

Original article:

Knowledge and attitude of men and women for menarche and menstruation – A reproductive health issue

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Abstract

Background: Unaddressed menstrual issues are a reflection of how menstruation is dealt within the society. It is tragic that menstruation being a natural and important phenomenon is not given due importance that it demands.

Objectives: An observational study to find out the awareness of menarche and menstruation among men and women.

Methods: A sample of 100 men and 100 women over 15 years of age attending the outpatient department of rural health training centre in Delhi, India. Information was collected on their knowledge and attitude about menarche, menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Data was collected, compiled, processed and analyzed by SPSS. Chi square test was applied.

Results: 38% women were not aware about normal length of menstrual cycle and duration of bleeding while 56% men were not aware about the same. 35% of women thought that menstrual problems are normal and do not need any consultation.

Conclusions: Increasing awareness about the importance of menstruation and menstrual hygiene can decrease the burden of menstrual problems to a great extent. Male participation in these issues of women would help in shedding of the shame culture and contribute towards maintaining menstrual hygiene.

Key words: Menarche, menstruation, menstrual hygiene, male participation.

Background and objectives

Unaddressed menstrual issues are a reflection of how menstruation is dealt with in the society. It is tragic that menstruation being a natural and important phenomenon is not given due importance that it demands. Menstrual problems are one of the common reasons of discomfort and affect the quality of life in women [1]. Menstruation is also dealt with embarrassment if disclosed to men which deprives it from the much needed importance [2]. Managing menstruation with dignity is the right no women should be denied off. Half of the population goes through menstruation and many studies have been done to assess the knowledge and awareness of menstruation in them, though the knowledge in the

remaining half is yet to be studied. Hence, we conducted an OPD based cross sectional survey to study the knowledge and awareness of men and women regarding menarche and menstruation and the various socio demographic factors affecting the knowledge and awareness.

Methodology

The present survey was a clinic based cross sectional study conducted during July-August 2012. Men and women over 15 years of age who have come to attend the outpatient department were included. A random total of 100 men and 100 women were interviewed after taking an informed consent. A pretested semi structured proforma incorporating personal and socio demographic details was used for collecting the

details. Participants were asked about the meaning and importance of menarche, the process, duration and length of menstrual cycle, methods to manage menstruation, type of problems faced during menstruation and their perspective on how to manage those problems. In addition to this they were also asked about the role of hygiene in menstrual cycle and problems caused due to poor hygiene. Men and women were further probed about their communication with spouses/ male companions in the context of menstruation. Data was collected, compiled and analyzed with the help of SPSS version 20.

Results

Table 1 shows the age, sex and marital status of the study subjects. The mean age of men and women was 36.4 ± 12.3 years and 28.3 ± 9.6 years respectively. Among the women 56% were in the age group of 15-24 years, 20% in the age group of 25-34 years, while 15% and 9% were in the age group of 35-44 years and more than or equal to 45 years. Among the men 26% belonged to the age group of 25-34 years and 35-44 years both, followed by 15-24 years which had another 24%, while the rest 23% were more than or equal to 45 years. More of younger women were seen to attend OPD, while almost equal proportions of men were seen in all age groups. Out of the 100 men who participated in the study 30 were unmarried, 61 were married, and 6 were widowed while the remaining 3 were separated. Among the women 40 were unmarried, 55 were married while the rest 5 were widows. Out of the 100 men who participated in the study 30 were unmarried, 61 were married, and 6 were widowed while the remaining 3 were separated. Among the women 40 were unmarried, 55 were married while the rest 5 were widows.

Table 2 shows distribution of knowledge regarding menarche among the study subjects. Out of the total study subjects all women had knowledge of menarche as expected while in men only 73% knew the same, while a big percentage of men (23%) also considered it to be some kind of problem among women.

Table 3 shows distribution of knowledge regarding the normal duration and interval of menstrual cycle among the study subjects. Duration of bleeding was taken to be 3-5 days and interval between two menstrual cycles was taken as 21-35 days. Among the women 62% and 74% of women knew correctly about the duration of menstrual bleed and interval between two menstrual cycles respectively, while among the men the same knowledge was seen in 37% and 43% respectively.

