

## **MENSTRUAL PATTERN, PRACTICES, PROBLEMS AND ATTITUDE AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Adolescence is the stage of life span that represents a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Menarche and menstruation is often considered as an issue that every girl has to deal with. The fast pacing technological and social development has still not completely made menstruation comfortable for girls even among the elite section in an urban society. Hence a study was undertaken to assess the menstrual pattern, practices, problems and attitude among adolescent girls studying in selected school Chennai. A quantitative research approach and a descriptive survey design was used. This study was conducted among adolescent girls in the age group of 11-16 years studying in a selected school in Chennai. Adolescent girls who attained menarche, those who were willing to participate and who can read, write and

understand English were included. A total of 229 adolescent girls were selected using purposive sampling technique. The data was collected using self-administered questionnaire. The results revealed that majority of the girls 102(44.5%) attained menarche at the age of 12 years and 170 girls (74.2%) reported that their menstrual cycle was regular. All girls used sanitary pads. Majority of the girls 212(92.6%) used cotton undergarments and 160 girls (69.9%) changed their undergarments once a day. Majority 206(90%) of them used only plain water to clean the genital organs. Majority of the girls 132(57.6%) had abdominal pain, and

117 (51.1%) of them had general tiredness. Majority of the girls 144(62.9%) had moderate attitude and 70 girls (30.6%) had poor attitude towards menstruation.

**KEYWORDS:** Menstruation, Hygiene, Attitude, Menarche, Menstrual Problems.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the stage of life span that represents a transition period between childhood and adulthood. Chronologically it begins at the age 12 years and extends through age 18. The developmental event of puberty which usually occurs at the beginning of adolescence, signals the end of childhood. On average, puberty typically begins between 8 and 13 in females and 9 and 14 in males (Logen Breehl, 2022).

Menarche, the onset of puberty in girls is one of the prominent bodily development in adolescent girls. It is a meaningful, dramatic, and concrete event which marks puberty. Menarche and menstruation is often considered as an issue that every girl has to deal with (UNICEF India, 2014). The attitudes of societies toward menarche vary from delight and pride to fear and shame (Shabnam Omidvar, 2018).

Menstruation has often been a subject that even biology teachers shush about. Even Parents ignore the responsibility and role they play in educating a girl about menstruation since Indian Society has always taught women not to voice out her personal issues. Many schools do not have the facilities to support either adolescent girls or female teachers to manage menstrual hygiene. This lack of infrastructure means that female teachers may struggle to perform their teaching duties, and girls may miss school whilst they are menstruating. Growing evidence documents the impact on girls' school attendance related to the problems of managing menstrual hygiene on the way to and during school (WHO and UNICEF 2013). Poorly managed menstrual hygiene may be linked to urinary or reproductive tract infections. The fast pacing technological and social development has still not completely made menstruation comfortable for girls even among the elite section in an urban society. Hence a need arises as to study menstruator's believes, problems and practices. The present study explores the menstrual pattern, practices, problems and attitude among adolescent girls.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A study to assess the menstrual pattern, practices, problems and attitude among adolescent girls studying in selected school Chennai.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the menstrual pattern, practices and problems among adolescent girls.
2. To assess the attitude towards menstruation among adolescent girls.
3. To find the association between attitude towards menstruation with selected demographic variables of adolescent girls.

## METHOD

A quantitative research approach and a descriptive survey design was used. This study was conducted among adolescent girls in the age group of 11-16 years studying in a selected school in Chennai. Adolescent girls who attained menarche, those who were willing to participate and who can read, write and understand English were included. A total of 229 adolescent girls were selected using purposive sampling technique. The data was collected using self-administered questionnaire. The tool consisted of items to elicit demographic data of adolescents, Questionnaire including 5 items to elicit regarding menstrual pattern, 9 items to elicit menstrual practice, 17 items to elicit menstrual problems and 15 items in Likert scale to elicit the level of attitude. For assessment of attitude, the scale legends with the scores were Strongly agree (1), Agree (2), Uncertain (3), Disagree (4) and Strongly disagree(5) for negative items and vice versa for positive items. Attitude was classified as good ( $\geq 75\%$ ), moderate (51-74%) and Poor ( $\leq 50$ ). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Permission from setting was obtained. Permission from IEC and informed consent from parents and assent from children were obtained. Confidentiality was maintained.

