

Araştırma Makalesi/Research Article

Cultural Beliefs and Practices of Reproductive Women about Menstruation

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Üreme Çağındaki Kadınların Menstruasyon Dönemi İle İlgili Kültürel İnanç ve Uygulamaları

ÖZ

Amaç: Bu çalışmanın amacı, üreme çağındaki kadınların menstruasyon dönemi ile ilgili kültürel inanç ve uygulamalarını belirlemektir.

Yöntem: Analitik-kesitsel tipteki araştırmanın örneklemini, Instagram'da yer alan bir sayfayı takip eden kadınlar ve yakınları oluşturdu. Veriler, soru formu aracılığı ile on-line anket yöntemi kullanılarak toplandı. Elde edilen bulgular tanımlayıcı istatistikler ve ki-kare ile analiz edildi.

Bulgular: Araştırmaya katılan kadınların, ortalama 27.48±7.81 yaşında, %72,7'si Y kuşağında, %65,2'sinin üniversite ve üzeri eğitim seviyesine sahip olduğu saptandı. Adet dönemi/perine hijeni ile ilgili %88,8'inin bilgi aldığı ve %62,2'sinin bu bilgiyi annesinden elde ettikleri görüldü. Araştırmaya katılan kadınların, %26,5'inin adetli olduğunu erkeklerle paylaşmadığı, %13,5'inin adetken bebek görmeye gitmediği, %79,3'ünün adetken Kur'an okumadığı, %23,7'sinin bu dönemde turşu yapmadığı/el sürmediği belirlendi. Menstrual döneme ait en sık uygulanan davranışların en az Z kuşağı tarafından uygulandığı saptandı (p<0,05).

Sonuç: Araştırmanın bulguları, kadınların menstruasyon döneminde uyduğu bir takım sınırlamalar olduğunu ve bu sınırlamaların en az Z kuşağı tarafından uygulandığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: menstruasyon; sosyal ve kültürel uygulamalar; tabu

ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of this analytical cross-sectional study was to determine cultural beliefs and practices of reproductive women about menstruation.

Method: The study sample comprised women following an Instagram account and their relatives. Data were collected with an online questionnaire. Obtained data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and Chi-square test.

Results: The mean age of the women was 27.48±7.81 years (min: 16 years; max: 48 years), 72,7% was from Generation Y, 65,2% had university education or a higher level of education. Eight-eight-point-eight percent of the women received information about menstruation/perineal hygiene and they most frequently obtained this information from their mothers (62,2%). Twenty-six-point-five percent of the women did not talk to males about menstruation and 13,5% did not visit newborns, 79,3% did not read the Koran and 23,7% did not pickle/touch pickles during menstruation. The most frequent menstruation-related practices were least frequently preserved by Generation Z (p<0,05).

Conclusion: The findings of the study show that women have some menstrual taboos and that the taboos are least maintained by Generation Z.

Key words: menstruation; social and cultural practices, taboos

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş: Menstrual siklus, bir kadının hayatının uzun yılları boyunca her ay yaşadığı doğal bir döngüdür. Bu döngüdeki kanamalı günlere ait, farklı kültürlerde çeşitli sınırlamalar ve ritüeller bulunmaktadır. Menstrual sınırlama ve kurallar, kültürler arasında farklılık göstererek o kültürün inançlarını, norm ve değerlerini barındırır. Bazı kültürlerde kadınlar, menstruasyon dönemlerinde “kirlenmiş” olarak görülüp, hayvanlara dokunmama, yalnız yemek yeme, bazı gıdaları tüketmeme, adet dönemi konusunda erkeklerle konuşmama, dini ritüellerden uzak durma, tırnak ya da saç kesmeme ve okula gitmeme gibi kısıtlamalara maruz kalır. Menstruasyon süresince kızların okula gitmesinin engellenmesi hem sosyal hem de eğitim anlamında eşitsizliklere neden olurken, balık ve et gibi bazı gıdaları tüketmelerinin yasaklanması beslenme yetersizliklerine, yorgunluk ve uyuşukluk gibi semptomları yaşamalarına zemin hazırlayabilir. Menstrual inanç ve uygulamalar, kontrol altına alınmadığı takdirde, insan hakları, cinsiyet eşitsizliği, sosyal damgalanma ve ayrımcılık gibi konularda da olumsuz etkiler yaratabilir. Üreme çağındaki her yaşta kadının hayatının pek çok boyutunu etkileyebilen bu sınırlamaların farklı kültürlerde tespit edilmesi oldukça önemlidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, üreme çağındaki kadınların menstruasyon dönemi ile ilgili kültürel inanç ve uygulamalarını belirlemektir.

