revealed from graph 1.

It is evident from graph 2 that little more than one fourth out-school and little more than two fifth in-school adolescent girls followed correct practice to maintain hygiene. They don't avoid washing hairs during menstruation. Majority of the respondents in both the groups comprising out-school (73.7%) as well as in-school (58.1%) adolescent girls avoid washing hairs during menstruation.

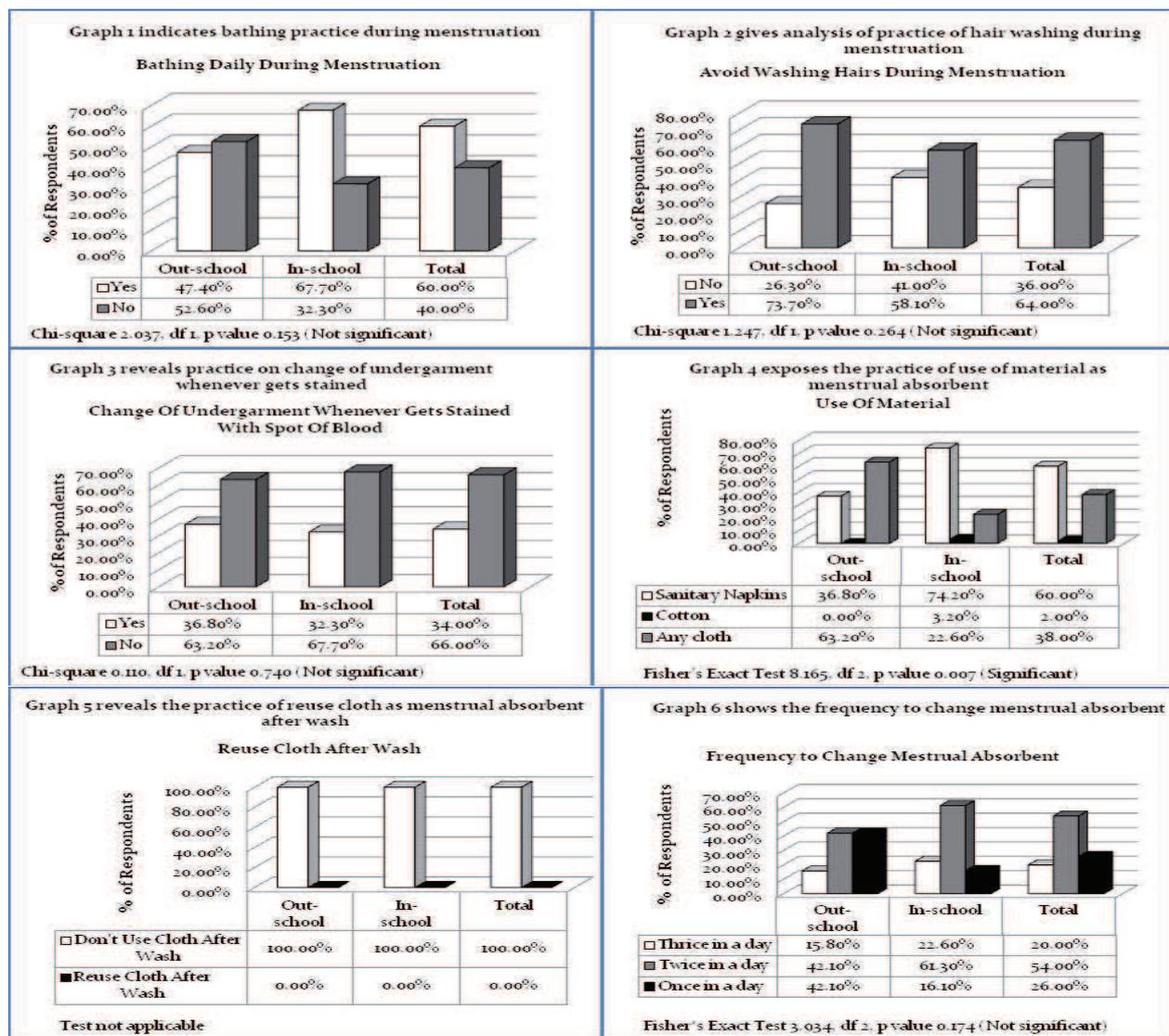
As indicated in graph 3, 36.8% out-school and 32.3% in-school adolescent girls change under garment whenever gets stained with spot of blood. 63.2% out-school and 67.7% in-school adolescent girls don't change under garment whenever gets stained with spot of blood.

