

Attitude of female adolescents of purig tribe towards menstruation

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Aim of the study was to assess the attitude of female adolescents towards menstruation. The sample for the study consisted of 32 adolescent's girls in the age group of 14 to 18 years studying in class 9th to 12th currently enrolled at Government Middle, High and Higher Secondary schools of Kargil block, J&K state. Random sampling technique was used to select the sample females from Purig tribe, a predominant Muslim tribe of the area. A standardized scale on Adolescent Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire (AMAQ) developed by Morse *et al.* (1993) was used to assess the required attitude. The results revealed that on an average girl held more negative attitude towards menstruation than being positive attitudes towards it. The samples adolescent had accommodated living with menstruation and were open towards it however they had lesser acceptance of menarche. Most of the girls had faced menstrual symptoms but continued to visualize it with negativity.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Tribal, Adolescent Girls, Attitude, Menstruation, Menarche

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Myths and misinformation regarding menarche and menstruation are very common almost in all societies. Religious and cultural myths sometimes become part of female's lives and despite being socially constructed are communicated to the girls around puberty stage (Moore, 1995). An example is the belief that menstrual blood is 'dirty' (Schooler, 2005). Such attitudes heighten embarrassment and shame thus impacting negatively on girls' self-esteem (Rembeck *et al.*, 2006). Women's attitudes toward menstruation are very complicated. Often, women's attitudes predict menstrual events to be worse than they actually are once the event is experienced (Koff *et al.*, 1996). These negative attitudes may be due, in part, to society's messages about menstruation. Attitudes toward menstruation also stem from education that women have received about the topic: more education is associated with more positive views of menstruation (Brooks-Gunn and Ruble, 1982; Golub and Catalano, 1983). Frank and Williams found the level of worry decreased for girls who talked with someone about menstruation, indicating that making use of a supportive person can have a positive impact on attitudes. Menstrual attitudes come from several sources, though mothers are often

cited as the main source of menstrual information (Amann-Gainotti, 1986; Rierdan and Koff, 1995). However, it is also important to take cultural influences, such as media, into account. For example, a study conducted in Italy interviewed 11-14 year old boys and girls and found that girls' positive descriptions of menarche were significantly related to their family's/culture's positive attitudes as well as to previous education (e.g. boys were more likely to ignore the subject). The author suggests that without proper preparation, youth are likely to revert to cultural attitudes (Amann-Gainotti, 1986). Britton (1996) found that, in England, the notion of negativity surrounding menstruation was rejected by views of unclean menstrual blood as pollutant, by the maintenance of secrecy and seclusion surrounding menstruation, and by physical discomfort associated with menstruation. In contrast, positive views about menstruation included that it revitalizes the body, clears impurities and is indicative of childbearing potential. Study of adolescents and menstruation concluded that adolescents suffer from a range of negative feelings such as guilt, shame and an inferiority complex as a result of lack of awareness regarding their growth processes. It stresses the need to orient parents and the community on a large scale

through specially designed courses so as to have a positive impact on their attitudes and practices (Gupta and Gupta, 2001). Menstrual education is a vital aspect of health education. It is known that attitudes to menstruation and menstrual practices developed at menarche may persist throughout life. The study of the menstrual practices of adolescent girls unveils health issues that affect their adjustment to reproductive life and provide the basis for formulating health education strategies relevant for this crucial period in reproductive life (Aniehue, 2009). Several researchers have found that girls who report being adequately prepared have more positive initial experience with menstruation (Jarrah and Kamel, 2012). Nagar and Aimol (2010) found that tribal women of Meghalaya had an average level of awareness of menstrual aspects and these girls did not know about the meaning of menstruation and associated it with bad/unclean blood. In the Lohra tribe of Jharkhand, it is an age-old belief that mothers do not communicate about menses to their daughters. In Kayastha (caste/ethnic group of India) families, it is believed that touching homemade vinegar or ghee during menstruation turns it bad. In Marwari (Indo-Aryan in Rajasthan) families, a menstruating girl does not attend guests or serve food because the girl is considered unholy or impure. Even entering into kitchen and storeroom or sitting on the sofa or bed is prohibited. In Sarna (religion), tribe of Jharkhand girls do not participate in plantation work, touching or watering plants during menses. Oraon tribe another tribe of Jharkhand, believes that when a girl attains menarche and if her mother tears a piece of cloth in three equal parts in one breath and gives that piece of cloth to the girl to use it during menses, it reduces the abdominal pain. However, many girls reported that this particular practice did not reduce the pain (Kumar and Srivastava, 2011). There is also a belief that the body is ridding itself of hot “negative energy” and warm baths can be harmful to the body and/or the environment (UNICEF India, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODS

The sample of the study was selected from Purig tribe of Kargil district of J&K state. The sample size was 32 adolescent's girls in the age group of 14 to 18 years studying in classes 9th to 12th. Eight girls each selected from a total of four Govt. schools of the district. In order to collect the required information, a standardized scale namely, Adolescent Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire (AMTQ) developed by Morse *et al.* (1993) was used. The scale includes 58 items involving six subscale; positive feelings, negative feelings, living with menstruation, Openness about menstruation and acceptance of menarche. The data were then systematically, coded tabulated and analyzed.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that adolescents scored highest

(3.8825±.31267) on the dimension of negative attitudes toward menstruation. Most of them found menstruation as scary and uncomfortable. They also felt bothered to buy pads, embarrassed to ask questions about periods and did not consider it appropriate to discuss about periods with boys and mostly worried that periods start unexpectedly or blood leaking through clothes. When the negative attitude of adolescent girls was compared with the other four dimensions, it was found that negative attitudes were far more dominating than the other feelings. Statistically calculation of t-value indicated that negative attitudes were more than the acceptance of menarche (t=15.279), live with menstruation (t=9.226), openness towards menstruation (t=8.33) and menstrual symptoms (t=5.551).