Metod: Analitik-kesitsel tipte yürütülen araştırmada 392 katılımcı yer aldı. Araştırmanın verileri 15 Ekim 2020-14 Ocak 2021 tarihleri arasında on-line anket yöntemiyle toplandı. Araştırmanın verilerinin analizinde tanımlayıcı istatistikler (sayı, yüzde, aritmetik ortalama) ile ki-kare testi kullanıldı.

Bulgular: Araştırmaya katılan kadınlar ortalama 27.48±7.81 yaşında olup, %72,7'sinin Y kuşağında, %65,2'sinin üniversite ve üzeri eğitim seviyesine sahip olduğu, %57,1'inin çalıştığı saptandı. Adet dönemi/perine hijeni ile ilgili %88,8'inin bilgi aldığı ve bu bilgiyi en çok annelerinden (%62,2) ve okuldan (%52,6) elde ettikleri görüldü. Katılımcıların menstruasyon dönemine ait en çok haberdar olduğu sosyal ve davranışsal uygulamalar “adetli olduğun erkekler söylenmez.” (%80,1), “erkeklerin yanında ped alınmaz.” (%58,7) ve “adetken beyaz renkte kıyafet giyilmez.” (%57,7) olarak belirlendi. En çok uyguladıkları sosyal ve davranışsal uygulamalar ise “adetli olduğun erkekler söylenmez.” (%26,5), “adetken bebek görmeye gidilmez.” (%13,5) ve “erkeklerin yanında ped alınmaz.” (%11,2) olarak saptandı. Katılımcıların menstruasyon dönemine ait bazı dini uygulamaları bilme durumları sorgulandığında; en çok haberdar oldukları dini uygulamalar “adetli iken Kur'an okunmaz.” (%96,2), “adetli iken camiye gidilmez.” (%91,8) ve “adetli iken

kıl/tüy/kaş alınmaz.” (%80,9) olarak belirlendi. Kadınlar, en çok uydukları dini uygulamaları “adetli iken Kur'an okunmaz.” (%79,3), “adetli iken camiye gidilmez.” (%71,9) ve “adetli iken abdest alınmaz.” (%55,1) olarak ifade etti. Araştırmaya dahil edilen kadınların menstruasyon dönemine ait bazı gıdalarla ilgili uygulamaları bilme ve bunları uygulama durumları irdelendi. Katılımcıların %41,8'inin “adetli iken turşu yapılmaz/turşuya el sürülmez.” ifadesini bildiği ve yine %23,7'sinin bu dönemde turşu yapmadığı/el sürmediği belirlendi. Menstrual döneme ait en sık uygulanan davranışların kuşaklara göre farklılık gösterip göstermediğini belirlemek için ki-kare analizi yapıldı. Analiz sonucuna göre “erkeklerin yanında ped alınmaz.” (p=0,001), “adetli olduğun erkekler söylenmez.” (p=0,000), “adetken bebek görmeye gidilmez.” (p=0,000), “adetken abdest alınmaz.” (p=0,032) ve “adetli iken turşu yapılmaz/turşuya el sürülmez.” (p=0,001) ifadelerinin kuşaklara göre gösterdiği farkın anlamlı olduğu ve bu davranışlara en az Z kuşağının uyduğu belirlendi.

Sonuç: Bu araştırma üreme çağındaki kadınların menstruasyon dönemi ile ilgili kültürel inanç ve uygulamalarını belirlemek amacıyla analitik-kesitsel olarak gerçekleştirildi. Çalışmanın sonunda katılımcıların adet dönemi ile ilgili bir takım sosyal, davranışsal veya dini sınırlamalara uyduğu saptandı. En çok görülen sınırlamalar, katılımcıların adetli olduğu bilgisini erkeklerle paylaşmaması, bu dönemde Kur'an okumaması ve fermente bir ürün olan turşuya el sürmemesi olduğu belirlendi. Üreme çağındaki kadınların menstrual döneme ait sık uyguladıkları davranışların en az Z kuşağı kadınları tarafından kabul gördüğü ortaya konuldu.

