

285th OMICS International Conference

Global Healthcare & Fitness Summit

July 20-22, 2015 San Francisco, USA

Memories and experiences of menarche among Jordanian adolescent girls: An interpretive phenomenological analysis study

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Menarche is a significant experience in adolescent's girls' lives. Culture is major factor in shaping the meaning of this experience. In order to explore the lived experiences and the associated meanings of menarche among girls in Jordan, a homogenous sample of seven Girls (11-14 years) who had first menstruation within last six months were asked to describe their Menarche experiences using journal notebooks. Interpretive phenomenology was used to analyze the data. Menarche experience emerged over three themes: A forbidden "topic", keeping 'topic' to self and releasing-out. Each theme was characterized by distinct sets of emotions knowledge seeking patterns. The Jordanian culture and the Islamic teachings have greatly influenced the menarche experience among the girls. Menarche was considered a social taboo that should not be discussed openly. At the first signs of menarche, participants were shocked, scared, confused and anxious. The girls had little information and support from family and school. As a result, the girls built on their own perception about menarche and menstruation was associated with profound negative emotions. Finally, there came a time when the participants decided to share the experience but hesitantly with mothers and close friends. The girls were alone and undergone undesirable psycho-emotional consequences as a result of lack of support. Formal educative interventions at school and in the community are recommended in order to support and help the girls understand the natural changes in female body and reproduction system.

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