

Awareness about Menstruation among Bathudi Tribal Adolescent Girls in Jashipur Block of Mayurbhanj District, Odisha

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Abstract

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage bridging childhood and adulthood. It is a transitional phase encompassing biological, psychological, social, and physical development. Indeed, it is one of the most vulnerable periods for female reproductive health. Proper diet and nutrition are essential for optimal growth and development during this stage. Alongside nutrition, the health of adolescent girls depends on menstrual hygiene. The present study was conducted to assess knowledge regarding menstruation among tribal adolescent girls. Objectives are to study Bathudi adolescent girls' reaction to menarche, to know the awareness of menarche among Bathudi adolescent girls, to understand awareness about various components of menstruation among Bathudi adolescent girls. Using a purposive sampling technique, a total of 110 adolescent girls aged 10 to 18 years were selected from various school hostels and households. The study primarily focused on adolescent girls belonging to the Bathudi tribe residing in the Similipal hills of Jashipur block in Mayurbhanj district, Odisha, India, examining aspects such as age at menarche, duration of menstruation, reactions, taboos, hygiene, and sanitary practices. The data has been collected using a semi-structured interview schedule comprising both qualitative and quantitative elements.

KEYWORD: Awareness, Menstruation, Adolescent Girls, Knowledge, Bathudi Tribe

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a phase of life that distinguishes children from adults. This stage is marked by physical, mental, and social development, as well as the transition from the onset of puberty towards adulthood. Adolescents are the young individuals (generally aged between 10 and 18 years) who are in this stage of life. Adolescents constitute approximately 22% of India's total population (243 million). This is a highly critical period regarding the reproductive health and nutrition of adolescent girls' aspects that require priority and protection. As adolescent girls are the mothers of the future, their health is of utmost importance. Negligence in this regard will directly impact the health and nutritional status of the next generation (Panda & Badanayak et al., 2025). Odisha holds a unique position in the field of tribal anthropological studies; it is home to 64 Scheduled Tribes, the majority of whom are identified as 'Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups' (PVTGs) and are dispersed across various regions. According to the 2011 Census data, Scheduled Tribes constitute 22.21% of the state's total population. While people belonging to these tribal communities reside in almost all districts of Odisha, their population is

particularly high in the Mayurbhanj district. Mayurbhanj district, located in northwestern Odisha, is home to 55 major tribal communities, including the Bathudi. The Bathudi is a prominent tribal community with a rich cultural heritage, whose total population approximately 125,000 of Bathudi tribe live in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. (Panda and Badanayak et al., 2010).

Adolescence is a separate phase of life that bridges childhood and adulthood. This represents a transitional period with biophysical, psychosocial, and physiological development from puberty to adulthood. Adolescents, often called as teens, are young boys and girls between the age of 10 and 18 years. Around 22% of the population in India are adolescents (243 million). This is one of the most vulnerable time periods for girls' reproductive health and nutrition, which require prime attention and protection. Adolescent girls are future mothers; therefore, their health is of critical importance, as neglecting it adversely affects the health and nutritional status of future generations (Panda & Badanayak et al. 2025). Odisha, a state of India, occupies a unique position in tribal ethnography comprising 64 Scheduled Tribes, including 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs). As per the 2011 census, the Scheduled Tribe population accounts for 22.21% of the state population. Tribal communities are found in almost all districts of Odisha with significant numbers in Mayurbhanj. Mayurbhanj district, located at the north western Odisha, is a home to 55 major tribal communities, and the Bathudi is one of them. Bathudis a prominent and colourful tribe with total population of 107,129, having a major concentration in the Kaptipada, Baripada, Bamanghaty and Panchpir subdivision of the Mayurbhanj district (Panda & Badanayak et al. 2025).

BATHUDI TRIBE

The Bathudi tribe is indigenous to India, with significant populations found in the states of Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal. In Odisha, they primarily inhabit the Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, and Balasore districts. They are most heavily concentrated in the Mayurbhanj district, with the largest numbers found in the Panchpir subdivision; their presence is also significant in the Baripada, Kaptipada, and Bamanghaty subdivisions. The name 'Bathudi' is derived from the word 'Barthali' where 'Bar' signifies 'Bar' and 'thali' refers to land or a place. They are also known by the names Bahutali, Bathuhuli, Bathdi, and Bathuri. There is a tradition among the Bathudis that they originally hailed from the 'Batuligarh' region of Ayodhya and migrated to the South Indian (Deccan) region by traveling along the banks of the Godavari River. However, according to another perspective, the Bathudis initially inhabited the Similipal hill region and subsequently migrated to the Mayurbhanj district (Nayak, 2019).

