



Study About Menstrual Health and Hygiene Practices Among the Females of Rural Area of Jhajjar District, Haryana

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ABSTRACT

The menstrual cycle is a biological phenomenon that is regulated by female hormones, which result in regular monthly bleeding. The menstrual cycle affects a woman's body in many different ways beyond just giving her monthly periods. Females differ in their menstrual cycle length and regularity. This study was carried out in the rural area of Jhajjar district, Haryana. 150 samples were gathered, and a survey form was created. This study's primary goal was to examine young ladies of various age groups' menstrual hygiene and health. Young girls in remote areas who were attending school had very little awareness of menstruation. The findings clearly show an increase in the prevalence of various vaginal issues, reproductive tract infections, and urinary tract infections. Most women across all age groups had vaginal discharge of various colors. Particularly in girls in the 21–30 age group, PCOD is rising more quickly. The primary cause of these issues was poor menstrual hygiene practices. Many regions of India continue to view periods as taboo. There are many period-related myths, and they are the main cause of poor menstrual hygiene behaviors that harm a female's ability to conceive. For adolescent girls and their parents to have a better understanding of periods, several educational programs about menstrual health and hygiene should be conducted.

Keywords: Reproductive, unsatisfactory hygiene, vaginal discharge, PCOD.

Received 20.09.2023

Revised 29.10.2023

Accepted 20.12.2023

INTRODUCTION

An extraordinary naturally occurring process in women of reproductive age is menstruation. The female reproductive system goes through several cyclical changes from menarche to menopause during menstruation. The menstrual cycle lasts an average of 28 days, however it can sometimes last up to 25 or 30 days, which is normal. Between 30 and 80 ml of blood might be lost during a period [1]. The three main phases of the menstrual cycle are the follicular or proliferative phase, the ovulatory phase, and the luteal phase. Cycle starts when the brain causes specific hormones to be released. These hormones promote the development of eggs. The egg exits the ovary after maturing and travels through the fallopian tube. If the sperm fertilizes the egg, the resulting zygote will attach itself into the uterine wall; otherwise, the egg will decompose. During your period, the hormone level will drop, the uterine lining will shed, and this will cause bleeding to exit the vagina. The brain's hypothalamus is where hormone secretion starts. The most crucial hormone for reproduction, known as GnRH (gonadotropin releasing hormones), is released by the hypothalamus [8-12]. Two hormones, follicular stimulating hormones (FSH) and luteinizing hormone (LH), are released by the pituitary gland as a result of GnRH. Both hormones have an effect on the ovary, causing it to release specific menstrual hormones [2]. Both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism can cause irregular menstrual cycles. Hypothyroidism might result in excessive blood flow during menstruation. When a person has hyperthyroidism, amenorrhea and oligomenorrhea might occur. Cycles of menstruation begin to alter. Fecundity in women is decreased by both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism [3]. Women's lives are significantly impacted by menstrual hygiene. A woman is more prone to contracting numerous sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract infections, and other reproductive tract infections during her period. Menstrual cups, tampons, and other commercial products like sanitary pads are less common and frequently out of reach for most people. India ranks last in the world for sanitary napkin use because most menstruation women cannot afford them [4, 5]. Even though menstruation is a natural occurrence, there are some physiological and religious hurdles because of a lack of information, which results in a variety of restrictions for menstruating girls and women [6]. There are several myths related to

menstruation like: - Menstruating girls are considered impure and are forbidden from touching plants, cooking, or going to religious places, among other beliefs about menstruation. Girls in slum areas face a lot of problems related to menstrual hygiene. Most of them do not know the actual meaning of menstruation and have very poor menstrual hygiene [7]. For three out of every four menstruating women, signs and symptoms include mood swings, breast pain, food cravings, weariness, irritability, fury, bloating, acne, depression, fever, anaemia, abdominal pain, back pain, and others are typical during menstruation. These symptoms are referred to as premenstrual syndrome, or PMS. Managing these symptoms makes it challenging to complete daily duties [8].

Aim and objective of the study: This study was conducted to investigate among females about menstrual health and hygiene.

Place of the study: This study was conducted in the rural area of Jhajjar district, Haryana. This study was conducted from January 2023 to June 2023 among 150 females in different age group i.e., from (12 to 20) (21-30) (31-40) (41-50). By using survey method.

Instrument for data collection: Personal interview was taken by the females of different age groups. In order to facilitate better comprehension, a questionnaire was created using straightforward language. 150 females were interviewed and their data was collected and analysed.

