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The experiences of visually impaired teenage girls on menstrual hygiene management: a qualitative study[☆]



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Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to collect the information from visually impaired children related to their menstrual hygiene management.

Methods: Six visually impaired children participated in this study. Qualitative design was used in this study in order to obtain themes related to menstrual self hygiene. Data were collected using interview recorded using sound recorder.

Results: The majority of the participant acquired the knowledge on menstruation and how to clean the menstrual pad from the teacher. The negative thoughts such as fear are the daily obstacles faced by the visually impaired children. Myth and beliefs about menstruation also appear on this study findings. The emotional responses stated such as dependence on feeling when doing menstrual self hygiene also obtained in the study findings.

Conclusion: Study findings explain that the visually impaired children still facing the problems related to psychosocial and physical disadvantageous. The findings in this study were expected to become the source of information in order to develop the psychosocial support to visually impaired children on maintain the health of their reproductive system.

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Introduction

Menstruation is the general experience of every woman. Eventhough it happens around teenage years, not every

woman acknowledge what happens to their body on the menstruation cycle. The certain significant condition experienced by women on their menstruation period is hygiene problem. Women tend to feel disturbed by blood scent, the fulness of menstrual pad and the unpleasant sensation on the private parts due to the itchiness and irritation. Women is susceptible to infection out of the lack of menstrual hygiene namely endometriosis, ovarian cancer, chlamydia and other diseases, thus it is important to the womeb to take care of their menstrual hygiene.¹

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The physical and psychological problems significantly affect the daily activities. The condition could be more challenging on disabled women especially the visually impaired women. They probably facing more challenge in fulfilling the comfort need on their period by maintaining self hygiene. Disability hamper the disabled people to do their personal and social activities. They have the limitation to fulfill their basic needs.^{2,3}

Visually impaired children acquired proper information on menstrual self hygiene behavior. The girls perception on their reproductive health were on the bad category and impact on their unproper menstrual hygiene behavior. It takes cooperation of several sectors including parents and teachers, even the religion organization to educate on sexuality and reproductive health. The use of mass media considered effective and recommended to increase the understanding on menstruation and its' hygiene practice.^{4,5}

This study aimed to explore the menstrual self hygiene management of visually impaired children.

Methods and procedure

Data were collected using structured interview to explore the participants' experience on the management of menstrual hygiene of visually impaired children.

Sample

Six participants were selected to join this study. Participants were asked to share their experience and knowledge on how they do the self care on their period. All of the participants were students of elementary to high school, with the age range around 15–20 years old. Most of the participant come from outside Langke Rembong District with varied socio economy status dominated by middle to low class.

Instruments

Instrument used to collect the study data are as follows:

1. Interview guide: the researcher prepare interview question lists. Before starting the interview, participants were asked to fill the informed consent form written with Braille code.
2. Recorder: participants answer were recorded using the voice recorder. The participants' data were organized by interview item order followed by data analysis using thematic analysis method.

Procedure

Firstly, participant was given explanation on the study objective and the confidentiality of participants' identity. Sample in this study were decided in accordance with inclusion and exclusion criteria. Participant in this study were those who voluntarily participated. On the collecting data phase, participants were assured to feel as comfortable as possible when being interviewed. The data collected then being analyzed.

Result

After conducting thematic analysis on the participants experiences of menstrual hygiene, this following themes were obtained:

Lack of knowledge

This theme appears from the misunderstanding on the definition of menstruation, etiology of menstruation and the origin of menstrual blood. The category of menstruation definition defined on the statements "*menstruation is blood*"; "*menstruation is change*"; "*menstruation is dirty blood released from our body*." Category of not knowing the cause of menstruation derived from participants statement as follows "*because the ovum cells is bursting*", "*don't know*"; "*when growing into adults*"; "*because (i) have grown*". Category of the fault in answering question on the origin of menstrual blood shown as following statements "*don't know*"; "*from genders*"; "*from genitals*"; "*from our body*."

Menstruation and beliefs

The majority of the participants stated that they believe that washing hair during period would cause serious health problem. This described from the following statements "*...if we wash hair during period, it is the same as we let it (menstrual blood) come out*"; "*...i dont wash my hair because one says the menstruation will flow out swift and more*"; "*...i don't wash my hair because i'm afraid i will feel dizzy...*"; "*when (i am) on period, (i) should not wash my hair, cause the blood would rush into (my) head*"; "*i don't wash my hair on period because i'm afraid (it will) suddenly stop, if it is stopped suddenly our body will not healthy*."

