

Experiences of urban teenage girls about menarche

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ABSTRACT

Two hundred urban teenage girls (15-17yrs) who had attained menarche two years back were selected at random from purposely chosen 1 high school and 4 colleges of Parbhani city, of Maharashtra. The data were collected by personally interviewing the sample girls. The age at menarche of these girls was between 12 yrs. and 13 yrs. Significantly a higher percentage of the middle socio-economic status group (MSES) girls were aware about menarche before its onset and ABOUT menstrual management as compared to their counterpart girls in low socio-economic status group (LSES). Irrespective of the socio-economic status, considerably a lower percentage of the LSES group of urban teenage girls were recorded to have special support particularly with regard to their nutrition, relaxation in doing household chores and affectionate social treatment. The findings of the study advocate that there is a great need to empower girls regarding pubertal changes and how to cope up with them prior to attaining menarche in order to have comfortable and healthy reproductive life. School based sex education programmes are also need to be conducted to provide scientific information about reproductive health care as adolescent girls of today are tomorrow's healthy women, mother, future of the society and great resource of the nation.

INTRODUCTION

Onset of menstruation is referred as menarche is a pivotal transition event in life of girls because the dramatic physical, physiological and psychological changes take place during the period of puberty. Menarche is the beginning of a series of periodic discharges of blood, mucus and broken down cell tissue of uterus, that occur approximately after every 28 days till women reach the stage of menopause. In the Indian context, the age of onset of menarche is generally between 11-15yrs. The mean age at menarche varies from population to population and is known to be a sensitive indicator of nutritional status, geographical location, environmental conditions, magnitude of socio-economic

inequalities in a society and indulgence of teenage girls in strenuous activities. Environmental factors such as childhood experiences and child upbringing practices are also found to influence it to a great extent (Belskey *et al.*, 1991).

As menarche is an important developmental milestone in life of girls, they should be made well aware of it. However a very few parents/families are found to make a deliberate efforts to educate their daughters regarding all aspects of menarche before they attain it (Sharma, 1999). Majority of the girls who got educated about various aspects of menarche before attaining it are found to have coped up with it at ease (Patnam *et al.*, 2003). Keeping in view above mentioned facts, the present research study was taken up.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A sample of 200 urban teenage girls in the age group of 15-17 yrs. who had attained menarche 2 years back were selected at random from purposely chosen 1 high school and 4 colleges of Parbhani city of Maharashtra state. The data pertaining to the study were collected by personally interviewing the sample teenage girls. Based on the family socio-economic status of urban teenage girls, they were categorized into two groups *i.e.* Middle socio-economic status (MSES) families whose family monthly income ranged between Rs. 25000-40000/- and Low socio-economic status group families (LSES) whose family monthly income was below Rs.10,000/- The collected data were pooled, tabulated, analyzed and discussed.

OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 indicate that majority of the MSES group teenage girls (42%) attained menarche between 12 and 13 yrs of age followed by attaining it at 14 and 15 yrs of age (3.73%). On the other hand a higher percentage of LSES group teenage girls (46.23%) were found to attain menarche in the age group of 13-14 yrs which was followed by attaining it in the age groups of 12-13 yrs (31.18%), 15-16 yrs (11.82%) and 14 -15 yrs of age (10.75%). However based on the sample teenage girls' socio-economic status, no significant differences were

recorded with reference to their age at attaining menarche. Irrespective of their socio-economic status, it was observed that, about 40-56 per cent of them were aware about menarche before its onset. While only 19.35 per cent of the LSES group teenage girls and 42.05 per cent MSES group teenage girls were observed to know about significance of attainment of menarche. A higher percentage of MSES group teenage girls (63%) learnt about various aspects of menarche like its significance, management, precautions to be taken during menstrual periods etc. from their mothers, followed by learning about it from sisters (25%), friends (16.66%), internet (15%), grandmothers, print media (13.33% each), teachers (10%) and from aunts (8.33%). Similar trend of results were recorded in LSES group teenage girls about it. However print media, internet and aunts were not found to have any role in the lives of LSES group with regard to learning about various aspects of menarche. Based on the socio-economic status, significantly a higher per cent of MSES group teenage girls were recorded to be aware about menarche as compared to their counterparts in LSES group. However statistically non-significant differences were found among them with reference to the sources of learning about it. These results are in line with the findings reported by Gupta and Sinha (2006); Lee and Kour (2006); Ray *et al.* (2011); Adinma and Adinma (2008); Adetokunbo *et al.* (2009); Nemade *et al.* (2009); Lawan *et al.* (2010); Omidvar and Begum

Table 1 : Information about urban teenage girls' age at menarche and their awareness about it