Upon learning of the availability of land there, they migrated to the Jamuna-Badadanda region of the Similipal hills. There were twenty-two "Zamindars" (landlords) under the Bhanja dynasty; four of them belonged to the Bathudi community and held estates in Similipal, Adipur, Daspur, and Karanjia. They were conferred the title of 'Mahapatra' along with a flag, a silver umbrella, and a "chamar" (ceremonial whisk), which they used during various festivals. However, during the reign of Maharaja Jadunath Bhanja, the Bathudi chieftain of Bamanghaty became tyrannical and rebelled against the Maharaja. The King defeated the Bathudi chieftain in the Battle of Tentaposhi and expelled him from Bamanghaty. At present, the Bathudis primarily reside in the plains of Mayurbhanj district, living alongside people of other tribes and castes. They are one of the major Scheduled Tribes of the district. Historically, they were warriors during the ancient Kalinga era or the Gajapati Empire; as descendants of the Paika lineage, titles such as Senapati, Dandasena, Biswal, Khandei, Naik, Giri, Patra and Bebartta are often associated with their names. During various festivals and celebrations, Brahmins and Vaishnavas partake in meals at the homes

of Bathudis. While they revere their presiding deity, Badam Badamani, they also visit Hindu temples and even serve as priests. Nevertheless, the Bathudis revere Similipal as their ancestral homeland. It is a sacred place for them, from where their ancestors migrated to other regions of the state (Nayak, 2019).

OBJECTIVES

1. To study Bathudi adolescent girls' reaction to menarche.
2. To know the awareness of menarche among Bathudi adolescent girls.
3. To understand awareness about various components of menstruation among Bathudi adolescent girls.

METHODS

Bathudi adolescent girls aged 13 to 18 years were selected from four schools in Jashipur block of Mayurbhanj district. A total of 110 tribal girl students were chosen using the 'purposive sampling' method. Awareness regarding menstruation was assessed through a self-designed questionnaire. This questionnaire included demographic data as well as specific information required to meet the objectives of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Reaction to menarche

Options	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Reaction to menarche	Happy	15	13.64%
	Fear	30	27.27%
	Discomfort	57	51.81%
	Emotional	8	7.28%
	Total	110	100%

Table 1 presents the reactions of the residents regarding menarche (the onset of menstruation). Among the respondents, the majority (51.81%) reported feeling uncomfortable when this stage began, while 27.27% experienced fear. Only 13.64% expressed happiness, and merely 7.28% experienced mixed feelings. Thus, these findings indicate that menarche is an uncomfortable experience for adolescent girls of the Bathudi community.

Table- 2: Awareness about menstruation before attaining menarche and age of attaining menarche.

Awareness	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness about menstruation before attaining menarche	Yes	75	68.19%
	No	35	31.81%
Awareness of the average age of attaining menarche	Below 10 years	2	1.82%
	10 to 12 years	38	34.55%
	13 to 15 years	67	60.90%
	15 years above	3	2.73%
	Total	110	100%

Table 2 presents the respondents' knowledge regarding the onset of menarche and the age at which it begins. Among them, 31.81% had no prior awareness of menarche, whereas 68.19% were aware of it before its onset. A significant proportion (60.90%) of the respondents believed that menarche occurs between the ages of 13 and 15, while 34.55% opined that it occurs at an earlier age, specifically between 10 and 12 years. Very few respondents were aware that girls experience their first menstruation after the age of 15 (2.73%) or before the age of 10 (1.82%).

Table -3: Source about menstrual health information

Sources of learning	Frequency	Percentage
Moter	24	21.82%
Father	7	6.37%
Sister	11	10.00%
Teachers	3	2.73%
Friends	22	20.00%
Cousins	9	8.18%
Books	8	7.28%
School Programs	12	10.90%
Media	14	12.72%
Total	110	100%

Table-3: Sources of information regarding menstruation among participants according to the data in table-3, the sources of information included mothers (21.82%), friends (20.00%), and sisters (10.00%). Approximately 2.73% of the girls received this information from teachers, 8.18% from siblings/relatives, 7.28% from media or books, and 10.90% through school programs. Thus, the results indicate that almost all adolescent girls learned about the process of menstruation from their mothers and friends.

CONCLUSION

Menstruation is a biological process that occurs every month for girls and women across the world. Most adolescent girls from the Bathudi tribal community experienced discomfort when they menstruated for the first time; this suggests that they had limited knowledge about the subject prior to the onset of menstruation. Most Bathudi adolescent girls were aware that menstruation typically begins between the ages of 13 and 15, and many knew that it is caused by hormones. However, a significant proportion of tribal adolescent girls were unaware of the actual cause of menstruation and perceived it as a curse from God. Although a large number of them were aware of the typical duration of menstruation, approximately one in four (25.37%) lacked this knowledge. They were aware that the menstrual cycle is regulated by the hormone oestrogen and that the process lasts for three to five days. Nevertheless, a large number of tribal adolescent girls were unaware that hormones drive the process of menstruation. Mothers and peers were the primary sources of information regarding menstruation for Bathudi tribal adolescent girls, while only a few learned about it from their teachers. These tribal adolescent girls possess a moderate level of knowledge concerning menstruation. Therefore, the study suggests that health education should be provided at both school and community levels to improve access to information on menstrual health issues and ensure the well-being of adolescent girls in this regard.

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