



ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN

**Menstruation/ Menstrual Hygiene Management
among Adolescent Girls in Chittagong, Bangladesh**

Summer project 2018-2019

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Abstract

Currently, the practice of menstruation and menstrual hygiene is becoming a predominant concern among adolescent girls due to lack of information of periods. Bangladesh as a developing country where menstruation is still being practice as a shameful or secret period of women's life, and there is several numbers of misconceptions and stigma behind menstruation circle. The purpose of the study is to reduce the misconceptions and stigma, which are still around the practice of menstruation, the way to promote healthy menstrual hygiene practice among adolescent girls in Chittagong. The research is based on quantitative data, and the training session. In addition, we first gave the survey to access the information of girls' knowledge and understanding about menstruation. Then we conducted training by discussing and sharing about the knowledge of menstruation and menstrual hygiene. After the training, we gave survey again for getting the outcome about how well they understood and improved. The total numbers of participants were 228. The age of the girls were among 10 to 17 years aged, from class 5 to 10. Among of those 228 girls, the research found out that 8.5 % already started their period and 16.2 % have not started their period, but 1.3 % did not complete the question. Out of 228 girls, there were 52.2% say girls during period are impure and 45.2% answered that it is normal and 2.6% did not give any answer the question. According to the final survey after the training, we have figured out that 36.8% answered girls are impure when they are on period and there were 61.4% understand that menstruation is not the issue of impurity and 1.8% did not even answer.

Introduction

Adolescence is an important period of time for people's life, especially for women because from adolescent they start menstruation. It is a monthly phenomenon of girls' physical, physiological and behavioral development. However, there is uncountable number of misconception and taboos regarding menstrual hygiene. There has been lack of knowledge and other issues almost all around including some

part of Bangladesh. Most of the adolescent girls are not able to share the issues regarding menstrual hygiene to their family or friend. Among them, monthly periods are considered as secret and shameful thing even though these are just misconception. There is countless number of unnecessary believes, periods are monthly disease, when girls get period, they become impure. These kinds of misconceptions have been there for a longer period of time and people still have some similar kinds of attitude toward menstruation and menstrual hygiene. In addition, unhealthy practices of menstrual hygiene are an issue for girls and women health such as not using proper pads, personal hygiene during menstruation, and many more. According to UNICEF, most Bangladeshi families are too poor to afford sanitary pads, and instead use rags torn from old saris and other clothing. Since there have been a lot of issues regarding menstruation and menstruation hygiene, this project focuses on reducing misconception of periods and promote healthy habit of menstrual hygiene. In addition to that this study figures out two secondary schools where girls among 12-17 aged do not take menstruation as a barrier or do not lack of proper knowledge of menstruation hygiene.

Literature Review

Approximately, there is more women population compared to men in the world. Menstruation hygiene is wellbeing of women and it is reproductive health issue, which is every individual women and girl has right to talk about it. If we care about our sister, daughter and mother health, menstrual issue concern to everyone. Jacqueline Grace Vaughn, the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, master degree of Public Health in Maternal and Child Health mentions that “nearly 52% of the global female population is of reproductive age, the majority of these females menstruate between two and seven days each month” (2). Menstrual hygiene is monthly women’s matter and natural issue but it is still a sensitive topic to talk among adolescent girls. Menstruation considered as dirty and impure in most of the developing country societies. Bangladesh as a developing country, many girls suffer from the stigma and misconception during their period. Due to menstrual issue, school absenteeism has become in issue. According to Mahbub Ul Alam, Stephen P Luby and et al, environmental Interventions Unit, Infectious Disease Division, International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research, Dhaka, Bangladesh “forty-one percent of girls reported missing school during menstruation, 42% (449/1106) in rural schools and 38% (482/1226) in urban schools. Absentee girls missed an average of 2.8 days each menstrual cycle, constituting approximately 16% of the academic year”(4-5). During menstruation, girls might feel hesitated to share their problems to their teachers during school, even there can be lack of school facilities for girls. By Anna Maria Van Eijk, department of Clinical Sciences, Liverpool school of Tropical Medicine “Poor water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools, inadequate puberty education and lack of hygienic MHM items (absorbents) cause girls to experience menstruation as shameful and

uncomfortable”(2). For example, if the school have women friendly washroom, it is not only help girl for menstrual hygiene but also with mental support that school concern about girls’ menstrual hygiene. The school’s environment promotes girls to feel more comfortable to come to school regularly during their period.

