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RESEARCH ARTICLE

REVIEW ON MENSTRUAL HYGEINE.

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Abstract

The important period in a girl's life is puberty, it is the phase at which they reach menarche and they undergoes physical and developmental changes. They need support through this phase of their life. Major proportion of the girls lack biological knowledge about menstruation. Topics like Menstrual hygiene is often ignored and given less importance in schools and Absence of sufficient facilities makes the pubertal girls susceptible to reproductive tract infections. Menstruation is the noticeable indicator of cyclic uterine flow of blood because of Rapture of uterine endometrium and it happens between 11-15 years of age. Sanitized menstrual practices include practice of using pads and cleaning of the genital areas which are required during monthly periods and Poor menstrual hygienic practices will rise proneness to reproductive health related complications.

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Introduction:-

Lack of menstrual hygiene management in schools can end up in awkwardness, monthly bunking off and often decreases academic performance of female students. Therefore, UNICEF implies the significance of providing privies in Schools which helps the female students to keep up menstrual hygiene that avoids bunking off and improve menstrual hygiene and safeguard Adolescent girl's education ⁽¹⁾.

Some of the problems faced by girl's during mensuration includes Anemia, infections in the reproductive tract, Abdominal pain, surplus hemorrhage, irregular period's, faintness, easy weakness, burning micturition, vaginal secretion with itching, discharge with foul odor. The foul odor vaginal secretion and vaginal secretion with itching were more common between teenage girls using cloth during monthly period's compared to the girls using sanitary pads and burning micturition were seen more among teenage girls using cloth as absorbent ⁽¹⁾.

The Teenage girls who are getting monthly periods too early and those who have prolonged duration of their monthly periods were more susceptible to anemia. As per the study 53.8% of teenagers were using pads 46.2% of the teenagers were using cloth their during their monthly period's the reason could be because of the higher prices of the sanitary pads as 69.4% were below poverty line. ⁽¹⁾

In another study done, it was found that the excessive vaginal secretion, itching over vulva, lower abdominal Pain were common indication of reproductive tract infection. Another health issue reported by teenage girls is dysmenorrhea. ⁽²⁾

In rural areas only minor proportion of adolescent girls use sanitary pads due to higher prices of sanitary pads available in market. Even some fraction of Adolescent girls were unaware of sanitary pads. In other study from India

specified that 82.5% of the rural girls and about 72.2% of urban girls used cloth material during their monthly menstrual periods. Here majority of rural girls used old cloth material instead of sanitary pads and they sanitizes the old cloth material by boiling and drying and such practices provide protection against the possible infections.⁽³⁾

Menstruation is often misunderstood and is considered dirty and impure by Indian society and culture. But improper menstrual hygiene cause instabilities to female reproductive system and can result in infection.⁽⁴⁾

Menstrual hygiene practices like genital hair trimming and washing of genital parts with cleanser and water and taking baths during menstrual periods decreases the risk of infection. As per a study completed it was found that Reproductive tract infections were found to be inferior in 55.7% of females using throwaway sanitary pads while compared to 71.4% of females who use reused cloth.⁽⁵⁾

As per a study completed out of 141 female participants 39% participants answered that they are feeling embarrassed to talk about their monthly periods due to pain, shyness and menstrual blood stains on cloths. Teasing by the opposite gender were one of the tests faced by women during monthly periods.⁽⁶⁾

In another study done 32.99% girls approved that there is absence of privacy for changing pads while 29.94% responded that there is no space or dustbins for discarding of menstrual pads in school.⁽⁷⁾

In majority of cases (62%) information about menstruation was from mother to female teen .while the second majority of information was from friends (30%) and (5%) got information about menses from media like television and newspapers and (3%) got information from relatives. Television programmes about mensuration and menstrual education by trained health care nurses and doctors provide information to Adolescent girls about menstrual hygiene.⁽⁸⁾

Menstrual Hygiene Products

The choice of using menstrual absorbents differs from individual to individual. Some of the menstrual hygiene products are as follows: (a) cloth pads (b) sanitary pads (c) Tampons (d) Reusable tampons (e) Menstrual cups (f) Bamboo fibre pads.

- (a) **Cloth:** They are properly washed and dried in sunlight and they are reusable and they are sun dried and stored in arid place to elude infection.
- (b) **Sanitary pads:** They are available in markets, pharmacy, even available online and it is very luxurious than cloth pads and is not environmentally friendly and may contain certain chemicals or preservatives.
- (c) **Tampons:** They are inserted in to vagina and it is spongy in nature it engrosses the menstrual blood and it is luxurious and not environmentally friendly
- (d) **Reusable tampons:** It can be washable and they are prepared from resources like cotton, wool and they are implanted in to vagina.
- (e) **Menstrual cups:** They are newer version of menstrual hygiene techniques and it is made from silicone rubber which allows the cup easy to fold and instilled to vagina and they are having lower cost and ecofriendly.
- (f) **Bamboo fibre pads:** cane pulp is used in sanitary pads and it is cost effective and has more penetrable capacity.⁽⁹⁾

One of the reason behind Reproductive tract infection is reduced menstrual sanitization management and it can result in Bacterial vaginosis and vulvovaginal candidiasis and they are non-sexually transmitted and could it be due to insertion of some absorbent material in to vagina. Disposable pads are preferred over Reusable pads.⁽¹⁰⁾

