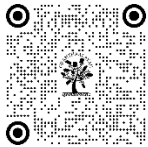


MENSTRUAL ATTITUDE AND MOTHER-DAUGHTER COMMUNICATION: A STUDY AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence marks a critical biosocial transition from childhood to adulthood, with menstruation playing a key role in the growth and development of girls. For some, the first period is an exciting milestone, while for others; it can evoke anxiety or distress. These emotional responses often stem from societal stigma and the nature of communication between adolescent girls and their mothers during this pivotal time. Therefore, the study focuses on the quality of mother daughter communication at the crucial time of menstruation. The study involved 150 school-going adolescent girls aged 10-16 years who had attained menarche, using purposive sampling to explore the link between mother-daughter communication quality and attitudes toward menstruation. The results revealed significant negative correlations between communication and debilitating, bothersome, and denial components of menstrual attitudes ($r = -0.521$, $p < 0.01$; $r = -0.367$, $p < 0.01$; $r = -0.210$, $p < 0.05$), while significant positive correlations were observed between communication, natural as well as predictable components of menstrual attitudes ($r = 0.378$, $p < 0.01$; $r = 0.403$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that girls who experience good communication with their mothers tend to view menstruation as a natural and positive occurrence, whereas poor communication contributes to negative attitudes toward menstruation.

Keywords: Adolescent Girls, Menstrual Attitude, Mother-Daughter Communication, Menarche, Menstrual Stigma

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence represents a transformative phase, bridging childhood and adulthood, marked by substantial biological, emotional, and social changes. One of the most significant milestones during this time is puberty, with the onset of menstruation plays a central role in the physical and emotional development of adolescent girls. Menarche, the first menstrual period, symbolizes a critical moment in a girl's life, signifying her biological maturation and reproductive potential. While for some, this milestone is celebrated as a positive and empowering experience, for others, it can be accompanied by feelings of anxiety, confusion, or even embarrassment. These reactions often arise from a lack of preparation and understanding about the physiological changes occurring during this transition, highlighting the need for better education and communication.

Despite menstruation being a natural and essential biological process, it remains shrouded in societal stigma and taboos. These negative perceptions are fueled by insufficient awareness, inadequate education, and limited access to reliable information about menstrual health and hygiene. For many girls, menarche occurs without prior knowledge or discussion, leaving them to navigate this life-changing event with uncertainty and fear. This lack of openness not only perpetuates misinformation but also reinforces harmful attitudes, creating barriers to the adoption of healthy menstrual practices.

Addressing these challenges requires fostering an environment of open communication and education, both within families and through broader societal initiatives. A mother, in particular, plays an important role in shaping their daughters' understanding of menstruation, offering guidance, reassurance, and support during this transitional phase. Comprehensive menstrual education programs in schools and communities are equally vital, providing accurate information and breaking down the myths and taboos associated with menstruation. By equipping adolescent girls with knowledge and promoting a positive narrative around menstruation, society can help them embrace this natural process with confidence and dignity, paving the way for improved menstrual health and overall well-being.

A study by **Pramodha and Shashirekha (2021)** on the knowledge, attitude, and practices of menstrual hygiene among adolescent schoolgirls in rural Dakshina Kannada, India, revealed significant gaps in understanding menstruation. While over half of the respondents recognized menstruation as a physiological process, 71% still adhered to taboos and myths surrounding it. Additionally, more than half of the participants continued to use cloth for menstrual management. The study emphasized the need for group discussions, media campaigns, and school-based sex education to break the stigma and promote better menstrual hygiene practices.

Alharbi et al. (2018) reported inadequate knowledge and preparation for menstruation among respondents at Princess Nourah University, with many unable to identify its biological purpose. Interestingly, some girls with negative attitudes were prepared for menarche, emphasizing the need for accurate information and awareness through schools, colleges, and healthcare professionals. Similarly **Tiwari, Oza, and Tiwari (2006)** found that many females were unaware of menstruation before experiencing it, with few girls reporting feelings of shame, some feeling guilt, and others fear during their first period. Despite completing nine or more years of education, many girls continued to harbour negative attitudes toward menarche.

Communication, particularly between mothers and daughters, plays a crucial role in promoting menstrual health. Mothers are often the primary source of guidance, teaching daughters how to cope with challenges and navigate societal norms. However, a study by **Deshmukh et al. (2019)** found a strong positive correlation between mothers' education and menstrual knowledge, underscoring the importance of maternal education in fostering positive attitudes and dismantling menstrual stigma.

