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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mothers communication with daughters regarding pubertal changes: A Study in Jammu District

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Abstract

Communication is central in all relationships and interactions. Effective communication is particularly important when a child reaches adolescence. A girl needs a tutor when she is passing through the stage of puberty as she is not aware about it. Many young girls in our country may lack appropriate and sufficient information regarding pubertal changes, causing incorrect unhealthy behaviour during this period. So the present study was planned with the objective to study mothers communication with daughters regarding pubertal changes. For the present study, sample of 400 mothers of adolescent girls was identified from Jammu city. Self devised Interview schedule was used to gather the relevant information. Findings of the study revealed that information regarding puberty was provided by some mothers while majority of mothers had not prepared their daughters for puberty with the fear that they will attain early puberty. Communication gap and lack of time were also found to be others reasons. Friendship with opposite sex, coming home late and going out with friends etc. were certain restrictions which were imposed on the adolescent girls by their mothers after attaining pubertal changes. Regarding hygienic practices, taking bath daily and using of disposable pads were the most suggested activities by the mothers during menstruation. Moreover, mothers also communicate about various beliefs associated with menstruation and gave reasons for the superstitions and beliefs related to menarche from hygienic, cultural and scientific point of view.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is viewed as a period of transformation and reorganization in family relationships. Research literature gives evidence that adolescence is a period of heightened tension between young persons and their parents. The period of pubertal maturation leads to diminished levels of positive interaction and a modest increase in distance in the parent-adolescent relationship. During this period, there is shifting and renegotiation of authority and control, along with a host of correlated biological, social, cognitive, and self-definitional/personal identity transitions that occur, results in transformations in the pattern of family interactions and is associated with the emergence and escalation of conflict between adolescents and their parents (Montemayor, 1983; Paikoff & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Steinberg, 2001). Here, balanced parenting is critical for the resolution of the conflict. And in this context, availability of the mother is the most important factor to every boy and girls as their relationship with mother is the closest one. It is their mother with whom they can share their problems, ask for solutions and discuss any situation. Russel et al. (1998) said that mothers are considerate and warm; as a result, the children always turn up to the mother in all circumstances (Deb, 2008). One thing that should never crop up between a mother and her daughter is a communication gap. A daughter should always try to talk to her mother openly, be it about her studies, friends or the changes associated with puberty. She should try to make her mother understand her viewpoint and at the same point, try to appreciate the perspective of her mother. On the other hand, a mother

needs to change according to the time, minimizing the generation gap between the two. She needs to give her freedom, trust that she will not misuse it. Soon enough, the small little problems will get resolved and the two of them would be able to share a really close bond. Keeping this as a background, the present study has been designed to ascertain communication of mothers with their daughters especially about puberty and related changes.

METHODOLOGY:

Sample Group:-The sample for the study consisted of 400 mothers of the adolescent girls belonging to urban areas of Jammu city. Multistage sampling technique was adopted to draw the urban sample.

Tool used for the Study: Interview schedule for mothers was used to know the communication between mothers with their daughters regarding pubertal issues.

Data analysis: Collected data was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively keeping in mind the objective of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 Background profile of the respondents

Age(in years)	N=400	%age
35-40	96	24.0
40-45	234	58.5
45-50	70	17.5
Educational qualification		
Non graduates	361	90.3
Graduates	39	9.8
Occupation		
Non-working	326	81.5
Working	74	18.5

Data in the table 1 clearly shows that majority (58.5%) respondent mothers were in the age group of 40-45 years followed by 24.0% who fall in age group of 35-40 years and 17.5% in the age group 45-50 years. Regarding educational qualification of the respondent mothers, majority (90.3%) of the mothers were found to be non-graduates. However, only 9.8% had done graduation. As far as their working status is concerned, it was found that 81.5% of the mothers were non-working and they were housewives. While only 18.5% were found to be working, out of which some were in teaching profession, both in government and in private schools, while others were in corporate sector.

