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Original Research Article

A mixed method study to assess the prevalence, practice and the effectiveness of technology assisted intervention on knowledge and attitude of menstrual cup usage among working women at a selected institution, Salem

M. Kanagadurga^{1,2*}, K. Tamizharasi², K. Nandhini²

¹The Tamil Nadu Dr. M. G. R Medical University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

²Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology Nursing, Sri Gokulam College of Nursing, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India

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*Correspondence:

Dr. M. Kanagadurga,

E-mail: durgaraj86@yahoo.co.in

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ABSTRACT

Background: Proper menstrual hygiene practices are needed for optimum health and dignity of women. One such practice is use of menstrual cup which has not gained widespread acceptance due to lack of awareness and inadequate promotion. A mixed method study conducted to assess the prevalence, practice and effectiveness of technology assisted intervention on knowledge and attitude of menstrual cup usage among working women at selected institution, Salem.

Methods: With formal consent, the prevalence and practice of menstrual cup usage was assessed from working women along with the pre and post-test level of knowledge and attitude.

Results: Strong positive approach was found among the samples who felt comfortable and happy, and even recommended to others. Among 120 working women, only 4 (3.3%) of them were using menstrual cup. Highest percentage of them had moderately adequate knowledge (60.50%) and neutral attitude (15.7%) in pretest with the mean score of 9.13 ± 2.93 and 60.4 ± 9.6 respectively. Whereas, highest percentage of them had adequate knowledge (81.56%) and positive attitude (52.6%) in post-test with the mean score of 14.13 ± 3.22 and 70.47 ± 10.7 respectively which is highly significant at $p \leq 0.001$ level. Also, high positive correlation ($r=0.89$) was found between knowledge and attitude. Significant association was found between selected variables.

Conclusions: The study concluded that though many of the women have heard of menstrual cup, the usage is lesser due to lack of awareness about the usage, its benefits and fear of using. Hence measures need to be taken to promote awareness.

Keywords: Knowledge, Attitude, Menstrual cup usage, Working women

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a crucial one that a woman practices proper menstrual management with good hygiene for optimum health and dignity. Menstrual hygiene and management implies access to menstrual hygiene products to absorb or collect menstrual blood, privacy to change the materials and access to facilities to dispose used menstrual management materials.¹

There are over 355 million menstruating girls and women in India; millions of them still facing significant barriers to a comfortable and dignified experience with menstrual hygiene management. One of the effective menstrual hygiene products which is gaining popularity in the last 3-4 years is a device called menstrual cup. Though tampons and menstrual cups have become the method of choice in western societies decades ago, they are yet to find a foothold in Indian communities. Tampons and menstrual

cups [(so called modern menstrual methods (MMM)) are not the preferred choices, given the apprehension among women with products involving vaginal insertion, and potential loss of virginity. In most Indian states, the use of sanitary napkins is considered “conventional” and is still the most widely used method.²

Need for the study

India has around 121 million women using sanitary napkins and thus 12.3 billion disposable sanitary napkins need to be taken care of every year, majority of which are not biodegradable. Consistent with a joint report by Water Aid India and the Menstrual Hygiene Alliance of India, counting on the materials utilized in the manufacture of the sanitary pads, it could take up to 800 years to decompose one pad.³ Sanitary pads/tampons are made using 90% of plastic and chemical waste products which can cause various health issues. The result of a research article published in the Indian state Mangalore, showed that among 150 samples 82% of females were aware of menstrual cup, but only 2.6% have used them. Menstrual cups are ecofriendly and create zero waste. Menstrual cups are made of silicon and hence are safe for disposal.¹

As the adoption of menstrual hygiene methods is based on cultural acceptability and other factors, menstrual cup is considered a better alternative to other methods. Though menstrual cups are more affordable and offer numerous benefits, they have not gained widespread acceptance due to lack of awareness and inadequate promotion. Hence this study intends to assess the prevalence and create awareness among working women.