Öneriler: Menstruasyon dönemini “hastalık” ya da “utanılması gereken bir durum” gibi kavramlarla özdeşleştiren toplumlarda adet dönemi ile ilgili konuların açıkça tartışılması oldukça zordur. Bu nedenle öncelikle menstruasyonun utanılması gereken bir durum olmadığı konusunda toplumun bilinçlendirilmesi gereklidir. Menstruasyon dönemi konusunda, adölesan dönemdeki kız ve erkeklerin bir arada okullarda, kadınların hemşireler tarafından herhangi bir sağlık kuruluşuna başvurdukları anda eğitilmeleri toplumun bilinçlenmesi konusunda atılması gereken adımlardandır. Yine televizyonlarda üreme sağlığı ve menstruasyon konularına yer verilmesi, hijyenik ped gibi ürünlerin reklamlarının artırılması, sosyal medyanın menstruasyon ile ilgili etkinliklere yer vermesi de hem kadın hem de erkeklerin bilinçlenmesini sağlayabilir.

Introduction

Menstruation is a physiological condition experienced by women from adolescence to

menopause (Kaundal ve Thakur, 2014). There have been many menstruation-related taboos and rituals in all traditional cultures (Yagnik, 2019; Tan, Haththotuwa ve Fraser, 2017). Rules, beliefs and taboos about menstruation vary with communities, religions and regions. Therefore, menstruation-related rules and taboos embody attitudes, beliefs, norms and values of cultures in which they are preserved (Yagnik, 2014; Agyekum, 2002). For example, women can be labelled as “dirty” and “fouled” during menstruation in some cultures (Ministry of General Education, 2016; Crofts, 2014). Besides, they are exposed to some menstruation-related individual or social taboos like eating alone, avoiding religious rituals, not touching animals, not consuming some food, not talking to males about menstruation, not entering religious buildings, not cutting nails or hair, not removing hair and not going to school (Hennegan, Shannon, Rubli, Schwab ve Melendez-Torres, 2019; Tan ve ark., 2017; Wall, Belay, Bayray, Salih ve Gabrehiwot, 2016; Sakar, Özkan, Saraç ve Atabey, 2015; Varghese, James, Ravichandran, Sivaprakasam ve Palaniyandi, 2015; Raina ve Balodi, 2014; Santina, Wehbe, Ziade ve Nehme, 2013)

Women face menstruation-related myths, cultural beliefs and social and religious norms at menarche (United Nations Women, 2014). They are encouraged to preserve menstrual taboos especially by their mothers (Mukherjee ve ark., 2020) These taboos affect their understanding the importance of menstruation and their opinions about menarche. As their interactions with the society increase, their taboos are reinforced (Kumar ve Srivastava, 2011). Unless menstrual misbeliefs and unhealthy practices are not changed, they create negative effects regarding fundamental human rights, gender inequality, social stigmatization and discrimination (Yagnik, 2019). Prevention of girls from going to school and playing games during menstruation produce both social and educational inequalities and forbidding them from consuming some food like fish and eggs can predispose to nutritional deficiencies. Besides, food taboos can lead to tiredness, drowsiness and dizziness during menstruation and decreases academic performance (Randev, 2016; Columbia Global Centers, 2015; Agyekum, 2002).

Feeling ashamed to talk about menstruation and menstrual taboos can cause women to acquire insufficient information about menstrual hygiene management (House, Mahon ve Cavill, 2013), fail to fulfill some of their daily activities and become inadequately socialized. Most of the studies about menstrual taboos have been performed in Ethiopia, Lebanon and India (Wall ve ark., 2016; Thakur ve ark., 2014; Santina ve ark., 2013) There has been

only one study about this issue in Turkey (Sakar ve ark., 2015). However, it is important to reveal cultural beliefs and practices of the Turkish population about menstruation to improve health status of women and to eliminate their misperceptions.

Methods

The present study was performed to determine cultural beliefs and practices about menstruation in a sample of Turkish reproductive women. The research questions are:

- What are the cultural beliefs and practices of reproductive women about menstruation?
- What are the factors affecting cultural beliefs and practices of reproductive women about menstruation?

Sample and Design

The study had an analytical cross-sectional design. The study population comprised the women following the Instagram account “Kadın Sağlığı Akademisi” (Women’s Health Academy). This account is managed by the researchers and offers up to date information and recommendations from the literature about women’s health.

The sample size without a known target population was calculated as 376 at the confidence interval of 95% and based on the prevalence of the women hiding their menstruation (42,5%) in a study by Sakar ve ark. ($p=0,43$; $q=0,57$; $t=1,96$). A total of 401 women participated in the study. Nine women who did not fulfill the inclusion criterion about the age group were excluded from the sample and the study was completed with 392 participants.

