Knowledge about menstruation among the girls before attaining Menarche (Pre-Menarche)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Menarche in its simple word is the first occurrence of menstruation. Menarche is the first menstrual cycle, or first menstrual bleeding, in female humans. From both the social and medical perspectives, it is often considered the central event of female puberty, as it indicates the possibility of fertility and reproduction (which means giving birth) among the females. Girls experience menarche at different ages. The normal age of menarche in adolescent’s girls is in between 12-18 years. But due to various unusual changing factors in the present context like changing of climate, foods, lots of mental and physical stress, major growth spurt, etc, the small girls between the age group 8-10 years starts attaining menarche of which they are fully unaware and unknown. Menstruation (monthly period) starts between 12 and 18 years of age. This is called menarche. This age may be different for every girl and by 45 years of age a woman stops having periods. This is called menopause. The time of menopause also varies.

Socioeconomic background: Socio-economic background refers to an economic and sociological combination of total measure of a person’s work experience and of an individual’s or family’s economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation. It refers to the income level and lifestyles of the people living in a particular community or society. As such, in this study the socio-economic background of the respondents refers to those respondents who are small children of class V of Durgabari L.P. School, Digboi.
**Case studies:** These case studies were taken place in Digboi, Durgabari LP School, under Tinsukia district. A session of two to three hours of the students of the LP school of class IV and V was taken place inside the school campus in the classroom. Individual study of each and every student was taken place separately. The students were also interested to take part in the session. They were curious to know about the topic and discussions. Though they were much younger and unknown to the topic but they showed kin interest throughout the entire session and cooperated and participated actively in the session. A total of three cases are elaborated in this study.

**Findings:** The study was conducted in Durgabari L.P. School, Digboi with an objective to assess the knowledge about menstruation among the girls before attaining menarche. This study was conducted among the small girls belonging to class V of the school among the age group of 9-10 years. All over five girls were interviewed out of which the case studies were discussed about the three girls. After conducting the case studies of the three girls in detail it was seen that out of the three interviewed girls two girls did not had any knowledge about the knowledge of menstruation and attainment of menarche and one girl only who was of 10 years old had somewhat a bit of knowledge about menstruation but did not had any knowledge about the exact time and period of attainment of menarche.

**Suggestions:** As there are lots of changes in today's world and things are going forward day by day but the mindset of some of the rural women are still static. Old beliefs and traditions, superstitions, etc still exist in most part of the country. Due to these old beliefs and practices our country is still lagging behind. Most of the girls did not know the reason for having menstruation. This indicates that menstruation is still regarded as something impure in our society and the myths and misconceptions are running down the generations.

**Conclusions:** Based on the above study and the findings, it was concluded that the small girls of class V of Durgabari L.P. School did not have any knowledge and sufficient information regarding menstruation and attainment of menarche. The main important factor of the study was that the mothers of the children were not up to date with the present day context for which they were still with those existing social taboos, superstition beliefs and practices.

**Keywords:** knowledge, menstruation, menarche.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Menarche in its simple word is the first occurrence of menstruation. Menarche is the first menstrual cycle, or first menstrual bleeding, in female humans. From both the social and medical perspectives, it is often considered the central event of female puberty, as it indicates the possibility of fertility and reproduction (which means giving birth) among the females. Girls experience menarche at different ages. The time period of attaining menarche among the girls is influenced by biology, as well as genetic and environmental factors, especially the nutritional factors related to their physical and mental growth. The initial flow of menarche is usually brighter than mature menstrual flow. The normal age of menarche in adolescent’s girls is in between 12-18 years. In the female reproductive system some parts are present inside the body and some are outside. The parts which can be seen by us on the outer side include inner lips, outer lips, clitoris, vaginal opening and urinary opening. Internal parts include the vagina, fallopian tubes, womb and ovaries (egg sacs). The egg sacs contain eggs which start maturing between 12 to 18 years of age this is known as menarche. The fallopian tubes are narrow through which the mature egg passes to reach the womb. The womb is a pear shaped bag. Its function is to nourish and keep the foetus and give the foetus room for growth for nine months.
Menstruation (monthly period) starts between 12 and 18 years of age. This is called menarche. This age may be different for every girl and by 45 years of age a woman stops having periods. This is called menopause. The time of menopause also varies. Every month one egg is released from the egg sac which reaches the womb through the fallopian tubes. At this time if intercourse takes place a woman may conceive i.e., she becomes pregnant. A thick layer of blood and mucus forms on the wall of the womb to nourish the foetus. If conception takes place then the fertilised egg appears and places itself on the wall of the womb. If conception has not taken place then the layer of blood and mucus on the womb wall starts breaking and comes out of the vaginal opening. This process is called menstruation. The bleeding continues for about 4 to 5 days.