Zakaria and Jarin (2019) revealed that most mother-daughter conversations about menstruation began only after the daughters' first period, and some daughters initiated the discussion themselves. Alarming, a quarter of mothers viewed menstruation as a sickness, and some imposed restrictive practices, such as avoiding physical contact or using cloth for menstrual management. Supporting this, **Fehintola et al. (2017)** observed that despite high levels of knowledge, over half of respondents described their first menstrual experience as scary and emotionally distressing. Adolescents whose mothers had higher education levels demonstrated better menstrual knowledge.

Effective communication between mothers and their adolescent daughters regarding reproductive health is crucial for fostering knowledge and safe practices. By providing accurate information about menstruation, mothers can help their daughters develop a positive attitude toward this natural process. Each mother-daughter relationship is unique, shaped by the bond they share, which can be both empowering and challenging. During this critical phase of adolescence, it is essential for mothers to serve as role models, guiding their daughters to grow physically, emotionally, and mentally strong. Open and supportive communication not only strengthens their relationship but also equips girls to navigate this transformative period with confidence and resilience.

The objective of the study was to explore the relationship between the quality of mother-daughter communication and adolescent girls' attitudes toward menstruation. A correlational research design was employed to examine this relationship.

Quality of mother daughter communication



Menstrual Attitude

The study hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between the quality of mother-daughter communication and girls' attitudes toward menstruation.

2. METHOD

SAMPLE

Participants included 150 adolescent girls aged 10-16 years from private schools in Jaipur. Purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of the sample. Inclusion criteria required participants to have attained menarche, fall within the specified age range, and be English or Hindi speakers willing to participate. Exclusion criteria included girls who had not attained menarche, belonged to special populations, or had any disabilities.

TOOLS OF THE STUDY

The Menstrual Attitude Questionnaire (MAQ) by Brooks-Gunn and Ruble (1980) will be used to measure adolescents. The MAQ is a measure of five attitudinal dimensions: debilitating, bothersome, natural, prediction and denial and the quality of mother daughter communication will be assessed by the items of Communication dimension of **Inventory Of Parent And Peer Attachment (IPPA)** by Armsden & Greenberg (1987).

PROCEDURE-

The data was collected using purposive sampling method. The selected participants for the sample of the study were contacted at their school after taking the permission from the authority figures at respective places. The data was collected from private schools in Jaipur. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to analyse the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Relationship between Menstrual attitude and mother-daughter communication.
(N = 150)**

| Variables | Menstrual Attitude | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------|-------------|--------|
| | Debilitating | Bothersome | Natural | Predictable | Denial |
| Mother-daughter communication | -.521** | -.367** | .378** | .403** | -.210* |

****Significance at 0.01**

*** Significance at 0.05**

The findings highlight the pivotal role of mother-daughter relationships and communication in shaping adolescent girls' attitudes toward menstruation. This table provides valuable insights into the relationship between mother-daughter communication and five key dimensions of menstrual attitudes. It shows how the quality of communication influences adolescent girls' perceptions of menstruation. A significant negative correlation is observed between mother-daughter communication and the debilitating aspect of menstrual attitude which suggests that as open communication improves; girls are less likely to perceive menstruation as overwhelming or incapacitating. This reduction in the debilitating perspective could stem from mothers offering emotional support, sharing practical advice, and scientific knowledge can mitigate feelings of helplessness during menstruation. Similarly, a **negative correlation is observed** between the mother-daughter communication and the bothersome aspect of menstrual emphasizing how maternal guidance normalizes menstruation as a manageable part of life. By fostering open dialogue, mothers can dispel myths, reduce the stigma surrounding menstruation, and lessen the perception of it being an inconvenient or troublesome experience.

Conversely, positive correlations were found with viewing menstruation as a natural or predictable phenomenon and the mother-daughter communication. The **positive correlation** here shows that effective mother-daughter communication is associated with adolescents perceiving menstruation as a natural and normal biological process. Leading to greater acceptance and emotional resilience during their cycles. Additionally, perceiving menstruation as predictable reduces uncertainty and anxiety, , as mothers who openly discuss and educate their daughters about menstrual cycles and symptoms help prepare them for the physical and emotional changes, reducing uncertainty or anxiety around menstruation. A slight negative correlation between the mother daughter communications with denial aspect further underscores the value of open conversations. Girls who feel supported and informed are less likely to ignore or avoid addressing their menstrual health. Instead, they develop confidence in managing their periods,

promoting healthier and more proactive behaviours. These findings highlight the transformative role of maternal communication in nurturing positive menstrual attitudes and improving overall adolescent well-being.

