

PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES ABOUT MENSTRUATION AMONG DIFFERENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSES OF PEOPLE IN PABNA, BANGLADESH**Most. Reshma Akter^{1*}, Shams Ferdows¹, Md. Shafiqul Islam², Md. Raihan Parvez³, and Md. Mehedi Hasan³,
Md. Masud Rana⁴**¹Department of Pharmacy, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Pabna-6600, Bangladesh.²Department of Pharmacy, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj-8100, Bangladesh.³B. Pharm (Professional) Student, Department of Pharmacy, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Pabna-6600, Bangladesh.⁴Department of Pharmacy, Islamic University, Kusthia-7003, Bangladesh.***Corresponding Author: Most. Reshma Akter**

Department of Pharmacy, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Pabna-6600, Bangladesh.

Article Received on 22/02/2021

Article Revised on 15/03/2021

Article Accepted on 06/04/2021

ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of our study was to assess the perception and practices regarding menstruation among different socio-economic classes of people in Pabna, Bangladesh. **Method And Material:** This cross sectional study was carried out by collecting data from Pabna and the data was analyzed by using Microsoft office Excel 2007. The empirical findings revealed in terms of perception about menstruation, social concept, starting age, source of information and helping hand, duration of cycle, extend of menstrual flow, materials used for menstrual management, changing frequency, and cleaning methods were summarized as counts percentages. **Result:** Of the total 400 participants, majority were age range between 21-30 years. Of them, 73.25% participants were married and 26.75% were unmarried. Among the respondents 99% were literate of various levels. Majority of the respondents, 56.75% had positive perception about menstruation although 18.25% felt shy, 3.5% felt scared, 4% felt discomfort, and 17.5% disgusted about it. About 82% husband had positive attitude about menstruation. The knowledge of menstruation was provided to the adolescent girl by the mother 33%, by grandmother 23.75%, by aunt 8%, by sister 13%, by friends 19.25% and by other relatives 3%. First menstrual period found to be started at the age 10-12 years of 70.50% participants. Respondents experiencing regular and irregular menstruation were 87.75% and 12.25%, respectively. Majority of respondents, 58.5% had normal menstrual blood flow for 5-6 days. Duration of each menstrual cycle were less than 21 days, 22-24 days, 25-28 days, 29-32 days, and more than 32 days among 4% , 44% , 42.25%, 8.25%, and 1.5% respondents respectively. As absorbent material 78.25% girls used sanitary pad, 3.5% new cloth, 14.25% reused cloth, 3.5% toilet paper and 0.5% cotton for menstrual management. Of the participants, 58.5% change their menstrual absorbent material 1-2 times and 28.5% change 2-3 times, 10.5% change 3-4 times, 0.75% change more than 4 times and 1.75% change only 1 time in a day. **Conclusion:** This study reveals that menstrual perception and hygiene is not quite satisfactory among the adolescent girls / women in Pabna. Public health awareness program should be promoted as well mothers, sisters and friends need to be emphasized for freely providing menstrual related information to the adolescent girls in the family and encourage them to maintain proper hygiene during menstruation.

KEYWORDS: Menstruation, Hygiene, Adolescent, Perception, Practices.**1. INTRODUCTION**

Menstruation is a normal physiological process of woman and a key sign of reproductive health.^[1] During the adolescent years, the onset of menstruation is one of the most important changes occurring among the girls. The first menstruation occurs between 11 and 15 years with a mean of 13 years.^[2] Although it is a natural process, social prohibitions and the negative attitude of parents in discussing the menstrual related issues frankly, have barren the access of adolescent girls to the correct information, especially in the rural area. Still now

menstruation is regarded as unclean and dirty, and this misconception and practices give rise to adverse health effect to women. Proper hygienic practices of women during menstruation are of significantly importance, as it has a health impact in terms of amplified vulnerability to reproductive tract infections. Poor personal hygiene and unsafe sanitary environment have also primarily resulted in gynecological problems.^[3] Use of unhygienic napkins constantly or improperly dried cloth napkins before its reuse results in sheltering of micro-organisms and causing vaginal infections.^[4] By rising the knowledge

about menstruation from childhood may escalate safe practices and this may help in relieving the suffering of women.^[5]

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Design

This area-based, cross-sectional study was conducted among 400 participants in Pabna. Data were collected for the period of four months (September-December) in 2020. All data were recorded by using self-designed questionnaire form. All the questions were translated in Bengali while asking the participants for their easy understanding.