But nowadays due to various unusual changing factors in the present context like changing of climate, foods, lots of mental and physical stress, major growth spurt, etc, the small girls between the age group 8-10 years starts attaining menarche of which they are fully unaware and unknown. This happens due to existing food habits, various usual as well as usual mental stress of the new generations. But these new generations young female kids are fully unaware of this natural happenings for which they need full support, different sessions regarding attainment of menarche and proper counseling. This knowledge regarding attainment of menarche before age should be first and foremost provided by the mother or other females of the house to their girl child. But many mothers and female members of the house hesitate to inform or provide knowledge to their child about menarche which creates lots of problems among the newly attained menarche female to handle the situation at first on how to manage with all the new happenings of their life though it is natural and god's gift to the female section. In today's world it has been seen that menstruation is not at all a problem in the life of the female humans, rather its god gift to every lucky female which provides them the ability to reproduce. It is as natural as breathing in and out. It is also scientifically proven that a woman is pure when she starts bleeding. So there is no need to hesitate or feel shy for the elder female to provide knowledge regarding the whole menstrual cycle to the youngest female. Mother and female child should always be the best friend inside the house and should always share each and every problem equally which will not only bring knowledge about menarche of the female child but will also stop the female child from doing any wrong deeds outside the house once she attains maturity both mentally and physically. In some areas there still exists the patriarchal society in which the woman are bound to stay within the four walls of the house and follow and go on according to the rituals and old beliefs where their children also suffers the same. But to remove this system from those areas proper counseling of both the male and female of the house and an awareness program among the females of the entire society is very much important which can somehow change their mindset and lead them to live a stress free life ahead. As our country is changing to be a digitalized country so each and every area of the country should somehow get in touch with the system and process of digitalization and come forward to face each and every challenge boldly. Especially the female section of the country should be more emphasized in leading and taking the country forward to reach its goal and touch the success.

**Socioeconomic background of the respondents**

Socio-economic background refers to an economic and sociological combination of total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education and occupation. It refers to the income level and lifestyles of the people living in a particular community or society. As such, in this study the socio-economic background of the respondents refers to those respondents who are small children of class V of Durgabari L.P. School, Digboi. Here in this study it totally refers to the background of the girls of the particular school to know whether they possess the knowledge about menstruation and the attainment of menarche. It also refers to the economical background of the children in relation to their proper maintenance of hygiene. In this study it was seen that the parents of the children, mostly their mother's still believes in their old beliefs and practices related to superstition. They
do not let their children to provide with proper knowledge and information about menstruation and menarche with their growth. They think it to be a bad sign to inform and train their children about menstruation and menarche beforehand. As such they are socially unaware about the present day facts and situation regarding various menstrual health and hygiene. Though some of the families in the particular society are economically very strong but they are socially and mentally unaware about the fact and about the fast growing hygienic and healthy life of every woman in the society. This study clearly depicts that the socioeconomic background of the respondents are very weak and fully backward as they are not aware and conscious of the health and hygienic matters of their children’s life rather they are busy in continuing with their old practices and beliefs. This thinking and mindset of the people of most of the societies needs to be changed and modified as early as possible with various updated awareness and research plans and programmes.