The menstrual cycle regularity, cycle length, health issues encountered during the menstrual cycle, blood loss and clotting, menstrual hygiene practices, reproductive and urinary tract infections, use of painkillers and other remedies, use of sanitary products, PCOD, menarche symptoms, restrictions encountered during menstruation, and various menstrual myths were all covered in the questionnaire on menstrual health and hygiene.

Prior to the interview, each topic was thoroughly explained, paying particular attention to the less educated or uneducated female candidates.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Questions:

- **Menstruation and its related issues**

- 1) How old were you when you had your first period?
- 2) Did you know about menstruation before you start menstruating?
- 3) Where did you get the information about the menstruation?
- 4) Do you have regular periods?
- 5) What menstrual product do you use?
- 6) What pad type do you use?
- 7) For how long you wear a pad?
- 8) Have you had any of these problems from using menstrual products?
- 9) Do you experience menstrual pain?
- 10) Do you experience the following symptoms during your periods?
- 11) What do you do when you have menstrual pain?
- 12) Do you experience clotting during periods?
- 13) For how many days your periods last?
- 14) Do you have vaginal discharge and what colour is of your discharge?
- 15) Do you have PCOD?
- 16) Do you experience any symptoms due to PCOD?
- 17) Have you ever consulted to a gynaecologist regarding any hormonal disbalance or any other menstrual problem?
- 18) Do you stop going to school/college/work during your periods?
- 19) Do you feel shy while buying menstrual products?
- 20) Do you talk to your parents/partner about your menstrual problems?
- 21) Is there any kind of menstrual products distributing programme at your school/college/village/society?
- 22) Do you experience food cravings during your periods?
- 23) Do you follow any kind of meditation or yoga during your periods?
- 24) What restrictions you experience during your periods?

- **Menstrual hygiene**

- 25) Do you use any hygiene product to was your intimate area?
- 26) Do you have proper disposal system for pads at your school/college/home?
- 27) Have you ever faced any problem due to improper menstrual hygiene?

- 28) What menstrual hygiene sessions are provided for girls in your school/college/area?
- 29) Are you heading towards menopause?
- 30) What kind of myths have you heard about menstruation?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Menstruation And Its Related Issues:

- In young girls who are in school, there has been a change in the menarche age. Even though 13 years old on average was the menarche age. Out of a total of 150 respondents, 50% were unaware of menstruation until they experienced it. The best people to ask about menstruation were mothers. Girls with less educated mothers or mothers who were illiterate had distinct ideas about menstruation.
- 40% of the women had irregular periods, compared to 60% who had normal periods. Diet, stress, and workload were the primary causes of the irregularity.
- Even though the market is flooded with menstruation sanitary goods, pads continue to be the most popular. Women in remote areas didn't even aware they existed, and those who did were scared to use them. Because of financial constraints and a lack of knowledge, women in rural areas continued to use cloth pads instead of disposable ones. Urban females, particularly those in the 18–28 age range, are converting to cotton pads from sanitary pads.
- Most of the respondents had experienced many problems form using menstrual product such as genital rash, vaginal irritation, genital redness or inflammation. All these problems occurred mainly due to synthetic pads.
- 96% of women report experiencing pain during their periods. Age and pain severity didn't have a meaningful link. Due to this, 60% of them skip work, school/college. Many women from disadvantaged backgrounds reported working while experiencing pain or other problems, which made their situation worse.
- Premenstrual syndrome was experienced by most females during menstruation. Back pain accounted for 67.8% of complaints, along with 46.6% of irritability or anger, 45.8% of sleep issues, 38.1% of headaches, 37.3% of bloating, 32.2% of anxiety or tension, and 18.6% of anaemia. 43.7% of ladies used natural remedies to lessen their period discomfort, compared to 46.2% who relied on pharmaceuticals.
- Women reported clotting in close to 81% of cases. Heavy bleeding and pain were also brought on by excessive clotting.
- The typical menstrual cycle lasted three to five days in majority of the cases. 30% females reported menstrual cycle of more than 5 days. Women who had cycles longer than 5 days were more likely to have PCOD, and the majority of them also experienced anemia.
- Women reported vaginal discharge in about 82% of cases. There have been reports of vaginal discharge in various colors. 61% of women reported milky white discharge, which is a common symptom of the monthly cycle, but if it is thick and accompanied by additional symptoms like itching, burning, or irritation, a yeast infection is likely to be the cause. 47.4% of people reported clear, watery discharge, which is most likely typical and is brought on by hormonal fluctuations. 17.5% of women reported having brown discharge, which is blood-filled vaginal discharge. 14% of respondents experienced yellow-green discharge, which is typically an indication of bacterial or STDs.
- Nearly 22% of females reported PCOD, however 24.4% were completely unaware of it. After being educated about the signs of PCOD, some of them noted similar physical symptoms. PCOD symptoms included irregular periods in 67.3% of cases, excessive body hair in 57.1%, acne in 40.8%, and weight increase in 36.7% of cases.
- Menstruation is still considered taboo in most places, according to the research, hence 30.3% of female were feeling self-conscious while buying sanitary napkins. Because they were nervous and even their parents didn't feel comfortable with it, 28% of them didn't even talk to their parents or spouse about menstruation.
- There are still no distribution programs for menstruation products in schools or colleges. In order to teach them about menstruation hygiene, 51% of women said that there are no counseling sessions or NGO programs.
- Women were most uncomfortable talking about menstruation because of restrictions during their periods. Particularly in rural regions, there were severe restrictions. 75% of ladies said they felt a lot of constraints.