Table 4 shows the knowledge of importance of the menstruation among the study subjects. Almost same proportion of men and women were aware of the importance of menstruation. 22% of all the subjects were still unaware about the importance of menstruation which needs to be addressed.

Figure 1 shows knowledge of duration and interval of menstrual cycle with marital status in men. Almost equal proportion of married and unmarried men knew the correct duration of bleed while a higher proportion of ever married men knew about the correct interval between two menstrual cycles.

Figure 2 shows the knowledge of problems faced during menstruation among the study subjects. All women said that they faced problems during menstruation while 83% said that these problems should be consulted. Among the men 47% said that women face some problem while menstruation and out of them 44% said that these problems should be consulted. Another 38% of men said that they are not

aware if women face some problems or not, while another 15% said that women face no problems during menstruation.

Table 5 shows the knowledge of interval of menstrual cycle with literacy status among the study subjects. It shows that as the literacy status improved more number of study subjects knew about the correct interval between menstrual cycles. Chi square test in males gives p value $>.05$ and in females as $<.05$.

Similar kind of results was seen while studying the relationship of knowledge of days of bleeding during menstruation with the literacy of the study subjects.

Discussion

This study was conducted in the outpatient department of Primary health centre, Palam, New Delhi with the aim to study the knowledge and awareness of men and women regarding menarche and menstruation and the various socio demographic factors affecting the knowledge and awareness. Majority of studies previously done regarding the knowledge of menarche and menstruation have been limited to adolescent girls. Our study shows that out of the total study subjects all women had knowledge of menarche, which is expected while in men only 73% knew the same. A big percent of men also considered it to be some kind of problem in women. A larger number of women knew about the normal duration and interval of menstrual cycle as compared to men. Around 1/4th of the married men were aware about the same. The lack of knowledge was around 30% for both married and unmarried women. More than 70% of men and women were aware of the importance of menstruation, though the proportion in women was little higher. Almost 22% of the population lacked the knowledge. In Women the major source of information were mother or sister while in men the major source of information were

wife, friends, books or internet, showing that women play a key role in non formal education.

A study done in Colorado by Gardner et al found that men's knowledge was incomplete and sometimes inaccurate, as well as focused on the negative aspects of menstruation. Additionally, men tended to learn their information about the menstrual cycle from formal education and conversations with wives, girlfriends, and female friends. The major implication of the findings was that more complete and accurate information about the menstrual cycle could enhance relationships [3]. Another study done among adolescents in Pennsylvania by Cheng CY et al revealed that there was a significant difference between the female and male students regarding the basic knowledge of menstruation. 12.4% of male students did not know the cause of menstruation. 1.5% and 6.7% of male students believed that menstruation was a punishment by god and due to injury to the uterus or any mental disease respectively. More than half of the male students received information about menstruation from their father/brothers and relatives/friends, whereas most female students' menstrual information came from their mother/sisters or they guessed about menstruation without consulting other people. School teachers and mass media were information sources for both male and female students [4]. Brookes-Gunn J et al conducted another study among students according to which both males and females believed women experience some cycle related symptoms, though women said they are more severe than what men said [5].

We recommend counseling of the couple in the outpatient departments and spousal interaction to improve the knowledge regarding menstruation. Good knowledge about menstruation and common

issues of women by spouses/ male companions could help promote a healthy lifestyle and a safe reproductive life.