**Case studies**

These case studies were taken place in digboi, durgabari lp school, under tinsukia district. A session of two to three hours of the students of the lp school of class iv and v was taken place inside the school campus in the classroom. The study was conducted with the prior permission of the principal of the school and also the class teacher. Individual study of each and every student was taken place separately. The students were also interested to take part in the session. They were curious to know about the topic and discussions. Though they were much younger and unknown to the topic but they showed kin interest throughout the entire session and cooperated and participated actively in the session. These cooperation and participation of the students made the session more interesting and informative. The session came out to be an authentic session.

**Case 1**

NAME- xyz  
AGE - 9 years  
EDUCATION- class V  
SEX- female  
ADDRESS- Digboi  
NATIONALITY- Indian  
RELIGION- Hinduism

**Introduction**

The study was conducted in L.P. School Durgabari, Digboi, Tinsukia district in which the primary students were interviewed one by one as the respondent. The client/respondent (student) was the student of Durgabari L.P. School and was of 9 years old. She was the student of class V. The nature of the student was childish but she was quite active and participative. She responded to each and every question that was asked to her.

**Case history**

The client is a permanent resident of Digboi and is a student of Durgabari L.P.School, Digboi.. The client is of 9 years. She is a small child and studies in class V. She belongs to Hindu religion. She has one elder sister, her mother and her father. An individual interview was taken by the interviewer to each and every client one by one over sessions done through powerpoint presentation slides. After interviewing the client it was gathered that the client being a small child of 9 years was unaware about the fact of menarche. It was seen that she somewhat knew about the fact by hearing from here and there but actually she did not knew about the whole process of menarche which is very important for her to know. According to her it was seen that she thought that only the elderly women attains menarche. As it was seen that still in some areas there exists some
superstition beliefs during the time of menses of women that they are not allowed to go inside the kitchen and cook food or they are restricted from going to temples and touch anything. So, in this relation when the interviewer asked the client that when her cousin sisters or mother gets menses what do they say her. The client responded that when her elder sister or mother get menses they just simply say her like they stepped onto some unusual things for which they won't be able to do work and became ill. This clearly depicts that the mother of the child neither allows her daughter to gather knowledge about attainment of menarche nor she shares any information about menses with her daughter i.e. The client. It was also known from the client that when she asks her mother or her elder sister about the matter they just say her that this is not the right time for you to know about this. While the interaction session and interview was going on with the client, the client gained so much interest that she started asking about each and everything on the slides presentation. She did not even know about the sanitary napkins which are to be used and how to use. She did not know actually what happens during the time of menstruation. She did not know about the proper hygienic maintenance during menstruation. As such, it was seen that the client was unaware of the fact of attaining menarche which she will have to face in the near future.

**Opinion of the client**-

The client who was a student of Durgabari L.P. School of class V was happy with the sessional interview which was conducted by the interviewer. The client found herself filled with lots of knowledge and information about attainment of menarche. At first she felt very shy to attend the session and to answer the questions asked by the interviewer. After that she showed her full interest throughout the entire session and with her kin interest she got to know each and everything about the menarche as well as menopause about which she was unaware. After the session and her interview ended she was very happy as she learned many things which are very much helpful for her future which she is also going to face.

**Plan intervention**-

After interviewing the client as a whole, it was gathered that the client was a small child of 9 years and was fully unaware of what menarche and menstruation are. Though the child belongs to a family where she has her mother, father also her elder sister but still it was seen that no one let the child with any information regarding her future menarche and menstrual process. As such through this interview the interviewer assumes that if this kind of situation appears with the client then it may make the client confused and afraid of and make her feel more and more shy during her attainment of menarche. So it can be said that it is the kin responsibility of the mother and sisters and other female members of the household to let their growing girl child with proper knowledge and information regarding menstruation and attaining of menarche as it is a natural process for each and every female over the world.

