

A Comparative Study of Understanding of Menstrual Process among Married Women Belonging to Two Ecological Settings

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ABSTRACT Menstruation is a process of utmost importance in the reproductive physiology of females. The present study aims at assessing the understanding of menstruation process among married women and to gain insight into the sources of information and nature of knowledge pertaining to the physiological process under consideration. The sample for the study comprised of 200 married women in the age group of 20-40 years. Equal numbers of women were drawn from two ecological settings (Rural and Urban) of Jammu District, through stratified random sampling technique. The tools for data collection included interview schedules. The results reflected a picture of ignorance and lack of understanding among respondents regarding the physiology and importance of menstrual process particularly among rural respondent ($\chi^2 = 35.24$, *Significant at 1%). Their explanation of menstruation reflected incomplete knowledge, unscientific notions and blindfold faith in cultural taboos, myths and social customs pertaining to practices and procedures. Besides these, rural respondents also associated a variety of negative physical and psychological changes with menstruation. Marked differences were also evident in the perception of urban and rural respondents regarding the right age of menarche ($\chi^2 = 64.72$, *Significant at 1%), prior information regarding menstruation ($\chi^2 = 13.20$, *Significant at 1%) and cleanliness measures adopted. Among the varied sources of information, mass media especially television and magazines, were found to be the major source of information among urban respondents, which is credited for their awareness regarding menstrual health and hygiene particularly in the usage of napkins, bathing and personal care. Elder female members of the family especially mothers and sisters were the major accessible source for rural respondents, who themselves lacked accurate and adequate knowledge, and hence continued the age-old customs and traditions, some of them lacking scientific vigor.