## RESULTS

### I. ASSESSMENT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

**Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables of Adolescent girls (N=229).**

Sl.no	Demographic variable	Frequency	Percentage
1	<b>Age of Girls</b>		
	11-12 Years	73	31.9
	13-14 Years	90	39.3
	15-16 Years	66	28.8
2	<b>Standard</b>		
	6 -7 Standard	73	31.9
	8-9 Standard	86	39.3
	10-11 Standard	70	28.8
3	<b>Education of mother</b>		
	Uneducated	12	5.2
	School Education	85	37.1

	Collegiate Education	96	41.9
	others	36	15.7
4	<b>Occupation of mother</b>		
	Home maker	136	59.4
	Self-employed /Business	18	7.9
	Private Job	57	24.9
	Govt. Job	18	7.9
5	<b>Monthly income</b>		
	Less than Rs. 20,000/-	42	18.3
	Rs, 20,000 to 30,000/-	100	43.7
	More than Rs. 30,000/-	87	38
6	<b>Dietary pattern</b>		
	Vegetarian	36	15.7
	Non Vegetarian	193	84.3
7	<b>Source of information</b> about menstruation		
	Mother	206	90.0
	Teacher	16	7.0
	Friends	7	3.1

Table 1 shows that 90(39.3%) girls were in the age group of 13-14 years and 86(39.3%) of them were studying 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> standard. Most of the girls' 96 (41.9%) mothers' educational status were college level, and 136 girls' (59.4%) mothers' were home makers. Most of the girls' 100(43.7) family monthly income was between Rs. 20,000-30,000/- and majority of the girls 193(84.3%) were non-vegetarian. Majority 206(90%) of them received information about menstruation from their mother.

## II. ASSESSMENT OF MENSTRUAL PATTERN

**Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of adolescent girls menstrual pattern**  
N=229.

Sl. No	Menstrual pattern	Frequency	Percentage
1	<b>Age at menarche</b>		
	11 Years	67	29.3
	12 Years	102	44.5
	13 Years	33	14.4
	14 Years	22	9.6
	15 Years	5	2.2
2	<b>Nature of menstrual cycle</b>		
	Regular	170	74.2
	Irregular	59	25.8
3	<b>Duration of menstrual cycle</b>		
	Less than 20 days	43	18.8
	20-25 days	58	25.3
	26-30 days	90	39.3
	31-35 days	18	7.9
	Others	20	8.7

4	<b>Duration of flow</b>		
	Upto 2 days	19	8.3
	Upto 3 days	25	10.9
	Upto 4 days	57	24.9
	Upto 5 days	96	41.9
	Others	32	14.0
5	<b>Day at which flow is excess</b>		
	2nd day	121	52.8
	3rd day	56	24.5
	4th day	32	14.0
	Others	20	8.7

Table 2 shows that most of the girls 102(44.5%) attained menarche at the age of 12 years and a significant number of girls 67 (29.3%) attained menarche at the age of 11 years. This is supported by the study conducted by Seenivasan, P (2016) who reported that 69% of the girls attained menarche at 11 to 13 years. Yaliwal RG et. al (2020) stated that 70% attained menarche 12 to 14.9 years.

Majority of them 170(74.2%) reported that their menstrual cycle was regular. Ninety girls (39.3%) reported that their menstrual cycle duration was 26-30 days and 43 girls (18.8%) had their cycle within less than 20 days. Most of the girls 96(41.9%) had their menstrual flow for upto five days. Majority of them 121 (52.8%) reported that they had excess flow on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. These findings are supported by the study conducted by Borkar S K et all (2022) who reported that the menstrual cycle was regular for 85.86% girls, 90.69% had their cycle for 21-35 days and 87.93% of the girls had bleeding for 3-6 days.