**CASE 2**

**NAME** - xyz  
**AGE** - 9 years  
**EDUCATION** - class V  
**SEX** - female  
**ADDRESS** - Digboi  
**NATIONALITY** - Indian
RELIGION - Hinduism

**Introduction:**

The study was conducted in L.P. School Durgabari, Digboi, Tinsukia district in which the primary students were interviewed one by one as the respondent. The client/respondent (student) was the student of Durgabari L.P. School and was of 9 years old. She was the student of class V. The nature of the student was childish but she was very calm and quiet and the most brilliant girl in the classroom. She also responded to each and every question that was asked to her but she felt very shy in each and every conversation.

**Case history –**

The client is a permanent resident of Digboi and is a student of Durgabari L.P. School, Digboi. She is a small child and studies in class V. She also belongs to Hindu religion. She has one elder sister, a younger brother, her mother and her father. She was a very talented girl in the class. An individual interview was taken by the interviewer to each and every client one by one over sessions done through powerpoint presentation slides. After interviewing the client it was gathered that the client being a small child of 9 years was unaware and felt shy about the fact of menarche. While interviewing the client it was seen that she did not at all knew about attainment of menarche and the process of menstruation. When the interviewer started asking questions to the client she was feeling shy to answer the questions and then the interviewer had to make her understand about the fact and the client answered the questions slowly and steadily. As the client was a child of 9 years she felt it very difficult to understand, but then she captured it very perfectly and tried to know everything from the interviewer. The client said that her mother and sister never let her know about the fact of obtaining menarche but she saw her elder sister buying sanitary napkins from the shop but could recognize as for what it was used. Also she never asked her elder about it and was never interested to know about. Here also when the client asks her mother and elder about why they do not enter into the kitchen for 3-4 days and also do not visit into the religious places then they reply her that they do not keep well for 3-4 day in every month or they give some other superstition excuses to her. And the client being a child was so simple and calm that she too never asks about the reason behind in details. She just agrees into every situation. This says that the mother and sisters of the house do not let their daughter know about the menstruation process and do not let her make advance and provide with knowledge and information about the attainment of menarche. After all the discussions from the client the interviewer then provided with the proper knowledge and information about the attainment of menarche in details i.e. What how and when does a girl child attains her menarche and attains menopause and also about maintaining proper hygiene during the time of menstruation. After knowing all these from the interviewer the client said that she fully unaware about all these and had never heard of all these fact before. The client also asked the interviewer about the use of the sanitary napkins. Finally the client gained full interest in the interaction session with the interviewer and cooperated with the interviewer in the whole session. As such in this case study it was also seen that that the client was a calm and quite girl and did not have any knowledge about menstruation and attaining of menarche.

**Opinion of the client:**

The client who was a student of Durgabari L.P. School of class V was also happy with the sessional interview which was conducted by the interviewer. The client reported to the interviewer that she learned many things about attaining of menarche and the whole process of menstruation. She also said that she had gained a lot of knowledge and gathered number of information regarding menstruation and its proper hygiene. Though the client was calm and quiet and a shameful girl but she answered all the questions that was asked her by the interviewer and also showed her full interest through the whole interaction session and the presentation.
After the session ended she felt very happy that she got to learn a lot which is very important for her in her near future.

**Plan intervention**

After interviewing the client as a whole, it was gathered that the client was a small child of 9 years and was fully unaware of what menarche and menstruation are. Though the child belongs to a family where she has her mother, father and her elder sisters and many more cousin sisters but still it was seen that no one let the child with any information regarding her future attainment of menarche and the menstrual process. As such through this interview the interviewer assumes that if this kind of situation appears with the client then it may make the client confused and afraid of and make her feel more and shyer during her attainment of menarche as the client is already a calm and quiet and shyer girl since her childhood. So, it is the role and responsibility of the mother and the elder sisters and other cousin sisters of the house to provide proper knowledge and information to their daughter and their younger sisters about the process of menstruation and attainment of menarche beforehand so that it might not create confusion during the time of their menarche.