Menstrual Hygiene:

- Because they were unaware of the pH of the vagina and the negative effects of using soap, 23.3% of females were using soap to clean their private parts. The poll showed a noticeably rising rate of intimate washing, though mostly among women in urban regions.

- 56% of females experienced issues as a result of poor menstrual hygiene. In the survey, rising rates of UTI and RTI were evident. 52% of the female population reported having rashes, and they did so monthly. 42.7% of people experienced urinating pain, while 22.7 reported swelling in vaginal area. Each of these elements has an impact on a woman's reproductive health.
- When females of age group (41-49) are asked about the symptoms of menopause, majority of them had those symptoms. Half of them had irregular periods and mood swings. 33.3% had sleep problems and 30% had vaginal dryness and weight gain with slowed metabolism.
- 100% of the females have heard about a lot of myths about menstruation. Females of rural area even believe in them and when they told the truth they denied believing.

A community-based cross-sectional study was carried out for this research from January 2023 to June 2023. The poll was administered to ladies of various ages who were in school, in college, married, single, housewives, working, illiterate, and literate. Data was gathered using a questionnaire and in-person interviews. The purpose of this survey was to evaluate women's menstrual hygiene and health. A variety of health-related problems are brought on by a lack of knowledge about menstrual cleanliness and health. Poor sanitation causes a variety of issues with the reproductive system, which reduces women's fertility. Due to a lack of information, women in rural areas or those with lower levels of education in particular confront all these issues.