### III. ASSESSMENT OF MENSTRUAL PRACTICE OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

**Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of adolescent girls menstrual practice N=229.**

Sl.No	Menstrual practice	Frequency	Percentage
1	<b>Menstrual absorbent used</b>		
	Sanitary pad	229	100.00
	Clothes	0	0
	Menstrual cups	0	0
	Tampons	0	0
2	<b>Type of undergarments used</b>	0	
	Cotton	212	92.6
	Synthetic	17	7.4
3	<b>Frequency of changing undergarments</b>		
	Once a day	160	69.9
	Twice a day	69	30.1

4	<b>Napkin change during less bleeding days</b>		
	Once	32	14.0
	2 times	93	40.6
	3 times	64	27.9
	4 times	29	12.7
	Others	11	4.8
5	<b>Napkin change during more bleeding days</b>		
	1-2 times	48	21.0
	3-4 times	103	45.0
	5-6 times	52	22.7
	7-8 times	14	6.1
	Others	12	5.2
6	<b>Use of separate undergarments for periods</b>		
	Yes	140	61.1
	No	89	38.9
7	<b>Washing hands after changing napkins</b>		
	Yes	218	95.2
	No	11	4.8
8	<b>Cleaning of genital organs</b>		
	With plain water	206	90.0
	Soap and water	20	8.7
	Antiseptics	3	1.3
	<b>Disposal of used sanitary napkins</b>		
	Wrapped in paper and discarding in dustbin	223	97.4
	Discard directly into dust bin	3	1.3
	Any other	3	1.3

Table 3 shows that all girls used sanitary pads. Majority of the girls 212(92.6%) used cotton undergarments and 160 girls (69.9%) changed their undergarments once a day. Ninety three girls (40.6%) changed their napkin twice during less bleeding days and 103 girls (45%) changed their napkin 3 to 4 times during more bleeding days. Majority 140 (61.1%) of them were using separate undergarments during menstruation and a significant majority 218(95.2%) of them reported that they wash their hands after changing the napkins. Majority 206(90%) of them used only plain water to clean the genital organs and a majority 223(97.4%) of them wrapped the used napkin in paper and discarded them in dustbin.

The above findings were supported by Borkar SK et al (2022) who reported that 74% of the girls had used sanitary pad, and 54% changed napkin twice daily and 31% used only plain water for washing external genitalia. Yaliwal RG et al(2020) stated that 69.8% of the urban

girls were using commercial sanitary napkins and 60.3% of the urban girls disposed napkins in the dust bin.

#### IV. ASSESSMENT OF MENSTRUAL PROBLEMS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

**Table 4: Frequency and percentage distribution of menstrual problems among adolescent girls N=229.**

Sl.No	Menstrual problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	Clots	32	14.0
2	Abdominal pain	132	57.6
3	Leg pain	114	49.8
4	Acne	63	27.5
5	Head ache	49	21.4
6	General tiredness	117	51.1
7	Irritable/feeling tense	83	36.2
8	Diarrhoea/Constipation	30	13.1
9	Swelling of the legs	31	13.5
10	Eating too much	34	14.8
11	Bloating	27	11.8
12	Sleeping disturbance	104	45.4

Table 4, speaking on menstrual problems faced by the girls shows that 32 (14%) of them had clots in their menstrual flow, 132(57.6%) had abdominal pain, 114 (49.8%) of them had leg pain, 63 (27.5%) suffered from acne, 49(21.4%) reported headache, 117 (51.1%) had general tiredness, 83(36.2%) were irritable, 30(13.1%) of them had Diarrhoea or constipation, 31(13.5%) had swelling of legs, 34(14.8%) were eating too much, 27(11.8%) of them had bloating and 104(45.4%) of them had sleep disturbance.

Few 18 (7.9%) of them commented that they missed classes/school. Yaliwal RG et al (2020) stated that 9% of urban girls were absent for schools during their period. Seventy four (32.3) of them skipped sports activities. Most of them 147(64.2%) refrained from religious activities and 54 girls (23.6%) avoided travelling during menstruation. The findings are supported by Borkar SK et al (2022) who stated that 98% of the girls were not being allowed to attend religious functions and 25% of the girls were not going for playing.

