



Psychological well-being of college students during menstrual cycle: An overview

¹Dr. Kumudini Achchi, ² Revathi R

¹ Assistant Professor, Postgraduate Department of Social Work, JSS College of Arts, Commerce and Science, B.N. Road, Mysuru, Karnataka, India

² Postgraduate Student, Postgraduate Department of Social Work, JSS College of Arts, Commerce and Science, B.N. Road, Mysuru, Karnataka, India

Abstract

Menstruation is a monthly cycle where in a formed layer of the womb sheds. During this biological process, a female can experience many changes, which might be physical and psychological. The physiological effects may be subtle, but at elite level sufficient to influence performance. The psychological correlates may be affected more obviously and more detrimentally. Psychological well-being is usually conceptualized as a combination of positive affective states such as functioning with optimal effectiveness in social life. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively that marks on performance, personality, behavior, coping capabilities and more importantly the ability to achieve one's full potential of an individual. Each individual has their own way of dealing and facing the day-to-day happenings, all it requires is a greater energy and balanced mind. Nevertheless, these factors may not be exercised in the same manner in different time and part of lifespan. One such situation is menstrual cycle among females. India which is tagged as a cultural and traditional city, women hesitate even to talk about menstruation or issues pertaining to menstrual cycle. This attitude results in internal sufferings. Keeping this dilemma in mind, with the aim to understand the problems, causes, consequences of the menstruation in social and academic performance with special reference to college students who has to focus on both the dimensions. The study adopts exploratory research design considering 60 postgraduate students as respondents who are in their early 20's. Focused areas are self-management, social performance and academic performance of students during menstruation. Data was elicited through interview schedule and analyzed using simple descriptive, contingency coefficient and chi-square test. The study reveals that menstruation makes them vulnerable to stress, anxiety, behavioral change, low concentration and average academic performance during the menstrual cycle specially during the first two days.

Keywords: Psychological Well-being, Menstrual Cycle, Students, Performance

1. Introduction

Menstruation is natural phenomena that is termed and accepted as a curse sometimes and a gift to females. Menstruation is a monthly cycle where in a formed layer of the womb sheds. During this biological process many changes can be experienced by a female that might be physical and psychological. The physiological effects may be subtle, but at elite level sufficient to influence performance. The psychological correlates may be affected more obviously and more detrimentally. Psychological well-being is usually conceptualized as a combination of positive affective states such as functioning with optimal effectiveness in social life. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively that marks on performance, personality, behavior, coping capabilities and more importantly the ability to achieve one's full potential of an individual. Each individual has their own way of dealing and facing the day to day happenings, all it requires is a greater energy and balanced mind. But these factors may not be exercised in the same manner in different time and part of lifespan. One such situation is menstrual cycle among females.

The word "menses" comes from the Latin *menses* meaning "months". The word "menstruation" comes from Old French *menstrual*, which comes from Latin *menstrualis*, meaning "monthly," especially "of or having monthly courses."

Globally about 52% of the female population is of reproductive age. In the lives of girls and women, there is that adolescence stage marked by the onset of menarche, and from this stage onwards they menstruate every month between two to seven days. Menstruation or Menstrual cycle is a monthly issue faced by the female once they attain puberty till their late 40s or early 50s. It is surely a natural aspect which has an intrinsic feature of fertility, sexuality, creativity and inner life. It is an intrinsic feminine experience. Beyond these physiological aspects, it's even linked with psychological aspects such as stress, depression, anxiety, aggression etc. These psychological aspects make a woman more vulnerable in their performances in many different dimensions. In most developing countries, including India menstruation, though a natural process, has been, and still is, dealt with in secrecy (Warenus, Pettersson, Nissen, Hojer, Chishima & Faxelid, 2007; Patkar & Bharadwaj, 2004; Mahon & Fernandes 2010). Mainly this is due to cultural taboos related to sexuality and reproductive health. This is why women suffer internally.

India which is tagged as a cultural and traditional city, women hesitate even to talk about menstruation or issues pertaining to menstrual cycle. This attitude results in internal sufferings. Keeping this dilemma in mind, a study conducted interviewing 60 respondents who are in their late 20's and pursuing post-graduation.