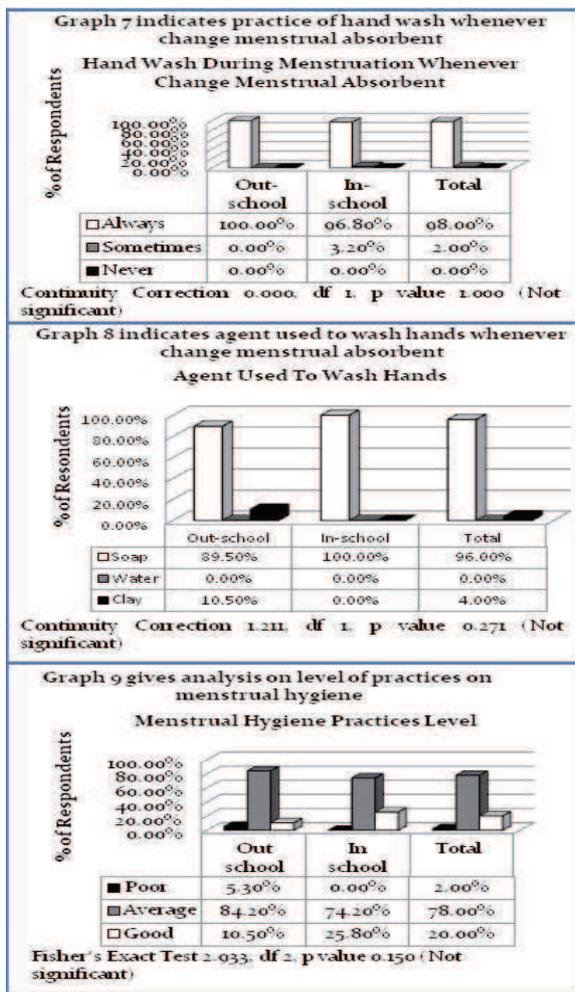
Graph 4 depicts that majority of out-school adolescent girls (63.2%) reported that they make use of cloth where as majority of the in-school adolescent girls (74.2%) preferred use of sanitary napkins during menstruation as menstrual absorbent. Negligible number of respondents among in-school adolescent girls makes use of cotton as menstrual absorbent during menstruation. Data on use of material during menstruation as menstrual absorbent was found to be statistically significant among in-school and out-school adolescent girls (p-value 0.007).

None of the respondents among out-school and in-school adolescent girls use cloth after wash during menstruation (Graph 5). It is apparent from graph 6 that 15.8% out-school and 22.6% in-school adolescent girls change menstrual absorbent thrice a day. More than two fifth out-school and more than three fifth in-school adolescent girls change menstrual absorbent twice in a day. More than two fifth out-school and little more than 16% in-school adolescent girls change menstrual absorbent once in a day.

100.0% out-school and 96.8% in-school adolescent girls always wash hands whenever go to toilet to change pad/cloth (Graph 7). 89.5% out-school and 100.0% in-school adolescent girls reported that soap is the best agent to wash hands. Negligible number of respondents reported use of clay for washing hands (Graph 8).

It is visible from graph 9 that little more than one fourth in-school and little more than one tenth of out-school adolescent girls have good level of menstrual hygiene practices. Majority of the respondents in both the groups had average level of menstrual hygiene practices. Negligible number of out-school adolescent girls have poor level of menstrual hygiene practices.





Discussion: To take bath daily during menstruation is important to maintain hygiene. In the present study, it was found that 60% of the adolescent girls from both out-school and in-school take bath daily during menstruation and rest of the adolescent girls don't take bath daily during menstruation. The findings of the present study are consistent with the results from the study conducted in Saudi Arabia [5] and in western Ethopia [6]. Hasanein and Diab found that 68% of the adolescent girls engage in regular bathing during menstruation and rest of the respondents don't take bath during menstruation [5]. Upashe et al found that 67.3% girls take bath daily with soap during menstruation [6]. Another study conducted in Nepal among adolescent girls by Adhikari et al. observed that 96% of the adolescent girls do take bath on third day of menstruation and meager 4% take bath daily during menstruation [7]. It is apparent from the data of the present study that majority of the respondents (64%) comprising both groups avoid washing hairs during menstruation. A study on various population groups from different parts of the world had also depicted that majority of the Indonesian and Filipino respondents believed

that it was inadvisable to wash hair during menstruation and a similar trend is also found among women in Yugoslavia, Pakistan and Jamaica [1].