## V. ASSESSMENT OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENSTRUATION AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS

**Table 5: Frequency and percentage distribution of level of attitude of adolescent girls.**

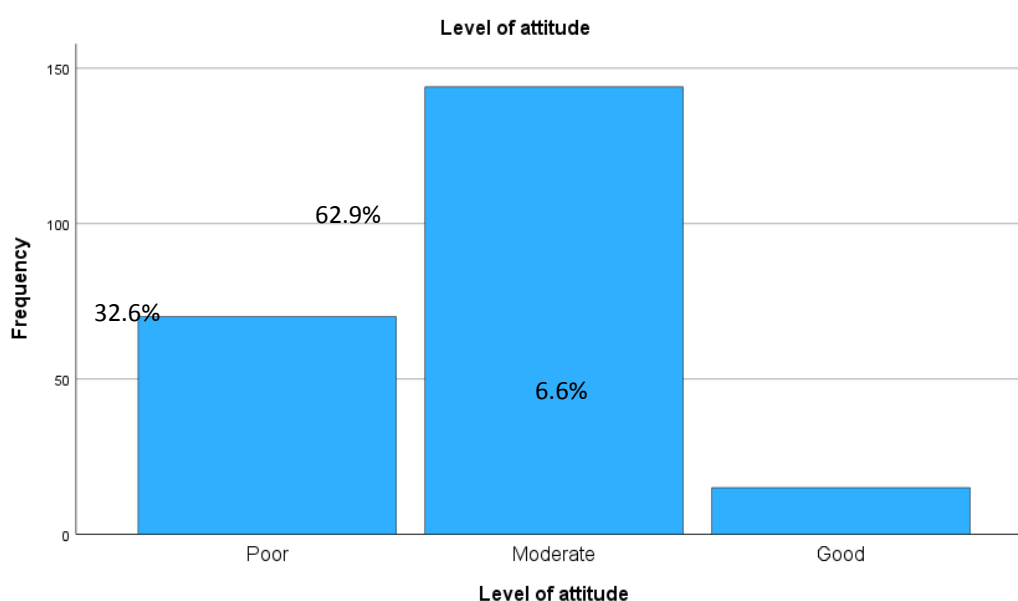
N=229

Level of Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Poor	70	30.6
Moderate	144	62.9
Good	15	6.6
Total	229	100.0

Majority of the girls 144(62.9%) had moderate attitude and 70 girls (30.6%) had poor attitude and only 15(6.6%) of them had good attitude towards menstruation.

38 (16.6%) of them agree that girls during periods are ugly, 97 (42.3%) agree that periods is a disturbance to girls, 28 (12.2%) agree that they are impure during periods, 28 (12.2%) agree that they should not enter the kitchen, 81 (35.3%) agree that period blood is dirty blood, 95 (41.5%) agree that menstruation is girl's issue, and 57 (24.9%) agree that girls should not touch plants during periods.

The attitude of the girls matters a lot as it helps in understanding of the physiological process happening in their body and to take appropriate care. Religious and cultural restrictions were enforced during menstruation.



**Fig. 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of level of attitude of adolescent girls.**



## VI. ASSOCIATION OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENSTRUATION WITH SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

There was a statistically significant association found between the level of attitude with age (0.005), Standard / class (0.010) and monthly income at (0.05) level of significance.

### NURSING IMPLICATIONS

School health nurse and community health nurse have greater scope for educating adolescent girls. Educating girl children in knowledge and awareness about menstrual hygiene is significant in prevention of reproductive tract infections and other complications associated with lack of menstrual hygiene. Moreover proper education on Menstruation can de-stigmatise the social embarrassments often associated with menstruation. As a menstruating girl, one should never feel stigmatised, embarrassed, weak or vulnerable, and proper education can be the solution to achieve it. Feeling confident and comfortable about handling menstruation will result in empowerment, efficiency and a sense of freedom in competing easily with the opposite gender.

### CONCLUSION

Menstruation, menstrual hygiene management, menstrual problems are issues that need to be addressed at the young age itself. The current study observed that most of the adolescent girls had moderate attitude towards menstruation and are subjected to restrictions. They had poor hygienic practices and problems associated with menstruation. An open discussion is needed to help them understand menstruation and immense efforts are needed to educate and to remove the myths about menstruation among the adolescent girls.

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