

ASSESSMENT OF PREMENARCHEAL HEALTH NEEDS AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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Abstract

Early preparation for menarche is important for future childbearing and for a girl concept of herself as a female because it teaches her to trust her body and think of menstruation as a mark of pride or grown up. Premenarcheal preparations could be conceptualized as consisting of anticipation, communication, and action-related planning for an event (**Thompson.2002**). **the aim** of this study was to assess the premenarcheal health needs among early adolescent girls. This descriptive **research study** was conducted at all governmental female preparatory schools in El manzala City, Egypt. The total sample represented 500 student girls. Two tools of data collection was used included: a structured Self administered questionnaire and a menstrual attitude questionnaire. **Results:** The student girls had inadequate preparation for menarche and only 23.8/% of them were prepared for menarche before its occurrence. The student girls have had sufficient prior knowledge about menarche often feel unprepared for the event itself. The finding revealed that about 80% of girls in a need for more information about menstruation and half of them agreed on preparing girls for menarche at ten years old which reflects their ignorance about the importance of early preparations before they got menarche. More half of girls reported that menarche would be easy if they knew more information. **Conclusions:** The study was concluded that early adolescent student girls had inadequate preparation for menarche, and need more information. **The study recommended** the complete preparation for menarche before attaining it.

Key words: Menarche; Early adolescent; Preparation; Attitude

Introduction

Early adolescence is a time when dramatic changes occur in a child's physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. The onset of menstruation is one of the most important changes occurring among girls during the adolescent years.

(Dasgupta et al, 2008).

Premenarcheal girls are in need for realistic discussion which involves health status and self-care, socio-emotional development and physical development that involves topics about fertility and menstrual cycle **(Frederick,2010)**. Several studies suggest that girls who were prepared for the physical changes at menarche were better able to acknowledge and accept this body changes associated with puberty and menarche. However, what counts as adequate preparation for menstruation is unclear, especially that many girls and women who knew about menstruation and menstrual hygiene reported that they did not feel well prepared for menarche. **(Alister & Eliya,2007).**

The perception and reaction of girls towards menstruation depends to a larger extent upon their awareness and knowledge of this phenomenon. In most cases there is very little awareness about menstruation among girls when they first experience it. Social prohibitions and negative attitude of parents in discussing the related issues openly has blocked the access of adolescent girls to the right kind of information especially in rural and tribal communities **(Mudey et al, 2010).**

In many families, the mother has limited experience in explaining the management of menstruation with regard to schooling, mobility or outdoor activities. There is an unspoken 'culture of silence' with regard to their menstruation. **(Unicef,2008)**

Significance of the study:

Adolescence is a unique phase of human development. It spans the years of transition from childhood to adulthood, many young girls often face serious health problems as a result of the strong parental bondage with traditional beliefs about menstruation. These girls suffer many gynecological problems including infections of the reproductive organs as a result of poor personal hygiene and unsafe sanitary condition **(Aniebue, et al,2009)**. In addition many studies on young girls' responses to menarche have determined in female developmental life .They found that most girls found menarche mildly stressful event when it occurs they greet it with mixed feelings more adequate preparation is associated with more positive initial

responses (Stubbs, 2008). So this study was conducted to assess the health needs from early adolescent girls' point of views.

Aim of study: *This study aims to:* assess the pre-menarcheal health needs among early adolescent student girls

Research questions: What are the pre-menarcheal health needs among early adolescent student girls from their point of view?

Subjects and methods: Research Design: This study was descriptive study. the study was conducted in all governmental preparatory schools in Manzala district, Dakahlia governorate, namely: Alielsoda preparatory school, Aledadia Almoshtaraka preparatory school, Om Elmomenin preparatory school, Altaaleemalasy preparatory school, Alazhar preparatory school. The sample was cluster stratified included 500 adolescent girls who fulfilled the following criteria: 1-Girls having menstruation for 1 to 3 years. 2-Aged: 11 to 14 years old. A total of 50 students were chosen randomly from the studied schools as representing 10 percent of total sample

these was to test the applicability, the feasibility and clarity of the tools

Tool of data collection: Two types of tools were used for data collection and conduction of the study. These consisted of self administered questionnaire and menstrual attitude questionnaire.

I: Self administered questionnaire:

Part 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the studied pupils such as age, residence, parents education and occupation,

Part 2: Menstrual history such as: age of menarche, duration, interval, and amount of blood loss.

