

PERCEPTION OF MENSTRUATION & FAMILY PLANNING IN UNDERGRADUATE FEMALES: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY IN KARAD

Dr. Sujata V. Patil*, Dr. Janhavi Ajay Shinde¹, Dr. Neha Anil Babar²,
Dr. Riya Rupak Dash³ and Dr. Shrutika Manish Baldawa⁴

*Associate Professor, Community Medicine,

^{1,2,3,4}Are interns Posted in Dept. of Community Medicine Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Deemed to be University, Karad Dist. - Satara, State – Maharashtra.

Article Received on
07 Jan. 2020,

Revised on 28 Jan. 2020,
Accepted on 18 Feb. 2020,

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20203-16864

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Sujata V. Patil

Associate Professor,
Community Medicine, Are
interns posted in Dept. Of
Community Medicine
Krishna Institute of Medical
Sciences, Deemed to be
University, Karad Dist. -
Satara, State – Maharashtra.

ABSTRACT

Introduction - Several factors including age, culture, ethnicity, religion, poor access to contraceptive services, peer pressure and lack of partner support were identified as contributing to the non-utilisation of contraceptives in the reproductive age group.^[5] We aim to study the perception of menstruation and family planning in undergraduate females in Karad Taluka. **Methodology:** This cross sectional study was conducted in college going students of 2nd 3rd year. The college was selected on the basis that it was a female college with streams unrelated to biology. A pre-structured questionnaire containing open and close ended questions was used to collect data which was analysed in software-IBM SPSS Statistics 20 Setup. Frequency, percentage and Chi-square were used for analysing the data. **Results:** The common age group was 19 years, 76.65% were Hindus, maximum (69.4%) belonging to a nuclear family of socioeconomic class 5 (79.03%). It

was observed that 77.4% of their mothers have primary level of education. The girls, despite being in the reproductive age group, 12.1% of them were unaware of the legal age of marriage for girls. 90.3% have misconceptions like menstrual blood is impure, 26.6% did not know about family planning methods and from the 73.4% who had heard about family planning 57.3% have incorrect knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Perception, Family Planning, Menstruation.

INTRODUCTION

There are several definitions of family planning, an Expert Committee (1971) of the WHO defined Family Planning as “a way of thinking and living that is adopted voluntarily upon by individuals and couples in order to promote the health and welfare of the family group and thus contribute effectively to the social development of the country.”^[1]

There is a pressing need for limiting the family size at a personal level due to the increased cost of living, scarcity of accommodation, a desire for better education for children in the competitive world and an improved standard of living. Reproductive health and medical grounds are other considerations for birth control. A woman younger than 18-20 years is not physically grown up to have a child and if does reproduce, she becomes a high risk case during pregnancy and labour and is likely to deliver a low birth weight baby. Birth control is thus a health measure for women of these age groups.^[2]

214 million women of reproductive age in developing countries who want to avoid pregnancy are not using a modern contraceptive method.^[3]

The global incidence of unplanned pregnancies amongst students at higher educational institutions every year continues to increase despite the high awareness and knowledge on regular modern contraceptives and emergency contraceptives.^[3,4]

Several factors including age, culture, ethnicity, religion, poor access to contraceptive services, peer pressure and lack of partner support were identified as contributing to the non-utilisation of contraceptives in the reproductive age group.^[5] The population that is being studied has no academic exposure to human biology which may contribute to their lack of awareness, myths or taboos about menstruation and contraception.

Although many studies on family planning usage have been conducted in India, little is known about awareness of female students in this age group towards family planning methods.

AIM: To study the perception of menstruation and family planning in undergraduate females in Karad Taluka.

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify reproductive health issues regarding menstruation and contraception.

2. To assess their knowledge about changes that occur during adolescence.
3. To assess their readiness to avail family planning services.
4. To study the influence of socio-economic factors on the source of information & level of awareness of facts of menarche & reproduction among undergraduate females.

METHODOLOGY

This cross sectional study was conducted in college going students of 2nd 3rd year. The college was selected on the basis that it was a female college with streams unrelated to biology. After obtaining the permission of the Principal of the college and consent of the girls the study was conducted.