2. Review of literature

Being physically active plays an essential role in ensuring health and well-being. Psychological well-being is not exactly the opposite end of the continuum to psychological distress. Menstruation is woman's monthly bleeding and scientifically explained as the body shedding the lining of the uterus (womb). The menstrual cycle provides important body chemicals, called hormones, to keep a woman healthy and even fertile. The chemicals or hormones are secreted in response to biological variations in the human body. These hormones as regarded as one of the major factor for any psychological imbalance. Hormonal imbalance leads to stress, anxiety, depression, lowers the confidence, behavioral changes can be noticed during menstruation. Psychological well-being is usually considered as some combination of positive affective states such as happiness and functioning with optimal effectiveness in individual and social life. (Deci & Ryan [2008]). Cultural and traditional norms, socio-economic conditions, physiological condition, psychological aspects influences the practices related to menstruation or menstrual cycle.

According to Shamokin and Ryff (2002) psychological wellbeing brings about perception of engagement with existential challenge in life and menstrual cycle is one such challenge that is being faced by the females on monthly basis, the biological process might be same but the psychological up and downs are out of prediction. We know hormone levels fluctuate throughout the month,” (Diana Schwarzbein, MD, an endocrinologist and author of *Menopause Power*). “There are going to be corresponding fluctuations in other hormones that are definitely going to affect emotions, processes of thought, and physical well-being.”

Menstrual period is very hard and critical time in the life period of females. It impacts on different daily life facets, including physical condition, academic achievement, behavioral pattern, mood, diet, exercise and sleep pattern. (Huda Y Khamdan 2014)

Onset of menstruation can be welcomed with joy and impatience by some girls, while others may feel scared or uneasy. Fear and anxiety tends to be higher among girls who do not understand the reproductive system, and what happens during the menstrual cycle very well. Menstruation leads to a number of hormonal changes that can cause physical and emotional effects that may contribute to anxiety. There is no single reason for this anxiety, but multiple factors probably are at work. Fluctuations in powerful hormones that regulate menstruation, such as estrogen and progesterone, can affect appetite, digestion, and energy levels, all of which can, in turn, affect your mood. “This may have an impact on psychological functioning,”(Dr. Goodstein). Additionally, women who have had difficult periods in the past, due to intense cramping or heavy bleeding, may worry about recurrent pain and discomfort prior to menstruation, and this can also cause added anxiety. (Charles Goodstein, MD, clinical professor of psychiatry at New York University Langone Medical Center).

3. Methodology

Menstruation is a period in women’s life, which starts from the onset of puberty. It has its own impact on the physical and psychological condition of the individual during the days of flow. The consequences are not the same in all the individuals

but having all these discomforts, the management of day-today situation becomes a challenge. This situation motivates to conduct a study to understand problems, causes, consequences of the menstruation in social and academic performance with special reference to college students who has to focus on both the dimensions. The study adopts exploratory research design considering 60 postgraduate students as respondents who are in their early 20’s. Focused areas are self-management, social performance and academic performance of students during menstruation. Data was elicited through interview schedule and analyzed using simple descriptive, contingency coefficient and chi-square test.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Showing the performance of the respondents during the first two days of menstrual cycle

Area of Performance		Level		Total
		Day 1	Day 2	
Self-Acceptance	Frequency	21	8	29
	Percent	53.8%	38.1%	48.3%
Environmental Mastery	Frequency	12	12	24
	Percent	30.8%	57.1%	40.0%
Autonomy	Frequency	3	0	3
	Percent	7.7%	0.0%	5.0%
Control of Self and events	Frequency	3	1	4
	Percent	7.7%	4.8%	6.7%
Total	Frequency	39	21	60
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
CC=.274;P=.182				

Table No 01: Shows the performance of the respondents during their first two days of the menstruation. The areas of performance analyzed are self-acceptance, environmental mastery, autonomy, self-control etc. Social acceptance indicates the level of happiness or satisfaction of an individual with oneself or with the situation, she is in. Environmental mastery represents the capacity of the person to cope up with the external or environmental situations. Autonomy is the person being independent of others. Control of self and events is the capacity of a person in controlling oneself along with managing the situations going around, that is balancing both the inner self and outer existing situations. Researcher could elicit data from the respondents and data was analyzed and results were tabulated. The results indicates that the respondents have their problems is handing environmental factors in the first day of their cycle where their self-acceptance level has also felt not very strong. 53.8% of the respondents have found having problems with self-acceptance on first day of their cycles, where another eight respondents mentioned that they have the problem on secondary rather than the first. Environmental mastery is an issue which is more bother to the majority of the respondents on the second due heavy flow. 7.7% of the respondents have expressed their lighter part of the dependence on the first day because of the cramps and the nauseated sensations. The result reveals that the respondents do face certain problems in managing the self and the environment during first two days of menstrual cycle. Contingency coefficient test revealed a non-significant association between the performance and the parameters adopted for the study.