Objectives

Objectives were to assess the prevalence and practice of menstrual cup usage among working women, to evaluate the effectiveness of technology assisted intervention on knowledge and attitude regarding menstrual cup usage among working women, to correlate the level of post-test knowledge and attitude scores regarding menstrual cup usage among working women and to determine the association between the level of knowledge and the level of attitude in pretest with their selected demographic variables and obstetrical variables among working women.

Hypotheses

H₁

There is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test score of knowledge and attitude regarding menstrual cup usage among working women at $p \leq 0.05$ level.

H₂

There is a significant correlation between post-test score of knowledge and attitude regarding menstrual cup usage among working women.

H₃

There is a significant association between the pretest level of knowledge and the level of attitude regarding menstrual cup usage with their selected demographic variables at $p \leq 0.05$ level.

H₄

There is a significant association between the pretest level of knowledge and the level of attitude regarding menstrual cup usage with their selected obstetrical variables at $p \leq 0.05$ level.

Operational definition

Prevalence

In this study prevalence refers to a total number of working women who were using menstrual cup in a particular institution which is measured by a structured questionnaire.

Practice

It refers to the experience related to the usage of menstrual cup among working women who were using menstrual cup which is measured by the researcher using personal interview schedule.

Effectiveness

It refers to the outcome of the technology assisted intervention assessed in terms of change in the level of knowledge and attitude which is measured by the researcher using structured knowledge questionnaire and rating scale.

Technology assisted intervention

In this study, it refers to a teaching method using multimedia which is systematically organized by using power point presentation, live techniques of usage and distribution of pamphlet.

Knowledge

It is the response given by the working women to the items in the structured questionnaire regarding menstrual cup usage which is assessed by the researcher.

Attitude

It refers to their values, beliefs and emotion of working women towards menstrual cups, willingness to use them and acceptance of it as a better choice for menstrual management as assessed by the researcher using five-point Likert scale.

Menstrual cup

Menstrual cup is a device for menstrual flow management and is claimed to be a health and environment friendly alternative to the conventional menstrual sanitary products made of flexible medical grade silicone and shaped like a bell with a stem.

Working women

In this study it refers to the working women between the age group of 18-45 who are experiencing the menstrual cycle.

METHODS

Study type

A mixed method approach with exploratory research design was adopted in the study.

Study place

Study conducted at Sona College of Technology, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India

Period of study

Study carried out from April 2024 to May 2024.

Inclusion criteria

The working women who are already using menstrual cups for qualitative study and who don't use for quantitative study both married and unmarried and who are willing to participate were included in the study.

Exclusion criteria

Those who have a history of psychiatric illness were excluded from the study.

Ethical consideration

Written permission was obtained from Sona College of Technology, Salem and written consent was obtained from working women those who fulfilled the inclusion criteria.

Data collection procedure

The prevalence of menstrual cup usage was collected from the total working women of the selected institution. From the women who use menstrual cup interview about the practice of menstrual cup usage was done qualitatively. From the other working women who do not use menstrual cup, samples were chosen using simple random technique to assess the knowledge and attitude of menstrual cup usage. Pretest was conducted using the structured knowledge questionnaire and attitude rating scale for the

chosen samples followed by technology assisted intervention in which the various information about the menstrual cup and its usage were taught using the PowerPoint presentation, showing them the live folding techniques of usage and distribution of pamphlet. After one week, post-test was conducted for the same samples using the same tools. Both descriptive and inferential statistics was done using statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS).

RESULTS

The distribution of working women according to their prevalence of menstrual cup usage depicted that 4 (3.3%) of them were using menstrual cup and 116 (96.7%) of them were not using menstrual cup (Table 1).

The findings of frequency and percentage distribution according to demographic variables showed that most of the working women were in the age group of 31-40 years (44.8%) and all of the working women (100%) were post graduate and above. Majority of the working women were teaching staff (94.7%), were Hindus (97.3%) and belonged to joint family (55.2%) having income $\geq 20,482$ (97.3%). The highest percentage of working women were married (78.9%) and were from urban area (81.5%) (Table 2).

Similarly, the frequency and percentage distribution of the working women according to the obstetric variables showed that the highest percentage of working women (92.1%) had regular menstrual cycle and only few had (7.89%) irregular menstrual cycle. Majority of the working women were (44.7%) multipara with most of them having 3-5 days of menstrual cycle (78.6%). The highest percentage of the working women (65.7%) previously know what is menstrual cup and the source of information for them were by internet/social media (72%) (Table 3).