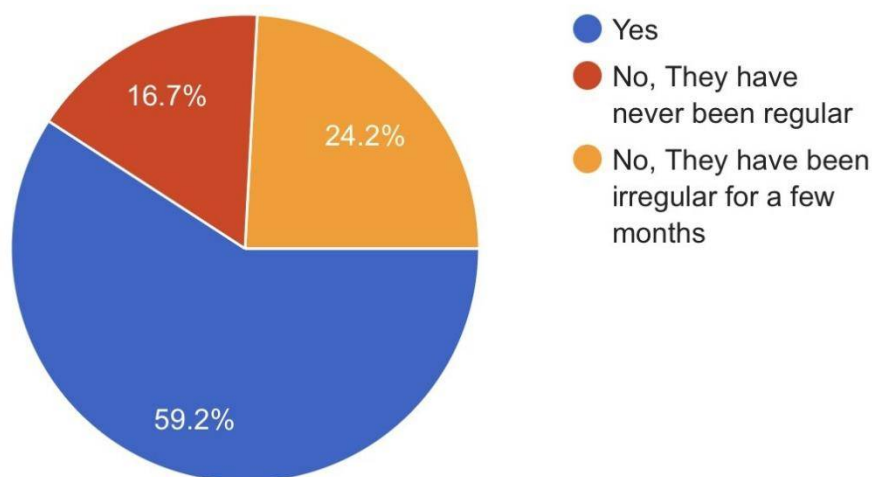


Fig. 1. Pie chart showing menstrual irregularity in females

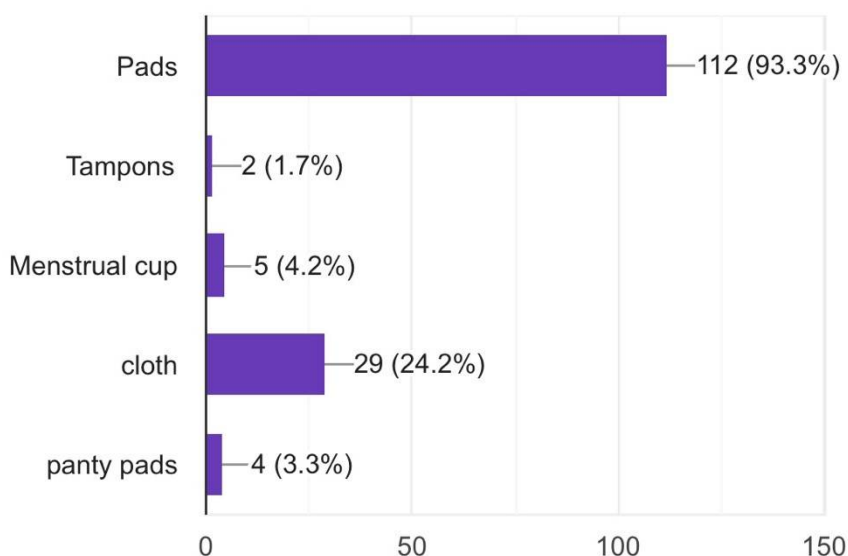


Fig. 2. Graph showing type of menstrual product used by females

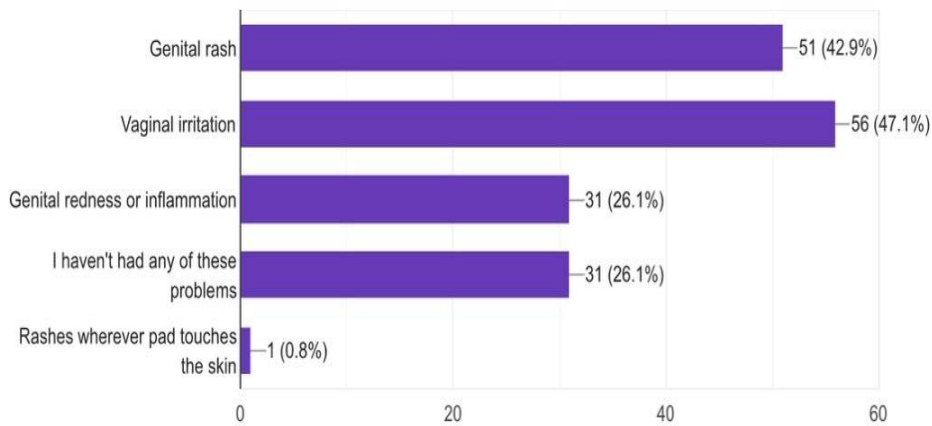


Fig. 3. Graph showing problems faced by females from using menstrual products

