

Identification of midwifery students' menstrual attitudes

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Abstract

This study is based on the idea that attitudes towards menstruation can be multi-directional, and the physiological and emotional symptom expectations during menstrual period can influence the attitudes. The study population consists of 100 students of the first and second year in Cukurova University Health Sciences Faculty Midwifery Department during 2014–2015 education year and the sample consists of 92 students. Questionnaires included sociodemographic information, menstrual features and menstrual attitude. The data were analysed with IBM 20.0 package program. The average age of the participants is 19.75 ± 1.86 and average menarche age is 13.77 ± 1.25 . It is indicated that 87.0% of the participants have knowledge regarding menstruation, yet 48.9% had worries during their first menstruation, 77.2% have regular menstruations, 71.7% experience premenstrual problems and 89.1% experience dysmenorrhoea. Based on high average scores for Menstrual Attitude Scale, i.e., 66.93 ± 8.12 , it is found that the students have positive attitudes towards menstruation.

Keywords: Menstruation menstrual attitude, midwifery student.

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1. Introduction

Even though menstruation is seen in almost every woman as a universal phenomenon, people still don't talk about it openly, and stays to be unknown part of womanhood. Researchers about menstruation points out that cultural beliefs play a huge role in the field. 'Silence' and 'privacy' and even 'invisibility' were main terms that surround menstruation during the 20th century (Cumming, Cumming & Kieren, 1991; Taskin, 2010). On the other hand, especially in Western cultures, menstruation has been left the oppressed position and started to take its places on market shelves. Even though, people started to publicly speak about periods, negative and positive cultural aspects are affective (Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1990; Ince, 2001; Roberts, 2004).

Culture makes women accept norms and functions about their bodies, and women are always getting messages about their unwanted hairs, getting rid of bad smells and how shall they feel during their period affective (Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1990; Roberts, 2004). People's knowledge about period and menage determine their behaviours toward them (Ince, 2001). Studies point out that physical and psychological symptoms' perceptions effect positivity or negativity of the period (Karavus, Cebeci, Bakirci & Hayran, 1997; Marvan, Cortes-Iniestra & Gonzales, 2001; Mendlinger & Cwikel, 2006; Woods, Dery & Most, 1980). In most of the studies, the attention is mostly on the relationship between gender roles, body image, self-respect and sexual behaviours (Beausang & Razor, 2000; Geller, Harlow & Bernstein, 1999; Schooler, Ward, Merriwether & Caruthers, 2005). It has been more important to explain the general perception about menstruation based on biological and socio-cultural findings. As the menstruation symbolises fertility, women experience some sort of physiological and psychological. Mostly teenager girls have a tough time adjusting their period cycle. This study is designed based on the idea that attitudes towards menstruation can be multi-directional; they can be positive as much as negative and the physiological and emotional symptom expectations during premenstrual or menstrual period can influence the attitudes. The study aims to identify midwifery students' menstrual attitudes.

2. Materials and methods

This research has been conductive descriptively. The population of the research is 100 students from the 1st and 2nd class of 2014–2015 academic year of Cukurova University Health Sciences Midwifery Department and the sample consists of 92 students. Institutional approval, ethics committee approval were obtained and participants approved by verbal consent.

Data collection consists of five subcategories and 31 points in total in menstrual attitude questionnaire (MAQ). Questions ask about students' sociodemographic information and menstrual cycle length. The original MAQ was developed by Brooks-Gunn and Ruble (1980) and its validity and reliability in Turkey determined by Kulakac, Oncel and Firat (2008). The Adolescent MAQ consists of 31 items scored on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = 'Strongly Disagree', 2 = 'Disagree', 3 = 'Uncertain', 4 = 'Agree' and 5 = 'Strongly Agree'. Within this questionnaire, the total scale point incorporates responses to questions posed in reverse (2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27 and 29) and the total determined by adding the numerical values of all options. In the MAQ, the sub-scale or total scale scores average that is higher than all points indicate menstruation attitude is positive. Cronbach's alpha value of 0.79 was found by Kulakac et al. (2008) indicating validity and reliability of the scale in Turkey. In this study, Cronbach's alpha value was 0.76. Menstruation Behaviour Scale questions positive sides of menstruation rather than only focusing on the bad sides. There are five sub categories: menstruation as a distracting phenomenon, as a natural phenomenon, sensing that menstruation is going to start soon and denying the effects of menstruation. Having higher points mean, the approaches towards menstruation is 'positive'.

The analysis of the data from the research is conducted at IBM 20.0 package program. In the evaluation process of the findings; percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U test, independent sample *t* test and Pearson correlation analysis have been used. Statistical mean level has been accepted as 0.05.