2.2 Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics were applied to evaluate the collected data using Microsoft Excel 2007 software. The findings revealed in terms of perception about menstruation, social concept, starting age, source of information and helping hand, duration of cycle, extend

of menstrual flow, materials used for menstrual management, changing frequency, and cleaning methods were summarized as counts percentages.

3. RESULT

Among the total respondents, age range of 189 (47.25%) were between 21-30 years. And the rest 108 (27%), 73 (18.25%) and 29 (7.25%) were 11-20, 31-40 and 41-50 years respectively. Only one participant was >10 years of age. Of the participants 293 (73.25%) were married and 107 (26.75%) were unmarried. Among the respondents only 4(1%) were illiterate and 394 (99%) were literate of various level. Majority of the respondents 227 (56.75%) had positive perception about menstruation although 73(18.25%) felt shy, 14 (3.5%) felt scared, 16 (4%) felt discomfort, and 70(17.5%) felt disgusted about it. Among the husband, 241(82%) had positive attitude, 20 (7%) negative attitude, 30 (10%) helpful and 2(0.68%) had no concern about menstruation. (depicted in fig. 1).

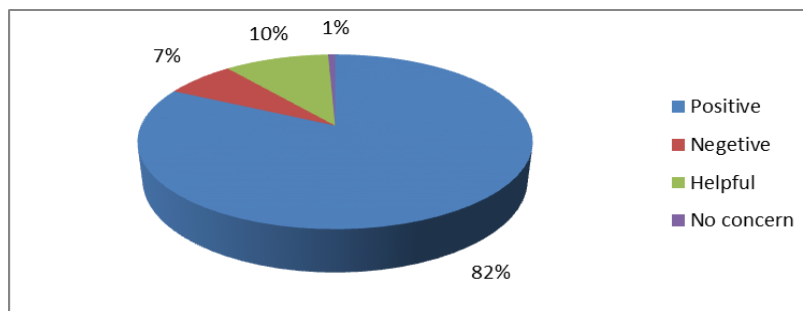


Fig. 1: Percentage distribution of husband attitude towards menstruation.

Regarding the perception of the society, 320 (80%) expressed it to be positive, 76(19%) negative, 2 (0.5%) shy, and 2 (0.5%) no concern on menstruation issue (Fig. 2).

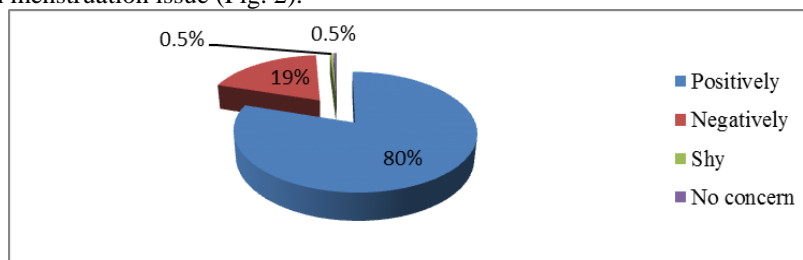


Fig. 2: Distribution of percentages of view of society about menstruation.

We observed that the girls first got their knowledge of menstruation from the mother 132 (33%), followed by grandmother 95 (23.75%), by aunt 32 (8%), by sister 52 (13%), by friends 77 (19.25%) and by other relatives 12(3%) (Fig. 3).