Part 3: Health education about menarche, pre-menarcheal needs and The student's recommendations for promoting pre-menarcheal preparation from their point of view

II : menstrual attitude questionnaire:

It is based on the Menstrual Attitudes Questionnaire (MAQ) developed by **Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, (1980)**. the MAQ has five subscales, the five subscales were further combined to form two factors. 1) The "Menstruation as a Negative Event" factor that included: a) the menstruation as a debilitating event, and b) menstruation as a bothersome event, and c) prediction of the onset of menstruation subscales, while 2) the Menstruation as a natural event factor included: a) the menstruation as a natural event and b) denial of any effect of menstruation subscales.

Scoring system:

The rating scale was of 3 points as follows: agree (3), somewhat (2) and disagree (1). Each subscale of MAQ was collected and the student girls having ($\geq 60\%$) of scores were considered to have a positive response to this attitude and $< 60\%$ was considered a negative response to this attitude. Then, the researcher calculated the total score for factor (1) "Menstruation as a Negative Event" by calculating girls' scores of Debilitating, Bothersome and Prediction of the Onset of Menstruation and the total score for factor(2) "Menstruation as a Natural Event" by calculating girls scores of Natural event and Denial of Any Effect). Each attitude was considered: positive if $60\%+$ and negative $< 60\%$.

B) Operational design:-

The operational design included preparatory phase, tools validity & reliability, pilot and field work.

Preparation phase

The researcher, after extensive review of related literature, different studies and theoretical knowledge of various aspects of the research topic using books, articles, internet, periodicals and magazines, had prepared tools for data collection.

Validity & Reliability

It was ascertained by a jury consisting of five experts in the obstetric and gynecological medical and nursing field for clarity, relevance, applicability, comprehensiveness, understanding and ease for implementation. According to their suggestions, the modifications were applied

Pilot Study:

A total of 50 students were chosen randomly from the studied schools as representing 10 percent of total sample. The questionnaire sheets were modified accordingly and made ready to use. These students were excluded from the total sample of the study. After the pilot study, language was simplified to be easy to understand by the student girls.

Field work

Data have been collected for 4 months throughout the period from first of October 2013 to January 2014. The field work has been performed in the following sequence

- Permission was taken from each school to carry out the study. Also the aim of the study has been clarified to the headmasters to gain their support and cooperation.

- The researcher visited the schools 3 days per week from 8 to 11 AM.
- The researcher introduced herself to the pupil and obtained their consent to be recruited in the study after explaining the nature of the study and the procedure of data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of their responses was ensured
- In each school, the researcher took the class that was free from scientific sessions, who fulfilled the following criteria were included.
1-Girls having menstruation for 1 to 3 years.
2-Aged: 11 to 14 years old. for 30 minutes when questionnaires were not finished, the researcher took the same class another time to finish the filling of sheets..
- Every student was asked to fill in the designed questionnaire sheet by herself in presence of the researcher to answer any questions that the students might have about the questionnaire.
- After finishing the school, the researcher took another school, until she finished the determined schools.

C) Administrative design:

Before the conduction of the study, written permissions were obtained from dean of Port Said, Faculty of Nursing to the selected schools' directors to obtain their permissions for conducting this study.

Agreement was also obtained and the aim of the study was explained to each head master of each school to gain their cooperation before starting data collection. .

Ethical Consideration:

- 1- An official letter from the faculty of nursing 'university of Port Said was directed to responsible authority of study.
- 2-The researcher explained the purpose of the study to student and then obtain their written consent to participate in the study and the confidentiality of data was assured.

D) Statistical design:-

Statistical Analysis:

The statistical analysis of data was done by using Excel program and Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) program version 10. The first part of data was descriptive in the form of mean \pm SD, frequency and proportion. The second part

was analytic to test statistical significant difference between groups. For qualitative data (frequency, proportion & chi-square test) were used. To test association between variable correlations coefficient test was used.

Results

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study sample. The mean age was 12.7 ± 1.2 of age group 11-14 years old. A large number from rural area, were daughter to secondary educated mother, daughter to housewives mother and had sufficient monthly income.

Figure 1 Shows the distribution of the studied adolescent girls' Information about menstruation, 86.4% having information about menstruation .

Figure 2 shows that, only slightly less than one- quarter of girls 23.8% had premenarcheal preparations.