Regarding the problems faced with current sanitary product during menstrual period showed that majority (52.6%) of them do not face any problem and 47.3% of them were facing problems like irritation (15.7%), rashes and itching (26.3%), problem of leakage (2.63%), discomfort (15.7%), disposal problem (15.7%) and expensive (2.63%).

Comparison between the level of knowledge regarding menstrual cup usage among working women in pre-test and post-test, n=38

Figure 1 shows that in pretest 3 (7.89%) of them had adequate knowledge, 23 (60.50%) of them had moderately adequate knowledge, 12 (31.50%) of them had inadequate knowledge. Whereas in posttest 31 (81.56%) of them had adequate knowledge, 7 (18.40%) of them had moderately adequate knowledge and none of them of them had inadequate knowledge. This reveals that after the technology assisted intervention the knowledge score of menstrual cup usage has increased.

Comparison on level of attitude in pretest and post-test

Figure 2 shows that in pre-test 6 (15.7%) of them had positive attitude, 32 (84.20%) of them had neutral attitude and none of them had negative attitude. Whereas in posttest 20 (52.6%) of them had positive attitude, 18 (47.30%) of them had neutral attitude and none of them had negative attitude. This reveals that after the technology assisted intervention the attitude of the working women regarding menstrual cup usage was improved.

The following themes were arrived from the data (Table 3)-Theme I: Duration and sources of information about menstrual cup usage, theme II: Type of menstrual cup usage, theme III: Size of menstrual cup, theme IV: Insertion technique, removal and emptying of menstrual cup, theme V: Sterilization and storage of menstrual cup, theme VI: Difficulty in usage of menstrual cup, theme VII: Difficulty in purchase of menstrual cup and theme VIII: Opinion about usage of menstrual cup by all.

Table 4 interprets that mean pre-test score on level of knowledge was 9.13±2.93 and in post-test was 14.13±3.22 with the calculated t=9.6 which is highly significant at ≤0.001. Similarly, mean pre-test score on level of attitude was 60.4±9.6 and in post-test 70.47±10.7 with calculated t=7.9 which is highly significant at p≤0.001. Hence it reveals that technology assisted intervention on menstrual cup usage among working women was effective.

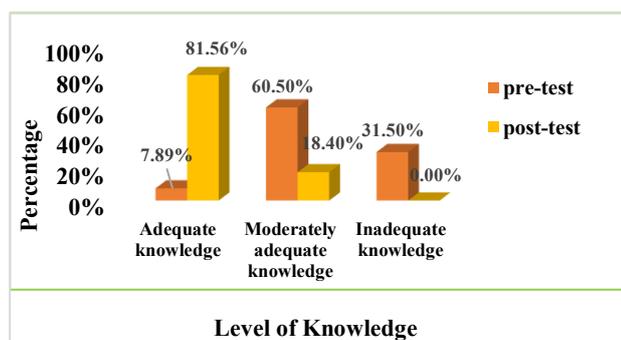


Figure 1: Comparison between the level of knowledge regarding menstrual cup usage among working women in pre-test and post-test.

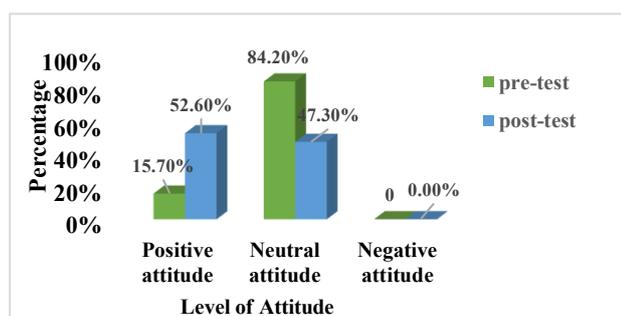


Figure 2: Comparison on the level of attitude regarding menstrual cup usage among working women in pre-test and post-test.

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of working women according to the prevalence of menstrual cup usage (n=120).