Table 1 : Adolescent attitude towards menstruation (n=32)

Items	M (SD)	t value
Positive	1.7453 (41911)	1.74±0.41
Positive and negative	2.13719 (0.57841)	-20.902**
Positive and living with menstruation	1.42500 (0.48174)	-16.733**
Positive and openness	1.39844 (0.44840)	-17.642**
Positive and acceptance of menarche	0.70312 (0.42025)	-9.465**
Positive and menstrual symptoms	-1.56094 (.45974)	-19.207**
Negative	3.8825 (0.31267)	
Negative and living with menstruation	0.71219 (0.43669)	9.226**
Negative and openness	0.73875 (0.50149)	8.333**
Negative and acceptance of menarche	1.43406 (0.53095)	15.279**
Negative and menstrual symptoms	0.57625 (0.58724)	5.551**
Living with menstruation	3.1703 (0.29228)	
Living with menstruation and openness	0.02656 (0.35948)	.418
Living with menstruation and acceptance of menarche	0.72188 (0.47695)	8.562**
Living with menstruation and menstrual symptoms	-0.13594 (0.40953)	-1.878
Openness	3.1438 (0.38432)	
Openness and acceptance of menarche	0.69531 (0.47485)	8.283**
Openness and menstrual symptoms	-0.16250 (0.45490)	-2.021*
Acceptance of menarche	2.4484 (0.32655)	
Acceptance of menarche and menstrual symptoms	-0.85781 (0.41222)	-11.772**
Menstrual symptoms	3.3062 (0.38766)	

df=31, *Significant, ** Highly significant

The second highest ($3.3062 \pm .38766$) mean score was noted on menstrual Symptoms. Majority of adolescent girls felt sick, grumpy, grouchy, moody during their periods and got severe backache and painful cramps during period. Results also revealed that most of the adolescent girls ($3.1703 \pm .29228$) had learn to live with menstruation the adolescent girls had accepted menstruation as a part of their lives. They felt that many of their routine activities get affected by menstruation. When they experience their monthly cycle they avoid certain activities such as swimming, exercise and so on. Living with menstruation when compared with the other four dimensions shared significant difference with positive attitude ($t = -16.733$), implying that rather being positive about menstruation, adolescent girls had learned to live with it. With both negative attitudes ($t = 9.226$) as well as acceptance of menarche ($t = 8.562$) also significant differences were noted indicating that they experienced non-negativity towards menstruation and had started living with it rather than accepting it. When openness about menstruation was analyzed, it was found that the adolescent girls were statistically more open rather than being positive about it ($t = -17.6$) or accepting of it ($t = 8.28$) but at the same time more negative ($t = 8.33$). Being open meant that they discussed menstrual issue more frequently with their family and friends but didn't view it as a positive component of their lives. Overall, acceptance score were relatively low indicating that many adolescent girls had not readily accepted it as part of their lives. When acceptance was compared with the other dimensions, statically significant differences were noted on all other five components. Negativity, living with menstruation and openness outweighed acceptance but at the same time acceptance was more than positive and fears associated with menstrual symptoms.

The sample adolescent scored lowest on positive attitude towards menstruation indicating that menstruation was more negatively associated with it. Though they had accepted or learned to live with it to some extent, they were not positive towards it.

Conclusion and recommendation :

Never the less, reaction to menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge about the subject. The manner in which a girl learns about menstruation and its associated changes may have an impact on her attitude to the event of menarche (Dasgpta, 2008). Several factors play a role in modeling the girls' attitudes towards menstruation that, in turn, influence the girl's behaviour during menstruation. Among these factors are: family size, her position among her siblings, her relationship with her mother grandmother and sisters, her cultural background, her body image, self-esteem and feminine, as well as her premenarch preparations for this exciting event (Lark, 1992).

From the findings of the present research, we can conclude that many young girls in Kargil do not received

adequate knowledge regarding menstruation, because of some cultural and religion restrictions, causing incorrect and unhealthy practices during their period. The findings overall highlighted that menstruation is visualized as a negative event, more than understanding its importance. All adolescent girls faced menstrual symptoms and had felt uneasy and discomfort most adolescent girls had learned to live with it as an integral part of their lives and had discussions with others to indicate their openness. Yet were not able to accept it and develop positive towards it.

There is a need of educating female adolescents about menstruation by providing the right information about menstrual cycle and its physiology at right age so that they can view menstruation as a normal process of body. For this, it's essential for mothers and grandmothers to think of the process of menstruation in a positive light. If a mother views her period as "the nuisance," her daughter might get a negative consciousness of the whole experience. Instead, mothers can describe menstruation as a natural and important part of being a woman. In addition, girls also need to be educated with feminine-hygiene supplies (sanitary pads and cloths) and they should know that sometimes periods may cause cramps when the muscles of the uterus contract. In order to generate positive attitude towards menstruation among adolescent girls of Kargil, mothers of young girls should be educated with appropriate knowledge about various aspects of menstruation and be empowered with necessary skills to communicate and transfer the information to their adolescent daughters. As many earlier studies have reported that mother plays an important role in providing knowledge about menstruation among young adolescent girls. Thus the help of mothers should be taken to bring about sustainable attitudinal change School based interventions are also suggested to help adolescents develop healthy attitudes towards this crucial phenomenon of their lives.

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