Figure 3 shows that above three- quarters of girls 80% reported that they are in need for more -information about menstruation

Table 2 shows that that student girls' had mixed attitude toward menarche, it is obvious from the above table that 69% of the student girls considered menarche as natural event, while,63.8% considered it as a negative event.

Table 3 shows that the things make menarche easy for adolescent girls, more than half 53.8% of girls reported that menarche would be easy if they knew more information about it, according to advices to other girls about 27.8 recommended to talk to their mother or someone else Concerning the advices for mothers in order to help them in preparing their daughters for menarche, more than half of girls 55.0% advised mothers to talk to their daughters for menarche

Table 4 shows that, there were a statistically significant difference between the studied adolescent girls' information about menstruation and their residence 97.1% of girls not had information about menstruation were from rural area. Moreover, a statistically significant difference between the studied adolescent girls' information about menstruation and their mothers' education. Finally, a statistically significant difference between the studied adolescent girls' information about menstruation and their family income, the majority 45.6% who had more than 1000 family income was had information about menstruation

Table 5 shows that there was a highly statistically significant relation between the timing of seeking information about menstruation and their residence, 56% of girls having premenarcheal preparation from urban area. Regarding mothers' education, It is interesting to notice that 56.3% of girls getting premenarcheal preparation were daughters of university graduate mothers. Finally a statistically significant difference between the timing of seeking information about menstruation and the mothers' occupation 88.3% of girls who are seeking their information before menarche were daughters of employees mother.

Discussion:

Menarche, the onset of the first menses, is a significant milestone in a woman's life and reproductive cycle which signifies the approaching cessation of physical growth and the maturation of reproductive potential. (Shin, 2005). Early preparation for menarche is important for future childbearing and for a girl concept of herself as a female because it teaches her to trust her body and think of menstruation as a mark of pride or grown up.(Elmeshad,2006). This resulted in the identification of the epistemology of menstruation which entailed developing understanding and interpretation of young girls' menstrual experience. This study was mainly concerned with identifying how young girls were prepared for menarche and their views regarding promotion of this kind of preparations.

Several studies suggest that girls who were prepared for the physical changes at menarche were better able to acknowledge and accept this body changes associated with puberty and menarche. They experience less distress at menarche and fewer painful menstrual symptoms. In contrast, when reproduction were referenced, girls were more likely to associate fear, shame, dysfunction, and victimization with their bodies. (Alister &, Eliya , 2007). this study revealed that only less than one- quarter of the girls were prepared for menstruation before attaining menarche. This was supported by other researches done in Egypt as (El-meshad, 2006) showed that almost one third 36.1% of girls were prepared for menstruation before attaining menarche.

This study obvious that the major source of girls knowledge was their mothers 62.1% while the other sources were very limited. and they had mixed emotional reactions toward menarche but their negative emotional reactions were more pronounced than positive ones. Only slightly less than one- quarter of the girls reported that they were ashamed of menarche 23%.

Regarding health education needs, the present study showed that even girls who have had sufficient prior knowledge about menarche often felt unprepared for the event itself. The findings revealed that more than three-quarters 80% of the girls reported that they are in a need for more-information about menstruation and most of them agreed on preparing girls for menarche. This finding is similar to the results of **(Lee,et al, 2006)** who stated that most of adolescent girls who viewed themselves as being prepared for menarche had misconceptions on the true physiological process and characteristics of menstruation and the menstrual cycle.

In relation to things that make menarche easy for adolescent girls, more than half of girls reported that menarche would be easy if they knew more information. This indicate that family response was very important; members should be kind, open, sensitive, and calm because how mothers approached their daughters at the time of menarche seemed to have a powerful impact on girls' experiences with menstruation **(Ayse , 2004)**. When asking girls to offer an advice for other girls who did not approach menarche yet, they offered advices regarding the importance of an almost equal proportion 27.8 %, 25.6% as advising young ones to talk to mothers or someone else and read about menses before its starts, respectively. This was supported by **(Abd-Ella , 2010)**:

Yared, (2004) stated that responses of girls to what advice they would give to their mothers, they said that mothers preferably have got responsibility to prepare and sustain girls to face the reality of menstruation. mothers should be kind, caring and be free to let their daughters talk. The findings of the present study showed that mothers should talk with their daughters about menarche and menstruation regarding facts, details, everything that's going to happen, what to expect and answer the questions of their young daughters. Responses indicated that mothers could best help by providing information.