Discarding Of Sanitary Pads

Suitable discarding of menstrual hygiene items are still absent in several realms of the world. Women often discard menstrual pads in to domestic wastes, open garbage bins. Even absence of lavatory facilities in India add more difficulty to menstruating women for safe discarding of sanitary pads and in urban areas there are efficient menstrual hygiene products and they are disposed by flushing in to lavatories. Poor menstrual practices can result in female ill health.⁽¹¹⁾

Other Problem faced by menstruating women is menstrual stress such stress is due to scarce guidance especially during bleeding episodes and it is not amenably discussed and women of low income background are not properly

educated regarding irregular menstrual flow and these women doesn't have knowledge and acquaintance to manage heavy blood flow.⁽¹²⁾

Current apprehension for MHM has focused in Ameliorating lavatories in schools thus providing privacy, MHM products in schools, separate Lavatories for girls where water along with other cleansing material are available and dustbins for proper disposal of sanitary pads.⁽¹³⁾

Incineration is another way for discarding of menstrual waste especially in worksites and schools. It is very effective for pathogen cure and helps in waste reduction. Incinerators are provided with air circulation and connected to lavatories by a tube and is effective in disposing menstrual pads. Number of aspects are taken to concern while choosing the type of incinerators that includes the type of absorbents to be used and also location of incinerator. The menace arising from use of incinerators is that certain sanitary pads containing chlorine bleach up on sweltering produces a carcinogen called dioxin which is harmful and the release of these toxin is reduced when burned at low temperature.⁽¹⁴⁾

Sanitary pads needed to be discarded in a ecofriendly manner and discarding of sanitary pads in India is a challenging issue. Due to absence of effective discarding amenities in schools and organizations. Sanitary pads are often discarded to sewage systems and other water bodies which can subsidize to contamination and other diseases and there is difficulty in designing of cost-effective incinerators.⁽¹⁵⁾

Knowledge regarding mensuration was more in literate population and use of pads were more predominant among urban females unlike the rural females. Health workers should educate the rural females regarding menstrual hygiene techniques especially with regard to cleaning of genitals with soap and water and proper disposal of menstrual pads.⁽¹⁶⁾

Policies by Government for Menstrual Hygiene Management

Menstrual pads in markets cannot be afforded by women from low financial background and there is cost effective machines for making sanitary pads they include Jayashree industries and Aakar industries.⁽¹⁷⁾

Another innovative idea for menstrual hygiene was put forward by government of Kerala which is entitled as the 'she pad scheme' and under this scheme the government implies on free circulation of sanitary pads to around 300 government schools which also provides loading space and discarding space for sanitary pads in schools. The government have spent about 30 crores for this 'she pad' scheme and the fund was from panchayats. This scheme have helped to create awareness among female adolescent children in schools and other action for menstrual hygiene was taken by HLL (HLL Life Care Limited) which fitted 'VENDIGO' that is pad vending machines in 15 schools of Kerala.⁽¹⁸⁾

SHE (Sustainable Health Enterprise) is a unremunerated organization which uses banana fibre rich sanitary pads which is cost effective and its ultimate aim is to provide sanitary pads to all women in the country. There are often nature friendly sanitary pads available in markets like jute sanitary pads. According to a study completed by IIT Kharagpur, The cotton pads were supplanted by jute fibre rich pads the reason for this is jute rich pads are more affordable than cotton pads.⁽¹⁹⁾

Understanding the significance of menstrual hygiene Karnataka has generated an 'Awareness Camp' entitled as 'Jagruthi Shibhira' most prevalently known as 'KISHORI'. The objective of the camp is to create alertness among the teachers for guiding Adolescent teens regarding their biological changes and behavioral changes and also educate regarding the biological reason behind their physical changes during Adolescence. 'KISHORI' camp is implied to all girls studying from 6th to 8th class.⁽²⁰⁾

The current studies reveals that homemade pads are more commonly used because of the increasing prices of pads available in market. Homemade pads are washed and used repeated times and the risk associated with homemade pads is women are embarrassed to let dry menstrual clothes under sun and as a result they hide their menstrual clothes in damp areas and this could led to serious infections in females. And the Indian government in 2015 December created national guidelines on MHM which aims at providing information to adolescent teens regarding mensuration.⁽²¹⁾

Another scheme is 'UDAAN' created by government of Rajasthan and it was launched in July 2015 in Jaipur. Three month stock of sanitary pads were provided to 200 girls from government schools and to 70 girls from slum areas in Jaipur. It was found that school syllabus do not cover topics of sexual development and beginning of menstruation so there is a necessity to promote education about this topics in schools to create awareness regarding menstruation.⁽²²⁾

Conclusion:-

Negative misconceptions about menstruation was more in rural pubescent teens while compared with urban pubescent teens. Menstrual hygiene techniques among rural areas were unhygienic. Better menstrual hygiene techniques should be implemented by making cost effective sanitary pads.⁽²³⁾ There are challenges about MHM in coming years and there will be contending importance in health and education domains for current development resources for adolescent girls. Delivery of booklets to girls regarding menstruation and puberty is an impending strategy. Tasks must be assigned to government individuals for providing MHM in schools and should be informed to international channels.⁽²⁴⁾ Females were found to be affected by Reproductive health problems because of not taking nutritious food and due to social stigma as a result Adolescent girls are undernourished. Packing of menstrual hygiene products should be restructured depending up on the needs of urban and rural females. Moreover menstrual hygiene issues should be emphasized in school syllabus and government and health sector should implement more policies and focus on MHM.⁽²⁵⁾

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