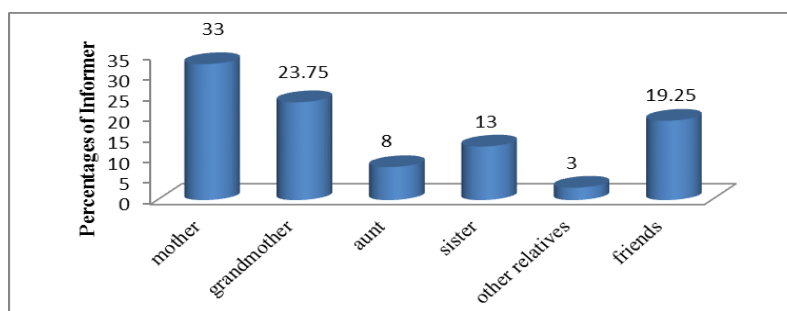


Fig. 3: Distribution of Percentage of informer about menstruation.

It was observed that in majority of participants 282 (70.50%), first menstrual cycle started at the age ranges of 10-12 years; whereas among 61(15.25%) and 57(13.75) participants menstrual cycle started at the age range less than 10 years and 13-15 years respectively.

In our study, we found that 351(87.75%) respondents experience regular menstruation while the rest 49 (12.25%) meet irregular menstruation. Most of the participants 234 (58.5%) had normal menstrual blood flow for 5-6 days, while 12 (3%), 135 (33.75%), and 19 (4.75%) had menstrual blood flow for 1-2, 3-4, and 6-7 days, respectively (Fig. 4).

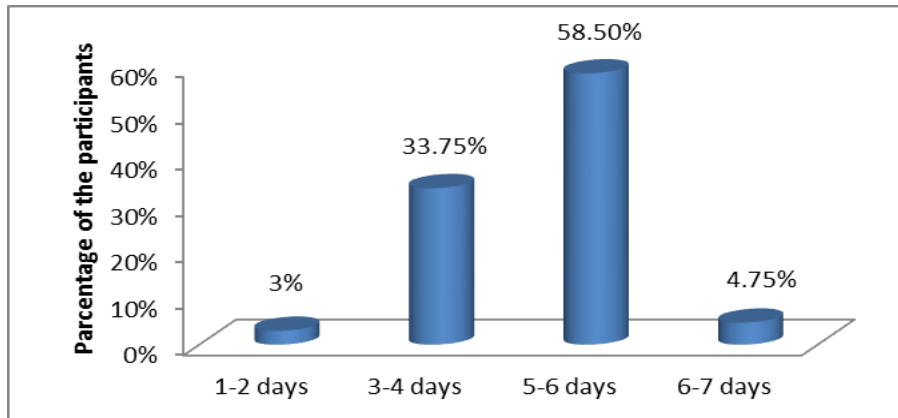


Fig. 4: Duration of the menstrual blood flow of the participants.

The present study showed that 176 (44%) respondents had duration of each menstrual cycle 22-24 days, 169 (42.25%) had 25-28 days, 33 (8.25%) had 29-32 days, 16 (4%) had less than 21 days and only 6 (1.5%) had more than 32 days (Fig. 5)

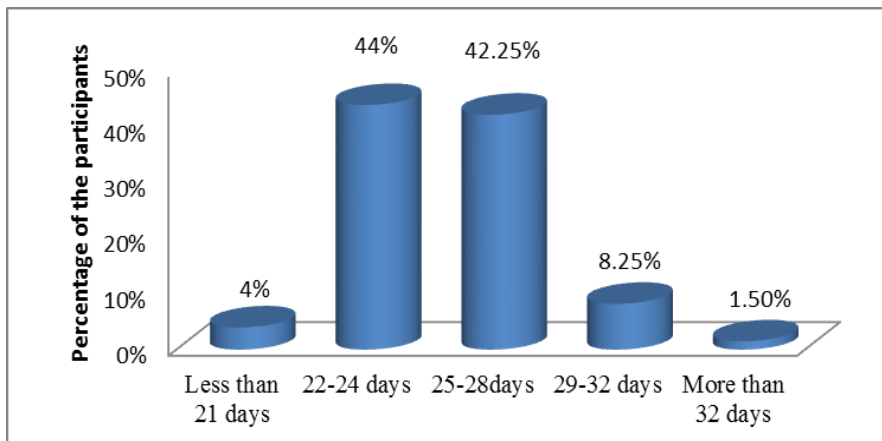


Fig. 5: Distribution of the participants on the duration of menstruation cycle

We observed that 313 (78.25%) participants used sanitary pad as an absorbent material and rest 14(3.5%), 57 (14.25%), 14 (3.5%), 2 (0.5%) used new cloth, reused cloth, toilet paper and cotton, respectively for maintaining cleanliness and hygiene (Fig.6).