Regarding to menstrual attitude the student girls' had mixed attitude toward menarche, it is obvious from the above table that 69% of the student girls considered menarche as natural event, while,63.8% considered it as a negative event.

Regarding the relation between girls' information about menstruation and personal characteristics among the studied adolescent girls, slightly less than all of girls did not get information about menstruation from rural area. As regards the mother's educational level, all daughters of highly educated mothers were having

information about menstruation, As regards the correlation between girls' information about menarche and their family income there was a positive significant correlation between knowledge about menarche and family income, slightly less than half of the girls in families with more than 1000 income had information about menstruation

Finally, the present study revealed a statistically significant difference between the timing of seeking information about menstruation and their residence as with the girls who live in urban area more than half of them got information about menstruation before it started (were prepared for menstruation),as well as, mothers' educational level, This study revealed that all girls daughter of highly educated mothers were prepared to menstruation and daughters of working mothers learned about menarche before it begins.

Conclusion

In view of the findings, the study concluded that the student girls had inadequate preparation for menarche, and the real experiences that adolescent girls went through and their recommendations would change young girls' future life from their point of view.

Recommendations

The school nurse should pay attention for the designing an educational program for adolescent girls about all aspects of menarche and menstrual cycle. Health visitors should catch the opportunity when visiting a household with premenarcheal girls and participate in raising the awareness of mothers to be qualified for preparing their daughters effectively for menarche before attaining it As well, Ministry of Education (MOE) should be develop educational programs in order to prepare young girls for menarche

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Table (1): Socio-demographic characteristics of the student girls (n=500)

Personal characteristics	No.	%
Age (years):		
11	107	21.4
12	131	26.2
13	45	9.0
14	217	43.4
Range	11-14	
Mean \pm SD	12.7 \pm 1.2	
Residence		
Rural	439	87.8
Urban	61	12.2
Education		
Read and write	128	25.6
Primary education	72	14.4
Preparatory school	35	7
Secondary education	205	41
High education	60	12
Employment		
Housewife	336	67.2
Employed	164	32.8
Family monthly income		
Less than 500 (not sufficient)	136	27.2
500- (sufficient)	164	32.8
More than 1000 (more than sufficient)	200	40

Figure (1): Information about menstruation among the studied adolescent girls

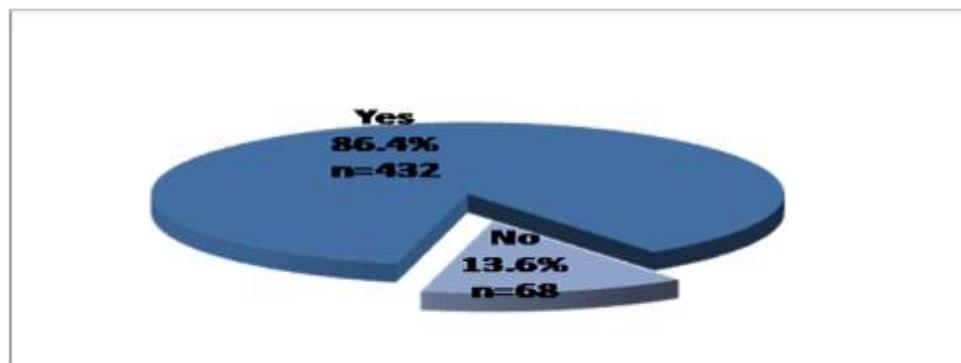


Figure (2): Timing of seeking information(No=432)

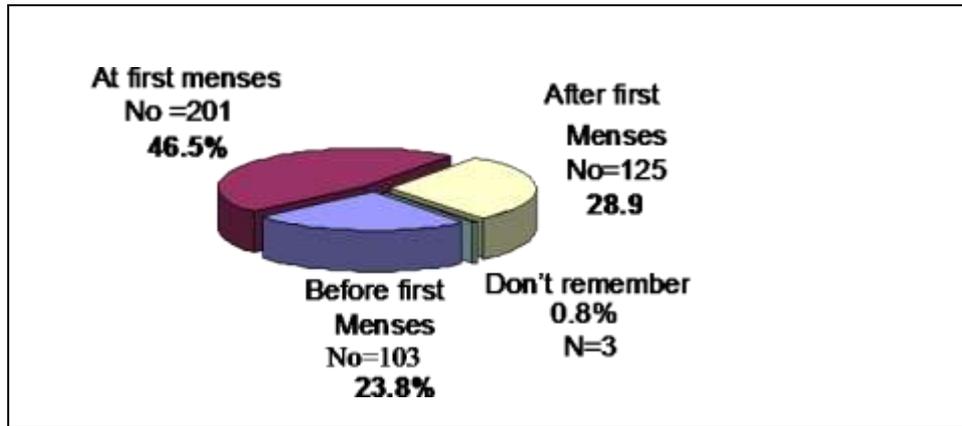


Figure (3): Need more information.(No=500)