**Case 3**

**NAME** - xyz

**AGE** - 10 years

**EDUCATION** - class V

**SEX** - female

**ADDRESS** - Digboi

**NATIONALITY** - Indian

**RELIGION** - Hinduism

**Introduction**

The study was conducted in L.P. School Durgabari, Digboi, Tinsukia district in which the primary students were interviewed one by one as the respondent. The client/respondent (student) was the student of Durgabari L.P. School and was of 10 years old. She was the student of class V. The nature of the student was childish but she was very smart and tall girl in the classroom. She also responded to each and every question that was asked to hand she did not feel any shy regarding the topic of the conversation and the interaction session.

**Case history** –

The client is a permanent resident of Digboi and is a student of Durgabari L.P.School, Digboi. The client is of 10 years. She is a small child and studies in class V. She belongs to Hindu religion. She has a younger brother, her mother and her father. She was a very smart and tall girl in the class. An individual interview was taken by the interviewer to each and every client one by one over sessions done through powerpoint presentation slides. After interviewing the client it was gathered that the client being a small child of 10 years was unaware about the fact of menarche but was not at all shy about the session. She was smart enough and was very interested to attend the session. While interviewing the client it was seen that she somewhat knew about the
menstrual process but did not knew about the exact time and period of attaining menarche. When the interviewer started asking questions to the client, the clients answer to every question was positive and she showed as if she somewhat knew about it. But it was seen that though the client was one year elder from the other clients and was smarter, her nature was fully childish. She wanted to know more about the fact of menarche as she knew that sometime or the other she will have the stage of menarche. She tried to understand each and every topic very carefully which the interviewer was trying to make her understand through the presentation and interaction session. She cooperated and participated actively with great interest along with the interviewer during the session. According to the client it was known that when the clients mother attains menstrual period the client gets to know about the fact by seeing her mother using the sanitary napkins as she knows about the sanitary napkins but her mother never let her know about the fact and gives her excuses when she asks about it. According to the client sometimes when she asks her mother about the piece of cloth that her mother uses during her menstrual period and dry out in the sun, her mother simply reuses to answer her and gives her some unusual excuses. It was also known that once when the client asked her mother about the fact of menstruation during her mother's menstrual period, her mother scolded her and said her that she is too young to know about it and also told her that she will know it by herself when her time comes. Here also it was seen that though the client was a smart girl and somewhat knew about the process of menstruation but she did not knew about it in details about how when and what happens during the time of menstruation and what necessary precautions are to be taken during menstruation. So this is the responsibility of the mother of a girl child not to hesitate and to let their daughters know about this natural inborn fact as they are to face this in their near future. So the interviewer provided with all the knowledge and information about the attainment of menarche and the process of menstruation to the client and the client was happy to gain much knowledge and information regarding her future need being a girl. As such it was seen that the client was a smart and tall girl and somewhat knew about the fact of menstruation and had interest to know more.

Opinion of the client-

The client who was a student of Durgabari L.P. School of class V was also happy with the sessional interview which was conducted by the interviewer. The client answered to the interviewer that though she knew about menstruation somewhat but she learned many things about attaining of menarche and the whole process of menstruation. She also said that she had gained a lot of knowledge and gathered number of information regarding menstruation and its proper hygiene. The client was a smart and tall girl and she answered all the questions that was asked her by the interviewer and also showed her full interest through the whole interaction session and the presentation. After the session ended she felt very happy that she got to learn more about the fact which is very important for her in her near future.

Plan intervention-

After interviewing the client as a whole, it was gathered that the client was a small child of 10 years and was one year elder from the other clients and somewhat knew about the process of menstruation but did not exactly knew about the attainment of menarche. Though the child belongs to a family where she has her mother, father, younger brother and other cousin sisters but still it was seen that no one let the child with any information regarding her future attainment of menarche and the menstrual process. As such through this interview the interviewer assumes that the client knew somewhat about the menstruation but she needs to know more about the attainment of menarche as she has to face the same in her future once she becomes fully matured. So, it is the role and responsibility of the mother and other female members of the house to provide proper knowledge and information to their daughters about the process of menstruation.
Findings