Information of girls	Socio-economic status and percentage of the girls (200)		Z values a vs b
	MSES (107) (a)	LSES (93) (b)	
Age at menarche (yrs.)			
12-13	42.05 (45)	31.18 (29)	1.62 ^{NS}
13-14	35.51 (38)	46.23 (43)	1.58 ^{NS}
14-15	18.69 (20)	10.75 (10)	1.65 ^{NS}
15-16	03.73 (04)	11.2 (11)	1.63 ^{NS}
Aware about menarche before its attainment	56.07 (60)	40.86 (38)	2.28**
Knew about significance of attainment of menarche	42.05 (45)	19.35 (18)	3.66**
Learnt about aspects of menarche from mother	63.33 (38)	52.63 (20)	1.57 ^{NS}
Sister	25.00 (15)	31.57 (12)	0.94 ^{NS}
Grand mothers	13.33 (08)	10.52 (04)	0.66 ^{NS}
Aunts	08.33 (05)	--	--
Friends	16.66 (10)	15.78 (06)	0.19 ^{NS}
Teachers	10.00 (06)	7.89 (03)	0.76 ^{NS}
Print Media	13.33 (8)	--	--
Internet	15.00 (9)	--	--

Figures in parentheses indicate number of teenage girls
 ** indicates significance of value at P < 0.01 level

NS=Non-significant

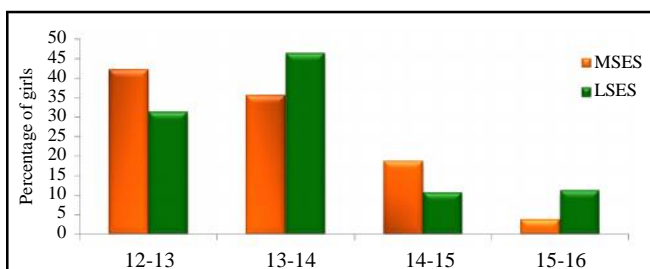


Fig. 1.1 : Age at menarche (yrs)

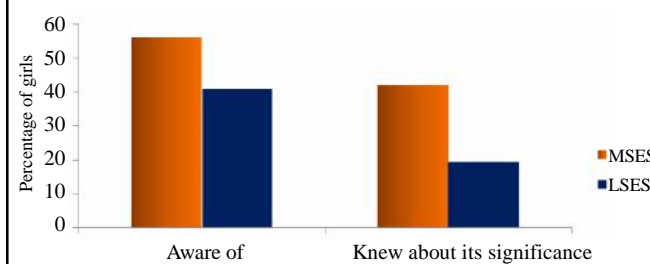


Fig. 1.2 : Awareness of urban teenage girls' about menarche before attainment

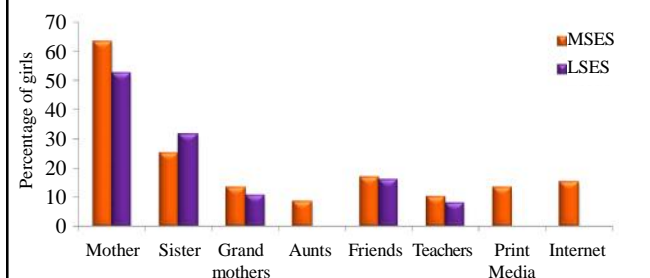


Fig. 1.3 : Urban teenage girls' sources for learning about aspects of menarche

Fig. 1 : Information about urban teenage girls' age at menarche and their awareness about it

(2010); Ali *et al.* (2011) and Thakre *et al.* (2011).

Table 2 (Fig. 2) informs about the reactions reported by urban teenage girls' towards menarche. The results clearly indicate that, the LSES group teenage girls' reactions towards menarche were more negative as

compared to their counterparts in MSES group teenage girls. While reporting about their feelings towards menarche, half of the LSES group teenage girls reported that they became fearful after experiencing menarche which was followed by having a mental shock (46.23%), shy feeling (40.86%) anxiety (26.88%) and feeling it like curse (21.50%). The corresponding percentages in MSES group teenage girls were 31.77, 20.56, 16.82, 13.08 and 19.62. On the other hand irrespective of socio- economic status, few teenage girls (14-20%) expressed that, they became happy after attainment of menarche as due to which they got sweets, jewellery and new cloths from their nearby relatives and neighbours in the ceremony called as 'Otty bharne' in Maharashtra.