Inclusion Criteria

- Speaking and understanding Turkish,
- Being aged 15-49 years,
- Having menstruation

Data Collection

Data were collected with an online questionnaire between 15 October 2020 and 14 January 2021. The questionnaire was prepared by the researchers in light of the literature (Wall ve ark., 2016; Sakar ve ark., 2015; Santina ve ark., 2013; Ali ve Rizvi, 2010) and is composed of questions about sociodemographic features (11 questions) and menstruation-related beliefs and practices (31 beliefs and 31 practices questions). Google forms was used to create the questionnaire and it was shared with the women following the Instagram account “Kadın Sağlığı Akademisi”. The women were also asked to share it with other women following their social

media accounts (WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook etc.).

Data Analysis

Obtained data were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0. Analyses were made by using descriptive statistics (numbers, percentages and mean values) and Chi-square test.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from an ethical committee of noninterventional research in a nursing department of a university (approval date: 14/10/2019-2019/113; approval number: E.5574). All the participants were informed about the aim of the study and were assured that their responses would be used for scientific purposes and kept in written documents. The questionnaire included an item asking the women whether they voluntarily accepted to participate in the study. After giving consent, they were allowed to respond to the questions in the questionnaire. The participants were not asked to supply information about their identity.

Results

The mean age of the women was 27.48±7.81 years (min: 16 years; max: 48 years), 72,7% was from Generation Y, 65,2% had university education or a higher level of education and 57,1% was employed. Seventy-five percent of the women lived in a city for the longest time of their life. Out of these women, 50,5% lived in Marmara Region for the longest time. The mean age at menarche was 12.95±1.35 years (min: 9 years; max: 17 years). Eight-eight-point-eight percent of the women received information about menstruation/perineal hygiene and they most frequently obtained this information from their mothers (62,2%), followed by school (52,6%) and the Internet (24,5%) (Table 1).

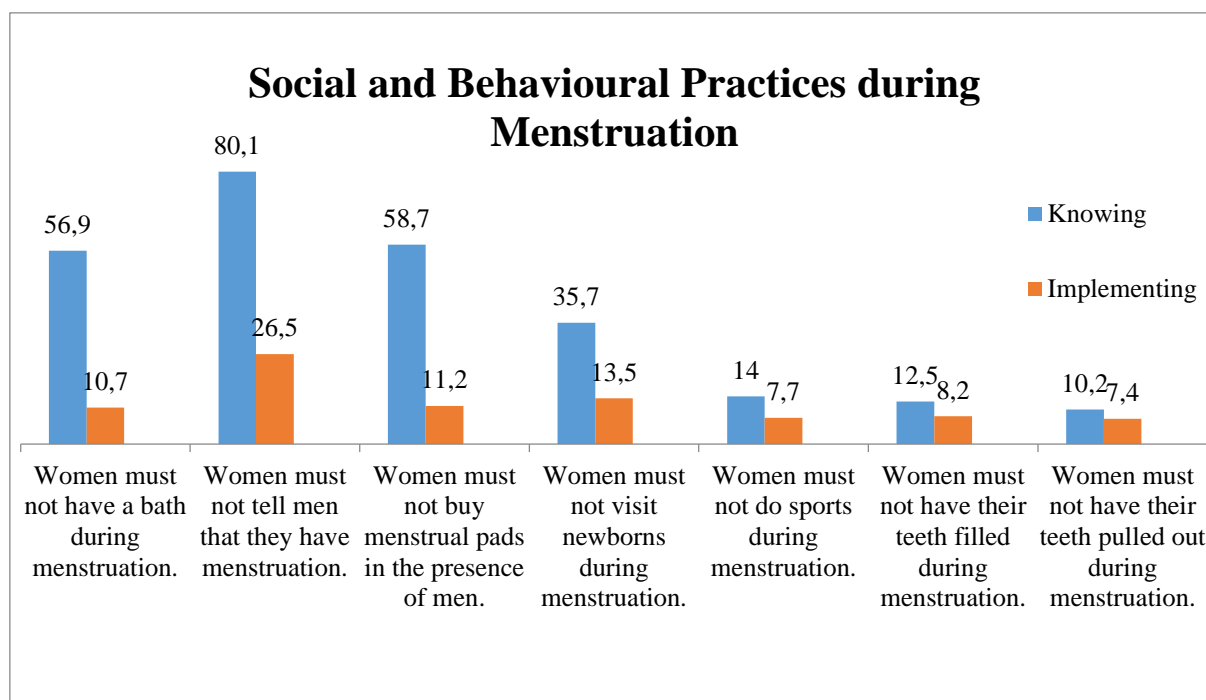
Whether the reproductive women included in the study knew and implemented some social and behavioral menstruation-related practices was examined. The most frequent social and behavioral practice known by the women was that "Women must not tell men that they have menstruation" (80,1%), followed by "Women must not buy menstrual pads in the presence of men" (58,7%) and "Women must not wear white clothing during menstruation" (57,7%).