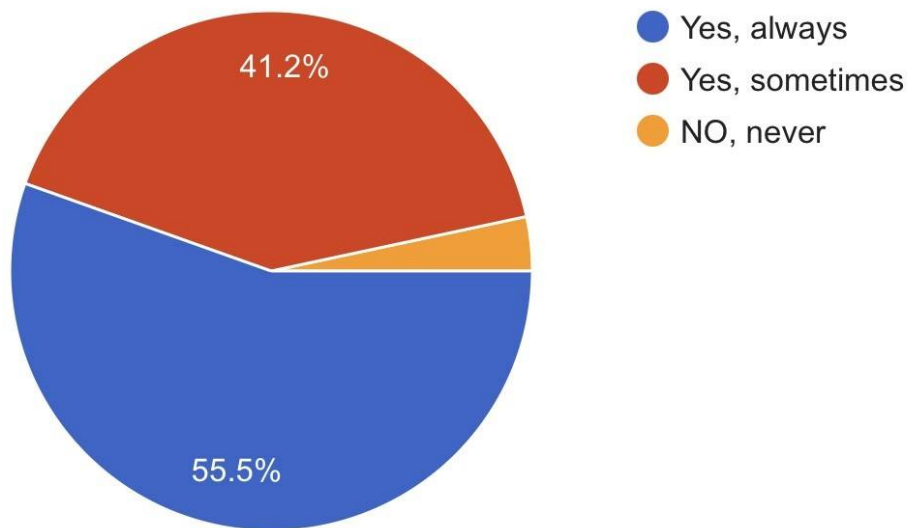


Fig. 4. Pie chart showing pain experienced by females during menstruation

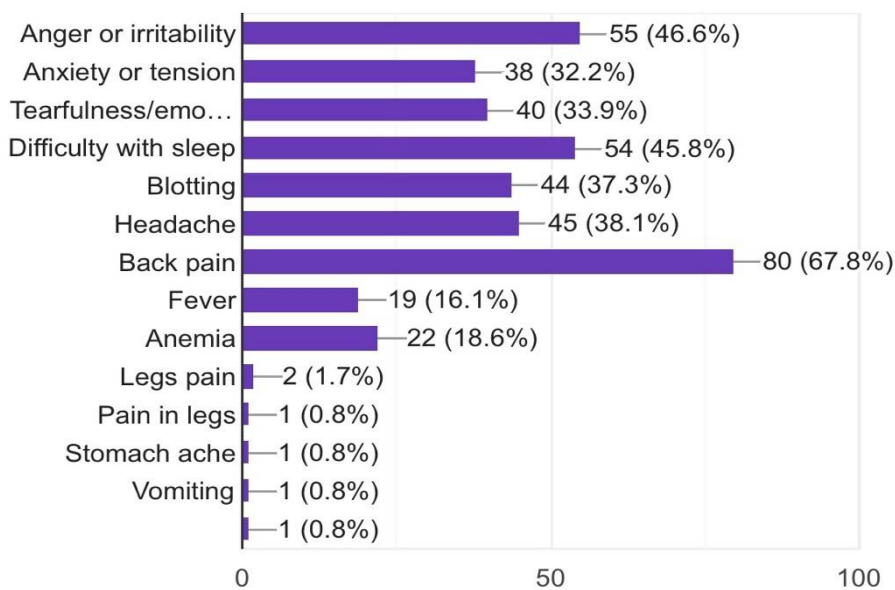


Fig. 5. Graph showing premenstrual syndrome experienced by females

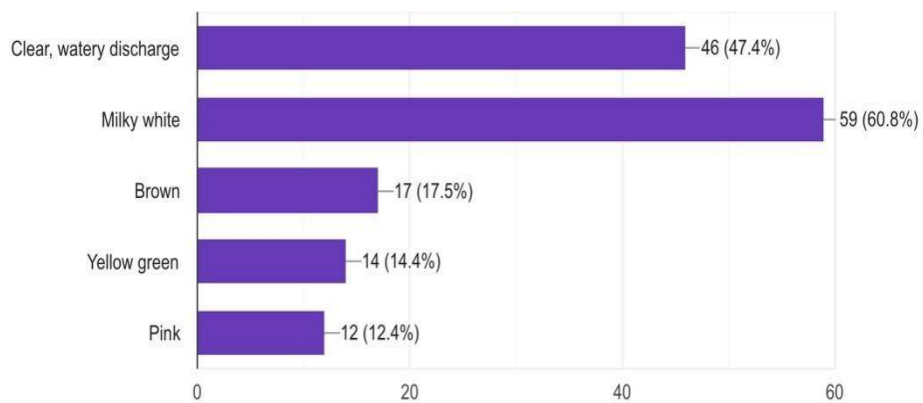


Fig. 6. Graph showing type of vaginal discharge

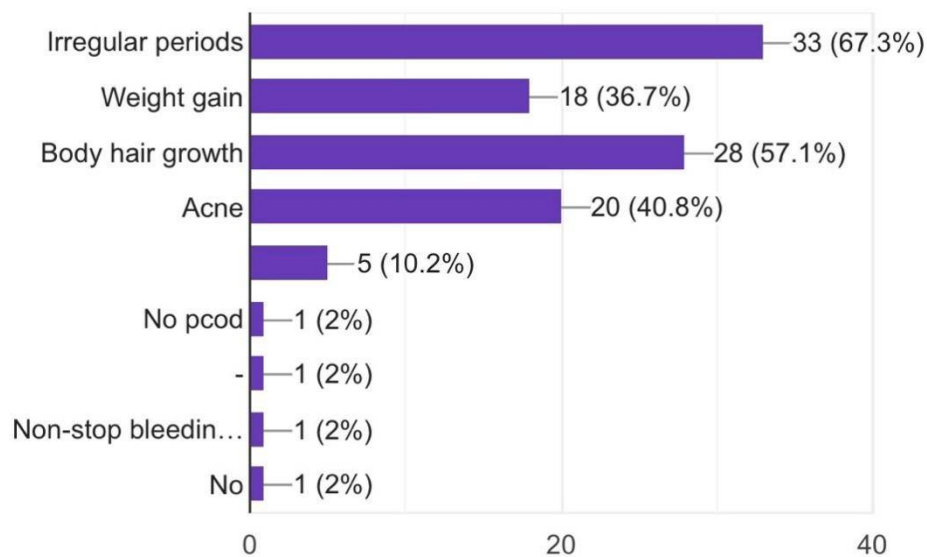


