

An Exploratory Study on Perception of Adolescent Girls Towards Early Menarche in Selected Schools & Colleges at Valsad District

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Abstract

Puberty is a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, during which sexual maturation occurs. Menarche is a key milestone in this process. Early menarche is often associated with psychosocial, physical, and reproductive health consequences. This study aimed to assess the perception of adolescent girls toward early menarche and to identify associations with selected demographic variables. A total of 150 adolescent girls from selected schools and colleges in Valsad district were included using purposive sampling. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that the majority of participants (63.6%) were aged 16–18 years, and most attained menarche between 13–15 years. Nearly half of the respondents reported inadequate preparedness for menarche, reflecting limited pre-menarcheal education. Statistical analysis demonstrated a significant association between age and perception levels ($p < 0.05$). The study concludes that adolescent girls require structured educational programs to enhance knowledge and coping mechanisms regarding menarche.

Keywords

Adolescent girls, Early menarche, Perception, Exploratory study, Reproductive health

I. Introduction

Menarche, the first occurrence of menstruation, signifies reproductive maturity in adolescent girls, typically occurring between the ages of 10–19 years. Early menarche may predispose girls to physical, emotional, and social challenges, including reproductive health complications and psychosocial stress. Lack of awareness and preparation before menarche often worsens these challenges. Hence, understanding adolescent perceptions is vital for designing educational interventions.

Objectives of the study include:

1. To assess the perception of adolescent girls toward early menarche.
2. To determine associations between perceptions and selected demographic variables.

II. Methodology

A quantitative exploratory research design was adopted. The study was conducted among 150 adolescent girls from selected schools and colleges in Valsad district using purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of demographic variables and items on perceptions of menarche. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage) and inferential statistics (chi-square test).

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency (n=150)	Percentage (%)
Age 16–18 years	95	63.6
Age 19 years	48	31.8
Education – Undergraduate	60	49.7
Menarche at 13–15 years	77	53
Nuclear Family	83	55
Religion – Hindu	145	96

Table II: Perceptions of Adolescent Girls Regarding Menarche

Perception Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Unaware about menarche before onset	27.2	68.6
Felt ready at first period	34.6	63.9
Knew what to do during first period	28.6	61.2
Felt menstruation was painful/dirty	25.9	63.2
Missed school during menstruation	27.9	62.6

Figures

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Participants

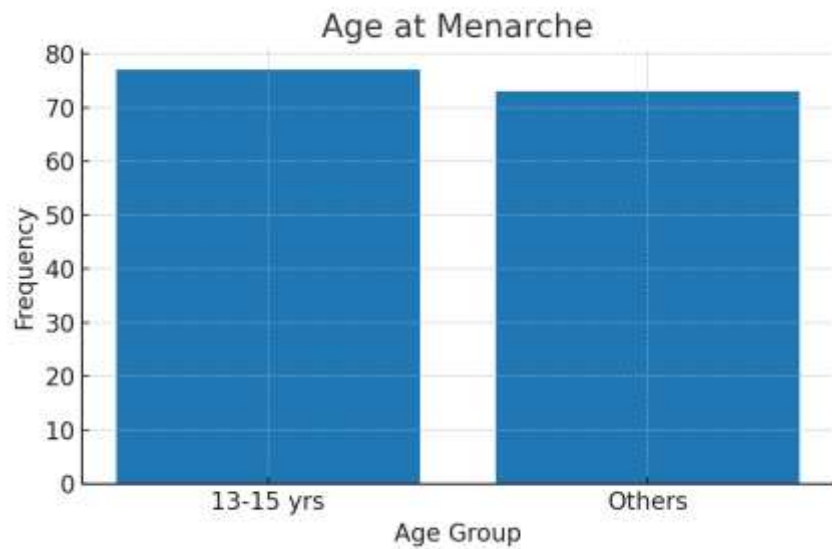
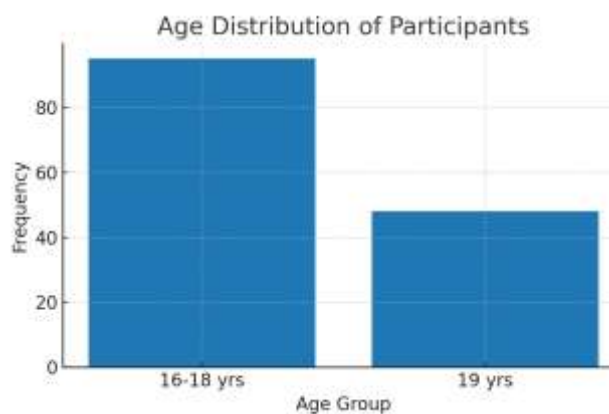