Table 2 Mother's Communication about pubertal changes with their daughters

Communication with daughter for pubertal changes	n=400	%age
Yes	145	36.3
No	255	63.8
If yes, how did you prepared them for pubertal changes		
By providing knowledge about puberty	96	24.0
By teaching about significance of menstruation	23	8.0
By teaching hygienic practices during menstruation	17	4.3
If no, Reasons for not preparing girls		
Due to fear that she might attain early puberty	106	26.5
Lack of communication	95	23.8

Never realise its importance	31	7.8
Lack of time	23	5.8

Data in the table 2 provides the findings regarding mothers communication and preparation about pubertal issues with their daughters. It was found that only 36.3% of the mothers had prepared their daughters for changes that occur during puberty. While majority (63.8%) reported that they had not discussed pubertal issues with their daughters. 24% who had given prior knowledge to their daughters about puberty stated that they had provided them information about sequence of changes associated with puberty to make them feel comfortable while having these changes. Other 8% of mothers informed that they prepared their daughters by explaining them that it happens with every girl and it's also very important for women to menstruate. They informed them about puberty so that they get mentally prepared for these changes. However, there were only 4.3% mothers who emphasised on menstrual hygiene. They disclosed that they educated their daughters about menarche and hygienic practices to be adopted during menstruation.

On the other hand, table 2 also depicts that 63.8% mother respondents had not prepared their daughters for the pubertal changes, out of which 26.5% of the mothers were of the view point that if the girls are informed about puberty, they will attain early puberty and due to this fear, they were inhibited from providing adequate knowledge to their daughters. Communication gap was found to be another reason for not preparing their daughters about puberty as reported by 23.8% of the respondents. 7.8% reported that it's not important to tell everything in advance, the time will teach them while 5.8% of the mothers reported that due to their busy schedule, they did not get time to discuss pubertal issues with their daughters.

Table 3 Restrictions imposed on the daughters during puberty

Restrictions imposed during menstruation	n=400	%age
Yes	327	81.8
No	73	18.3

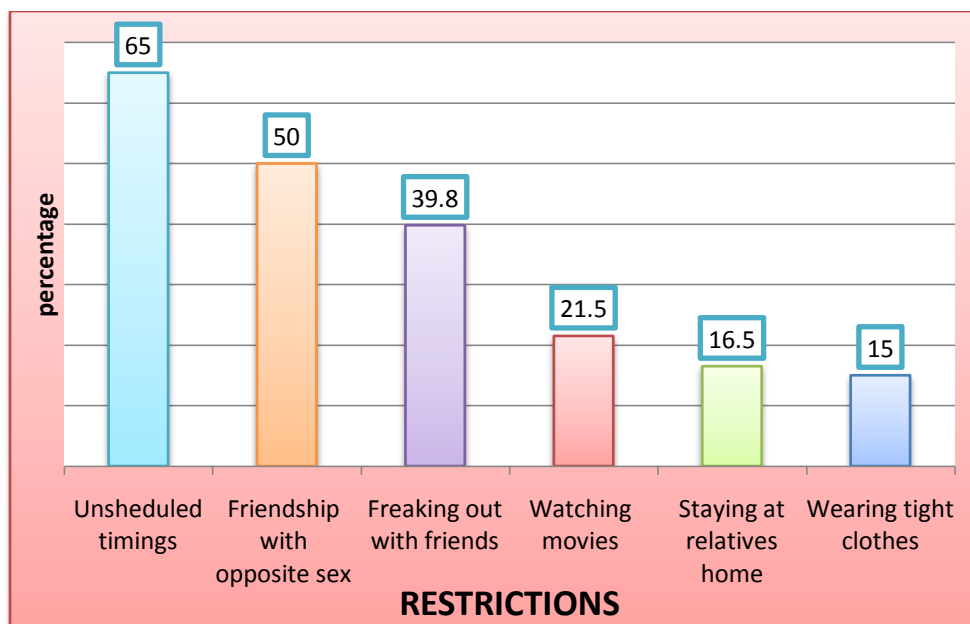
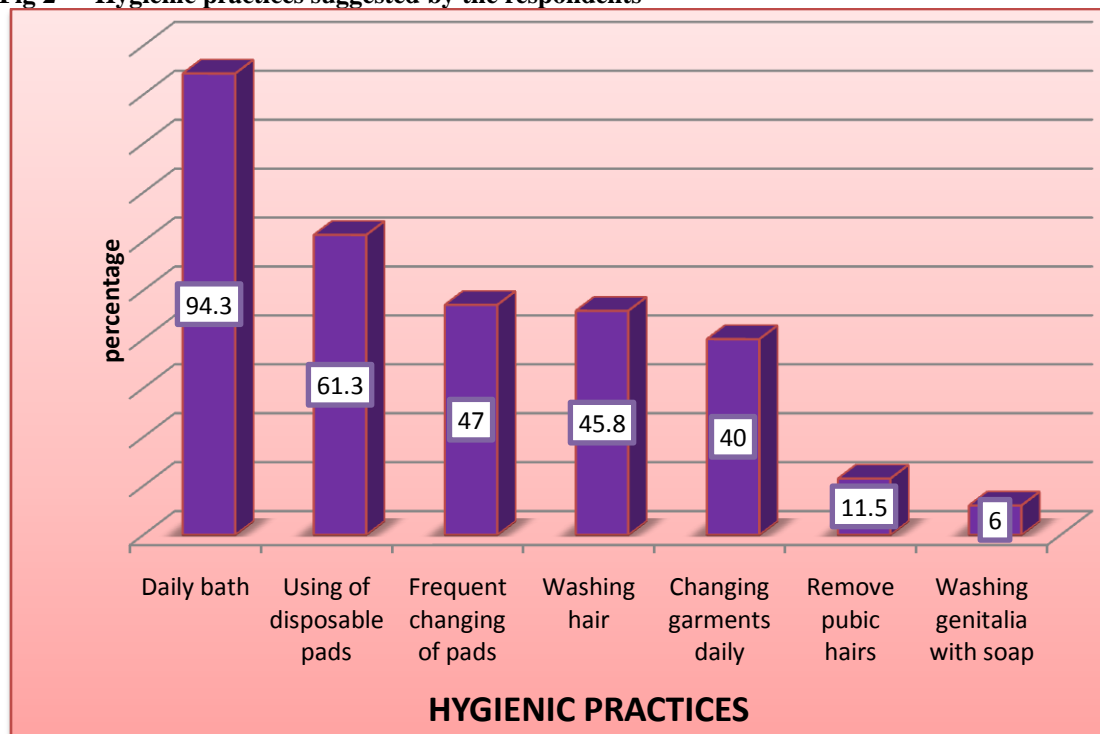