Fig. 7. Graph showing symptoms of PCOD experienced by females

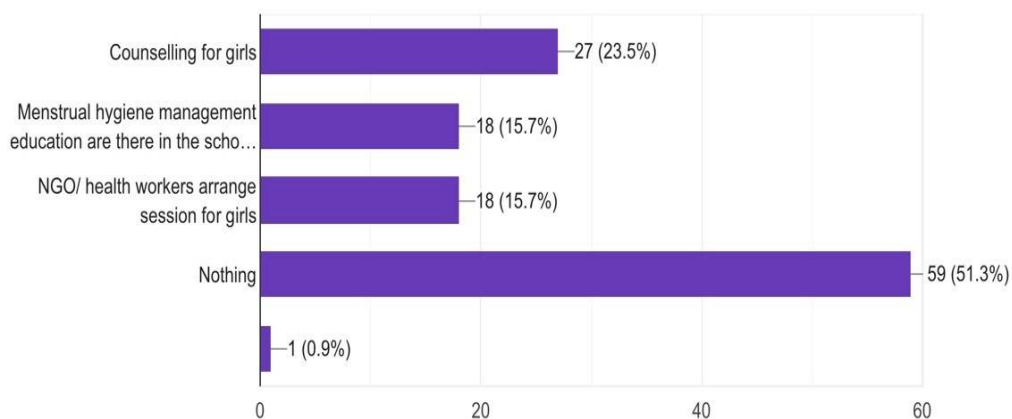


Fig. 8. Different type of menstrual hygiene education session provided for girls

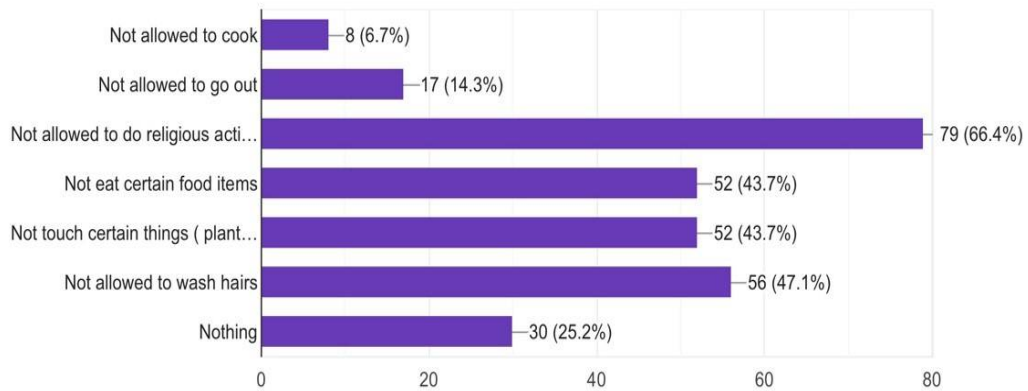


Fig. 9. Graph showing restrictions experienced by females during their periods

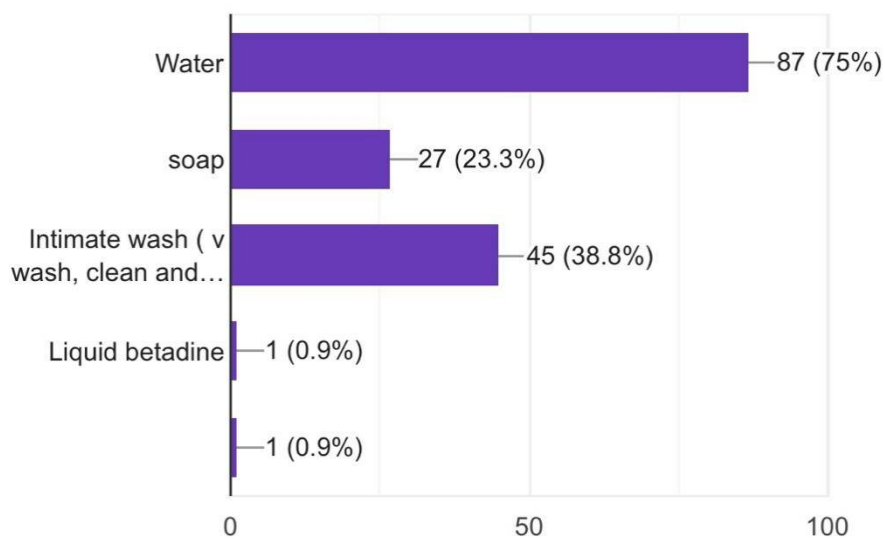