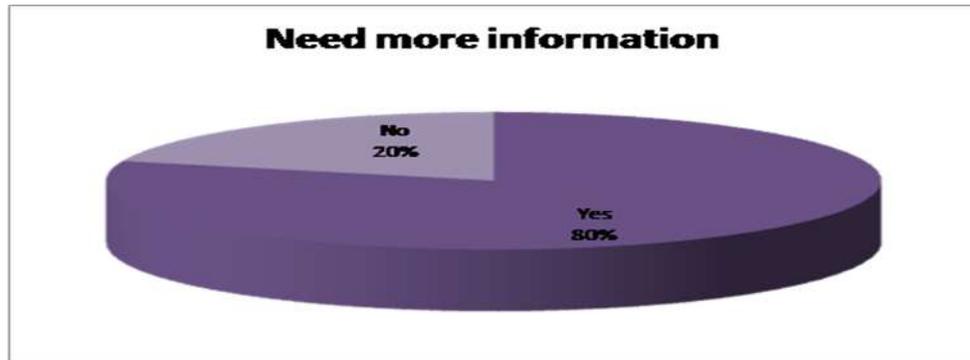


Table (2): Distribution of student girls regarding total score of attitude toward menarche

Student girls attitude toward menarche	n = 500	
	No	%
Menstruation as a negative event		
Positive >60%	319	63.8
Negative <60%	181	36.2
Menstruation as a natural event		
Positive >60%	345	69
Negative <60%	155	31

Table (3): Girls' recommendations for promoting premenarcheal preparations from their point of view

Recommendations	Studied girls (n=500)	
	No	%
Practices that facilitate acceptance of first menstruation		
Have enough knowledge about menses	269	53.8
Family should be supportive	72	14.4
Not to talk about it	32	6.4
To keep it secret	94	18.8
Don't know	33	6.6
Advices to others girls before menses		
To be calm on 1 st menses	92	18.4
Reading about menses before its start	128	25.6
Talk to mothers or someone else	139	27.8
To keep it secret	136	27.2
Don't know	5	1
Advices to mothers		
To talk to their daughters about menses	275	55
To be supportive to their daughters	78	15.6
Not to talk to their girls about menses	45	9
To keep it secret	70	14
Don't know	32	6.4

Table (4): Relation between girls' information about menstruation and personal characteristics among the studied adolescent girls

<i>Personal characteristics</i>	<i>Had information</i>		<i>Not had information</i>		<i>Significance</i>
	<i>(n=432)</i>		<i>(n=68)</i>		
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	
Residence					X ² =6.3 P=0.012*
Rural	373	86.3	66	97.1	
Urban	59	13.7	2	2.9	
Educational level of mother					MC P<0.0001*
Read and write	103	23.8	25	36.8	
Primary school	53	12.3	19	27.9	
Preparatory school	31	7.2	4	5.9	
Secondary school	185	42.8	20	29.4	
University	60	13.9	0	0	
Occupation of mother					X ² =0.41 P=0.522
Housewife	288	66.7	48	70.6	
Work	144	33.3	20	29.4	
Job of the father					X ² =56.863 P<0.0001*
Skilled work	44	10.2	22	32.4	
Worker	124	28.7	22	32.4	
Employee	70	16.2	22	32.4	
businessperson	194	44.9	2	2.9	
Monthly family income					X ² =59.51 P<0.0001*
▪ Less than 500	94	21.8	42	61.8	
▪ 500-1000	141	32.6	23	33.8	
▪ More than 1000	197	45.6	3	4.4	

Table(5):Relation between girls' information about menstruation and personal characteristics among the studied adolescent girls