Prevalence of menstrual cup usage	N	Percentage
Yes	4	3.3%
No	116	96.7%

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution of working women according to their demographic variables (n=38).

Demographic variables	N	Percentage
Age (in years)		
<20	-	-
21-30	06	15.8%
31-40	17	44.8%
>40	15	39.4%
Education status		
Post graduate and above	38	100%
Graduate	-	-
Higher secondary education	-	-
Secondary education	-	-
Primary education	-	-
No formal education	-	-
Occupation		
Teaching staff	36	94.7%
Non-teaching staff	-	-
Others	2	5.3%
Marital status		
Unmarried	8	21.1%
Married	30	78.9%
Separated or divorced	-	-
Type of family		
Joint family	21	55.2%
Nuclear family	17	44.8%
Extended family	-	-
Place of residence		
Urban	31	81.6%
Rural	4	10.6%
Semi urban	3	7.8%
Religion		
Hindu	37	97.4%
Christian	-	-
Muslim	1	2.6%
Others	-	-
Monthly family income (in INR)		
≥20,482	37	97.4%
Rs. 10,241-20,481	1	2.6%
Rs. 7681-10,240	-	-
Rs. 5120-7680	-	-
Rs. 3072-5119	-	-
Rs. 1034-3071	-	-
≤1033	-	-

Table 3: Frequency distribution and practices of working women regarding menstrual cup usage (n=4).

Qualitative theme	N	Practices
How long you have been using menstrual cup and what influenced its choice?	1	“I am using it for 2 years and got influenced by my sister”
	1	“I am using it since one and half to two years and got influenced by my colleagues”
	1	“I am using it for 8 months and got influenced by my sister”
	1	“I am using it for 6 months and got influenced by my sisters. They suggested me for using the menstrual cup”
What type of menstrual cup you use and how convenient it is?	1	“I am using reusable type and its rashes free”
	2	Both reported that “I am using reusable type and more convenient”
	1	“I am using reusable type and it is more and more convenient. Apart from the body pain I have forgotten my periods and I enjoy using this product”
What is the size of menstrual cup that fits you and how did you choose the appropriate one?	2	Both reported that “I am using medium size and I learnt from my sister”
	1	“I am using medium size and I learnt from colleague”
	1	“I am using medium size and learnt from my sister but it was wrong one. After use I found my correct size of menstrual cup”
How do you insert menstrual cups and from where you learnt?	1	“I’m following c-folding and learnt from YouTube videos and my sisters”
	1	“I’m following punch down folding and learnt from YouTube videos”
	1	“I’m following c-folding and learnt from YouTube videos, doctor’s videos and my sisters”
	1	“I’m following c-folding and learnt from my sisters”
How do you remove the menstrual cup and how often you empty it?	1	“I remove by pulling the stem of the menstrual cup and empty between 8 hours once”
	1	“I remove by pulling the stem of the menstrual cup and empty between 4-5 hours once during 1 st 3 days”
	1	“I pinch the stem and pull out the menstrual cup and empty it 2 times per day such as before bath and before bed”
	1	“I slightly pull the stem then pinch it and pull out for removal and empty between 2-3 hours.
How do you sterilize menstrual cup before and after usage and how you store your menstrual cup after sterilization?	2	Both reported that “I sterilize it by soaking it in the boiled hot water with Dettol solution before and after use and store it in a container”
	1	“I sterilize it before use with soap and Dettol solution and after use I sterilize it with boiling water up to 10 mins and wipe it with cotton and store in a pouch given by the manufacturer”
	1	“I sterilize by boiling in a stainless-steel vessel for 10 mins, dry it and store by wrapping in the tissue paper”
Do you experience any problem or difficulty in using menstrual cup?	1	“I only faced difficulty in my 1 st cycle of use”
	2	Both reported that “no difficulties or problem”
	1	“I am facing difficulty during working hours as I wear kurtas which makes difficulty in emptying”.
Do you face any problem or difficulty while purchasing the menstrual cup?	3	3 of them reported that “no difficulty while purchasing through online”
	1	“I had some doubts while purchasing regarding correct size of the menstrual cup”
What is your opinion about the usage of menstrual cup by all age group of women?	2	“I Suggest it to all of them except unmarried. I think it’s not suitable for them”
	1	“I enjoy my periods and would definitely suggest to all but I don’t know about unmarried whether it suits for them or not”
	1	“I suggest it to all of them. And I have suggested to my friends also. But they are unmarried so they are thinking over it”

Table 4: Effectiveness of technology assisted intervention on knowledge and attitude regarding menstrual cup usage among working women (n=38).