Fig. 10. Graph showing types of ways used by females to wash their intimate area

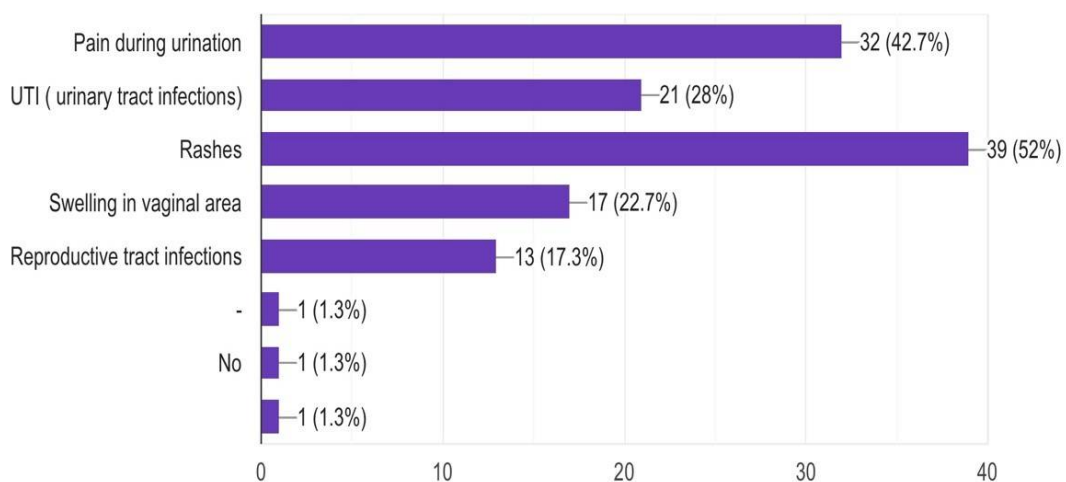


Fig. 11. Graph showing problems faced by women due to poor menstrual hygiene

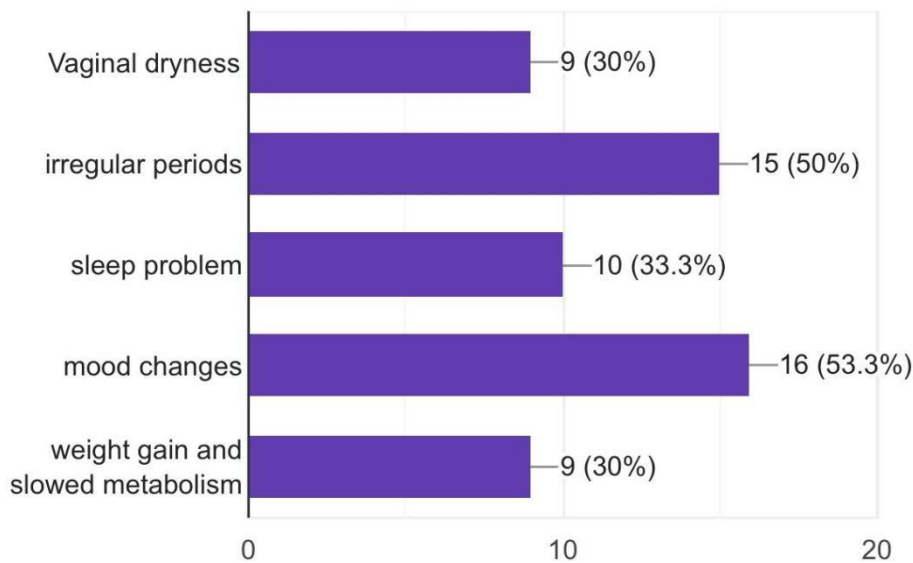


Fig. 12. Graph showing types of symptoms experienced by females heading toward menopause