Objective of the study

- To demonstrate the level of importance about hygiene during menstruation.
- To spread the awareness of myths/stigma regarding menstruation
- To show girls how to avoid the spread of infection and keep themselves clean and tidy during menstruations
- To know how to manage the sanitary pad/clothes properly after using.

Significance of the Study:

Our research provides the opportunity for the girls to have different perspectives on menstruation so that they can have a better understand of menstruation cycle. In addition, it also can reduce cultural misconception about menstruation in the society of Bangladesh. Furthermore, it adds a value to the students of those schools and later on the society by introducing our research idea.

Methodology

This research/ project was based on quantitative research and training. As a quantitative research we used survey questionnaires and collected data from 228 students. Our targeted population was the schoolgirls of class 5,6, 7,8,9 and 10 who are from Chittagong Divisional School and Sahid Nagar City Corporation Girls’ High School in Chittagong city, Bangladesh. For conducting the survey and training, we reached out the schoolgirls by requesting permission from the authority of the respective schools. Firstly we clarified the school’s principal and students what our research is about and we confirmed the date for doing our research. After that, we requested the head of the school to fix some suitable time for us, so we could implement our project, which did not have any negative impact on their study or class time. We gave the survey to assess their previous knowledge/ understanding of menstruation. After that, we conducted the training session to discuss myths and misconceptions regarding menstruation, and how these can be reduced, as well as sanitation and hygiene strategies. After a month had passed, we gave the same survey again to the schoolgirls to assess the improvement of their knowledge and understanding about menstruation from this project.

Here are the sample questions for our survey

Age: ()

Class: ()

Have you started your period?

- Yes
- No

Do you throw your used pad in the trash bin properly?

- Yes
- No

Menstruation blood contains dangerous substance?

- Yes
- No

Menstrual girls are impure.

- Yes
- No

What do you normally use during your period?

(Cloth/ cotton/ toilet tissue/sanitary napkin/ towel/ others)

Have you ever buy sanitary pad?

- Yes
- No

Do you feel shy when you go out to buy pad?

- Yes
- No

Sanitary pad is a costly thing?