Table 1. Demographic Features Of The Women (n=392)

Demographic Features	Mean± SD	min-max
Age	27.48±7.81	16-48
Age at menarche	12.95±1.35	9-17
	N	%
Generations		
X (≥40 age)	37	9,4
Y (20-39 age)	285	72,7
Z (16-19 age)	70	17,9
Education		
Literate	12	3,1
Primary school	10	2,6
High school	114	29,1
University and higher level of education	256	65,2
Employment status		
Employed	224	57,1
Unemployed	168	42,9
Place of living for the longest		
City	294	75,0
Town	80	20,4
Small town/Village	18	4,6
Region where the women lived for the longest		
Marmara	198	50,5
Black Sea	33	8,4
Middle Anatolia	52	13,3
Aegean	60	15,3
Mediterranean	31	7,9
Eastern Anatolia	11	2,8
Southeast Anatolia	7	1,8
Receiving information about menstruation/perineal hygiene		
Yes	348	88,8
No	44	11,2
Sources of information about menstruation/perineal hygiene (n=348)*		
Mother	244	62,2
School	206	52,6
Internet	96	24,5
Friend	89	22,7
Health professional	72	18,4
Relatives	19	4,8

*More than one option was marked. Percentages are based on "n".

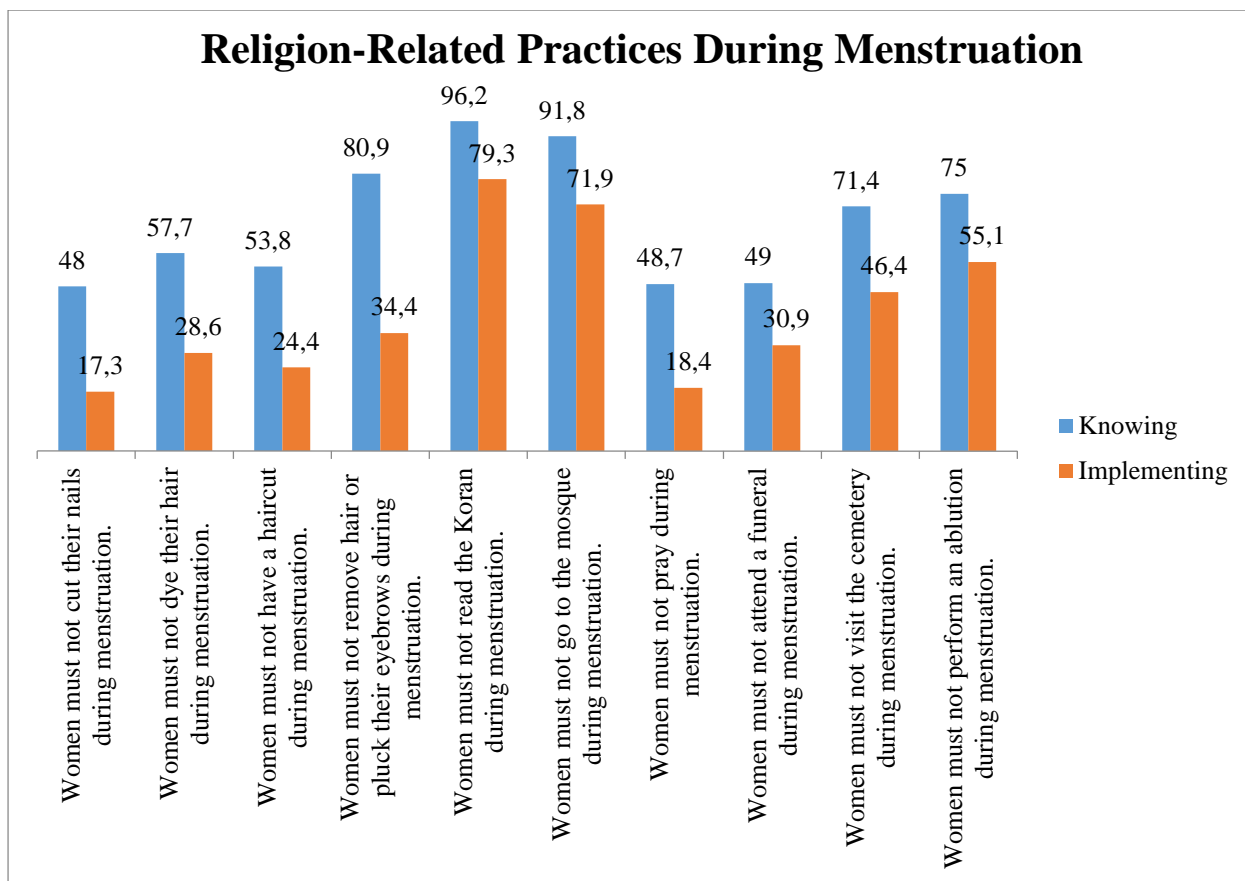
The most frequent social and behavioral practice implemented by the women was that "Women must not tell men that they have menstruation" (26,5%), followed by "Women must not visit a newborn when they have menstruation" (13,5%) and "Women must not buy menstrual pads in the presence of men" (11,2%) (Graph 1).