During adolescence, girls often look up to their mothers, and the nature of this relationship significantly impacts their self-esteem, sense of identity, and understanding of menstruation. In traditional Indian society, open discussions on menstruation are often restricted, leading to gaps in knowledge and the perpetuation of unhealthy or negative attitudes. While some traditional practices related to menstruation may be beneficial, others reinforce harmful stereotypes creating a negative perception among girls.

Open communication between mothers and daughters forms the foundation of a strong relationship, particularly during puberty. This communication is critical for shaping a girl's understanding of the biological changes she experiences, including menstruation. The following findings can be understood more through the study done by **Esmaelpour et al. (2022)** which stated that girls who maintained strong relationships with their mothers experienced a reduced sense of shame regarding menarche and menstruation. In contrast, those with weaker bonds often faced these milestones alone or found it difficult to discuss such topics with their mothers. The study also highlighted the positive role of maternal literacy, demonstrating a significant relationship between mothers' educational background and the severity of menstrual-related stressors. This underscores the importance of fostering open communication and strong mother-daughter connections to promote healthy menstrual practices and alleviate the emotional burden associated with menstruation.

Similarly, **Sooki et al. (2016)** emphasized that despite possessing adequate knowledge about menstruation, many mothers are hindered by social taboos, embarrassment, and negative attitudes, preventing them from effectively sharing this information with their daughters. Such barriers can block access to accurate information, leading to reliance on incomplete or incorrect sources, ultimately impacting girls' health and well-being. Both studies advocate for targeted programs to enhance mother-daughter communication, focusing on cultural and societal factors. These initiatives should aim to strengthen relationships, address taboos, and equip mothers with the tools to effectively educate their daughters about puberty and menstruation.

Langer et al. (2015) further discovered that menstrual knowledge had a significant impact on shaping positive attitudes toward menstruation, particularly in terms of coping with menarche, openness, and acceptance. Older teenagers and mothers with higher educational attainment tended to have more progressive views on menstruation. Collectively, these studies advocate for the need for comprehensive educational programs that engage both mothers and daughters, aiming to improve menstrual health, reduce stigma, and equip future generations with accurate information and supportive attitudes.

A cross-sectional study was carried out by **Eswi et al. (2012)** to assess the attitudes and knowledge of Egyptian female teenagers regarding menstruation. The results showed that individuals' perceptions towards menstruation varied widely. Some people accepted it as a natural part of life, while others saw it as a crippling and annoying experience. Crucially, girls who were informed about menarche beforehand showed a more optimistic attitude towards menstruation. The girls' knowledge and attitudes were greatly influenced by their mothers, who were found to be the main information source. The media came in second. The study emphasises the importance of pre-menarche education in helping adolescents develop a more positive and knowledgeable view of menstruation.

So, through the above studies it can be understood that adolescent girls who maintain open and effective communication with their mothers are less likely to develop negative perceptions or view menstruation as a burdensome or overwhelming experience. This open communication contributes to the perception of menstruation as a natural and manageable process. Girls who feel supported by their mothers are also less prone to use avoidance behaviours, such as ignoring the importance of menstrual health or dismissing its impact on their bodies. It helps them to understand the physiological aspects of menstruation, recognize symptoms, and anticipate changes, reducing anxiety and fostering acceptance.

4. CONCLUSION

The research underscores the importance of communication in promoting hygienic practices and dispelling menstrual myths and also providing girls with valuable insights into the cultural practices surrounding this natural process. Unfortunately, the prevailing culture of shame and silence surrounding menstruation in many societies greatly limits girls' access to accurate knowledge. This stigma often stifles open dialogue, leaving girls uninformed and ill-equipped to navigate their menstrual health. Avoiding conversations about periods and concealing information can lead to serious issues, perpetuating misconceptions and myths. Open and honest conversations allow mothers to clarify menstruation,

helping their daughters approach it with understanding and confidence. These discussions provide a sense of reassurance, ensuring that girls are well-prepared to embrace this natural process without confusion or anxiety. Educating girls at an early age is crucial, as it helps them develop a healthier and more positive attitude toward menstruation. Additionally, a mother's educational background has been shown to influence her daughter's menstrual attitude. Therefore, educational programs targeting both mothers and daughters are essential to challenge traditional misconceptions, promote accurate understanding, and encourage positive changes in attitudes toward menstruation.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that no competing interests exist.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Both the authors contributed equally to the theoretical development, analysis, interpretation and writing of the manuscript.

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