

Original Article

A Descriptive Study on Cultural Practices about Menarche and Menstruation

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Abstract :

A descriptive study on cultural practices about menarche and menstruation was done with the objective to identify the cultural practices related to menarche and menstruation among women and to compare the difference in the cultural practices of different religions. A survey approach was used and subjects aged 18 years and above were included in the study. Data were collected using demographic proforma and practice questionnaire on menarche and menstruation. Findings of the study revealed that 37% of the sample celebrates menarche and 13% of the sample offered special pooja after 7th day of menarche. 83% of the sample does not offer pooja/namaz and visit temple during menstruation. 68% of the sample do not apply kumkum which is offered to God. Hindus practice different practices like not applying the kumkum (100%) which is offered to God, do not visit temples (100%), enter the pooja room (92%), attend the religious functions (100%). whereas Christians are not following any practices and Muslims (100%) cut nails, shave private part and are not doing namaz for seven days.

Conclusion: The findings of the present study revealed that majority of the Hindus believe that menstruation is unclean and they follow different practices.

Introduction

Menarche (Greek: moon + beginning) is the first menstrual cycle, or first menstrual bleeding, in female human beings. From both social and medical perspectives it is often considered the central event of female puberty, as it signals the possibility of fertility. Girls experience menarche at different ages. The timing of menarche is influenced by female biology, as well as genetic and environmental factors, especially nutritional factors. Menarche is celebrated in many cultures around the world as a rite of passage, a time to recognize that a girl is moving into womanhood

In some parts of India when a girl has menarche, her parents invite close friends and relatives for a party to celebrate the new young women. In some communities, young women are given a special menarche ceremony called Ruthu Sadangu⁵. Adolescence is a period of extreme stress and strain. Menarche and menstruation are bound

to elicit tremendous psychological and social response in them. Menstruation is still regarded as something unclean and dirty in Indian society. The reaction to menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge about the subject. Although menstruation is a natural process, it is linked with several misconceptions and practices which sometime result into adverse health outcome. Increased knowledge about menstruation right from childhood may escalate safe practices and may help in mitigating and suffering of millions of women. The present study was undertaken to elicit information about practices regarding menstruation among women and to compare the difference in the cultural practices of different religions

Materials and Methods

A descriptive survey was used to find the cultural practices related to menarche and menstruation among women in Udupi district, Karnataka. Objectives of the study were to

identify the cultural practices related to menarche and menstruation among women and to compare the difference in the cultural practices of different religions. Convenient sampling technique was used to select samples of 100. Tools used to collect the data were demographic proforma and cultural practices during menstruation.

The study proposal was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee. Written informed consent was taken from all the subjects. Tools used for data collection were demographic proforma which includes total 6 items, Cultural practices during menstruation tool consisted of 22 items on cultural practices. Tools were validated by five experts in the field of Medical Surgical Nursing and sociology. Reliability of the tool is done by test retest method (r=1). Pilot study was done Panchanabettu village, Udupi District and the study was found feasible. Descriptive statistics frequency and percentage was used to compute the results.

Results

Findings of the study reveals that most of the sample (48%) belongs to the age group of 20-30 years. Among them 71% were Hindus and 17% were Christians. 60% of them married. With regard to their education majority 52 % studied below 10th standard and 41% above 10th. Majority 63% of them were not celebrating menarche and 87% of them were not offering pooja after menarche (Table 1).

The major findings of the cultural practices were 82% of them were not offering pooja during menstruation. Majority (83%) of them were not visiting temples. Majority (71%) of them were not attending marriage and other functions. Majority (66%) of them were taking special food items during menstruation, Majority of them were not applying the kumkum (100%) which is offered to God, don't enter the pooja room (65%), were not wearing new clothes (47%), were not wearing flowers which is offered to God (61%), were not celebrating festivals (62%), Sleeping in a separate room (41%), using separate bed sheet (40%) (Table 2)

The data presented in table 3 shows that during

menstruation majority of the Hindus were not offering pooja (98.59%). The cultural practices like visiting temples, not applying the kumkum which is offered to God, not attending marriage or other functions, don't attend the religious functions were followed by all the Hindus (100%), don't enter the pooja room (92%),. Were not wearing new clothes (66.19), were not wearing flowers(85.91), were not celebrating festivals Sleeping in a separate room(57.74%), using separate bed sheet (56.33%) where as Christians are not following any practices and Muslims (100%) cut nails, shave private part and are not doing namaz for seven days.

