

# How prepared and aware are young rural girls about the menstrual health and hygiene?

## A cross sectional study

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### ABSTRACT

#### BACKGROUND:

Menstruation and menstrual practices are still clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions resulting in adolescent girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes.

#### METHODOLOGY:

A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted among 152 adolescent girls of a secondary school situated in the field practice area of Rural population of ambegaon taluka from Pune district from Maharashtra, with the help of a self made questionnaire . Data were analyzed statistically by simple proportions.

#### RESULTS:

Out of 152 respondents, 77(50.7%)of them considered menstruation was a normal phenomenon, where 21(13.8%)considered it as a curse given by god,54(35.5%)considered it was a pathological condition.16(10.5%) of them perceived that it is not allowed to pray god or visit temple during menstruation, 67 (44.1%) of them perceived all of them i.e., not allowed to touch others, not allowed to go to kitchen and not allowed to pray god or visit temple; and 69(45.4%) of them perceived none of the options above.10(6.6%)were using absorbent material, during menstruation 140(92.1%) use sanitary pads, and 2(1.3%)use menstrual cup. Subjects using sanitary pad 58(38.2%)chose burning as the disposal method, while 17(11.2%)chose digging in the ground and 77(50.7%)throw it in dustbin.140(92.1%) think that the above ways are environment friendly and 12(7.9%) think that those are not environment friendly.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

The study concludes that even if the population was educated still half of the rural girls do not think menstruation as a normal phenomenon and still follow the misperceptions during menstruation. Many of them do not do anything for the pain experienced during menstruation. Almost all of the population has heard about the menstruation but the information and the practices they follow is not adequate. Only negligible percent of the population are aware about the menstrual cup or recent advances that can be used for menstruation. The use of sanitary pad is more and are not aware about the right techniques about its disposal and harmful effects and do not think that the techniques they practice are not environment friendly. Thus, the above findings reinforce the need to encourage safe and hygienic practices among the adolescent girls and bring them out of traditional beliefs, misconceptions restrictions regarding menstruation.

**Keywords**—Adolescent girl, menstruation, menstrual hygiene, disposal methods, misperceptions.

### Introduction

Menstruation may be a universal and normal phenomenon during the reproductive age of females. Menstruation (also called a period) is that the regular discharge of blood and mucosal tissue from the inner lining of the uterus through the vagina. The oscillation is characterized by the increase and fall of hormones. Menstruation is triggered by falling progesterone levels and may be a sign that pregnancy has not occurred.[2] The first period, some extent in time called menarche, usually begins between the ages of 12 and 15. Menstruation starting as young as 8 years would still be considered normal. the typical age of the primary period is usually later within the developing world, and earlier within the developed world.[5] the standard length of your time between the primary day of 1 period and therefore the first day of the subsequent is 21 to 45 days in young women. In adults, the range is between 21 and 31 days with the typical being 28 days. Bleeding usually lasts around 2 to 7 days. Periods stop during pregnancy and typically don't resume during the initial months of breastfeeding. Menstruation stops occurring after menopause, which usually occurs between 45 and 55 years old. [3] Up to 80% of girls don't experience problems sufficient to disrupt daily functioning either during menstruation or within the days leading up to menstruation. These include acne, tender breasts, bloating, feeling tired, irritability, and mood changes Other symptoms some women experience include painful periods and heavy bleeding during menstruation and abnormal bleeding at any time during the cycle.[3] a scarcity of periods, called amenorrhea, is when periods don't occur by age 15 or haven't re-occurred in 90 days.