Uncomfortability

Based on the interview result with participant, the third theme were obtained namely the uncomfortability. This theme were obtained by the participants' answer on the question related to what happens when one delay to change their menstrual pad. The uncomfortability category were depicted from this statements "*feeling discomfort, the genital feels itchy, underwear is sticky*"; "*body felt weak and pain*"; "*feeling uncomfortable*."

Emotional

Based on the interview result with participant, the fourth theme, emotional, were obtained. This theme obtained from participants' answer of the question related to how to know that the menstrual pad is clean. The emotional category is depicted from this following statements "*i know my menstrual pad is clean by feeling*"; "*usually just by feeling*"; "*we feel it from the fishy and detergent scent*."

Social environment

This theme was obtained by the participants' statements on their understanding of managing self hygiene during menstruation period from their close people and relatives. *"i knew how to clean menstrual pad from sister (nun)"; "from teacher"; "from older sister"*.

Source of information category depicted from the statements related to second theme beliefs *".....i get the information from my friend that they get from social media"; "i don't wash my hair because one says the menstruation will flow out swift and more"; "when (i am) on period, (i) should not wash my hair, cause the blood would rush into (my) head, this i heard from my sister."* The information obtain from closest relatives have the impact on the behavior of visually impaired children showed on their way to clean and dispose their menstrual pad. This were described from the statements *"...first i clean the menstuaal pad, then i rip it then i dispose the pad content into the toilet"; "first, dispose the pad fillings then throw it into the toilet..."*

Discussion

The findings on this study showed that the visually impaired children obtain their information on the method to do personal hygiene on menstruation period from their closest relatives. The information that they get influence their way of thinking and behavior. From qualitative data analysis conducted, there were five themes earned related to the management of self hygiene during menstruation period of visually impaired children. From the study findings showed that visually impaired children do not properly understand yet the definition of menstruation, it's etiology and the origin of menstrual blood.

This showed that there is no difference of understanding amongst normal and visually impaired women on the definition of menstruation. The level of education still plays an important role on the level of knowledge. Knowledge and understanding also influenced by the source of information. This study showed that attitude and beliefs of visually impaired children significantly influence their self care management on menstruation period. Those beliefs impact on the way of cleaning their private parts and maintaining hair cleanliness which visually impaired children do not wash their hair during menstruation period. They believe that it would cause a bad impact such as the menstruation will stopped, the menstrual blood gets more, the menstrual blood would rush to the head.^{6,7}

This result is in line with the study conducted by UNICEF representatives that still vast number of teenager believe that washing their hair during menstruation would block the menstrual flow, causing headache and death. Menstruation can not be separated from myth or beliefs practiced on the society that develop into the understanding attributed to someone. On menstruation period, woman is suggested to maintain their personal hygiene including hair hygiene. Cleaning hair during menstruation is recommended.⁸

It takes the cooperation from various parties including parents, teachers and religious organization on teaching health education. The use of mass media is expected as the

effective way to improve the understanding on menstruation and its' practice. The visually impaired children acquired the valid information of health behavior on menstruation period. The information obtained in this research was that the visually impaired children experiencing the uncomfotability when they delay the menstrual pad change. Menstrual pad need the proper management to protect the female reproductive organ from health problems. Maintaining the menstrual pad cleanliness is a proper health behavior on menstruation period.^{9,10}

In this research, the visually impaired children stated that they use their feelings to ensure that their menstrual pad is clean enough. Visually impaired person rely on their touching sense ability to perceive what they experience. Touch and taste senses are the first two senses develop in an individual from baby to adult.¹¹

In this research, visually impaired children obtain their information on menstruation from teacher, boarding school supervisor and their siblings. The information of parent's involvement was not found in this study. Family especially parents take an important role on providing social support to the children mother is a main source of information right before the girls going through menarche, then the information related to menstruation usually obtained from siblings, teacher, friends, books/newspaper and other resources.¹²

The teenage girls bad perception impacting on their false health behavior regarding menstruation. Thus, it needed collaboration from several parties such as parents, teachers, religious organization on reproductive health education. The use of mass media is recommended as an effective way to improve the knowledge on menstruation and its' health practice. Parents, teacher and society support significantly influence the childrens' behavior.

Conclusion

Study findings explain that the visually impaired children still facing the problems related to psychosocial and physical disadvantageous. The findings in this study were expected to become the source of information in order to develop the psychosocial support to visually impaired children on maintain the health of their reproductive system.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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