A pre-structured questionnaire containing open and close ended questions was used to collect data on socio-demographic factors, general knowledge regarding family welfare, family planning, menstruation and menstrual hygiene and adolescent physical changes. The questions were translated into the local language and they were first explained to the girls and then they were asked to fill it carefully without mentioning their identity to maintain confidentiality.

Ethical clearance from Institutional Ethical Committee was obtained before conducting the study.

Sample Size Calculation

In a study conducted in Vadodara District about reproductive health awareness among rural school going adolescents, 50% girls knew the changes that marked girls entering into womanhood.

So using the formula $4pq/L^2$

(where p= prevalence, q= 100-p, L= error allowed), we have calculated sample size of 100 undergraduate students.

But for study purpose, the questionnaire was distributed among 140 students out of which 16 were rejected due to incomplete data, making the final count 124.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was done in software-IBM SPSS Statistics 20 Setup. Frequency, Proportion and Percentage were used for analysing the data.

OBSERVATION AND RESULTS**Table I: Demographic details of the study population.**

PARTICULARS	TOTAL (n=124)	PERCENT %
AGE (years)		
19	59	47.6
20	47	37.9
21	16	12.9
22	2	1.6
TYPE OF FAMILY		
Nuclear	86	69.4
Joint	36	29
No response	2	1.6
SOCIO ECONOMIC STATUS		
Class 2	1	0.8
Class 4	17	13.7
Class 5	98	79.03
EDUCATION OF MOTHER		
Primary	96	77.4
Secondary	12	9.7
Graduation	8	6.5
No Response	8	6.5
RELIGION		
Hindu	95	76.6
Muslim	19	15.3
Others (Buddha, Christian)	10	8.1
MARITAL STATUS		
Married	4	3.2
Unmarried	120	96.77

In the study population most common age group is 19 yrs. Majority of the population belong to the lower class (calculated according to Modified BG Prasad classification of January 2019) and most of their mothers have received primary level of education which could affect their knowledge and practices regarding menstruation and family planning.

Table 2: General Knowledge about Family Welfare.

	CORRECT	INCORRECT
Legal age of marriage for girls.	109 (87.9%)	15 (12.1%)
Legal age of marriage for boys.	117 (94.4%)	7 (5.6%)
Where does the foetus grow?	100 (80.6%)	24 (19.4%)
Ideal number of children a couple should have.	102 (82.3%)	22 (17.7%)
Minimum gap between 2 pregnancies.	62 (50%)	62 (50%)

The study population consisted of 2nd, 3rd year students among whom 12% are unaware of the legal age of marriage for girls. 19.4% girls still don't know that the foetus grows in the uterus. Despite being in the reproductive age they do not have knowledge about the ideal number of children a woman should have and the minimum gap between two children.

CHANGES NEEDED FOR A GIRL TO BECOME A WOMAN AS PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS

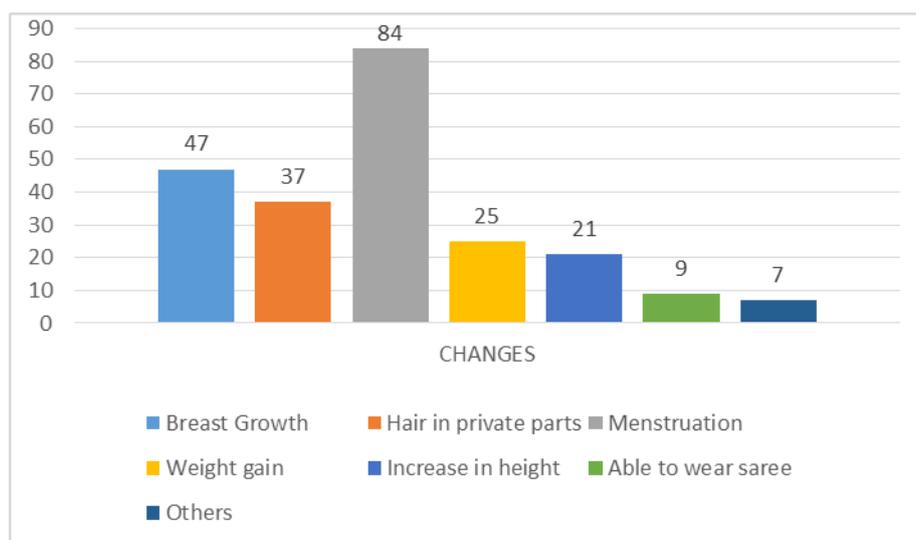


Figure 1.

