A LITERATURE REVIEW ON MENSTRUATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

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ABSTRACT- This review aims to understand and to break misconceptions about menstruation. It is a normal biological process and a healthy part of women's life. The menstrual cycle of a women's life starts from the onset of menarche (average 13 years) through to menopause (average around 50 years). A woman menstruates for about 7 years during their life. In this period women face many problems. Menstruation is not only confined to the physical pain and symptoms but it affects the mental health of female adolescents. Several surveys have been conducted in the area. A lack of information about menstruation leads to damaging misconceptions and discrimination. Many girls do not have complete and accurate information about menstruation. By providing proper counseling sessions and workshop program girls can be educated about menstruation. There is a need to build their confidence and encourage healthy habits and to break down taboos.

Keyword- Menstruation, Mental Health, Menarche

1. INTRODUCTION

This study will aim to discover the connection between menstruation and mental health. How menstruation can influence the mental health of an individual. To respond, this query, past studies on this subject will be revised in detail.

So, this study we will analyze previous studies on the topic of menstruation and mental health relationships retrieved from reliable records. Concluding the results of previous studies, this study will give strategies for approaching new studies or research on this theme.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This review paper is a qualitative literature assessment on the concept of menstruation, mental health and their relationship with each other. For this purpose, literature and previous studies are studied from reliable journals, studies, reports, websites. In the following sections, related studies are summed up under headlines on the concept of menstruation, the concept of mental health, the relationship between menstruation and mental health. Concluding comments about the studies are stated in the end.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1. Concept of Menstruation

Menstruation is a natural phenomenon. The term menses derives from the Latin meaning "months". The term "menstruation" arises from ancient French menstrual, which derives from Latin menstrualis, meaning "monthly," particularly "of or having monthly courses. A menstrual period is a very hard and serious time in the life of females. The menstrual period impacts different everyday life facets, with academic achievement, physical condition, behavioral pattern, diet, exercise, mood and sleep pattern (Khamdan, 2014).

"Menstruation is a normal vaginal blood loss that occurs as a part of a woman's life once-amonth. Each month, a woman's body prepares for pregnancy. If no pregnancy occurs, the uterus sheds its lining. Menstrual blood is partially blood and tissue from inside the uterus. It passes out of the body through the vagina".

The menstrual cycle of a women's life starts from the onset of menarche (average 13 years) through to menopause (average around 50 years). A woman menstruates for about 7 years during their life. In this period women face many problems. Menstruation is not only confined to the physical pain and symptoms but it affects the mental health of female adolescents. Several surveys have been conducted in the area. A lack of information about menstruation leads to damaging misconceptions and discrimination. Many girls do not have complete and accurate information about menstruation. They usually preceding from 3-5 days. There are some symptoms of menstruation –

- i. Muscle stiffness
- ii. Cramps
- iii. Painful breasts
- iv. Food cravings
- v. Mood swings and irritability
- vi. Fatigue
- vii. Headache
- viii. Swelling

Many girls use a tampon, pad, Menstrual cup. Girls lose a few tablespoons of blood during the one cycle. Most young adolescent women need to change their pad, tampons, or menstrual cup about three to six times a day. The menstrual cycle is a problem of hormonal changes. Two main hormones are involved in menstruation that is estrogen and progesterone. Stages of estrogen and progesterone differ across different points in the menstrual cycle and estrogen levels are lower just after ovulation and before you bleed – the 'pre-menstrual' stage. Low levels of estrogen are also supposed to have a knock-on effect on other substances in the mind, like serotonin, which affects mood and thought processes. Low serotonin is also known to be linked with craving carbohydrates, so there's a scientific reason for your burning craving to mainline crisps and toast like there's no tomorrow, when your period is due 3 days. Social factors, cultural and religious ethics can also have a big impact on someone's mental health. Maia Schwarz stated that "menstruation is the only blood that is not born from violence" until now stigmatization of menstruation with the stigma surrounding mental health is still a problem in some cultures across the world and mainly in some religious societies.

