

# Knowledge of Menarche and Menstrual Cycle Among Adolescent Girls in Ekiti State

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## Abstract:

The study examined the knowledge of menarche and menstrual cycle among adolescent girls in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study examined the knowledge of female adolescents about menarche and menstrual cycle; the current menstrual hygiene practices among female adolescent; and the challenges facing female students during menarche period. This study was conducted using a descriptive research of the survey type. The population for this study consisted of all the Secondary School female students in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The sample for this study comprised of 100 female students selected from five (5) public secondary schools using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for this study was self-structured questionnaire based on the research questions earlier raised in the study. The questionnaire was validated by experts of Tests and Measurement as the reliability coefficient was 0.81. Data were collected and analyzed descriptively via frequency counts and simple percentage. Findings of the study revealed that majority of the female adolescents are knowledgeable about menarche and menstrual cycle. The study also revealed that majority of the female students observed menstrual hygiene practices such as frequent bath, frequent changing of sanitary and use of medicated soap during menstruation. In addition, the major challenges facing some female students during menarche period were poor relationship and feeling irritated during menstruation. It was recommended among others that there is need for parent (mother) to educate their female child on the necessities in coping with menarche challenges.

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## Introduction

Adolescence is a shift period from childhood to adulthood in which pubertal development and sexual maturation take place. During puberty, hormonal, psychological, cognitive and physical changes occurs concurrently and interactively making physiological development a change for adolescent to face with emotional, social and behavioural dimensions. A feature of sexual maturation in the human race is the four to five years physiological variation of pubertal age witnessed in normal individuals living in the conditions (Tanner, 2008).

Early adolescence is period of physical, intellectual, emotional and social developments in which young people confront the enquiries about puberty. Here, bodily maturation mainly sexual maturation has noteworthy effect on self-concept and social relationship during this period. This period is affected by peer group, parent and teachers. When a healthy child is somewhere between nine and sixteen years, she will enter puberty, that is onset of sexual maturation. It is the period under the influence of hormones when the child experiences physical and sexual changes. The commencement of menstruation is one of the most visible signs that a girl is entering puberty (Chang, 2009; Iswarya & Varshini 2018). Menstruation is a physiological phenomenon which marks the beginning of reproductive years which is a period saddled with hygienic responsibilities (Ogunleye & Kio 2020)

The milestones of pubertal events in girls are the beginning of puberty, peak height velocity (PHV) and menarche. The onset of puberty is characterized by the development of breast tissue, while PHV is the highest velocity that is observed during the pubertal growth spurt. Menarche is a rather late event in puberty and usually occurs 6 months after PHV is attained. The age that menarche occurs varies and is dependent on the interaction between genetic and environmental factors. The most reliable marker of the positive sexual changes in pubertal development was the fall of the age at menarche. It has been projected that during most of the 20th century age, menarche has been falling by about 3 months per decade (Krsmanovic, 2009).

Maturing girls search for advice and support from their parents and/or who is closer to them. As menarche is a powerful signifier of entry into maturity stage, it should be dealt with in different perspectives. For most girls puberty is non-event, a negative or a fearful experience. Among young girls, menstruation is perceived as an irritant or is something to be ashamed of. Clinical studies demonstrated that both pre and post menarche girls regard menarche as a hygiene crisis rather than as a maturation event (Tiwari, 2009) Maniar and Mehta (2017) in their study found an association between menstrual hygiene and reproductive diseases also attested to this.

The most striking event in the whole process of female puberty is undoubtedly the beginning of menstruation, menarche. It is a different point signifying the major alteration between man and woman. It involves fear, anxiety, and feminine hood contentment which are packed with untold emotional attachment which thereafter creates discomfort and some anxiety when it is delayed. The feeling of fright and embarrassment that girls pass through at menarche need to be recognized and the negative aspect of the menstrual experience need to be addressed in order to provide a better view of menstruation.

Adolescents' population is on the increase likewise the risk of reproductive health problems, unwanted pregnancy, infection, death from abortion (done by unqualified practitioners) and sexually transmitted illnesses (STI's) (Brakthalaskshmi, Govindarajan, Ethirajan & Felix 2014). Based on the challenges linked with the period and development stage, the need for provision of adolescent friendly reproductive health services emerges. These problem emanates from the fact that sexuality education is not been stressed in the educational institutions and most parents deny their female child the required information about their sexuality, developmental progression into adulthood, menarche and menstruation. Mostly, parents and teachers shy from discussing the aspect in details and often centered their responses to questions asked by adolescent. It is against this background that this study therefore seeks to assess the knowledge of menarche and menstrual cycle among adolescent girls in Ekiti State. Specifically, the study;

1. examined the knowledge of female adolescents about menarche and menstrual cycle;
2. examined the current menstrual hygiene practices among female adolescent; and
3. identified the challenges facing female students during menarche period.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for this study;

1. Are the female adolescents knowledgeable about menarche and menstrual cycle?
2. What are the current menstrual hygiene practices among female adolescent?
3. What are the challenges facing female students during menarche period?