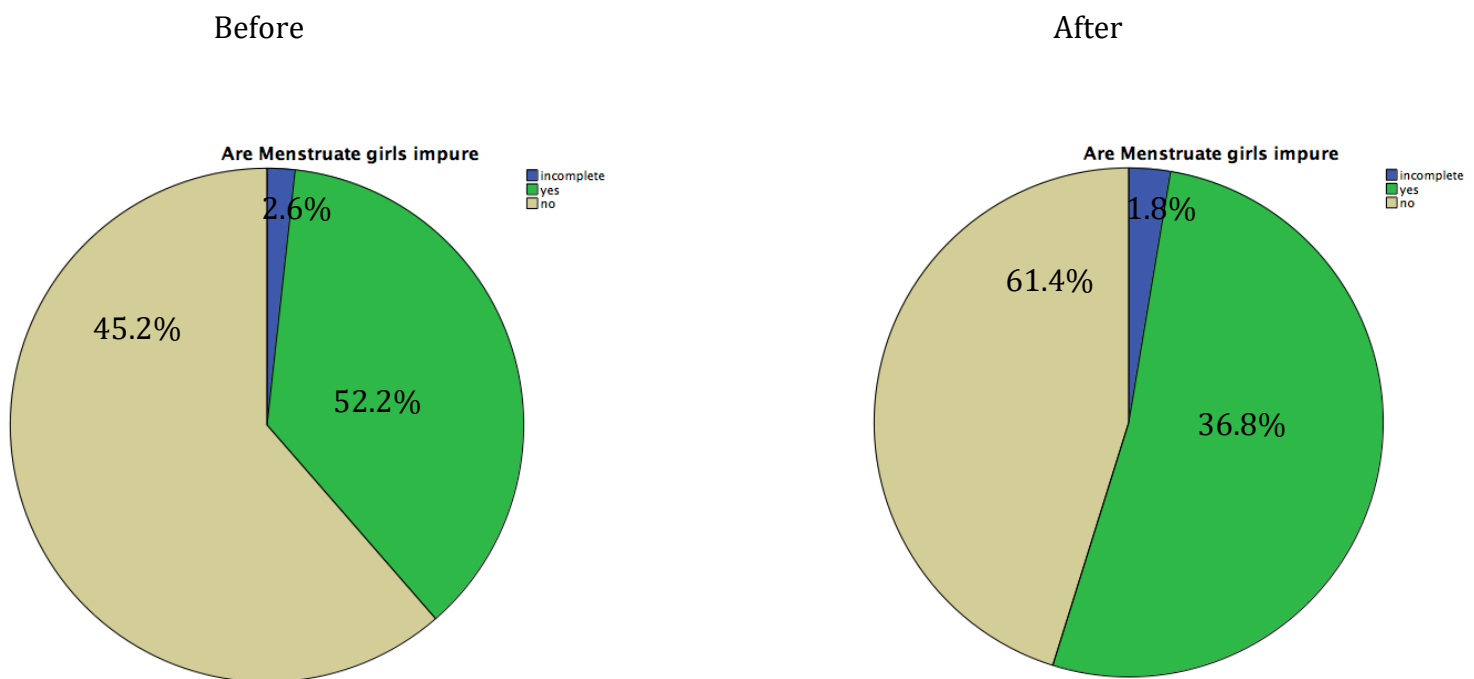
- Yes
- No

We kept the participants' information confidential by keeping their identity anonymous. We stored the data in the participant form in such a way that only the researchers can access to the data. Then, we used SPSS (Statistics software) to calculate the data and number and Microsoft word excel to display the data by pie chart.

Result

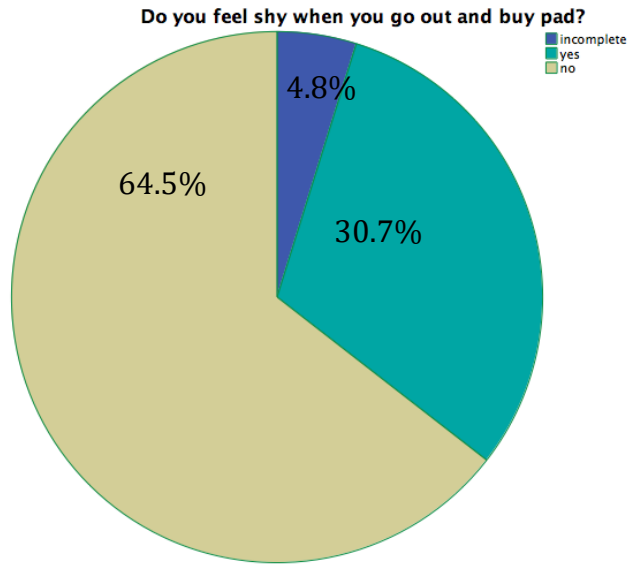
There were 228 schoolgirls from Chittagong Divisional School and Sahid Nagar City Corporation Girls' High School participated in this project. The age is from 10 to 17, from class 5 to 10. Amount of those 228 girls, the research found out that 8.5 % already started their period and 16.2 % have not started their period, but 1.3 % did not complete the question.

Here is the result about knowledge on menstrual myth. The question is “are menstrual girl impure?” Here is the result before we conducted the training. Out of 228 girls, there were 52.2% say ‘yes’ and 45.2% say ‘no’ and 2.6% did not give any answer either yes or no. Here is the result of our survey after the training. There are 36.8% answered ‘yes’ and there were 61.4% responded ‘no’ and 1.8% did not even answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