3.2. Concept of mental health

Mental health denotes to our social and psychological well-being. It helps determine how we maintain stress and other difficulties. Mental health affects day-to-day life, physical health, and relations. Also, mental health includes a person's ability to enjoy the day to day life to maintain a balance among life actions and accomplish psychological flexibility.

According to Medilexicon's medical dictionary:

"Mental health is an emotional, behavioral, and social maturity or normality; the absence of a mental or behavioral disorder; a state of psychological well-being in which one has achieved a satisfactory integration of one's instinctual drives acceptable to both oneself and one's social milieu; an appropriate balance of love, work, and leisure pursuits".

According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and can make a contribution to his or her community".

There are some symptoms of Mental Health -

- Withdrawing day to day life activity
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Feel low energy.
- Using drugs more than normal
- More confusion.
- Determined thoughts and memories that repeat frequently.
- Thinking of harming self or others.
- Listening to vocal sound.
- Delusion, etc.

Mental health is essential during every phase of life, that is childhood, adolescence through adulthood.

3. 3. Relationship between Mental Health and Menstruation

Several studies are exploring how menstruation disturbs Mental health. Menstruation and mental health associated with each other. Due to menstruation women faces many mental health problems like anxiety, depression, overthinking, and eating disorders. Mental health problems affect everyone. Even children show early mental health symptoms. These problems diagnosable clinically and collaboration of biological, psychological, and social factors. 50% of all mental health syndromes show first signs before14 years, and three-quarters of mental health syndromes start before 24 years old. Menstruation has always been surrounded by myths and taboos. Menstruation taboos and myths current in various cultures influence young adolescent female's attitudes, life, emotions, and most significant health.

In Indian culture and particularly in the Hindu religion, a negative connotation is given to menstruation. Menstruating girls are not allowed to enter temples, water the plants, and they are prohibited to enter the kitchen at home. They are restricted to a diet and are further advised to not to take bath. The main restriction among young adolescent females in cities is not taking part in the pooja ceremony while rural females are stopped from entering kitchens. Menstrual problems are common in all young adolescent females. On studying various research papers regarding menstrual difficulties. According to Greydanus and McAnamey (1982), they said

three most common menstrual disorders like amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, and dysfunctional uterine bleeding in adolescent's female.

The report further came with shocking findings stating even the 70 percent mothers of the menstruating daughters considered menstruation as dirty moreover the considerable 70 percent of young adolescent girls not aware of the process of menstruation till menarche. Whereas, the report reported that in Nepal and Afghanistan almost 30 percent of girls record absenteeism during menstruation. According to the UNICEF report (2014) -Tamil Nadu in 79%, 66% in Uttar Pradesh, 56% in Rajasthan and 51% in West Bengal, adolescent women were not aware of menstrual hygiene. Menstruation not only affects the physical health but its psychological effects are louder and distressing, being the major cause of the school drop-outs and absenteeism among the teenagers and female adolescents. In such a scenario the psychological effects would be more distressing.

4. CONCLUSION

Most of the girls feel an extreme level of pain, mood swings, depression, anxiety, and stress during menstruation and they do not have much awareness regarding menstruation and hygiene practices. Young adolescent women suffer from more menstrual difficulties, the commonest being dysmenorrhoea. Menstruation is related to several disorders related to mental health like depression, anxiety, and stress. Malnutrition and city life are secondary aspects of menstrual difficulties. "Embarrassment" about menstruation, it is the main difficulty in health-seeking behavior. It is also linked with some disorders like social phobia, anxiety, and depression. Accurate and well-informed discussions regarding menstrual difficulties help girls to deal better with such problems. Most of the girls take advice and have a conversation on this topic with their mother. This signifies that the education of mothers regarding menstrual health helps in tackling health problems regarding menstruation. It is necessary to provide basic menstruation knowledge to all teachers. It is essential, that especially female teachers need to be inspired to discuss and talk with all young adolescent females about both physical and mental health problems. Every adolescent girl needs to have sessions with a health counselor to discuss difficulties and misunderstanding health issues, especially menstruation. All government and private schools and colleges appoint health counselor to address young adolescent female health difficulties and remove taboos and misconceptions regarding menstruation.

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