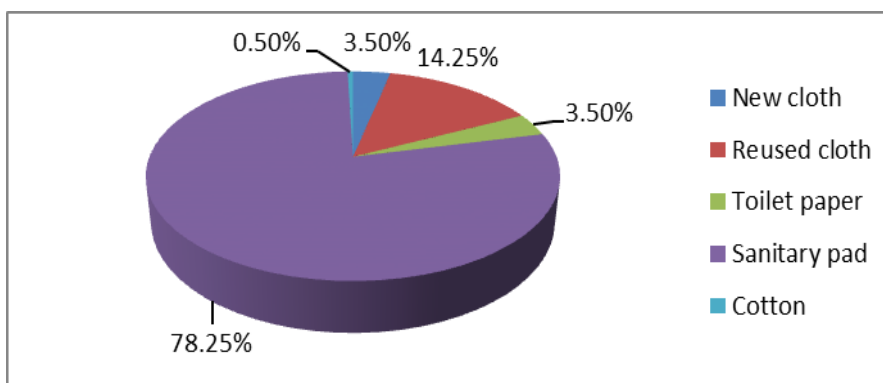


Fig. 6: Percentages of participants used various absorbent materials

We also found that, 234 (58.5%) participants change their menstrual absorbent material 1-2 times, 114(28.5%) 2-3 times, 42(10.5%) 3-4 times, 3 (0.75%) more than 4 times and 7(1.75%) only 1 time in a day (Fig.7).

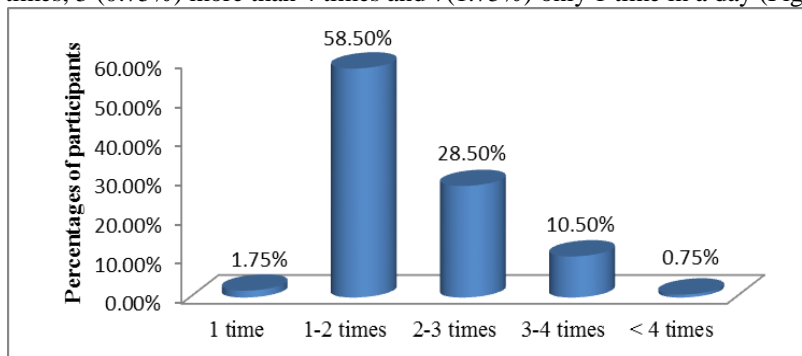


Fig.7: Changing frequency of the absorbent material of the participants.

Our study also revealed that maximum number of respondents 307 (76.75%) maintain their cleanliness by bathing and the remaining 85 (21.25%), 4(1%) and 4(1%) by hot water, antiseptic and neem containing water respectively (Fig.8).

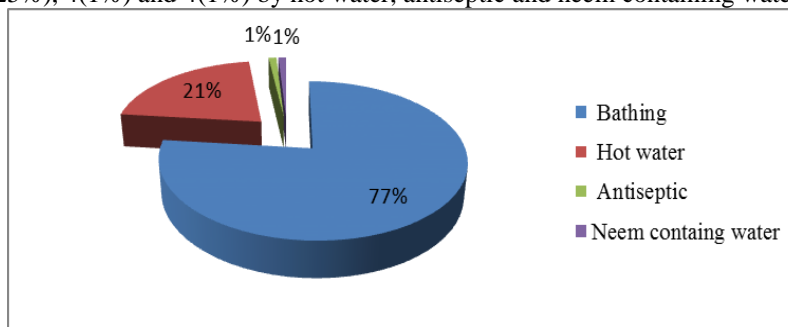


Fig. 8: Various techniques to maintain cleanliness during menstruation.