The onset of menses takes place during adolescent period within which dominant physiological and emotional changes happen. Adolescent is a vital period where females are preparing and adjusting themselves to manage their menstrual bleeding in safe and

clean way. this is often also the best time that girls often join different environments including high schools and tried to plan for his or her next adulthood life.[2] However, most adolescent girls (girls with age ranges of 10 to fifteen with a mean of 13 years old) enter to their puberty stage (maturity) without preparing themselves thanks to the shortage of adequate information . most girls are uncomfortable to debate regarding “menses” because it features a social taboo and adolescent girls couldn't have access to realize adequate information. Even the tiny information they receive most typically from religious institutions, peers, loved one is usually selective and surrounded by misperceptions. Adolescent girls constitute a vulnerable group, particularly in India where female descendant is neglected one.[2]

People in India often perceive menstruation as something happened as a results of being cursed, an indication of diseases, and punishment from God, a lifelong process et al.. As a result, adolescent girls perceive menstruation as something embarrassing that ought to be kept hidden. this will increase the vulnerability of adolescent girls to own mental, emotional and physical problems. These conditions further impair the daily activities, academic performance, school attendance, and social relationships of adolescent girls.[4] The view within which girls perceive towards menstruation also affects their hygienic practice during their menstrual bleeding. Women with better understanding of menses often have safe and clean way of managing their menstrual bleeding and the other way around .[3] it's uncovered that poor menstrual hygiene practice may be a reason for reproductive and genitor-urinary tract infection, cervical cancer, school absenteeism, or drop-out, poor academic performance, lower self-esteem and poor quality of life . Moreover, girls have also often experienced feelings of fear, confusion and shame during their menstruation period as a results of smell, leakage, staining of garments and dropping of sanitary materials during their class schedules. this may have also a negative impact on the concentration, class participation and confidence of their studies. [4] Although poor knowledge and unsafe menstrual hygiene practice have such considerable clinical implications for the women themselves and their future off springs, knowledge of adolescent girls regarding menstruation is poor and their hygienic practices don't seem to be correct, particularly with lower socio-economic contexts.[4] it's been reported that 40–45% of adolescent school girls have poor knowledge and unsafe hygienic practice of their menstrual bleeding. This might need a clinical implication to integrate the promotion of menstrual hygienic practice within the health care system and comprehensive efforts including policy implication are needed to enhance girls' knowledge and safe hygienic practices towards menstruation right from her adolescent period.

#### AIM:

To Study how prepared and aware are young rural girls about the menstrual health and hygiene.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To elicit beliefs, conception and source of data regarding menstruation among the study population.
- 2) To seek out out the status of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls.

#### METHODOLOGY

Study design: community based cross sectional observational study.

Study set-up: rural population from ambegaon taluka of pune district.

Sampling technique: simple random sampling

Sample size: 152

Study duration: 6 months

#### INCLUSION CRITERIA

1) Adolescent girls (Age group :- 13-21 years)

2) Girls from Rural Population.

#### OUTCOME MEASURES:

1. A self made Questionnaire.

#### PROCEDURE

The girls from the rural population and from the inclusion criteria were selected. Approval of the conducting study was taken from the ethical committee and written consent letter from the subjects was taken. Then the students were explained about the purpose of the study and questionnaire. The questionnaire was provided to them. The questionnaire had different questions regarding socio-demographic profile, obstetric and gynecological related characteristics, questions used to assess knowledge of adolescent girls towards menstruation, and questions used to measure hygienic practices of menstruation. The process took approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The responses from the girls was been taken. The prevalence was calculated based on the responses obtained from the subjects to the total no of population participated in the study.

#### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

TABLE 1:-Age wise distribution of the study

Age group	Count
13-15	36
16-18	76

19-21	40
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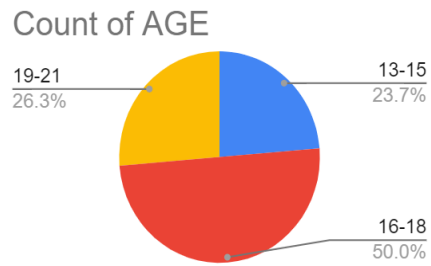


FIGURE 1

**INTERPRETATION:-** According to table 1, 36 of the participants were of 13-15 years, 76 were of 16-18 years and 40 of them were of 19-21 years of age from the rural population of Ambegaon taluka from Pune district. According to figure 1, 23.7% of the participants were of 13-15 years, 50.0% were of 16-18 years and 26.3% of them were of 19-21 years of age from the rural population of Ambegaon taluka from Pune district.