In the study population majority (84) of the girls think that the start of menstruation is the change required for a girl to become a woman and many do not know that other changes like breast growth, pubic hair, increase in height, weight gain occur before menarche.

Table 3: General Knowledge about menstruation.

	CORRECT	INCORRECT
1. Normal Duration Between Two Menstrual Periods	98(70.03%)	26(20.96%)
2. Is Menstrual Blood Impure?	12(9.7%)	112(90.3%)
3. When Does Ovulation Occur?	20(16.1%)	104(83.9%)
4. What Is Safe Period?	10(8%)	114(92%)

Although the study population is female of reproductive age group, 20.96% are unaware of the normal duration between two menstrual periods. Girls are studying Arts/Commerce, hence no academic exposure to biology may be the reason for such a high percentage of not knowing the period of ovulation (83.9%) and 92% do not know about the safe period.

Although the study population is females of reproductive age group, 20.96% are unaware of the normal duration between 2 menstrual periods. As mentioned in *Table 1* their mothers' education and lower socioeconomic status could be the cause of their false beliefs like the fact that menstrual blood is impure.

The girls are studying Arts/Commerce, hence have no academic exposure to biology which is why such a high percentage (83.9%) do not know when ovulation occurs and 92% do not know about safe period.

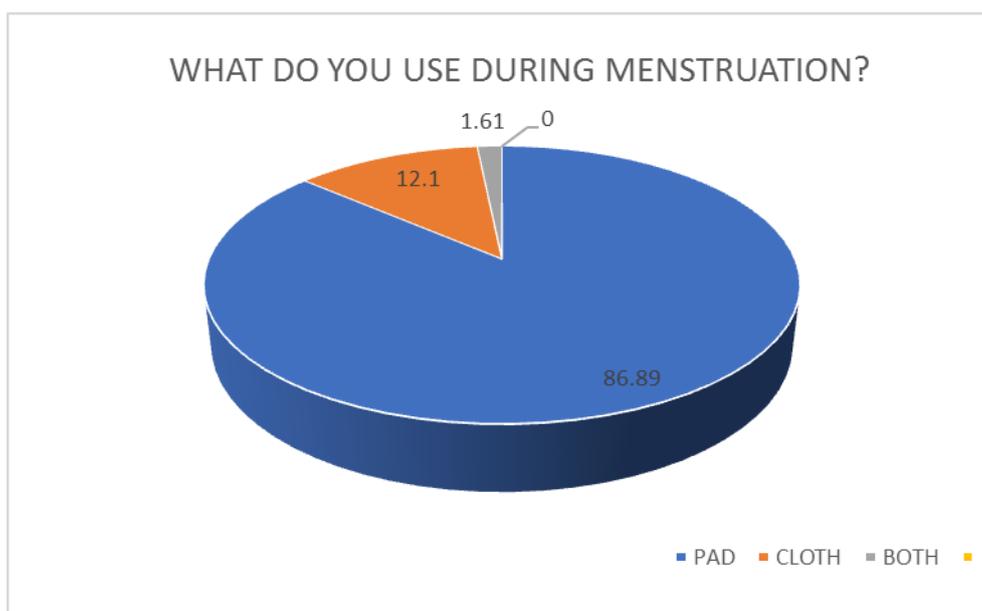


Figure 2.