The study was conducted in Durgabari L.P. School, Digboi with an objective to assess the knowledge about menstruation among the girls before attaining menarche. This study was conducted among the small girls belonging to class V of the school among the age group of 9-10 years. All over five girls were interviewed out of which the case studies were discussed about the three girls. After conducting the case studies of the three girls in detail it was seen that out of the three interviewed girls two girls did not had any knowledge about the knowledge of menstruation and attainment of menarche and one girl only who was of 10 years old had somewhat a bit of knowledge about menstruation but did not had any knowledge about the exact time and period of attainment of menarche. It was also found out that none of their mothers and sisters were aware about providing their girl child with proper knowledge about menstrual cycle and attainment of menarche as their child have to face this fact in their near future. It was also seen that these children's are also afraid of asking their mothers regarding the menstrual cycle process as their mothers are very much strict in letting their daughters know about menstruation rather providing them with proper knowledge about menstruation, menarche and its hygiene. Hence no proper guidance was given and lack of health education programmes in schools added to the gravity of it. There is a need to educate the mothers as well. Also the schools should add health education in the curriculum so that the adolescents know the changes they are going through.

Suggestions

After all the case studies report it was seen that in today's world there are no changes among the mind of the women mostly in the rural areas. As there are lots of changes in today's world and things are going forward day by day but the mindset of some of the rural women are still static. Old beliefs and traditions, superstitions, etc still exist in most part of the country. Due to these old beliefs and practices our country is still lagging behind. Most of the girls did not know the reason for having menstruation. This indicates that menstruation is still regarded as something impure in our society and the myths and misconceptions are running down the generations. As we can see that menstruation is fully a natural process for every female in the world without which a women is not considered as a female category in the society. It is thought that women who bleed and menstruate are the luckiest in the society and it is god’s gift to every woman in the society to have the ability to reproduce. So, in this study a case study of 5 students of Durgabari L.P. School was conducted out of which 3 case studies are discussed above. While conducting the studies through powerpoint representation it was seen that though the students were small children's but they were quite interested to attend the session. The students had no knowledge about the age of attainment of menarche neither they were provided with any information regarding menstruation from their mothers and other female family members. Through this it can be said that as this menstrual process is a natural and inborn process for every women in the world so there is nothing to hide about it to our future generation who are the sufferers of this god’s gift in their near future. Nowadays there is no certain time period or age for a girl to attain menarche as it totally depends upon a girl’s physical growth. Earlier it was seen that girls used to attain menarche at a particular age i.e. Within 12-15 years but now it has been seen and found out that most of the girls attain menarche at the age of 8-10 years of which they are unaware and less mentally matured. So, presently it is very necessary for all the mothers and other female members of the family and the whole society to make their girl child aware and provide them with proper knowledge and information about menstruation, menstrual hygiene and attainment of menarche from the age of 8 years and to leave all superstition beliefs, taboos and excuses and maintain a friendly nature with their daughters before maturity till their teen age.
**Conclusion**

Based on the above study and the findings, it was concluded that the small girls of class V of Durgabari L.P. School did not have any knowledge and sufficient information regarding menstruation and attainment of menarche. The main important factor of the study was that the mothers of the children were not up to date with the present day context for which they were still with those existing social taboos, superstition beliefs and practices. Though the respondents were small children they responded to the interviewer properly. Here in this study the young adolescent girls are under-prepared for puberty and menstruation. This showed that the children were not at all aware about this emerging fact that they being the girl child have to face in their near future. Nowadays due to various unhygienic food habits, polluted environment, atmospheric imbalance, global changes, poor climate conditions, etc and many more people all around from children to aged are facing various changes in their physical activities. So, the mothers of the children should be aware that due to these various natural problems every human beings are facing changes and that there is no proper time period and age for their daughters to attain menarche or to face the challenge of menstruation which is a pure and natural thing. Very little is known about the impact of timing of puberty or menstruation interventions and education. Also it is seen that in most of the areas including the study area the female and women section of the society take menstruation and its process in a superstition belief and consider it as a social taboo. So, both the mother and the entire female section of the society including the small girl child should be given proper awareness with adequate knowledge and sufficient information about menstruation, and its proper hygiene and management with reference to its present context.

**References**