**FAMILY TYPE**

Response	a	b
n=152	78	74

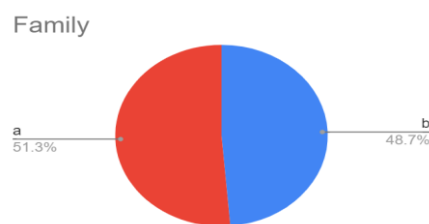


FIGURE 2  
a=nuclear family  
b=joint family

**INTERPRETATION:-** According to the table 2; 78 subjects lived in nuclear family whereas 74 of them lived in joint family. According to the figure 2; 51.3% subjects lived in nuclear family whereas 48.7% lived in joint family.

**MOTHERS EDUCATION**

Response	a	b
n=152	148	4

TABLE 3

a=educated  
b=uneducated

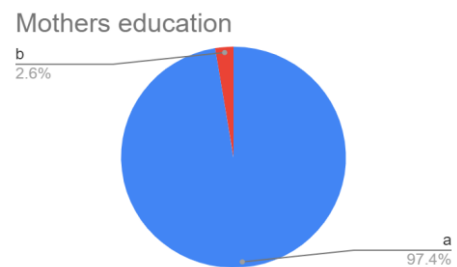


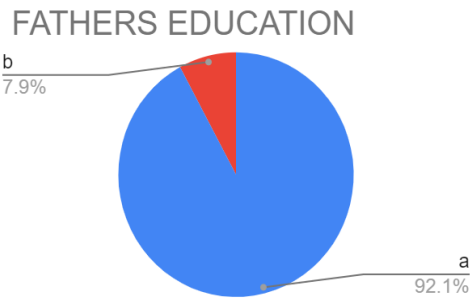
FIGURE 3

**INTERPRETATION: -** According to table 3; 148 of their mothers were educated and 4 were uneducated. According to figure 3; 97.4% of their mothers were educated and 2.6% were uneducated.

**FATHERS EDUCATION**

Response	a	b
n=152	140	12

TABLE 4



**INTERPRETATION:** - According to table 4; 140 of their fathers were educated and 12 were uneducated. According to figure 4; 92.1% of their fathers were educated and 7.9% were uneducated.

Q1 WHAT DO YOU THINK IS MENSTRUATION?

Q1	A	B	c	D
n=152	77	21	54	0

TABLE 5

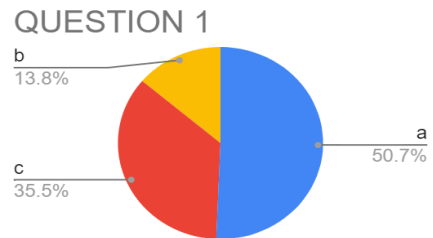


FIGURE 5

- a = It is a normal phenomenon
- b=It is a curse given by god
- c=It is a pathological condition.
- d=It will be stopped after intercourse

**INTERPRETATION:** - According to table 5; 77 of them considered menstruation was a normal phenomenon, where 21 considered it as a curse given by god, 54 considered it was a pathological condition. According to figure 5; 50.7% of them considered menstruation was a normal phenomenon, where 13.8% considered it as a curse given by god, 35.5% considered it was a pathological condition.

Q.2 WHAT DO YOU PERCEIVE ABOUT THE FOLLOWING DURING MENSTRUATION?

Q.2	a	B	C	D	E
n=152	0	0	16	67	69

TABLE 6

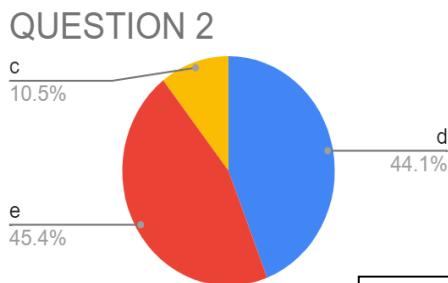


FIGURE 6

- a=It is not allowed to touch other during menstruation.
- b=It is not allowed to go to kitchen during menstruation.
- c=It is not allowed to pray god or visit temple.
- d=All of these
- e=none of these.