Components	Max. score	Pre-test			Post test			Difference in mean %	T value	Table value
		Mean	SD	Mean %	Mean	SD	Mean %			
Level of knowledge	20	9.13	2.93	45.65	14.13	3.22	70.65	25%	9.6* df-37	3.55
Level of attitude	100	60.4	9.6	60.4	70.47	10.7	70.47	10.07%	7.9* df-37	

*Significant at p≤0.001 level.

Correlation of post-test scores on knowledge and attitude regarding menstrual cup usage among working women

The correlation between knowledge and attitude regarding menstrual cup among working women showed that the calculated ‘r’ value was 0.89 which is a highly positive correlation. This shows that the attitude improves when the knowledge is improved and vice versa.

Association between the level of knowledge and the level of attitude in pretest with their selected demographic variables and obstetric variables among working women

There was no significant association found in pre-test scores on level of knowledge and level of attitude with demographic variables such as age, educational status, occupation, type of family, place of residence, religion, monthly family income except marital status which was significant with level of attitude at p≤0.05 level.

Similarly, there was no significant association found in pretest scores on level of knowledge and level of attitude with obstetric variables such as regularity of menstrual cycle, parity, average menstrual days, knowing about menstrual cup, type of sanitary hygiene product currently used, any problem with current sanitary product, and ever used menstrual cup previously and stopped except source of information about menstrual cup and problem faced with current sanitary product which was significant at p≤0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

Only 4 (3.3%) of working women were found to use menstrual cup whereas majority of them 116 (96.7%) were not using menstrual cup. The findings align with the study conducted to assess awareness, acceptability, and feasibility of the menstrual cup among working women which showed that while awareness was moderate (45%), actual usage remained low (20%), with several barriers preventing adoption.⁴

Most of the working women were in the age group of 31-40 years (44.8%) and all of the working women (100%) were post graduate and above. Majority of the working women were teaching staff (94.7%), were Hindus (97.3%) and belonged to joint family (55.2%) having the income

≥20,482 (97.3%). The highest percentage of working women were married (78.9%) and were from urban area (81.5%). The finding is comparable with partial support and partial contradictory to the study conducted to assess the knowledge regarding menstrual cups and its usage among adolescent girls which found that 76.6% followed the Hindu religion, 69% were from nuclear families, 66% were in rural areas, 33.33% of adolescent females came from families with a monthly income of 20001-40000, 69.16% of adolescent girls use sanitary pads as their primary method of menstruation management and 79% of adolescent girls reported no problems with their present approach of menstruation management.⁵

Highest percentage of working women (92.1%) had regular menstrual cycle and only few had (7.89%) irregular menstrual cycle. Majority of the working women were (44.7%) multipara with most of them having 3-5 days of menstrual cycle (78.6%). More than half of the working women (65.7%) previously know what is menstrual cup and the source of information for them were by internet/social media (72%). It is comparable with the study conducted to assess knowledge, attitude and practices regarding menstrual cup among females in an urban setting of south Kerala which showed that 80% of them were aware of menstrual cup. Among them 36.7% of the participants got information from media, 26.7% from family, 20.8% from friends, and 14.2% from medical personnel.⁶ In the present study, nearly half of the samples (47.3%) were facing problems like irritation (15.7%), rashes and itching (26.3%), problem of leakage (2.63%), discomfort (15.7%), disposal problem (15.7%) and expensive (2.63%) with the current menstrual hygiene product used.