Table 4(A)

NO. OF TIMES YOU CHANGE (pad/cloth)	
1.ONCE	1(0.8%)
2.TWICE	85(68.56%)
3.TRICE	33(26.61%)
4.FOUR TIMES	5(4.03%)
PAD DISPOSAL	
1.BURN	62(50%)
2.BURY	9(7.26%)
3.DUSTBIN	35(28.22%)
4.NO RESPONSE	18(14.52%)

CLOTH	
USE AND THROW	16(12.9%)
WASH AND REUSE	21(16.9%)
NO RESPONSE	87(70.2%)

In the study population 86.89% use pad and 12.1% use cloth during menstruation. Among the females using pad maximum (68.56%) change it twice a day and maximum (50%) dispose it off by burning. The college that they study in has an incinerator which is used for disposing the pads. Maximum (16.9%) of the ones using cloth wash and reuse it.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING FAMILY PLANNING

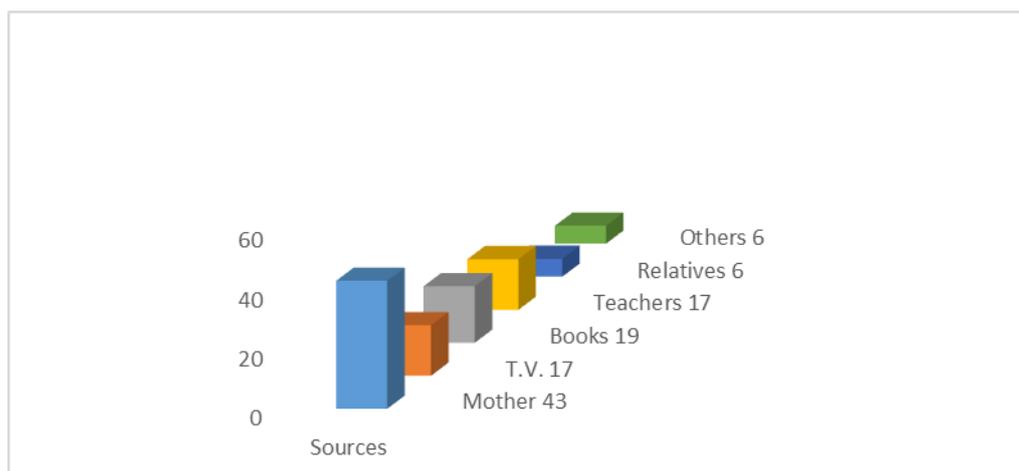


Figure 3.

In the study population mother proved to be the most common source of information regarding family planning followed by Books, Teachers and T.V. and other sources include friends, internet etc.

Table 5: Students' perception of how does a contraceptive act.

	% of Students
Prevents Ovulation	8.1
Prevents Implantation	4.8
Prevents STD's	9.7
All of the above	16.1
Don't know	57.3

Maximum number of study subjects had heard about at least some form of contraceptive method (73.4%) but 26.6% still don't know about family planning methods. 57.3% students didn't know how a contraceptive acts

Table 6: Description of menstruation according to the students.

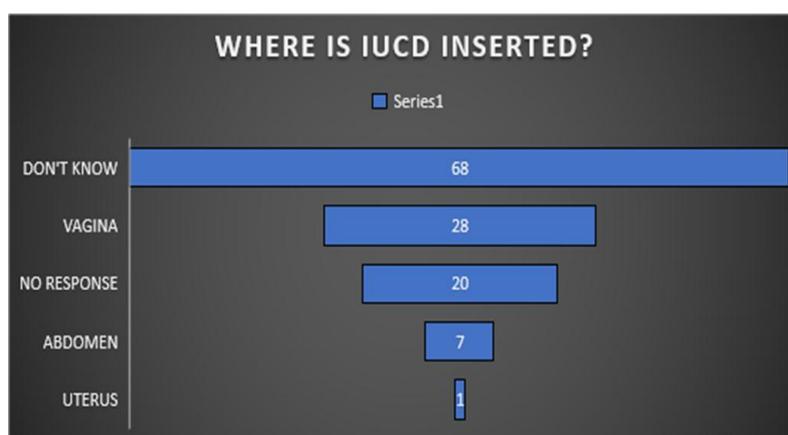
REASONS	PERCENT%
Impure Blood	43.54%
Monthly cycle	2.42%
Bleeding per vaginum	7.2%
Shedding of endometrium	0.8%
Extra blood from the body	1.61%
Attainment of maturity	2.42%
Ovulation	4.84%
Don't know	36.99%

The reasons for menstruation were explored and results obtained were varied. Among which a large portion (43.54%) said its impure blood coming out of the vagina and about 36.99% didn't know what menstruation is and when asked about Safe Period, only 8.06% of girls knew the answers which were partially correct. Rest of the girls didn't know.