**INTERPRETATION:-** According to table 6; 16 of them perceived that it is not allowed to pray god or visit temple during menstruation,67 of them perceived all of them i.e., not allowed to touch others, not allowed to go to kitchen and not allowed to

pray god or visit temple; and 69 of them perceived none of the options above.

According to figure 6; 10.5% of them perceived that it is not allowed to pray god or visit temple during menstruation, 44.1% of them perceived all of them i.e., not allowed to touch others, not allowed to go to kitchen and not allowed to pray god or visit temple; and 45.4% of them perceived none of the options above

**Q.3) AT WHAT AGE HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED BLEEDING FOR THE FIRST TIME?**

Age group	12-13	14-15	16-18
n=152	38	86	28

TABLE 7

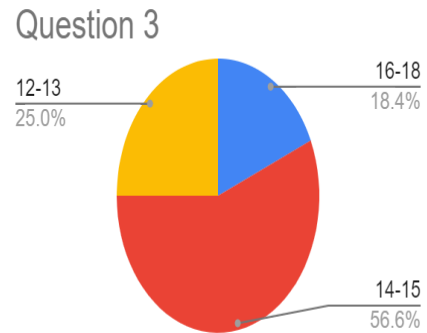


FIGURE 7

**INTERPRETATION:** - According to table 7; 38 of them experienced bleeding for the first time at the age of 12 or 13; 86 experienced bleeding at the age of 14 or 15 and 28 at the age of 16 and above.

According to figure 7; 25.0% of them experienced bleeding for the first time at the age of 12 or 13; 56.6% experienced bleeding at the age of 14 or 15 and 18.4% at the age of 16 and above.

**Q.4) FOR HOW MANY DAYS DOES YOUR MENSTRUAL BLEEDING STAY?**

No. of days	A	B	C
n=152	19	108	26

TABLE 8

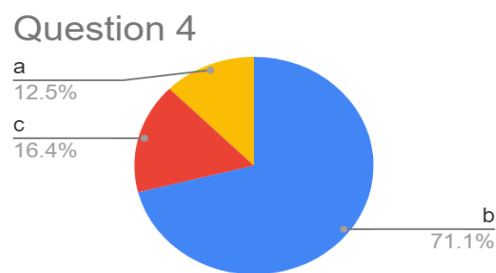


FIGURE 8

a=3 days  
b=3-5 days  
c=5 days

**INTERPRETATION:** - According to table 8; 19 of them had menstrual bleeding for about 3 or less than three days, 108 for 3-5 days and 26 for more than 5 days. According to figure 8; 12.5% of them had menstrual bleeding for about 3 or less than three days, 71.1% for 3-5 days and 16.4% for more than 5 days.

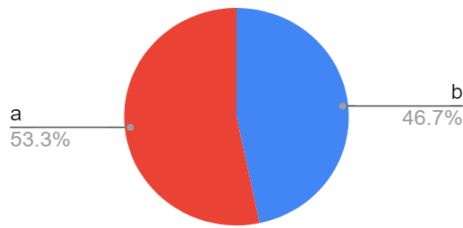
**Q.5) DO YOU EXPERIENCE SEVERE PAIN DURING YOUR MENSTRUAL FLOW?**

RESPONSE	A	B

N=152	81	71
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TABLE 9

Question 5

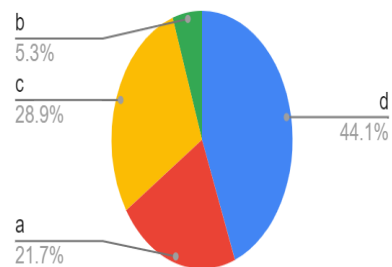


Q.6) IF YES, WHAT DO YOU DO FOR IT?

RESPONSE	A	b	c	D
n=152	33	8	44	67

FIGURE 9

Question 6



a=Pills  
 b= Hot pack  
 c= only sleep  
 d=Nothing

**INTERPRETATION:** According to table 10; 33 responded that they take pills; 8of them take hot pack; 44 only sleep or do nothing.