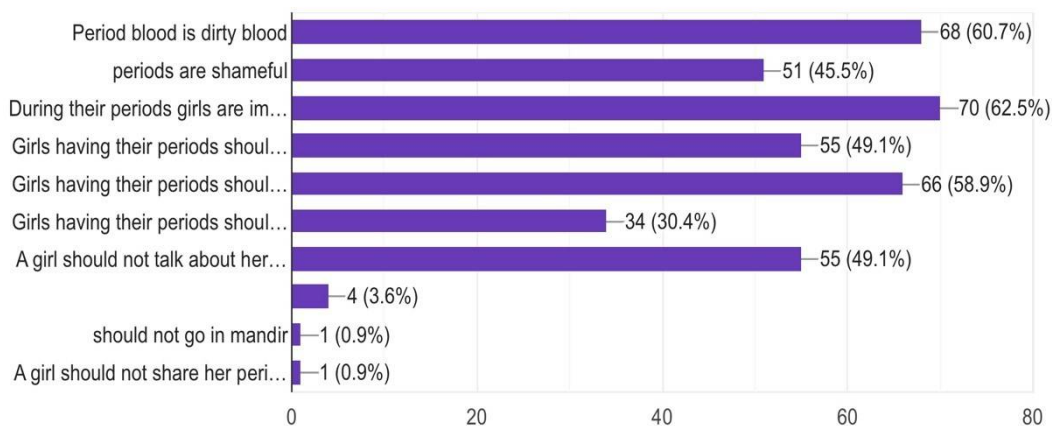


Fig. 13. Graph showing myths about menstruation.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions have been drawn from the results:

- Up until their first period, 35% of females had no idea what menstruation was, and their mothers were the main sources of information. Girls whose mothers were illiterate or poorly educated knew very little about menstruation.
- Period irregularity was seen, particularly in girls in the 18–25 age group. In young girls, there was a change in menarche age. The issues that women have with their menstrual cycle are brought on by psychological stress, worry, and sadness.
- Most females still do not utilize sanitary goods other than pads. Most of them were completely unaware of them. Those who were aware of them feared employing them. Only a small percentage of them use sanitary goods outside pads, such as tampons and menstrual cups. Rural women and girls continue to use cloth during their periods.
- Some women were using sanitary pads for longer than six hours due to ignorance. They had no idea what would happen when the results of this were explained to them. Due to the use of cloth and synthetic pads during menstruation, issues like genital rash, vaginal irritation, genital redness, and inflammation are growing more and more frequently.

- Most females experience pain throughout their periods. Age and pain severity didn't have a meaningful link.
- Women often experience issues like anger, fever, irritability, bodily aches, anemia, etc. during their periods. All of these issues disrupt their daily activities. During their periods, the majority of them skip work, school, and/or college
- Vaginal discharge of various kinds was seen. But they were unaware of the significance and origin of such emission. Most of the females didn't even think to seek medical advice.
- The most frequent reason for anovulatory infertility is PCOD. Women with PCOD who participated in the study reported feelings of anxiety, despair, tension, and personal dissatisfaction. These feelings may be made worse by changes in how they see their bodies as a result of weight gain.
- In most families, menstruation is still considered taboo. This is leading to a great deal of misunderstandings regarding them, and as a result, there is poor menstrual hygiene, which was amply demonstrated in the survey. Bad menstrual hygiene is contributing to an increase in urinary tract infections (UTI) and reproductive tract infections (RTI).

RECOMMENDATIONS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Researchers might perform a study on a sizable population with a focus on female menstruation.

Perhaps these women's attitudes towards menstruation will alter as they get more interested in learning about it, tracking their ovulation and monthly cycles, and feeling more at ease. To draw results that can be generalized, a larger study involving random data collecting in each region with a diversity of sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses is required. More respondents who are biological females, who are pregnant, who have irregular periods, excessive bleeding, or no bleeding, and who also have disorders related to menstruation should be included in the data collection.

Surveys like the one used in this study and those in the future should ask participants about their dependability and knowledge of the menstrual cycle.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Garima Sheoran and Nikita Chahar writing main manuscript, Shweta Sharma and Neha Kumari helping in graphs and figures and prof. Vineeta Shukla supervising, visualization the manuscript.

Funding: N.A.

DATA AVAILABILITY:

All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article

Ethics statement: N.A.

Informed consent: N.A

Consent to participate: Not applicable

Consent to publication: Not applicable

Conflict of interest: Authors have no conflict of interest.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Authors acknowledge the infrastructural and financial support provided from Department of Zoology, Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak-124001, Haryana, India.

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CITATION OF THIS ARTICLE

Garima S, Nikita C, Neha K, Shweta S, Vineeta S Study About Menstrual Health And Hygiene Practices Among The Females Of Rural Area Of Jhajjar District, Haryana. *Bull. Env.Pharmacol. Life Sci.*, Vol 13 [3] February 2024: 36-45