Table 1: Age, sex and marital status of the study subjects

Sex			marital status			Total (%)
			single	married	Widow/ Seperated	
male	age groups (years)	15-25	21	4	0	25 (25)
		26-35	5	21	0	26 (26)
		34-45	2	20	4	26 (26)
		46-55	2	16	5	23 (23)
	Total		30	61	9	100 (100)
female	age groups (years)	15-25	40	16	0	56 (56)
		26-35	0	18	2	20 (20)
		36-45	0	12	3	15 (15)
		46-55	0	9	0	9 (9)
	Total		40	55	5	100 (100)
Total	age groups (years)	15-25	61	20	0	81 (40.5)
		26-35	5	39	2	46 (23)
		36-45	2	32	7	41 (20.5)
		46-55	2	25	5	32 (16)
	Total		70 (35)	116 (58)	14 (7)	200 (100)

Table 2: Knowledge regarding menarche

Knowledge Regarding menarche	Men	Women	Total
Starting of Vaginal bleed	73	100	173
Some problem in women	23	-	23
Don't know/ others	4	-	4
Total	100	100	200

Table 3: Knowledge regarding the normal duration and interval of menstrual cycle

Knowledge Regarding	Men	Women
Duration of menstrual bleed	37% knew correctly 57% said they don't know 6% knew incorrectly	62% knew correctly 26% said they don't know 12% knew incorrectly
Interval between two menstrual cycles	43% knew correctly 54% said they don't know 3% knew incorrectly	74% knew correctly 22% said they don't know 4% knew incorrectly

Table 4: Knowledge of the importance of menstruation among the study subjects.

Importance	Men	Women	Total (%)
Reproduction	71	79	156 (78%)
Don't know	22	13	29 (14.5%)
No importance	5	7	12 (6%)
Other	2	1	3 (1.5%)
Total	100	100	200 (100%)

Table 5: Knowledge of interval of menstrual cycle with literacy status

<u>Literacy</u>	<u>Interval Between two menstrual cycles</u>			
	<u>Answered Correctly</u> <u>(Men)</u>	<u>Don't know/ Answered Incorrectly</u> <u>(Men)</u>	<u>Answered Correctly</u> <u>(Women)</u>	<u>Don't know/ Answered incorrectly</u> <u>(Women)</u>
illiterate	-	2 (3.5%)	3 (4.1%)	7 (27%)
primary	5 (11.6%)	4 (7%)	8 (10.8%)	4 (15.4%)
middle school	4 (9.3%)	2 (3.5%)	10 (13.5%)	5 (19.2%)
secondary	6 (14%)	10 (17.5%)	12 (16.2%)	6 (23%)
senior secondary	21 (48.8%)	28 (49.1%)	27 (36.5%)	3 (11.5%)
graduate	7 (16.3%)	9 (17.5%)	14 (19%)	1 (3.8%)
Total	43 (100%)	57 (100%)	74 (100%)	26 (100%)

Figure 1: Knowledge of duration and interval of menstrual cycle with marital status in men