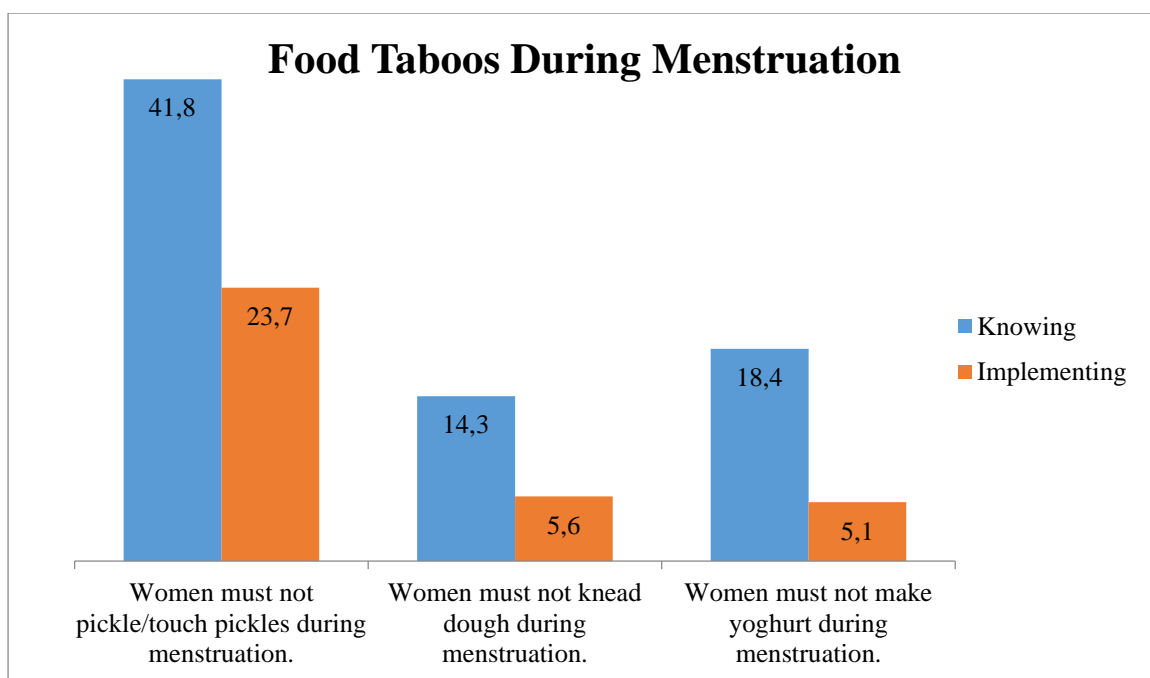
Graph 1: Social and Behavioral Practices Known and Implemented by the Women during Menstruation (n=392)

When religion-related and personal care practices of the women during menstruation were examined, the most frequently known practice was “Women must not read the Koran during menstruation” (96,2%), followed by “Women must not go to the mosque during menstruation” (91,8%) and “Women must not remove their hair/pluck their eyebrows during menstruation” (80,9%). The most frequently implemented religious practice was “Women must not read the Koran during menstruation” (79,3%), followed by “Women must not

go to the mosque” (71,9%) and “Women must not perform ablutions during menstruation” (55,1%) (Graph 2). When food taboos of the women during menstruation were examined, 41,8% knew that “Women must not pickle/touch pickles during menstruation” and 23,7% did not pickle/touch pickles during menstruation (Graph 3).



