



A Review on Menstruation and Mental Health of Girls in India

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to show a connection between Menstruation and Mental health of female and the scenario of this relation in the houses of India. A woman's body is vulnerable to a variety of changes. The cycle of changes occurs every month, that is known as menstrual cycle. In this paper we are trying to show the effect on mental health of girls due to bodily hormonal changes and the main reason in India is the family relations and behaviours during the time of menstruation cycle at home. We have shown two major disorders related to menstruation cycle i.e., PMDD (**premenstrual dysphoric disorder**) and PCOS (**polycystic ovarian syndrome**) and their effect on mental conditions. We have also categorized the mental disorder according to the time periods of menstruation in a life of a girl. This paper also gives light on the mentality of Indian parents and family about the menstruation. Menstruation is still considered as a taboo in some remote areas of India.

Keywords: Menstruation Cycle, Menses, Mental health, PCOS, PMDD

1. INTRODUCTION

The menstrual cycle is natural changes in hormone production and the structures of the female reproductive system. This cycle controls the production and release of female gamete eggs and the release of female hormones estrogen and progesterone. When an ovum is unfertilized, the uterus lining sheds and leads to a hemorrhage (bleeding). In a girl, menstruation starts from the age of 10 and 15 as she attains the puberty, this can be varied in different girls. The first day of bleeding is marked as the first day of a menstrual cycle and the period from one menstrual cycle to another can vary from 28 to 30 days.

1.1 INTERESTING HISTORY

Menstruation and menstrual blood had many labels from the past, it is referred as both a cure and a curse. In Ancient Egypt, menstrual blood was a cure for sagging breast and thighs. They believed that menstrual blood could cure leprosy.

"Period" is rooted in the Greek words "peri" and "hodos" (periodos), which turned to the Latin "periodus" meaning "recurring cycle".

The menstrual cycle is not only bound to physical discomfort but also secondarily linked to the mental health of a girl.

In this research we have included two mental disorders PMDD (Premenstrual dysphoric disorder) and POCD (Polycystic ovary syndrome). I have divided the mental disorders related to menstrual cycle in two parts:

- i. Pre-adolescent disorder
- ii. Post-adolescent disorder

2. MENSTRUATION DISORDER

2.1 PMDD (Premenstrual dysphoric disorder):

The disorder comes under the title pre-adolescent disorder as every girl experiences the menstrual cycle with that they are associated to many PMS (Premenstrual syndrome) before their first experience. The most common disorder to which many young girls suffer with is premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD.) This can lead to severe mental chaos like depression, fatigue, trouble focusing and panic attacks. According to some studies the low level of estrogen and progesterone just before the start of menstrual cycle are linked to the low production of serotonin the "Happy Hormone".

Physical symptoms of PMDD lists gastrointestinal symptoms like abdominal cramps, bloating, constipation, nausea, vomiting, pelvic heaviness or pressure, backache, etc. Other symptoms include skin problems like Acne, skin inflammation with itching, swelling of the ankles, hands, and feet, diminished urine output.

2.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL AFFECTS OF PMDD:

PMDD can cause extreme mood shifts that can disrupt an individual's daily social life and can also contribute in end of relationships. This disorder can sometimes lead to suicidal thoughts. Some other concerning symptoms are hopelessness, extreme sadness, irritability, lack of control, confusion, crying spells, difficulty in concentration, anger, panic attacks, insomnia, and food craving and binge eating. There are no known reasons for this disorder but the researches shows a crucial role of hormones. PMDD is usually treatable through change in lifestyle, natural remedies and sometimes if got worse then medication.

2.3 What can cause PMDD:

- The exact cause of PMDD is not known. It may be an abnormal reaction to normal hormone changes that happen with each menstrual cycle. The hormone changes before attaining the puberty can cause this disorder. Usually, any women can develop PMDD but Women with a family history of PMS or Women with a personal or family history of depression, postpartum depression, or other mood disorders have high risk to develop.
- The other most important cause of developing PMDD is lack of education and awareness about the menstrual cycle to young girl population.

3. PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome):

PCOD (polycystic ovarian syndrome) is a hormonal disorder. According to my hypothesis this is a post-adolescent disorder. Women diagnosed with PCOS may have infrequent or prolonged menstrual periods or excessive production of male hormone (androgen). The ovaries may develop numerous small collections of fluid (follicles) and fail to regularly release eggs.

PCOS is a far more complicated disorder than PMDD. Complications of PCOS can cause infertility, pregnancy induced High blood pressure, Non-alcoholic steatohepatitis — a severe liver inflammation caused by fat accumulation in the liver, premature birth, miscarriage, sleep apnea, abnormal uterine bleeding and many more complicated symptoms. The excessive androgen production can cause worse signs such as worsening hirsutism, acne and male-pattern baldness.

3.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL AFFECTS OF PCOS:

A woman needs a healthy physical and mental health. The symptoms affect the self-esteem and relationship, which leads to anxiety and depression. The social anxiety can open on to fear of facing social situations, meeting new people and doing daily routine in front of others. It can also lead to OCD (Obsessive compulsive disorder), Bipolar disorder, binge eating and other eating disorders.

PCOS can also make some women feel self-conscious, low self-esteem and confidence that affect their behavior. It can also cause an aggressive emotional change.

3.2 What can cause PCOS:

There is no exact reason known, but the main factors that can affect are:

- **Excess insulin** – Excessive insulin can lead to androgen production that can result in difficulty in ovulation.
- Excess androgen
- Low-grade inflammation
- Heredity

4. Myths related to Menstruation:

Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to girls. However, in India it has always been surrounded by taboos and myths that keep out women from many aspects of socio-cultural life. In India, menstruation is being seen as a taboo till date in some places. This taboos about menstruation in the society influences on girls' and women's emotional state, mental health and lifestyle. The main problem about such taboo is because of young girls' low knowledge levels and understandings about puberty, menstruation, and reproductive health. In India many middle classes and uneducated families' women are prohibited from engaging in normal life while menstruating. According to them a women must be "purified" before she is allowed to return to kitchen and day to day chores of household. Many girls and women are subject to restrictions in their daily lives simply because they are menstruating like not entering the puja room and kitchen is the major restrictions. Menstruating girls and women are also restricted from offering prayers and touching holy books, because people think a girl is "impure" during menstruation. People believe that females during menstruation are unhygienic and unclean and hence they think that the food they touch or prepare gets contaminated. Some people also think that when a menstruating girl touches sour items like pickles, curd they spoil.

People and even girls think that doing exercise and physical activities during menses can cause dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation, typically involving abdominal cramps) but actually doing such activities can relieve menstruating women from premenstrual syndrome and dysmenorrhea and relieve bloating. Studies state that exercise can help production of serotonin which help them feel happier. Some more illiterate people think that when a menstruating girl touches a cow, that cow turns to infertile that leads to making the girl impure and cursed.

5. Problems faced during menstruation in India:

Menstruation in India is brushed under the carpet and not discussed openly. The stigma related to a woman bleeding every month leads to deficient hygiene among rural girls using wood husk, plastic, paper, cloth, and other such materials instead of sanitary napkins because their family member think that as a useless expenditure every month. Fungal, urinal tract, reproductive tract infections and many other diseases, illnesses are caused due to unavailability of hygiene products to poor and rural girls.

Girls feel left out and that affect their mental health by leading them to start Autophobia (fear of being alone and left out) that can ultimately lead to anxiety and other mental disorders.

6. CONCLUSION

An understanding of the relationship between mental disorders and menstrual cycle is very much important in a country like India to make people aware of the bad consequences a girl can face if her menstruation don't go well. Many problems during menstruation can be caused by many factors like poverty, lack of knowledge and awareness. A girl's mental health is more crucial than the physical health. Psychological factors like anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, eating disorders, stress during menstruation can also disrupt in her higher education. Girls are not allowed to go to schools during their periods, which avoid them from gaining knowledge and attain higher studies. Girls should do exercise and physical activities to avoid menstrual pain and irritability. Women with good mental health means a healthy and happy society.

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