

Menstrual Hygiene Practices Among the Women Age 15-24 in India

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Abstract : Menstrual hygiene is an important aspect in the life of young girls. Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) is defined as 'Women and adolescent girls using a clean material to absorb or collect menstrual blood that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing the body as required and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials. This paper aims to investigate the prevalence of hygienic menstrual practices and socio-demographic correlates of hygienic menstrual practices among women aged 15-24 in India. Data from the 2015-2016 National Family Health Survey-4 for 244,500 menstruating women aged 15-24 were used. The methods have been categorized into two, women who use sanitary napkins, locally prepared napkins and tampons considered as a hygienic method and those who use cloth, any other method and nothing used at all during menstruation considered as an unhygienic method. Women's age, year of schooling, religion, place of residence, caste/tribe, marital status, wealth index, type of toilet facility used, region, the structure of the house and exposure to mass media are taken as an independent variables. Bivariate analysis was carried out with selected background characteristics to analyze the socio-economic and demographic factors associated with the use of hygienic methods during menstruation. The odds for the use of the hygienic method were computed by employing binary logistic regression. Almost 60% of the women use cloth as an absorbent during menstruation to prevent blood stains from becoming evident. The hygienic method, which includes the use of locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins and tampons, is 16.27%, 41.8% and 2.4%. The proportion of women who used hygienic methods to prevent blood stains from becoming evident was 57.58%. Multivariate analyses reveal that education of women, wealth and marital status are found to be the most important positive factors of hygienic menstrual practices. The structure of the house and exposure to mass media also have a positive impact on the use of menstrual hygiene practices. In contrast, women residing in rural areas belonging to scheduled tribes are less likely to use hygienic methods during their menstruation. Geographical regions are also statistically significant with the use of hygienic methods during menstruation. This study reveals that menstrual hygiene is not satisfactory among a large proportion of adolescent girls. They need more education about menstrual hygiene. A variety of factors affect menstrual behaviors; amongst these, the most influential is economic status, educational status and residential status, whether urban or rural. It is essential to design a mechanism to address and access healthy menstrual knowledge. It is important to encourage policies and quality standards that promote safe and affordable options and dynamic markets for menstrual products. Materials that are culturally acceptable, contextually available and affordable. Promotion of sustainable, environmentally friendly menstrual products and their disposal as it is a very important aspect of sustainable development goals. We also need to educate the girls about the services which are provided by the government, like a free supply of sanitary napkins to overcome reproductive tract infections. Awareness regarding the need for information on healthy menstrual practices is very important. It is essential to design a mechanism to address and access healthy menstrual practices. Emphasis should be given to the education of young girls about the importance of maintaining hygiene during menstruation to prevent the risk of reproductive tract infections.

Keywords : adolescent, menstruation, menstrual hygiene management, menstrual hygiene

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