Graph 2: Religion-Related and Personal Care Practices Known and Implemented By The Women During Menstruation (n=392)



Graph 3: Food Taboos known and implemented by the Women during Menstruation (n=392)

Table 2. The Distribution of the Most Frequently Preserved Taboos during Menstruation according to Generations (n=392)

Taboos preserved during Menstruation	Generations			Test result and p
	X n(%)	Y n(%)	Z n(%)	
Women must not buy menstrual pads in the presence of men.	11(25,0)	29(65,9)	4(9,1)	$\chi^2=15,163$ P=.001
Women must not talk to men about their menstruation.	23(22,1)	66(63,5)	15(14,4)	$\chi^2=26,698$ P=.000
Women must not visit newborns during menstruation.	13(24,5)	38(71,7)	2(3,8)	$\chi^2=21,600$ P=.000
Women must not read the Koran during menstruation.	29(9,3)	220(70,7)	62(19,9)	$\chi^2=4,461$ P=.107
Women must not go to the mosque during menstruation.	29(10,3)	199(70,6)	54(19,1)	$\chi^2=2,330$ P=.312
Women must not perform an ablution during menstruation.	13(6,0)	161(74,5)	42(19,4)	$\chi^2=6,864$ P=.032
Women must not pickle/touch pickles during menstruation.	17(18,3)	66(71,0)	10(10,8)	$\chi^2=13,593$ P=.001

$\chi^2=Chi-square$

Chi-square test was utilized to determine whether the most frequently preserved taboos during menstruation differed between generations. The taboos “Women must not buy menstrual pads in the presence of men” (P = .001), “Women must not talk to men about their menstruation.” (P = .000), “Women must not visit newborns during menstruation.” (P = .000), “Women must not perform an ablution during menstruation.” (P = .032) and “Women must not pickle/touch pickles during menstruation.” (P = .001) significantly differed between generations. These taboos were least frequently preserved by Generation Z.

Discussion

This analytical cross-sectional study was performed to determine cultural beliefs and practices of reproductive women about menstruation. Most of the women were found to receive information about menstruation/perineal hygiene and the source of this information was their mothers for most of them. Four of every five women heard that “Women must not tell men about menstruation” and half of the women did not tell their male relatives about their menstruation. Nearly all the women knew the taboo “Women must not read the Koran during menstruation” and three fourth of the women did not read the Koran during menstruation. One of every two women knew the taboo “Women must not pickle/touch pickles during menstruation” and almost half of them did not pickle/touch pickles. The most frequently implemented menstrual practices significantly differed between generations and these practices were least adopted by the women from Generation Z.

More than three fourth of the women acquired information about menstruation/perineal hygiene and more than half them learned about it from their mothers, which is consistent with the literature. The rate of the women obtaining information about menstruation in national and international studies ranges from 50,7% to 74,6%. The most important source of information was found to be the women’s mothers, which is also congruent with the literature (Mukherjee ve ark., 2020; Sinop Gedik ve Şahin, 2017; Thakur ve ark., 2014). Mothers seem to be the most significant source of information about menstruation for their daughters throughout the world.

In the present study, four of every five women were found to hear about the taboos “Women must not tell men about their menstruation” and one of every two women heard about “Women must not buy menstrual pads in the presence of men.” One fourth of the women were found to avoid telling men about menstruation and visiting newborns during menstruation. The meanings attributed to menstruation by communities create an important effect on women. It can be very difficult to discuss menstruation-related issues in communities where menstruation is associated with the words “bad”, “illness” and “something that should be ashamed of” (Hennegan ve ark., 2019). In a study performed with adolescents in Turkey, three fourth of the girls were reported to experience the feelings of nervousness and embarrassment singly or in combination and the rate of the girls feeling happy during menstruation was only 4% (Sinop Gedik ve Şahin, 2017). In a study by Sakar et al. (2015), 42,5% of the university students noted that menstruation should be kept secret. In a study in Egypt, 79,4% of the girls were found to feel embarrassed while watching television advertisements for menstrual pads in the

presence of men (El-Lassy ve Abd El-Aziz Madian, 2013). Mukherjee et al. reported that 52,1% of the girls in Nepal did not openly talk about menstruation (Mukherjee ve ark., 2020). The lower rate of the women that avoided telling men about their menstruation in the current study is conflicting with the findings revealed by studies in other countries. It is not surprising that menstrual taboos and practices vary from culture to culture. Education levels, social status of women and perceptions about genders in a society can affect menstrual taboos and practices.