Table1 -Description of sample characteristics n=100

Sl.no	Variable	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
1. Age in years	20-30	48	48
	30-40	26	26
	40-50	26	26
2. Religion	Hindu	71	71
	Christian	17	17
	Muslim	12	12
3. Marital status	Married	60	60
	Unmarried	40	40
4. Educational Qualification	Illiterate	7	7
	Below 10 th	52	52
	Above 10 th	41	41
5. Menarche celebration	Yes	37	37
	No	63	63
6. Offering pooja after menarche	Yes	13	13
	No	87	87

Discussion

The present study found that the majority (82%) of them are not offering pooja during menstruation. Majority (71%) of them not visiting temples, not attending marriage and other functions.

The study findings supported by a study which was conducted to investigate the Cultural and Social Practices regarding Menstruation among Adolescent Girls. The study was conducted on 117 adolescent girls (age 11–20 years) and 41 mothers from various communities and classes in

Table 2 : Practices during menstruation n=100

S.No	Cultural practice	Yes	If no mention days						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Offering Pooja/ Namaz	18					69		13
2	Visiting temples (Muslims – don't go to Mosque)	17					69		2
3	Attending marriage or other functions	29			38	3	30		
4	Having special food items during menstruation	34	66						
5	Entry into the kitchen	62			22		16		
6	Cooking food	64			20		16		
7	Take head bath on 1 st and 3 rd day of menstruation	83	17						
8	Touching others	61			21		18		
9	Talking to religious leaders	96	4						
10	Applying kumkum	32			7		60		1
11	Eating prasadam	56			12		32		
12	Touching well/or drawing water from well	42			36	16	6		
13	Entering into pooja room	35			29		35		1
14	Talking to men	100							
15	Milking (Cows)	100							
16	Working in field/ farm	100							
17	Wearing new clothes	53			44		3		
18	Wearing flowers	39			38	16	6		1
19	Touching diseased person	76			22		2		
20	Touching children	66			16	16	2		
21	Celebrating festivals	38			41		21		
22	Cleaning yourself after menstruation (cutting nails, removing hairs of private parts)	12	88						

Table 3 : Comparison of cultural practices of different religions n=100

S.No	Cultural practices	Hindu n=71		Muslim n=12		Christian n=17	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Offering Pooja/ Namaz	1	70	0	12	17	0
2	Visiting temples/Mosque/Church	0	71	0	12	17	0
3	Attending marriage or other functions	0	71	12	0	17	0
4	Having special food items during menstruation	34	37	0	12	17	0
5	Entry into the kitchen	62	9	12	0	17	0
6	Cooking food	64	7	12	0	17	0
7	Take head bath on 1 st and 3 rd day of menstruation	71	0	12	0	17	0
8	Touching others	44	27	12	0	17	0
9	Talking to religious leaders	71	0	8	4	17	0
10	Applying kumkum	32	39	NA	NA	NA	NA
11	Eating prasadam	56	15	NA	NA	NA	NA
12	Touching well/or drawing water from the well	42	29	12	0	17	0
13	Entering into pooja room	6	65	0	12	17	0
14	Wearing new clothes	24	47	12	0	17	0
15	Wearing flowers	10	61	12	0	17	0
16	Touching a person with any diseased	47	24	12	0	17	0
17	Touching children	37	34	12	0	17	0
18	Celebrating festivals	9	62	12	0	17	0
19	Cleaning yourself after menstruation	0	71	12	0	0	17
20	Sleeping in a separate room	41	30	0	12	0	17
21	Using separate bed sheet	40	31	0	12	0	17
22	Using separate vessel for eating and drinking	35	36	0	12	0	17
23	Use of cow dung for cleaning the places used by menstruating women	25	46	0	12	0	17

Ranchi comprising residential colonies and urban slums. The study findings shows that 45.5% of the slum girls reported that they face social restrictions like not going to the neighborhood and not playing or talking with boys³.

A study on Perceptions and Practices Regarding Menstruation: A Comparative Study in Urban and Rural

Adolescent Girls shows about 23.4% of urban girls and 35.1% of rural girls had restrictions on type of clothing⁶.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that majority of the Hindus believe that menstruation is unclean and they follow different practices.

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