

Age at Menarche in Two Caste Groups (Lingayath and Adikarnatakas) Groups of Mysore District: Some Preliminary Observation

R. Veena and H.K.Bhat

Department of Studies in Anthropology, University of Mysore, Manasagangothri, Mysore 570 006, Karnataka, India

KEYWORDS Menarche. Belief. Diet. Rituals. Taboos. Dysmenorrhoea

ABSTRACT The aim of this study was to find the mean age at menarche in two different caste groups. i.e. Lingayath and Adikarnatakas. This study was to assess the level of knowledge regarding rituals, taboos, food pattern, social restrictions, health problems and nutrition observed during the menstrual period. The sample for the research comprised of 200 Lingayath girls and 200 Adikarnataka girls in the age group of 11-18 years from Mysore district. The results reveal that the mean age at menarche among the Adikarnatakas girls is 13.64.

INTRODUCTION

Menstruate hygiene is very important and unhealthy practices may lead to various reproductive tract infections. Some study reveals that majority of the girls belonging to both the caste group felt uneasy at the time of menarche and they faced painful menstrual periods. There was no restriction on eating, but they avoided non-veg and spicy food. It was found that the girls of Lingayath community were more orthodox compared to Adikarnataka community. But both the communities follow certain beliefs like avoiding going to temples, having separate utensils and prohibition from social inter course.

METHODOLOGY

Sample: For determining the age at menarche the sample comprising of 400 girls were taken. Of them 200 girls each belonged to Lingayath and Adikarnatakas families. These girls were between the age group 11-18 years and they were from the various Government High Schools of the rural areas of Mysore. For taking other pertinent information 100 girls (Who had experienced menarche) from the above 400 girls were selected (50 Lingayats and 50 Adikarnatakas girls). Random sampling technique was used. Sample was drawn from among the middle socio economic strata. Status quo method was used to obtain the age at menarche, and interview schedule for gathering the information regarding the rituals, taboos, social restrictions, health problems, nutrition, hygiene were observed during menarche.

Analysis of the Data: The response obtained was coded, tabulated and percentage was drawn. Content analysis was done and mean- standard deviation were calculated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows number of respondents from different age groups (in year) among two caste groups who have experienced menarche

Table 2 reveals that 100% girls of both the group felt bad during menstruation but their family's (92%) attitude was positive. Majority of the Adikarnatakas girls (25%) faced pain in abdomen whereas most of the Lingayath girls (12%) faced pain in Leg. Only (6%) of the Lingayath girls consulted doctor at the time of pain. 76% of the Lingayath girls and 89% of Adikarnatakas girls had their regular menstruation period. 86%

Table 1: Number of respondents from different age groups (in year) among two caste groups who have experienced menarche

Age (in years)	Caste Groups		Total
	Lingayath	Adikarnatakas	
11	8	3	11
12	55	67	122
13	64	58	122
14	52	49	101
15	13	18	31
16	3	4	7
17	3	1	4
18	2	0	0

Mean: 13.1900 $\pm$ 0.0879 Mean:13.1400 $\pm$ 0.0788
S.E: 1.242538 $\pm$ 0.0879 S.E: 1.1137 $\pm$ 0.0788

Table 2: Social and health problems during menarche (in percent)

Response		Lingayath	Adikarnatakas
Feeling during Menstruation	Negative	100	100
Family Reaction	Positive	100	100
Painful periods	Yes	42	53
Location of the Pain			
1) Abdomen	Positive	25	18
2) Legs	Positive	12	8
3) Head	Positive	10	6
Weakness or fainting	Positive	3	6
Whether you consult Doctor	Positive	6	0
Do house holds work Regularly	Yes	45	61
Periods	Yes	76	89
Whether date is Remembered	Yes	86	92
Take bath on first day	Yes	100	100
Material used (cloth)	Yes	100	100
Nutrition			
Do you eat whatever	Yes	82	72
Avoid hot foods	Yes	38	24
Avoid going to kitchen	Yes	41	22
Whether live in separate Room	Yes	20	12
Whether utensils are Separated	Yes	40	20
Prohibition from			
Social Interactions	Yes	85	67
Avoid going to temple	Yes	100	100

of Lingayath girls and 92% of the Adikarnataka girls remember their menstrual dates. All girls used cloth pads at the time of menarche and they took bath on the first day. 82% of the Lingayath girls and 72% of the Adikarnataka girls eat whatever is cooked at home, but 38% Lingayath girls and 24% of Adikarnatakas girls avoided eating sesame seed, jaggery, sour food and sweets during menstrual periods. 30% of the girls from both the group preferred lemon juice, coconut water and ice-cream as it reduces stomach pain. 41% of the girls belonging to Lingayath families and

22% of Adikarnataka avoid going to kitchen at the time of menarche. 40% of Lingayath girls and 20% of Adikarnataka girls keep their utensils separate during menstruation. 85% of the Lingayath girls and 76% of Adikarnataka girls were prohibited from social interactions at that time. All the girls of both the community avoid going to temple during this period.

It has been observed by number of researchers that there is a wide variation in the age at menarche. Decherncy and Pernall (1994) reveals that the impact of menarche on their daily activities disturb their productivity at their work place. Roy (2004) observed that a menstruating woman is not allowed to enter into the living room, cattle shed and kitchen. It is also a taboo for them to collect drinking water for herself and for the household and to visit religious place. Bilguis (2003) reveals that respondents from high and middle income groups were found to be normal and moderately nourished, whereas respondents from low income groups were moderate and undernourished. Sharma et al. (2006) too reached similar conclusion that the majority of the girls belonging to both caste (Brahmins and Rajputs) group felt uneasy at the time of menarche and they faced painful menstrual periods. There are no restrictions in eating but they avoid sour foods. Early in her menstrual life a young girl is conditioned to the idea of dysmenorrhoea.

This study observed that some girls who had painful periods absented themselves from school for the first two or three days. The main point achieved in this study was the necessity of educating girls about the menstrual period and personal hygiene.

REFERENCES

- Bilguis Madhavilatha K 2003. Trend of menarche in three regions of Andhra Pradesh. *Man in India*, 83(1 & 2): 233-236.
- Decherncy AH, Pernall ML 1994. *Treatment of Dysmenorrhea, Current Obstetric and Gynecology Diagnostic and Treatment*. Tehran: Prentice Hall International Inc, pp. 664-665.
- Roy Jotirmoy 2004. Some aspects of birth related practices in Khairwars of Sidhi District of Madhya Pradesh. *Journal of Man and Life*, 30(3-4): 93-100.
- Sharma Neeru, Vaid Sumathi, Manhas Anju 2006. Age at menarche in two caste groups (Brahmins and Rajputs from rural areas of Jammu. *Anthropologist*, 8(1): 55-57.