3. Findings

The average age of the participants is 19.75 ± 1.86 and average menarche age is 13.77 ± 1.25 . It has been found that 54.3% of students are second class and 43.4% of their mother education status is primary education (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of participants' traits

Demographic variables		<i>n</i>	%
Class	1st Class	42	45.7
	2nd Class	50	54.3
Education status of the mother	Illiterate	15	16.3
	Literate	5	5.4
	Primary	39	42.4
	Middle class	18	19.6
	High school	14	15.2
*What did you feel when you first had your menstruation?	College and higher education ↑	1	1.1
	Had normal reaction	42	45.7
Were you informed about menstruation before your period started?	Fear	32	34.8
	Happiness	10	10.9
	Anxiety	45	48.9
	Nothing	28	30.4
	Shame	19	20.7
	Guilt	3	3.3
*Source of your information, if applicable	Yes	80	87.0
	No	12	13.0
Regular bleeding?	Mother	76	82.6
	Friend	33	35.9
	Health personnel	35	38.0
	TV–Book–Newspaper–Internet	42	45.7
Any concerns before period?	Yes	71	77.2
	No	21	22.8
Any pain during the period?	Yes	66	71.7
	No	26	28.3
Any pain during the period?	Yes	82	89.1
	No	10	10.9

*More than one option was selected.

It is indicated that 87.0% of the participants have knowledge regarding menstruation, yet 48.9% had worries during their first menstruation, 77.2% have regular menstruations, 71.7% experience premenstrual problems and 89.1% experience dysmenorrhoea (Table 1).

Table 2. Menstruation manner scale the bottom dimensions and medium of total points

Menstruation manner scale the bottom dimensions	Average standard deviation	Min–max
Menstruation that makes vulnerable	24.84 ± 5.43	10.14–37.44
Menstruation that disrupts	10.93 ± 2.74	3.72–16.12
Menstruation as a natural phenomenon	8.10 ± 2.02	2.20–11.00

Sensing the menstruation beforehand	11.24 ± 2.12	4.86–16.20
Denial of effects of menstruation	11.81 ± 1.88	6.30–16.10
Total	66.93 ± 8.12	46.84–87.58

Total average score of the participants on Menstrual Attitude Scale is 66.93 ± 8.12 ; the average scores for subscales are (10.93 ± 2.74) menstruation as an annoying phenomenon, (8.10 ± 2.02) as a natural phenomenon, (11.24 ± 2.12) sensing/recognising menstruation in advance and (11.81 ± 1.88) denial of menstrual effects (Table 2). It has been indicated that the difference between the menstruation that makes vulnerable and menstruations that disturb is statistically proven ($p < 0.05$). It has been indicated that having regular periods and having periods as natural phenomes' are statistically different ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, age, education status of mother, menarche age and getting information before menarche. There has been no statistical difference between pre-during menstruation difficulties and scale bottom points ($p > 0.05$).

4. Discussion

This study explored menstrual attitude in adolescents. The research findings are regarding the related literature. In this study, we found that the majority of adolescents are informed about menstruation (87.0%) and these adolescents were mostly informed by family members (82.6%). The comparable studies of Turan and Ceylan (2007) and Tasci (2006) found that adolescents were primarily informed about menstruation by their families with rates 60.3%, 89.1% and 64%, respectively. These rates are similar to our study's findings. We concluded that adolescent girls are given information about menstruation by close relatives and that this can be considered as a cultural reflection.

This study found that 45.7% of girls reported a normal reaction to menarche. However, many responses reacted to menstruation using words such as excited, surprised, but also with embarrassment, fear, anger, crying and sorrow expressing negative emotions—although the majority of adolescents were informed about menstruation. Similarly, in their studies, Tortumluoglu et al. (2004), Tang, Yeung and Lee (2003) found some reactions such as crying, feeling scared, anger, embarrassed and excitement. These negative results can arise when adolescents take information from non-professional people who have negative early menarche experiences, and the media—that can be affected by the incorrect information. Thus, for the development of positive attitudes towards menstruation, information provided by health professionals would be more appropriate.

Adolescents' Menstruation Attitude Scale item score average was found to be 66.93 ± 8.12 . One sub-scale of the Menstruation Attitude Scale—'Menstruation as something makes women vulnerable'—received the highest average score. In her study using the Menstruation Attitude Scale, Kulakac et al.'s (2008) findings were different to our findings on the sub-scale average scores within the dimensions.

5. Conclusion

Based on high average scores for Menstrual Attitude Scale, it is found that the students have positive attitudes towards menstruation. It can also be claimed that since the participants perceive menstruation as a natural phenomenon, they can easily cope with related problems. Since student midwives are future women's health service providers, it is recommended that midwifery students be supported and provided with education and guidance on menstruation related topics during their education for them to protect and improve their own health and the health of other women with peer and public education.

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