### Methodology

This study was conducted using a descriptive research of the survey type to gather information from a representative sample of the population under study. The population for this study consisted of all the Secondary School female students in Ado-Ekiti Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The sample for this study comprised of 100 female students selected from five (5) public secondary schools using simple random sampling technique. The instrument used for this study was self-structured questionnaire based on the research questions earlier raised in the study. The instrument consisted of section A and B as section A consisted of student biographic data while section B consisted of items on knowledge, practice and challenges facing female students during menstruation.

The drafted questionnaire was corrected and scrutinized by the experts in test and measurement and nursing science to ensure face and content validity before distribution to respondents. The reliability of the instrument was carried out through test re-test method. The instrument was administered twice on 20 students who were not among the sampled respondents within an interval of two weeks. Their scores were later correlated and a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained which made the instrument reliable for administration. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the support of a well-informed research assistant to ensure a one hundred percent (100%) return of completed questionnaires. Data were collected and analyzed descriptively via frequency counts and simple percentage.

## Results and Discussion

**Research Question 1:** Are the female adolescents knowledgeable about menarche and menstrual cycle?

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of adolescents' knowledge of menarche and menstrual cycle**

S/N	Items	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	Have you heard about menarche	46	46.00	54	54.00
2	Women stop menstruation as they grow old	69	69.00	31	31.00
3	Menstruation is one of the sign that you have reached puberty	78	78.00	22	22.00
4	Some changes occur in female during the time of their menstruation	62	62.00	38	38.00
5	Did your parents ever talk to you about menstruation before you began menstruation	29	29.00	71	71.00

Table 1 shows that 78 (78.00%) of the respondents agreed that Menstruation is one of the sign that a girl have reached puberty as against 22 (22.00%) of the respondents who have countered opinion about the item. 69 (69.00%) of the respondents agreed that women stop menstruation as they grow old while 31 (31.00%) of the respondents disagreed with the item. Some changes occur in female during the time of their menstruation, this is the belief of 62 (62.00%) of the respondents on the questionnaire as against 38 (38.00%) of the respondents who objected the item. It can easily be deduced that majority of the female adolescents are knowledgeable about menarche and menstrual cycle. This finding is related to the findings of Tiwari (2008); Chang (2009); Kokiwar and Nikitha (2020)

**Research Question 2:** What are the current menstrual hygiene practices among female adolescent?

**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of the current menstrual hygiene practices among female adolescent**

S/N	Items	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	I bath frequently during menstrual period	74	74.00	26	26.00
2	I change my sanitary pad frequently per day	65	65.00	35	35.00
3	I use medicated soap during my menstrual period	32	32.00	68	68.00

Table 2 shows that 74% of the female students bath frequently during menstrual period as against 26% of them who hardly have their bath regularly during menstrual period. 65% of the female students change my sanitary pad frequently per day as against 35% who

care not. From the above, it can be said that majority of the female students observed menstrual hygiene practices such as frequent bath, frequent changing of sanitary and use of medicated soap during menstruation. This finding is related to the findings of Poureslami and Osati (2010) and Aniebue and Nwankwo (2009).

**Research Question 3:** What are the challenges facing female students during menarche period?

**Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of the challenges facing female students during menarche period**

S/N	Items	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	I couldn't relate with my friends during my menarche period	44	44.00	56	26.00
2	I was not happy with myself during my menarche period	65	65.00	35	35.00
3	I feel irritated when menstruating	40	40.00	60	60.00

Table 3 shows that 44% of the female students find it difficult relating with their friends during menarche period as against 56% who move freely with their peers while 40% of the female students feel irritated when menstruating and 60% of them are not bothered with their present state of body chemistry. However, 65% of the female students were not happy with their self during menarche period as against 35% of them who are not bothered. It can deduced that the major challenges facing some female students during menarche period were poor relationship and feeling irritated during menstruation. This finding is related to the findings of Tiwari (2008) and Aniebue and Nwankwo (2009).

### Conclusion

The study has shown that majority of the female adolescents are knowledgeable about menarche and menstrual cycle. The study also concludes that majority of the female students observed menstrual hygiene practices such as frequent bath, frequent changing of sanitary and use of medicated soap during menstruation. In addition, the major challenges facing some female students during menarche period were poor relationship and feeling irritated during menstruation.

### Recommendations

1. There is need for parent (mother) to educate their female child on the necessities in coping with menarche challenges.
2. Female child should develop positive view of the menarche and menstrual cycle rather than thinking of the challenges faced during menstruation.
3. Age should not be a barrier in rendering sensitization program for the female child.

### Contributions to Knowledge

This study assessed the knowledge of adolescent girls about menarche and menstrual cycle. The study will be a useful tool in educating the female adolescents on how to maintain cleanliness during their menstrual periods in order to prevent infection which might have an effect on them in the nearest future. It will also help in educating the female adolescents on the changes that takes place in their body and to make female adolescents have full knowledge about menarche before it onset and the work will also serve as data for other study related to it.

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