Fig.1 Restrictions imposed on the daughters during puberty.

In table 3, Findings about restrictions imposed on daughters by the respondent mothers during puberty are presented. It is found that majority (81.8%) of the mothers imposed restrictions/limitations on their daughters for certain activities like friendship with opposite sex, unscheduled timings, coming late at home, going out with friends and watching movies with friends, talking on phone for longer etc (as shown in fig. 1). According to them, it's very important for girls to have some limitations which safeguard them from getting into some wrong way. Most of the mothers (65%) prohibited their daughters from coming home at unscheduled timings. According to them, girls should come home in time. The other common restriction which was imposed by the mothers on their daughters was not to get friendly with opposite sex (50%). As one of the respondent mother stated that, 'she is aware about the current happening of the society, she wants her daughter to remain aloof from boys, she added

that friendship with boys may turn into other relationship, so in order to avoid such situation it is important to set limitations for the daughters not to get friendly with them'. Restrictions were also imposed on daughters for going out and freaking out with friends as reported by 39.8% mother respondents. It was found that mothers were more concerned about their daughter's protection and they did not allow them to move out without any specific reasons; Permission for outdoor recreational activities like watching movies, going at friends home, going for trips etc. was also not given to the daughters as reported by 21.5% of the respondents. 16.5% of the respondents stated that they also did not allow their daughters to stay at relatives home while permission for wearing of tight clothing was not granted by 15% of the respondents. On the other hand, 18.3% did not impose any kind of restrictions on their daughters. They were of the view point that instead of setting limitations on the daughters for certain activities, one should guide the daughters gradually so that they do not turn the wrong way.

Fig 2 Hygienic practices suggested by the respondents



Hygienic practices suggested by the respondents

Fig.2 depicts that the practices which were suggested by the most (94.3%) of the mothers were taking bath daily during menstruation, and using of disposable pads (61.3%). Changing of sanitary pads frequently (47%), washing of hair before entering into the kitchen (45.8%), and changing of garments daily (40%) were other hygienic practices which were recommended by the mother respondents. While only 11.5% and 6% suggested their daughters to remove their pubic hair and wash genitalia with soap or medicated water. It was found that mothers suggested their daughters to use only readymade sanitary napkins which are safe, hygienic to use and also avoid wastage of time in washing the used cloths. All the respondents stated that they keep on suggesting their daughters to adopt these hygienic practices which will keep them clean and perpetuates healthy living.