4. DISCUSSION

In this cross sectional study, majority of the participants were between 21-30 years of ages. Both married (73.25%) and unmarried (26.75%) adolescent woman were included in our study. Most of the participants (99%) were literate.

Total 56.75% respondents had positive perception about menstruation although 18.25% felt shy, 3.5% felt scared, 4% felt discomfort, and 17.5% felt disgusted about it. About 82% husband had positive attitude towards menstruation.

Though menstruation is a natural and normal physiological process for all healthy women, it has been surrounded by secrecy and myths in many societies. Very few mothers are ready to share the information which is of vital significance to their daughters. We found that, about 33% participants obtained information from their mother during their first menstruation, 23.75% from their grandmother, 8% from aunt, 13% from sister, 19.25% from friends, and 3% from other relatives which was concordat with the previous study conducted by Seenivasan *et al.*^[6] and Prajapati *et al.*^[7]

This study showed that first menstrual period started at the age ranges 10-12 years among 70.50% respondents; whereas among 15.25% and 13.75% respondents it started at less than 10 years and 13-15 years respectively

which was allied with the study done by Pandit *et al.*, Narayan *et al.*^[8-9]

In this study, we found that 87.75% respondents had regular menstruation period and 12.25% meet irregular menstruation period.

Among the participants, 58.55% had normal menstrual bleeding for 5-6 days, while 3%, 33.75%, and 4.75% had 1-2, 3-4, and 6-7 days respectively that was similar with the earlier studies by Singh *et al.* and Balsubramaniam P *et al.*^[10-11]

We have found that majority of the respondents, 44% had duration of each menstrual cycle 22-24 days, 42.25% had 25-28 days, 8.25% had 29-32 days, 4% had less than 21 days and only 1.5% had more than 32 days of each menstrual cycle which was aligned with previous study conducted by Dhingra *et al.*^[12]

The type of absorbent used during menstruation is extremely important since reusable materials could be a cause of infection if inappropriately cleaned and poorly stored. We observed that 78.25% participants used sanitary pad; while 3.5%, 14.25%, 3.5% and 0.5% used new cloth, reused cloth, toilet paper and cotton as an absorbing material. Similar finding was observed by the studies conducted by Seenivasan *et al.* and Gupta *et al.*^[13-14]

We found that, majority of participants (58.5%) change their menstrual absorbent material 1-2 times in a day, and 28.5% changed 2-3 times, 10.5% changed 3-4 times, 0.75% more than 4 times, 1.75% only one time in single day whereas similar study in Nigeria (Oche *et al.*) reported that majority (60%) changed sanitary pads three times a day^[15] and Fisseha *et al.* reported that about 48.9% of the girls changed their menstrual hygiene materials twice a day, 26.5% of them changed once a day and 24.6% changed three times and more.^[16] The difference may be due to low socio-economic status and poor knowledge on menstrual hygiene.

In our study, we found that, maximum number (76.75%) of respondent maintain their cleanliness by taking bath, rest 21.25%, 1%, and 1% by hot water, antiseptic and neem containing water respectively. Similar study was conducted by Shanbhag D *et al.*^[17]

5. CONCLUSION

From all observations it was found that the social perception, practice and hygienic management of menstruation were not good at all. Reproductive tract infection is a still epidemic that devastates women's life which is directly related with poor menstrual hygiene. Public health awareness program should be promoted at all levels of the society as well mothers, sisters and friends need to be emphasized for the sharing of menstruation related information to the adolescent girls in the family. Therefore, proper menstrual hygiene, right perceptions and adequate knowledge can uplift the women from this unexpected social perception and lacking.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors are thankful to the Department of Pharmacy of Pabna university of Science and Technology for their kind support for conducting this survey-based research.

7. AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Most. Reshma Akter conceptualized the study, prepared the questionnaire, analyzed data and prepared manuscript. Shams Ferdows collected data and helped in data analysis. Md. Shafiqul Islam helped in manuscript preparation as well as necessary correction. Md. Raihan Parvez, Md. Mehedi Hasan, and Md. Masud Rana formulated the present hypothesis. All of the authors checked and approved the final manuscript before submission.

8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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