

ABSTRACT

Menstrual Health among adolescent girls in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

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Background:

Menstruation is believed to be a natural phenomenon in females; any signs and symptoms are perceived as normal. Having menstruation is a potential sign of well-being. Unfortunately, it is also seen as a taboo in many societies. Hence menstrual health and hygiene have been neglected areas of public health in low-income countries. In Lao PDR, menstruation is a culture-bound phenomenon. Adolescent girls experience challenges in achieving optimal menstrual health. The link between menstruation and sexuality often makes them feel ashamed and may limit seeking professional help. This study aims to obtain information on the age of menarche and the menstrual health among adolescent girls, to promote MHM among adolescent girls in Lao PDR.

General objective:

To study the current situation of menstrual health among adolescent girls in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

Specific objectives:

- To identify the age of menarche among adolescent girls in Vientiane, Lao PDR.
- To study the abnormality of menstruation among adolescent girls in Vientiane, Lao PDR.
- To understand the basic knowledge and hygienic practice towards menstruation among adolescent girls in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

Research setting:

Field research: From Oct.2019 to Dec.2019

Research site: 4 governmental junior high schools in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR. The targeted schools are randomly chosen by multi-random sampling.

Method: Participants: 770 Schoolgirls age 12-17 from 4 governmental junior high schools in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR. Data were collected by a self-administered questionnaire and anthropometry measurement.

Data analysis: Quantitative variables were calculated by a mean value and standard deviation. The prevalence of polymenorrhea, oligomenorrhea, and bleeding lasting more than six days were assessed. Univariable and multivariable analysis were used to evaluate the effects of the covariate in early menarche, menstrual disorders, and knowledge and practice towards menstruation.

Result: The mean age among the study participants was 14.8 (SD 1.61) years. The mean age at menarche was 12.0 (SD 1.35) years. Early menarche (≤ 10 years) occurred in 5.2%, while delayed menarche (≥ 15 years) occurred in 0.9%. After adjusting OR for other significant covariates, this study presented the association a reduction in body mass was significantly associated with earlier menarche (aOR:0.43, 95% CI:0.21-0.85; $p=0.01$). The incidence of menstrual disorder was relatively high and common among the participants since the initiation of menarche. The prevalence of polymenorrhea persisted at a similar level since menarche to after 2 postmenarcheal years. (44.3% to 44.8%). The occurrence of oligomenorrhea showed a significant increase among overweight girls ($p=0.03$). 34.5% of 770 participants had a basic knowledge of menstruation at a good level. 78.8% of the participants were classified in good practice of MHM.

Conclusion: An occurrence of menarche in the capital of Lao PDR is in line with Asia's trend. Body mass and living area was significantly associated with the initiation of menarche. The existence of continuous menstrual disorder indicated an anovulatory cycle that may impact their

psychological and reproductive health. Interventional encouraging activities should be provided targeting adolescent girls to make them aware of their menstrual cycle period.

Keywords: Menstrual health, menstrual disorder

(Word count: 490)