On interactions during the study, it was found that all mothers talked about the general cleanliness, but a vast majority of mother had not emphasised on cleanliness about genitalia. Also they did not talk about removal of pubic hairs which is also a part of menstrual hygiene.

Table 4 Mothers perspective on menstrual beliefs

Menstrual beliefs	N=400	%age
Communicate menstrual beliefs	365	91.3
Did not communicate menstrual beliefs	35	8.8
Reasons for communicating menstrual beliefs		
From hygienic point of view	188	47.0
From cultural point of view	116	29.0

From practical significance point of view	61	15.3
Reaction of daughter for these reasons		
Get annoyed	125	31.3
Listen carefully	107	26.8
Listen but showed little objection	133	33.3
Mother's views on existence of menstrual beliefs		
Menstrual beliefs should exist	314	78.5
Menstrual beliefs should not exist	86	21.5

As far as communication about menstrual beliefs and superstitions is concerned, the data in the table 4 indicates that about 91.3% of the mothers said that they observe the practices/beliefs related to menstruation and also communicate these beliefs to their daughters. They reported that they instructed their daughters about the beliefs by explaining its cultural relevance, from hygienic point of view, and discussing about its practical significance. 47% reported that they instructed their daughters about the beliefs by explaining that 'menstrual blood is impure' so none should worship and touch idol of god, also one should not touch pickle and enter into kitchen which is a hygienic place so they communicate these beliefs from hygienic point of view. While others, 29%, communicated about beliefs with their daughters from cultural/ traditional point of view. They stated that these beliefs are to be obeyed by the daughters as they are followed from generation to generation and are practised in our culture from the time unknown. Only 15.3% of the mothers gave practical reasons for observing these beliefs. They said that most of the beliefs are based on facts like lifting heavy weight items or doing heavy work is prohibited during menstruation as it increases menstrual flow. Also menstruating girls are told to avoid sour food which might cause pain in lower abdomen. So in this way, mothers communicate with their daughters about the beliefs associated with menarche.

When mothers were asked as to how their daughters act in response to the reasons for practising menstrual beliefs, majority (33.3%) of the mother respondents said that their daughters listen the reasons but they had some objection for practising these beliefs as they viewed that it is a natural phenomenon, so why & how it's considered unhygienic condition. Other (31.3%) mothers stated that their daughters get annoyed and they never listen to the reasons given for practising these beliefs. 26% of the respondents were glad to say that their daughters were always ready to listen the reasons given for observing the menstrual practises.

Findings regarding respondents perception about existence of menstrual practices are provided in the table 4. It was found that 78.5% of the respondent mothers perceived that these menstrual beliefs should exist in our culture as they are following from generation to generation and also they signify some practical reasons. They added, though, that girls do not accept it easily and have negative attitude towards these beliefs but they viewed that the girls should be enforced to accept these beliefs/superstitions. Other 21.5%, who were against these beliefs viewed that one should stop practicing these beliefs. According to them, the foundation of these beliefs is very old and these were formed so that a woman, who is busy in household chores day and night, gets rest in these days, but now the time has changed, women of today are not behind the men, rather she works shoulder to shoulder with men. So in this modern era, these beliefs should not be practised so that they do not become a hurdle for women's development.

Conclusion:

From the present findings, it is found that most of the mothers were non-graduates and were housewives while few of them were graduates and were having working status. Results revealed that majority mothers had not communicated with their daughters about the upcoming pubertal changes with some reasons like they will attain early puberty, also due to communication gap and due to lack of time. In spite of focussing on preparing daughters for menstruation, majority of mothers were concerned in enforcing restrictions over certain activities like friendship with opposite sex, coming home late and going out with friends etc. Moreover, mothers had communicated the various reasons for the superstitions and beliefs related to menarche by justifying the reasons from hygienic, cultural and scientific point of view. It may be concluded that the communication of mothers with their daughters was less regarding pubertal changes, rather it is mainly concerned with the communication of the beliefs and superstitions.

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