According to figure 10; 21.7% responded that they take pills; 5.3% of them take hot pack ; 28.9% only sleep or do nothing.

Q.7) HAVE YOU HEARD ANY INFORMATION REGARDING MENSES AND ITS HYGIENIC PRACTICE?

Response	A	b
n=152	142	10

TABLE 11

Question 7

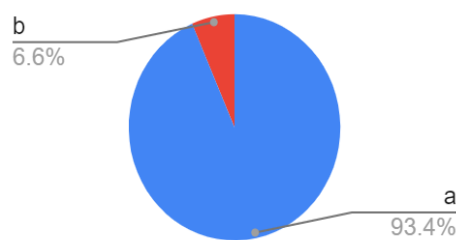


FIGURE 11

a = yes  
 b= no

**INTERPRETATION:** According to table 11, 142 of them have heard and 10 have not heard. According to figure 11, 93.4% of them have heard and 6.6% have not heard.

IF YES, THEN WHAT WAS YOUR SOURCE OF INFORMATION?

Response	a	b	c	d	e
n=152	80	6	23	24	19

TABLE 12

Question 7

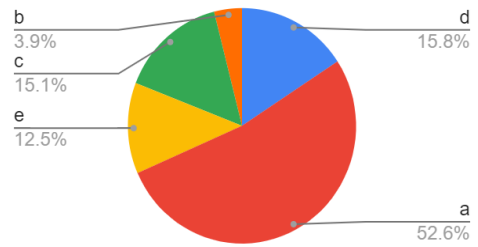


FIGURE 12

- a=mother
- b=friends
- c=teachers
- d=social media
- e=multiple options

**INTERPRETATION:** According to table 12 ; 80 it was mother; for 6 it was friends; it was teachers; 24 was social media and for 19 there were multiple sources.

According to figure 12; 52.6%it was mother; for 3.9%it was friends; 15.1% it was teachers; 15.8% was social media and for 12.5% there were multiple sources.

8) WHAT DO YOU USE DURING MENSTRUATION?

Response	a	b	c	d
n=152	10	140	0	2

TABLE 13

- a)Absorbent material
- b) Sanitary pad
- c) Tampon
- d) Menstrual cup.

Question 8

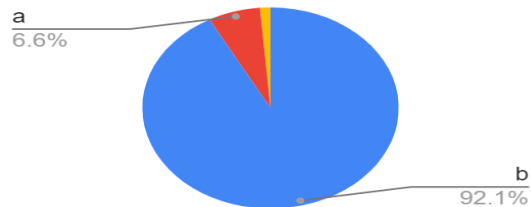


FIGURE 13

**INTERPRETATION:** According to 10 were using absorbent material, during menstruation 140 use sanitary pads, and 2 use menstrual cup.

According to 6.6% were using absorbent material, during menstruation 92.1%use sanitary pads, and 1.3% use menstrual cup.

9) IF YOU USE SANITARY PAD OR TAMPON, WHERE DO YOU DISPOSE IT?

Response	A	b	C
n=152	58	17	77

TABLE 14

Question 9

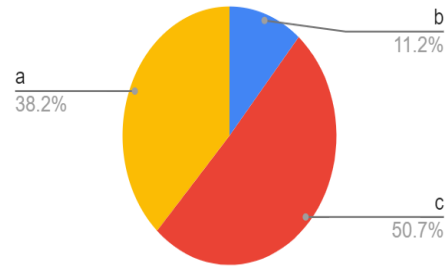


FIGURE 14

a=burning  
b=digging in the ground  
c=dustbin

**INTERPRETATION:** According to table 14; 58 chose burning as the disposal method, while 17 chose digging in the ground and 77 throw it in dustbin. According to figure 14; 38.2% chose burning as the disposal method, while 11.2% chose digging in the ground and 50.7% throw it in dustbin.

10) Do you think the above ways are environment friendly?