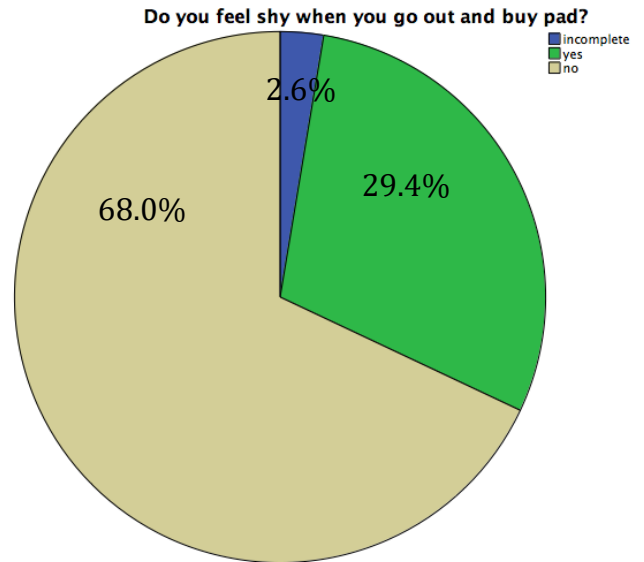


Do you feel shy when you go out to buy pad? Here is a survey result before the training, we found out that there were 64.5% answered ‘no’ and 30.7% answered ‘yes’ and 4.8% did not answered the question. Here is the result that we found after we conducted the training. There was 29.4 % responded ‘yes’, 68.0% responded ‘no’ and 2.6% did not responded to the questions.

The result before training



The result after training



Here is another result that we found out that related to menstrual hygiene. Do you throw your used pad in the trash bin properly? Yes/ No. Before the training, we found out that, there were 43.4% for 'yes', 54.4% for 'No' and 2.2 % did not answer the question. After the training, we found out that, there was 81.6% answered 'Yes', 16.7% answered 'No' and 1.8% did not answer the question.

Do you throw your used pad in the trash bin properly?

Before

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Incomplete	5	2.2%
Yes	99	43.4%
No	124	54.4%
Total	228	100.0%

After

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Incomplete	4	1.8%
Yes	186	81.6%
No	38	16.7%
Total	228	100.0%

Analysis

Although menstrual cycle is a usual phenomenon for girls and women, but for schoolgirls is more significant because during school life they experience period. Also, they spend at least 7 to 8 hours in school, but almost all of them do not know much about menstruation, or proper menstruation hygiene. We found that, most of the girls have misconceptions regarding menstruation. However, based on the final survey result, the schoolgirls had been aware of menstruation myth and misconceptions. Similarly, we noticed that during training session most of the girls personally face many myths inside and outside of the family. For instance, girls are not allowed to wash their hair, cannot touch plants, or touch the jars of pickle and many more unbelievable and unrealistic stuffs during menstruation. They feel uncomfortable to share any issues or concerns regarding menstruation even with their family members or friends. One of the teachers from Chittagong Divisional School (CDS) said that “Girls are not comfortable to share their menstrual problems and some students’ even skip their school frequently just because of monthly period”. Adding to her statement, another teacher suggested their students that if any girls face any difficulty regarding period during school, girls are always welcome to share their concern with their teacher during school period. Besides, she pointed out that a friendly school environment can help them to reduce the misconceptions regarding menstruation and improve their knowledge about menstruation hygiene. According to the final survey, more girls responded to throw the used pad in the trash bin. Overall, the schoolgirls had been able to reduce misconceptions and improved menstrual hygiene management too.

Limitation

Getting permission from school principal was one of the challenges to conduct our research. The large number of participants had been difficult to manage the training and make them understand well. Besides, it was quit tough to conduct the topic clearly to those who had not get period yet. In addition, the time clash was another tough thing due to busy schedule of the schools.

Conclusion

However, we concluded that menstruation hygiene is taken as reproductive health for school girls in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Due to traditional practices and lack knowledge of menstruation hygiene, this project had given the adolescent girls to aware of what to do and how to do during their menstruation. In order to keep this knowledge up, the school teachers should be aware of menstruation management and be supportive toward students to attend school during menstruation. The students should have open discussion among friends and be aware of misconceptions. The school also should provide emergency medical support for primary service to the students. The project is recommended the students to spread awareness of menstrual hygiene to their own community.

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