All the working women 4 (100%) who used menstrual cup felt it to be comfortable and advises others to use it. Fifty percentage of them had difficulty in choosing the size initially but once identified, they felt it could be convenient. A Study conducted to assess the adaptability and efficacy of menstrual cup in managing menstrual health and hygiene supports the findings which showed that the menstrual cup was acceptable to most users in relation to comfort, ease of use, and effectiveness in menstrual collection with the added advantages of overall convenience, portability and easy storage, extended wear time, and greater freedom of movement. And on overall,

women preferred the cup to their current method of menstrual management.⁷

The level of knowledge and attitude were improved after administration of the technology assisted intervention with the significant difference at $p \leq 0.001$. Our finding is comparable with the study conducted on comprehensive assessment of menstrual cup awareness and utilization among college students where the demonstration of knowledge and practice regarding menstrual cups were effective at $p \leq 0.05$ level of confidence.⁸ The study conducted to assess awareness, acceptability, and feasibility of the menstrual cup among working women showed that the willingness to try menstrual cups increased from 20% to 60% after an educational session, indicating that awareness can directly impact the adoption.⁴

The correlation between knowledge and attitude regarding menstrual cup among working women showed that the calculated 'r' value was 0.89 which is a highly positive correlation. Similar findings were found in other study which was conducted among college students in which there was a positive correlation ($r=0.340$) between the knowledge and practice scores of college students regarding menstrual cups.⁸

There was no significant association found in pre-test scores on level of knowledge and level of attitude with demographic variables such as age, educational status, occupation, type of family, place of residence, religion, monthly family income except marital status which was significant with level of attitude at $p \leq 0.05$ level. Similarly, there was no significant association found in pretest scores on level of knowledge and level of attitude with obstetric variables such as regularity of menstrual cycle, parity, average menstrual days, knowing about menstrual cup, type of sanitary hygiene product currently used, any problem with current sanitary product, and ever used menstrual cup previously and stopped except source of information about menstrual cup and problem faced with current sanitary product which was significant at $p \leq 0.05$ level. The present study was contradictory to the findings of the study which was conducted to assess and analyse the awareness regarding menstrual cup among the women of reproductive age group in A. J. Institute Mangalore, Karnataka, India, which revealed that there was no significant association between level of knowledge with selected demographic variables in areas like age in years, education, occupation, marital status, monthly income at $p \leq 0.05$ level.⁹

Implications

The findings of the study have implications in different branches of nursing. i.e., nursing practice, nursing education, nursing administration, and nursing research. The investigator received a clear picture regarding the different steps to be taken in different fields to improve the same.

Nursing practice

The nursing personnel can advise patients in the reproductive age regarding menstrual cup usage. Staff development programme can be arranged for staffs working in the hospitals and maternity centre.

Nursing education

Nursing curriculum can offer short term CNE to nursing students and nurses regarding menstrual cup usage. Nurse educators can use innovative ideas to prepare posters, pamphlets, videos to create awareness among women including adolescents. The nurse educators can teach nursing students to educate the women about menstrual cup usage.

Nursing administration

The nurse administrator can organize in service education programme regarding menstrual cup usage for health care professionals. The nurse administrator should initiate in creating policies and plans in providing education regarding menstrual cup usage to the women in the reproductive age group.

Nursing research

Nursing research can be conducted to find out knowledge among midwives and student nurses regarding menstrual cup usage. The findings of the study can be disseminated through publications and presentations in conference and seminars.

Limitations

The study is limited to selected setting and limited samples.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the working women who were using the menstrual cup feels it to be convenient and recommends it to others. Majority of the working women though they have heard about the menstrual cup are hesitant to use it due to fear and lack of awareness about the benefits of it. Creating awareness can promote healthy menstrual hygiene practice among women of reproductive age group. Additionally, the findings of the present study help in understanding that the teaching methods helps in promoting awareness and can be a base for future studies. Hence the researcher feels that measures to be taken in promoting awareness regarding the menstrual cup.

Recommendations

Similar study can be done in a large sample to generalize the findings, Similar study can be carried out by using various teaching methods, a comparison can be made between urban and rural areas, the same study can be

conducted with experimental and control group and similar study can be conducted among women of various professions.

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Ethical approval: The study was approved by the Institutional Ethics Committee

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