Table 7: Knowledge about OCPs in the study population.

CRITERIA	RESPONSES	TOTAL
When to start a pill?	Correct answer	7 (5.6%)
	Wrong answer	117 (94.4%)
What will you do if you miss a pill?	Correct answer	16 (12.9%)
	Wrong answer	108 (87.1%)

20.2% of the study population knew about OCPs, but 94.4% do not know when to start it and 87.1% do not know what to do when a pill is missed.

**Figure 4: Knowledge about Intra Uterine Devices.**

In the study population 16.9% females know about IUCD as a method of family planning, among which only 1 of them knew it is inserted in the uterus and the rest do not have this knowledge.

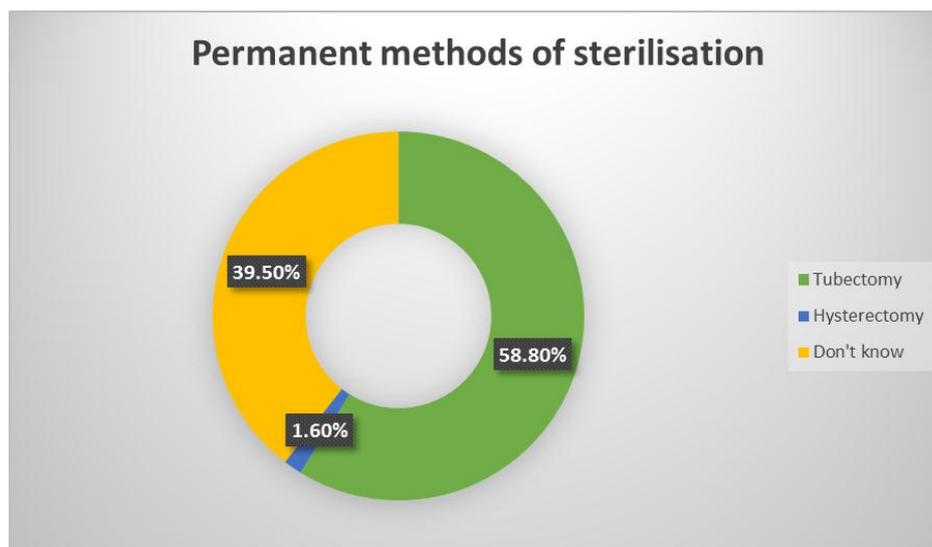


Figure 5: Knowledge about permanent method of sterilization.

58.8% Of the study population is aware about Tubectomy as a method of sterilisation in females, 1.6% have incorrect knowledge and think hysterectomy is the surgery done for permanent sterilisation and 39.5% have no knowledge of the same.

DISCUSSION

This study examined Perception of Family Planning and Menstruation in undergraduate female students of Mahila Mahavidyalay, Karad. The study was a cross sectional survey using a structured, self administered questionnaire for data collection.

In a study conducted in Gorakhpur city, the study population was aged 15-19 years of school going girls which studied awareness about reproduction and adolescent changes.^[6] And our study included college going students of age group 19-22 years because they might require this knowledge in the near future.

The study population when approached with the questionnaire were quite hesitant to discuss matters of family planning. However, towards the end of the questionnaire they developed interest and a favourable attitude. In our study it was found that 26.6% girls did not know about family planning methods and from the 73.4% who had heard about family planning 57.3% have incorrect knowledge. So when asked if they feel the need for establishment of special counselling stations which provide information about family planning, 91.1% concluded that it is necessary. And 86.3% believe that sex education is necessary in schools and colleges.