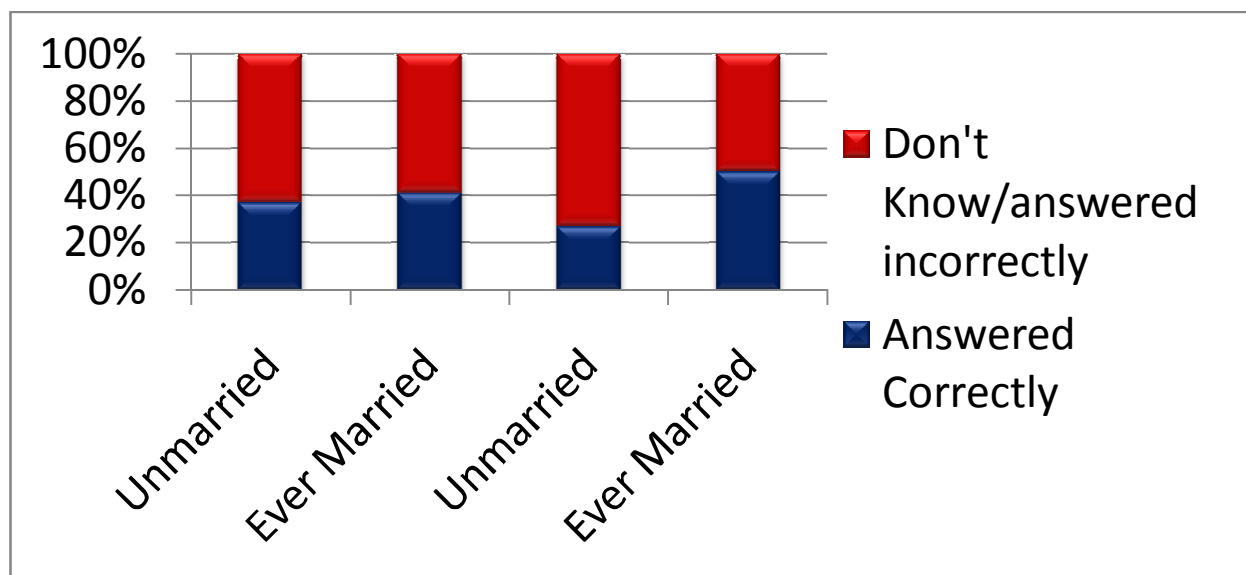
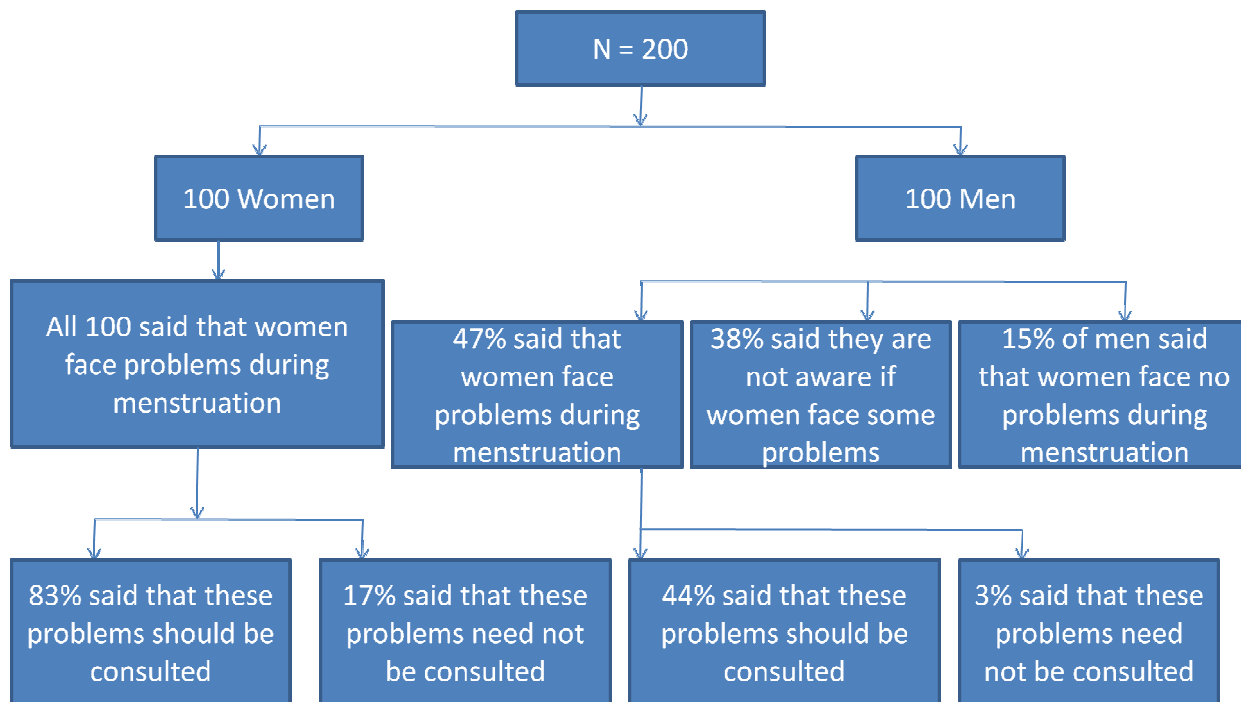


Figure 2: Distribution of the knowledge regarding the problems faced during menstruation.



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