Response	A	B
n=152	140	12

Table 15

Question 10

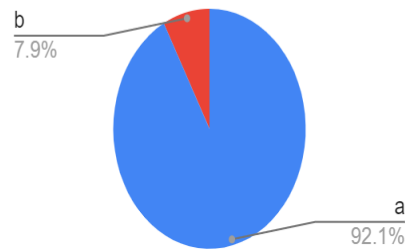


FIGURE 15

a= Yes  
b=No

**INTERPRETATION:** According to Table 15,140 of the subjects responded yes and 12 responded No. According to figure 15,92.1% of the participants responded yes and 7.9% responded No.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In the current study,152 adolescent girls of age group 13-21 were included in which 36 of them were of 13-15 years,76 were of 16-18 years and 40 of them were of 19-21 years of age from the rural population of ambegaon taluka from pune district. The subjects were chosen randomly; the consent was taken and the questionnaire was explained to them. According to the subjects comfort they were given choice to fill either English or Marathi questionnaire.All the subjects were educated and were from higher secondary school or college.

According to the data collected 78 subjects(51.3%)lived in nuclear family whereas 74 of them(48.7%)live in joint family where 148(97.4%) of their mothers were educated and 4(2.6%)were uneducated.Also,140(92.1%)of their fathers were educated and 12(7.9%)were uneducated.

According to the questionnaire, question 1; was what do you think is a menstruation? And 77(50.7%)of them considered menstruation was a normal phenomenon, where 21(13.8%)considered it as a curse given by god,54(35.5%)considered it was a pathological condition

According to the questionnaire, question 1; was what do you think is a menstruation? And 77(50.7%)of them considered menstruation was a normal phenomenon, where 21(13.8%)considered it as a curse given by god,54(35.5%)considered it was a pathological condition.

From question 2 16(10.5%) of them perceived that it is not allowed to pray god or visit temple during menstruation,67 (44.1%) of them perceived all of them i.e., not allowed to touch others, not allowed to go to kitchen and not allowed to pray god or visit temple; and 69(45.4%) of them perceived none of the options above.

- According to question 3, 38(25.0%) of them experienced bleeding for the first time at the age of 12 or 13; 86 (56.6%) experienced bleeding at the age of 14 or 15 and 28(18.4%) at the age of 16 and above.



- The results from question 4 were 19(12.5%)of them had menstrual bleeding for about 3 or less than three days,108(71.1%)for 3-5 days and 26(16.4%)for more than 5 days.
- According to question 5; 81 (53.3%) girls experience pain during menstrual flow whereas 71(46.7%) did not experience pain.
- The subjects who experience pain were asked what they do to reduce pain in the next question and 33(21.7%) responded that they take pills;8(5.3%)of them take hot pack ;44(28.9%)only sleep or do nothing.
- According to question 7,girls were asked if they heard about menstruation before and 142(93.4%)of them have heard and 10(6.6%)have not heard .
- If they have heard about it before they were asked what was their source of information and for 80(52.6%)it was mother; for 6(3.9%)it was friends;23(15.1%)it was teachers;24(15.8%)was social media and for 19(12.5%)there were multiple sources.
- According to the next question i.e., Q.8 10(6.6%)were using absorbent material, during menstruation 140(92.1%)use sanitary pads, and 2(1.3%)use menstrual cup.
- Subjects using sanitary pad 58(38.2%)chose burning as the disposal method, while 17(11.2%)chose digging in the ground and 77(50.7%)throw it in dustbin.
- And 140(92.1%) think that the above ways are environment friendly and 12(7.9%) think that those are not environment friendly.
- Adolescence is recognized as a special critical period of females in which significant hormonal and emotional changes take place including their first menstrual onset. Although menstruation is such a normal physiological process in female's reproductive age, it is surrounded by taboos and supernatural perceptions. India being male dominant society females doesn't feel comfortable to speak on this topic in front of the family. As a result, many adolescent girls could not have the access to get adequate information regarding menstruation and its hygienic practice, and they often join to their menarche without preparing themselves, particularly in rural areas . This might result in adverse health outcomes and poor academic performance of adolescent school girls.
- Puja Dudeja,Apoorva Sindhu,Pooja Shankar,Tukaram Gadekar studied A cross-sectional study to assess awareness about menstruation in adolescent girls of an urban slum in western Maharashtra and concluded that Correct knowledge in adolescent young girls regarding menstruation is lacking. Lack of awareness is a roadblock in adopting safe and hygienic menstrual practices. It also hinders them from overcoming traditional beliefs, misconceptions and restrictions regarding menstruation.
- Deo DS, Ghattargi CH. studied Perceptions and practices regarding menstruation: a comparative study in urban and rural adolescent girls concluded that significant differences were observed among urban and rural adolescent girls in terms of knowledge, perception, and practices related to menstrual hygiene. The findings are comparable to other parts of the country. Ignorance, false perceptions, and unhygienic practices were also prevailing among adolescent girls. This indicated an urgent need for health promotion interventions in the form of regular awareness sessions and counseling for menstrual hygiene management at primary care level.