Table 2: showing the level sociability of the respondents during the menstrual cycle

		Good	Average	Poor	Chi-Square	P
Sociability	Frequency	24	29	7	13.300	.001
	Percent	40.0	48.3	11.7		

Table No 2 shows the level of sociability of the respondents during menstruation. The areas discussed in this table are relationship, social involvement, fair treatment and religious practices. Relationship here is how capable a person is in handling the affiliation with the people around. Social involvement is how a person is getting involved in the social affairs going around. Fair treatment is about handling the people equally and religious practices is how a person is in following the cultural and traditional norms of the community. All these issues reflects on the quality of sociability of the individual which also reflects on their quality of life lead in the social environment. The results are categorized as good, average and poor. Among 60 respondents, 40.0% feel good and they shows more involvement in the sociability even during the menstrual cycle where they have no much issues to highlight. 48.3% respondent’s reads average as they mention that controlled level of involvement in the sociability occur with them which make them to be conscious about themselves in the social environment. 11.7% shows less involvement in the social activities, where they will have problems in effective social performance. In sum, the study reveals that majority of the respondent’s feels that they need to be conscious about their social performance during their menstrual period. Whereas 40% of them are comfortable. Very lesser part of the respondents are found to be poor performers during the period. When chi-square test was applied to these frequencies, chi-square test revealed a significant value ($X^2=13.300$; $p=.001$), having ‘average’ response high.

Table 3: showing the quality of academic performance of the respondents during menstrual cycle

		Good	Average	Poor	Chi-Square	P
Academic Performance	Frequency	21	35	4	24.100	.000
	Percent	35.0	58.3	6.7		

Table No 3 shows the quality of academic performance of the respondents during menstruation. The areas discussed by the researcher in this table are concentration, achievement, confidence, group activities, and exam assessment performance. Concentration is the intense of a person in a particular aspect that influences the achievement. Achievement is the accomplishment of the goals or the work that definitely need certain amount of self-confidence in the individual. Confidence is nothing but the level of certainty or assurance a person has in oneself or the work done by him. Group Activities is the ability of a person in attainment of the group activities and it is the ability of a person to be in the group and perform. Exam Assessment Performance is where the academics performance of a person is analyzed and measurement of the skill and abilities. Data was collected, analyzed and then tabulated the results. Results were also been categorized as Good, Average and poor. The result shows that among 60 respondents 35.0%

mentioned about facilitated quality performance in academics. 58.3% of the respondents mentioned that their academic performance will not be up to their satisfaction level during the menstrual cycle but will be average. Whereas 6.7% of the respondents admits their poor performance in those days because of the discomforts, feels a bit weak and tiring. When chi-square test was applied to these frequencies, chi-square test revealed a significant value ($X^2=24.100$; $p=.000$), having ‘average’ response high.

Managerial criteria suggested are

- Adopting a healthy diet
- Exercise on a regular basis
- Keeping oneself free from negative thoughts
- keeping oneself hygienic
- Having proper food at a proper timings
- Creating a positive environment around oneself and trying to keep the individual /community/nation for development
- Keeping oneself busy
- Mediation
- Trying to do things which makes oneself happy

5. Conclusion

The natural and biological process menstruation or menstrual cycle is a rightly a gift to females but it also imposes many physical and psychological effects on them. As the college students are in their tender age hormonal imbalance during the menstruation makes them vulnerable to stress, anxiety, behavioral change, low concentration and average academic performance during the menstrual cycle especially during the first two days.

6. References

1. Deci EL, Ryan RM. Hedonia, eudaimonia, and well-being: An introduction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 2008; 9:1-11.
2. Huda Y Khamdan, Khadija M Aldallal, Eman M Almoosa, Najla J AlOmani, Aalaa SM Haider, Zahra I Abbas, *et al.* 2014.
3. Warenaus L, Pettersson KO, Nissen E, Hojer B, Chishima P, Faxelid E. Vulnerability and Sexual and Reproductive Health among Zambian Secondary School Students. *Culture, Health & Sexuality: International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care.* 2007; 9(5):533-44.
4. <http://janebennett.com.au/sample-page/menstrual-wellbeing/>
5. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26204666>
6. <http://www.psywb.com/content/2/1/3>
7. <http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/menstruation.html>