It is apparent from the results of the present study and above stated studies that not taking bath and avoiding washing hair is a common phenomenon to be followed during menstruation. Reasons behind not taking bath daily and to avoid washing hairs during menstruation found in the present study are: they believe that periods become irregular, flow of blood as well as pain can aggravate. It was also found that respondents had great influence of their peer group, as their friends also follow the same practices.

Two-third of the respondents comprising both groups, that is, out-school and in-school don't change undergarment whenever gets stained with spot of blood. While one-third of the respondents change undergarment whenever gets stained with spot of blood. A similar trend was found among both groups regarding change of undergarment whenever gets stained with spot of blood. The reason explicated by the respondents for not doing so was "staining during menstruation is a common phenomenon".

60% of the respondents comprising both groups, that is, out-school and in-school use sanitary napkins where as 38% use cloth as menstrual absorbent. The present study supports the findings of Mohanty et al. [8] and Jogdand and Yerpude [9], who in their studies found that majority of the respondents use sanitary napkins as menstrual absorbents. Mohanty et al. found in his study conducted in urban slum area in Odisha that 56.8% of the girls exclusively use sanitary napkins whereas 12.7% use cloth as menstrual absorbent [8]. Jogdand and Yerpude conducted study in urban slum area in Andhra Pradesh found that 53.7% girls reported the use of sanitary pads and 34.63% girls reported the use of old clothes during menstruation [9]. Singh et al. [10], Dasgupta and Sarkar [11] and Kansal et al [12] found that majority of the respondents use cloth as compared to sanitary napkin. Singh et al conducted a study in village areas of Uttarakhand found that 38% girls used sanitary pads and 62% girls used cloth pieces [10]. Dasgupta and Sarkar conducted study in West Bengal, found that 11.25% girls used sanitary pads and 48.75% girls used old and new cloth pieces [11]. Kansal et al. conducted study among rural adolescent girls in Varanasi found that 31% of the respondents were using sanitary pads and 69% were found to be using cloth as menstrual absorbent [12].

None of the respondent comprising both groups, that is out-school and in-school found to be reusing cloth after wash as menstrual absorbent. The studies of Mohanty et al. [8] and Kansal et al. [12] are found to be contrary to the present study. Mohanty et al found that 73% reused cloth after wash [8]. Kansal et al. found that 17.6% of the respondents were washing

and reusing cloth [12]. The difference that is found in the present study as compared to above stated studies may be because of the selection of geographical area for research.

20% respondents comprising both groups that is out-school and in-school change menstrual absorbent thrice a day wherein respondents changing menstrual absorbent thrice in a day is comparatively higher among in-school than out-school. Contrary to the present study Hennegan et al. found more than 60% respondents change sanitary protection three per day and more times [13] and Upashe et al. found that 51.9% respondents change pads or cloth three times and above during menstruation [6].

Washing hands is a defensive measure against various forms of diseases and infections. During menstruation washing hands is important to protect from such fears. In the present study, it was found that 3.2% in-school adolescent girls wash hands sometimes whenever change menstrual absorbent, the reason being non-availability of agent to wash hands during school hours. 10.5% out-school adolescent girls use clay to wash hands, probable reason may be low economic status and dearth of knowledge regarding hygienic way of washing hands. 20% respondents comprising both groups of adolescent girls found to be having good level of

menstrual hygiene practices. Upashe et al. in their study found that 39.9% had good practices on menstrual hygiene [6]. In the present study, it was found that majority of the respondents had average level of menstrual hygiene practices. The probable explanation might be that both out-school and in-school adolescent girls had low level of communication with anganwadi workers and in-school adolescent girls had low level of communication at school regarding menstruation and its hygiene practices, as these exposures had not been able to make good impact on their practices.

Conclusion: The present study found that ensuing certain misconceptions and beliefs, adolescent girls from both groups, were following certain unhealthy practices during menstruation. The results of present study point out the need to impart knowledge on menstrual hygiene among out-school and in-school adolescent girls through anganwadi centres for eradicating misconceptions and to improve practices. At school level, teachers can play a very influential role to equip the in-school adolescent girls for pursuing safe and healthy menstrual hygiene practices.

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