### **CONCLUSION**

- The study concludes that even if the population was educated still half of the rural girls do not think menstruation as a normal phenomenon and still follow the misperceptions during menstruation. Many of them do not do anything for the pain experienced during menstruation. Almost all of the population have heard about the menstruation but the information and the practices they follow is not adequate. Only negligible percent of the population are aware about the menstrual cup or recent advances that can be used for menstruation. The use of sanitary pad is more and are not aware about the right techniques about its disposal and harmful effects and do not think that the techniques they practice are not environment friendly. Thus, the above findings reinforce the need to encourage safe and hygienic practices among the adolescent girls and bring them out of traditional beliefs, misconceptions and restrictions regarding menstruation.

### **CLINICAL IMPLICATION**

Before bringing any change in menstrual practices, the girls should be educated about the facts of menstruation, physiological implications, about the significance of menstruation and development of secondary sexual characteristics, and above all, about proper hygienic practices with selection of disposable sanitary menstrual absorbent. This can be achieved through educational television programmes, school nurses/health personnel, compulsory sex education in school curriculum and knowledgeable parents, so that her received education would indirectly wipe away the age-old wrong ideas and make her feel free to discuss menstrual matters including cleaner practices without any hesitation. All mothers irrespective of their educational status should be taught to break their inhibitions about discussing with their daughters regarding menstruation much before the age of menarche

This study reveals that menstrual hygiene is far from satisfactory among a large proportion of the adolescents while ignorance, false perceptions, unsafe practices regarding menstruation and reluctance of the mother to educate her child are also quite common among them.

### **FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDY**

- The study can be conducted in different locations.
- Further studies can be done about the awareness of recent advances that can be used during menstruation having minimal or no side effects to the body.

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**QUESTIONARE****Demographic Data**

Name:-

Gender:-Female

Age:-

Education:-

Religion:-

Education of Parents:-

a)Mother:-

b)Father:-

Family Structure:-

a)Nuclear

b)Joint family

1) What do you think is a menstruation?

a)Normal phenomenon

b)It is a curse given by God

c)It is a pathological condition

d)It will be stopped after initiation of sexual intercourse.

2)What do you perceive about the following during menstruation?

a)It is not allowed to touch other during menstruation.

b)It is not allowed to go to kitchen during menstruation.

c)It is not allowed to pray God or visit temple.

- d)All of these  
e)none of these.
- 3)At what age have you experienced bleeding for the first time?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4)For how many days does your menstrual bleeding stay?  
a)<3days  
b)3-5days  
c)>5days
- 5) Do you experience severe pain during your menstrual flow?  
a)Yes                      b)No
- 6)If yes, what do you do for it?  
a)Pills                      b)Hot pack  
c)Only sleep              d)Nothing
- 7) Have you heard any information regarding menses and its hygienic practice?  
a)Yes                      b)No
- If yes, then what was your source of information?  
a)Mother                  b)Friends  
c)Teachers                d)social media  
d)Other
- 8) What do you use during menstruation?  
a)Absorbent material      b)Sanitary pad  
c)Tampon                      d)Menstrual cup.
- 9)If you use sanitary pad or tampon where do you dispose it?  
a)Dustbin                      b)Digging in the ground.  
c)Burning
- 10)Do you think the above ways are environment friendly?  
a)Yes                              b)No