Figure 3: Age at Menarche

Figure 2: Educational Status of Participant

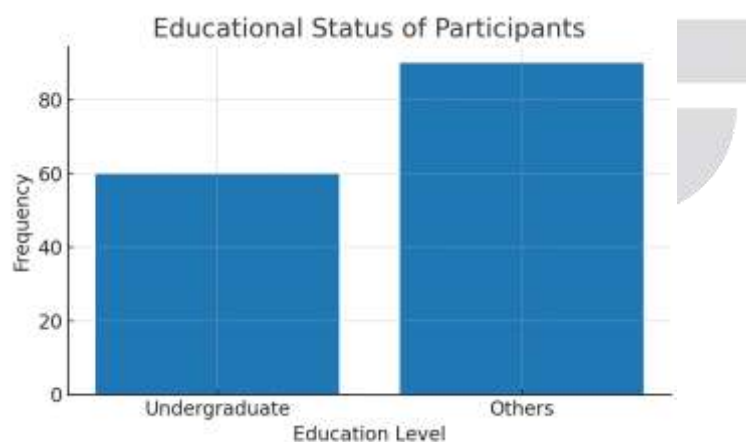
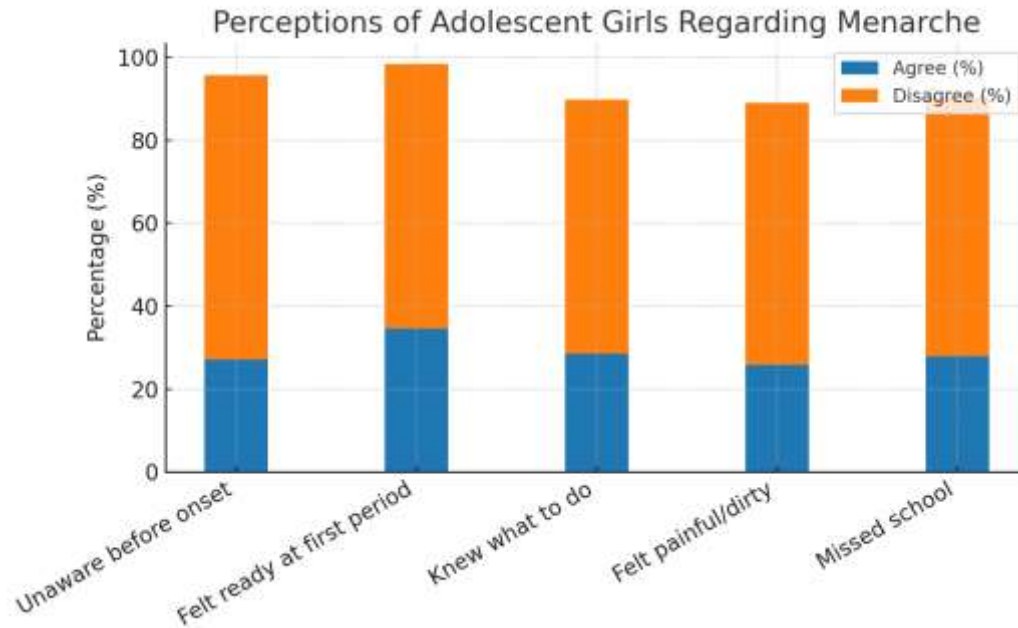


Figure 4: Perceptions of Adolescent Girls Regarding Menarche



III. Results

Among the 150 participants, 63.6% were aged 16–18 years, and 49.7% were pursuing undergraduate studies. The majority (53%) attained menarche between 13–15 years. Most participants belonged to nuclear families (55%) and practiced Hindu religion (96%). Regarding perceptions, over half of the respondents (51.3%) reported being unaware of menarche before its onset, while 33.3% strongly disagreed that they were ready for menarche. A significant association was found between age and perception levels ($p < 0.05$).

IV. Discussion

The findings highlight limited preparedness among adolescent girls for menarche, consistent with global studies reporting lack of awareness and inadequate pre-menarcheal education. Cultural taboos, lack of parental guidance, and limited school-based education contribute to misconceptions. Structured awareness programs targeting both girls and their families are necessary to promote healthy coping mechanisms and menstrual hygiene practices.

V. Conclusion

The study concludes that adolescent girls in Valsad district often lack adequate knowledge and preparation for early menarche. Educational interventions through schools, families, and healthcare providers are essential to promote reproductive health awareness and reduce psychosocial stress among adolescents.

Acknowledgment

The authors express their gratitude to Sandra Shroff College of Nursing, Vapi, for institutional support, and to all participants for their cooperation in the study.

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