The statistical data indicate that significantly more number of LSES group teenage girls' reacted more negatively towards attainment of menarche as compared to their counterparts in MSES group. This might be due to their unawareness about menarche prior to its attainment. However no significant differences were recorded with reference to reporting happy feelings due to the attainment of menarche. The findings are in conformity with the results recorded by McMohan *et al.*

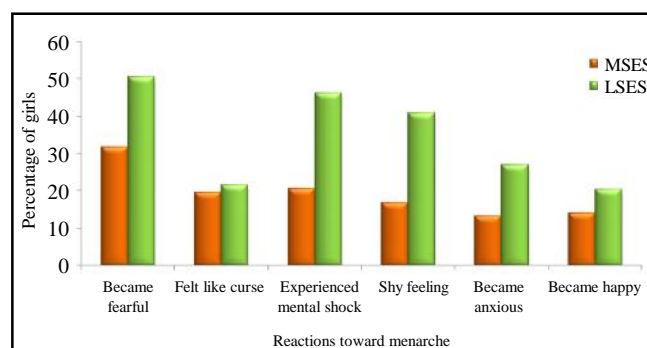


Fig. 2 : Reactions reported by urban teenage girls towards menarche

Reactions towards menarche	Socio-economic status and percentage of the girls (200)		Z values a vs b
	MSES (107) (a)	LSES (93) (b)	
Became fearful	31.77 (34)	50.53 (47)	2.77**
Felt like curse	19.62 (21)	21.50 (20)	0.35 ^{NS}
Experienced mental shock	20.56 (22)	46.23 (43)	4.02**
Shy Feeling	16.82 (13)	40.86 (38)	3.87**
Became anxious	13.08 (14)	26.88 (25)	2.32*
Became happy	14.01 (15)	20.43 (19)	1.12 ^{NS}

Figures in parentheses indicate number of teenage girls

* and ** indicate significance of values at P < 0.05 and < 0.01 level, respectively

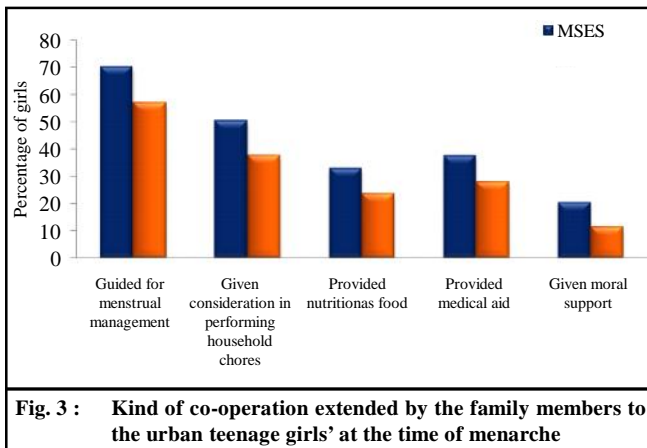
NS=Non-significant

Table 3 : Kind of co-operation given by family members to the urban teenage girls at the time of menarche

Kind of co-operation	Socio-economic status and percentage of the girls (200)		Z values a vs b
	MSES (107) (a)	LSES (93) (b)	
Guided for menstrual management	70.09(75)	56.98(53)	2.06*
Given consideration in performing household chores	50.46(54)	37.63(35)	1.86 ^{NS}
Provided nutritious food	32.71(35)	23.65(20)	1.43 ^{NS}
Provided medical aid	37.38(40)	27.95(26)	1.52 ^{NS}
Given moral support	20.43(19)	11.21(12)	1.78 ^{NS}

Figures in parentheses indicate number of teenage girls
* indicates significance of value at P< 0.05 level

NS=Non-significant



(2011) and Satina *et al.* (2012).

Table 3 (Fig. 3) denotes kind of cooperation extended by the family members to the urban teenage girls. Seventy per cent MSES group teenage girls and 57.00 per cent LSES group teenage girls expressed that, when they attained menarche, specially their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and elder sisters guided them about menstrual management. About half of the MSES group teenage girls and 37.63 per cent of the LSES group girls stated that their family members gave them consideration in performing household work due to the attainment of menarche in order to get maximum rest during their menstrual periods. Further irrespective of their socio-economic status, 23-32 per cent teenage girls reported that, their family members took special care particularly by providing nutritious food to them during their periods. In addition to it, 27-37 per cent families also sought medical aid to overcome menstrual problems encountered by the sample girls. The statistical results indicate that significantly a higher percentage of MSES group families guided their teenage girls for menstrual management as compared to their counterparts in LSES group. Some of

the findings are in line with the results reported by Patil *et al.* (2012).

Conclusion :

Majority of the MSES urban teenage girls reported that they were well aware of menarche as compared to their counterpart girls in low socio-economic status group. No significant differences were recorded in the age range of the urban teenage girls at attainment of menarche based on their socio-economic status. Significantly more number of LSES group teenage girls' reacted more negatively towards attainment of menarche as compared to their counterparts in MSES group. Irrespective of their socio-economic status, majority of them expressed that, when they attained menarche, specially their mothers, grandmothers, aunts and elder sisters guided them about menstrual management. These findings advocate that there is a great need of educating urban families and their daughters at school age for understanding and coping up well with the menarche and its related issues.

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