Personal characteristics	Timing of seeking information(n=432)						Significance
	Before first menses (n=103)		At first menses (n=201)		After first menses (n=125)		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Residence							MC P<0.0001*
Rural	45	43.7	200	99.5	125	100	
Urban	58	56.3	1	0.5	0	0	
Educational level of mother							X ² =288.9 P<0.0001*
Read and write	0	0	45	22.4	57	45.6	
Primary school	5	4.9	47	23.4	1	0.8	
Preparatory school	6	5.8	25	12.4	0	0	
Secondary school	34	33	83	41.3	67	53.6	
University	58	56.3	1	0.5	0	0	
Occupation of mother							X ² =187.22 P<0.0001*
Housewife	12	11.7	167	83.1	108	86.4	
Work	91	88.3	34	16.9	17	13.6	

تقييم الاحتياجات الصحية لفترة ما قبل الاحاضه لدي الفتيات في مرحله المراهقة المبكرة

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المخلص العربي

تعتبر بداية مرحلة المراهقة فترة شديدة الحيوية في حياة الفتاه فهي تنسم بالعديد من التغيرات النفسية والجسمانية ومن أهم هذه التغيرات لدى الفتاه هي مجيء أول دورة شهرية والتي تحدث فجأة وبدون أي إنذار على عكس التغيرات التدريجية الأخرى التي تصاحب فترة النمو. أول دورة شهرية ليست مجرد تغير بيولوجي فقط ولكن توجد عوامل اجتماعية وثقافية قد تؤثر على حياة البنت كمنظرتها لنفسها ووضعها كامرأة ودورها الاجتماعي ولذلك ترك الفتاه تخوض التجربة بدون إعداد مبكر لحدوث أول دورة حيضية يؤثر في مفهوم و نظرة الفتيات تجاه أنفسهن. فهو يعلمهن الثقة بأجسادهن وكذلك التكبير في الحيض والدورة الشهرية كرمز للفخر و النضوج وليس عبئا عليهن. حيث أن الفتيات اللاتي يتم إعدادهن لبدء الحيض يستطعن التكيف لمواجهة الآلام المصاحبة للدورة الشهرية بشكل أفضل. بالإضافة إلى قدرتهن على تقبل التغيرات الجسمانية المصاحبة لعملية البلوغ. لذلك، يجب على الآباء والأمهات والمدارس البدء أو المشاركة بشكل أكبر في إعداد الفتيات الصغيرات لأول دورة شهرية وكذلك مساعدتهن على تقبلها من خلال تعليمهن المفهوم الصحيح للصحة الإنجابية، التغيرات الجسمانية المصاحبة لعملية البلوغ، مفهوم الحيض وكذلك توفير وسائل وكتيبات تثقيفية صحية تناقش هذه المواضيع.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلي التعرف علي الاحتياجات الصحية لفترة ما قبل الاحاضه لدي الفتيات في مرحلة المراهقة المبكرة. تم إجراء هذه الدراسة الوصفية في كل المدارس الإعدادية للبنات داخل مدينة المنزلة محافظة الدقهلية،مصر. وقد أجريت هذه الدراسة علي عينه قوامها 500 طالبة. وقد تم جمع البيانات عن طريق استخدام استمارة استبيان تتألف من جزئين رئيسيين: استمارة استبيان المقابلة الشخصية واستمارة استبيان لتقييم اتجاهاتهن اتجاه أول دورة شهرية ومن أهم النتائج أن إعداد البنات لأول دورة شهرية إعدادا " غير مناسب ولم يكن هناك سوى 23.8% منهن قد تم إعدادهن قبل مجيء الدورة الشهرية. (80%) من الفتيات بحاجة للحصول على معلومات إضافية حول الحيض، وأن الفتيات يوصيني على ضرورة إعداد الفتيات للحيض قبل بدءه بفترة كافيه وان السن المناسب لتحضيرهن هو سن العاشرة. كما قامت الفتيات بتقديم عدة نصائح موجهه للأخريات اللاتي لم يأتينهن الحيض بعد أهمها ضرورة تحضير أنفسهن للدورة الشهرية من خلال قراءة الكتب المختلفة التي تتناول هذه الموضوعات. بشكل عام ، لم يكن إعداد الفتيات لاستقبال الحيض مناسباً أو كافياً ،ووفقاً لذلك اقترحت الدراسة عدداً من التوصيات الهامة ، والتي تهدف إلى أهميه و ضرورة البدء بإعداد الفتيات الصغيرات المقبلات على الاحاضه لهذا الحدث الهام