Many religions impose some restrictions on menstruation. Almost all the women in the present study heard about the religious taboos "Women must not read the Koran during menstruation" and "Women must not go to the mosque during menstruation" and three fourth of the women did not read the Koran and did not go to the mosque during menstruation. In a study on knowledge and practices about menstruation in Turkish university students by Sakar et al., 81,7% of the students believed that women must not read the Koran and that 94,6% believed that women must not go to the mosque (Sakar ve ark., 2015). Several studies from other countries revealed that the rate of the women not visiting religious buildings/places ranged from 17,8% to 88,6% (Wall ve ark., 2016; Varghese ve ark., 2015; Raina ve Balodi, 2014; El-Lassy ve Abd El-Aziz Madian, 2013). A qualitative study about menstrual taboos emphasized religious taboos related to praying, holding the Koran, entering the mosque and fasting (Shah ve ark., 2019). The finding about religious taboos in the current study is compatible with the literature. Religious taboos differ from social and behavioral taboos. Although social and behavioral taboos vary with communities, religious taboos naturally vary between religions. Therefore, where women with the same religious beliefs live does not much matter in terms of religious taboos. Besides, religious taboos are taught by not only mothers but also religious courses and activities offered in childhood. Therefore, it is not surprising that a high rate of the women preserve religious menstrual taboos.

In the current study, regarding food taboos during menstruation, almost half of the women knew "Women must not pickle/touch pickles during menstruation and one fourth of the women did not pickle/touch pickles. Consistent with this finding, studies from Turkey and other countries revealed the taboo about avoidance of touching pickled food (Mukherjee ve ark., 2020; Sakar ve ark., 2015; Kamaljit, Balwinder, Gurmeet ve Neki, 2012; Kumar ve Srivastava, 2011). Avoidance of pickled food during menstruation was attributed to the idea that the body sends out a smell or light worsening that food (Kumar ve Srivastava, 2011). As the primary source of hygiene knowledge about menstruation, mothers transmitted menstrual taboos to their

daughters. Feeling embarrassed about menstruation and uncomfortable while talking about menstruation causes transmission of wrong information from generation to generation.

The most frequently implemented menstrual taboos were least preserved by Generation Z. There have been no studies showing which generation more frequently maintains menstrual taboos. Generation Z was born into a digital world where the Internet, mobile phones and tablets are commonly used. It is more important to spend time and socialize in a virtual world than socialize in the physical world (Taş, Demirdöğmez ve Küçükoğlu, 2017). Prior generations did not have as many options to access knowledge as Generation Z. Therefore, they put the knowledge about menstrual taboos they received from their mothers into practice without questioning it. Since Generation Z can have access to knowledge through many ways in a shorter time, they can have an opportunity to question menstrual taboos. The finding of the current study that one of the most frequently utilized sources of information was the Internet can suggest that Generation Z searches for new information and questions the information offered to them.

Conclusion

The women participating in the current study were found to implement some social, behavioral or religious taboos during menstruation. The most frequent taboos were that they did not tell men about their menstruation, did not read the Koran and did not touch pickled food. These taboos were least accepted by Generation Z.

Traditions, beliefs or taboos of a society have either positive or negative effects on people living in that society. Discussing menstrual issues can be difficult in societies where menstruation is identified with negative concepts like "illness" and "a situation causing embarrassment". This can prevent women from accessing correct information or receiving support (Hennegan ve ark., 2019). Therefore, public awareness about the fact that menstruation is not an embarrassing condition should be increased. The most important task falls to the nurses regarding the taboos related to the menstrual period. Women of all ages should be informed about the menstrual period by school health nurses and clinician nurses. Especially, women's health nurses, who encounter different age groups, should prepare brochures about menstruation and taboos related to menstruation and provide counseling. Besides, educational television programs about reproductive health and menstruation, more advertisements about menstrual pads or similar products and social media coverage about menstruation can increase awareness of both men and women. It can also be recommended that menstrual taboos should be

determined and awareness raising projects should be launched to reduce acceptability of the taboos with a negative impact on health status, social life and personal development of women.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. First, data were collected through the online questionnaire method, and the findings are based on the notifications from the participants. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized for all women. Second, the study results represent only the data of the women who were following the Instagram account “Kadın Sağlığı Akademisi” and were included in the study.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethical approval was obtained from an ethical committee of noninterventional research in a nursing department of a university (Aydm Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi Hemşirelik Klinik Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu) (approval date: 14/10/2019-2019/113; approval number: E.5574).

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