In another study conducted in Vadodara^[7], as perceived by the girls, menstruation was the change needed for a girl to become a woman and similar results were obtained in the study we conducted. This shows how important it is to educate girls about the other pubertal changes that occur before menarche.

Majority of the study population do not have information and education on menstruation and reproductive health. According to the results obtained, mothers are the main source of information about menstruation and family planning and the mothers' lack of education is the cause of prevailing false beliefs and poor knowledge among these girls.

Francis et al's study^[8] of 716 school girls in Delhi, observed that the most frequent source of information on reproductive facts was books (53.8%) followed by friends (47.3%) in contrast to our study where mother was the most common source of information. As inferred from this data, the study conducted in Delhi was in an urban population with better availability of books whereas our study conducted in Karad included a rural population making mothers a popular source of information.

Though reproductive system was a part of the syllabus in classes 9 and 10 these topics were never taken up in the classroom as teachers themselves hesitated and were uncomfortable in teaching these topics⁽⁷⁾. This could be the reason why the results of the study we conducted also shows teachers as an unpopular source of information.

Research shows that most college students had experienced unprotected sex and unintended pregnancy.^[9] In such cases emergency contraception (EC) could play a critical role in reducing unintended pregnancies.^[9] The awareness of EC among college students in Kathmandu is 66%^[9] which is much higher than the awareness in our study population i.e. 18.3% only because this is a subject which is very less discussed in their households and neither do they have an academic exposure to the subject.

AIDS and STDs were well known to 70% respondents in Watsa's study^[10] as compared to 48.8% girls in our study who claimed to have knowledge about the same.

CONCLUSION

So based on the study conducted, even in this rapidly advancing age a large portion of these girls still believe the myths and taboos surrounding menstruation. We also found that the girls have some knowledge and realise the necessity of being educated in matters of family

planning. An important finding was the association between the educational status of the mother, socioeconomic status with their knowledge of menstruation and family planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Public schools and colleges in rural setup should consider a possible curriculum to incorporate correct knowledge about menstruation and other pubertal changes to help them realise that the myths and taboos regarding these issues that are propagated in their household are mere false beliefs.
- The school curriculum should make sex education a part of their programmes.
- To promote education of girls and timely exposure to family planning information which will help them in their reproductive age group.
- The college authorities should arrange for seminars, discussions, street skits to spread awareness.

REFERENCES

1. K Park. Park's Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine. Pune, Bhanot Publishers, 2015.
2. Shaw, W., Howkins, J., & Hudson, C. N. (1977). *Shaw's Textbook of operative gynaecology*. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone
3. World Health Organisation. 2018 February 8. Family planning/contraception. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/family-planning-contraception>
4. Maja TMM, Ehlers VJ. Contraceptive practices in northern Tshwane, Gauteng Province. *Health SA Gesondheid*, 2004; 9(4): 42–52 <https://doi.org/10.4102/hsag.v9i4.179>
5. Golbasi Z, Tugut N, Erenel AS. Knowledge and opinions of Turkish University students about contraceptive methods and emergency contraception. *Sex Disabil*, 2012; 30: 77–87 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11195-011-9227-3>
6. Gupta Sadhna, Sinha Achala. Awareness about reproduction and adolescent changes among school girls of different socioeconomic status. *The journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of India*.
7. P.V. Kotecha, Sangita Patel, R.K.Baxi, V.S. Mazumdar, Shobha Misra, Ekta Modi and Mansi Dewanji. Reproductive Health awareness among rural school going and adolescents of Vadodara district. *Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS*.

8. Francis PT, Gill IS, Chawdhary S. Knowledge, belief and attitude regarding AIDS, STDs and human sexuality among senior secondary students. *Ind J Community Med*, 1994; 19: 16-20.
9. Ramesh Adhikari. Factors Affecting awareness of emergency contraception among college students in Kathmandu, Nepal. *BMC Women's Health*.
10. Watsa MC. *Youth Sexuality*. Mumbai (SECERT). Family Planning Association of India, 1994.