

Analysis of Awareness and Supportive Behaviour of Males Regarding Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene: Importance for Women

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Abstract: *Menstruation is a natural biological process that affects the well-being of women and girls. Despite its significance, menstrual hygiene and awareness are often neglected, especially among males. This study examines male awareness and supportive behavior regarding menstruation and menstrual hygiene. A community-based cross-sectional observational study was conducted among 84 males aged 18 and above. A self-administered questionnaire assessed knowledge, practices, and social restrictions related to menstruation. The results indicate that 85.7% of participants recognized menstruation as a physiological process, and 92.6% were aware of the use of sanitary napkins. While awareness levels were generally high, cultural myths persisted. The study highlights the importance of including males in menstrual hygiene education to promote gender-sensitive reproductive health awareness."*

Keywords: Menstruation, Male Awareness, Menstrual Hygiene, Cultural Taboos, Reproductive Health

1. Introduction

Puberty is the age of physical maturation of adolescent where reproduction system becomes mature and capable for reproduction. Puberty usually begins between 8 to 13 years of age with mean age of 12 among females and 9 to 14 years among male. Girl child age of puberty has declined by three years over the past two centuries where boys' first ejaculation started around age of 13¹. Menarche is a one of the female developmental processes during puberty. During menstruation many of the female faces various physiological, psychological and cognitive changes that occur accompanied with other bodily changes. Many of the girls complaining abdominal cramps, back pain, fatigue, headache, mood changes, anxiety, loss of appetite, depression, vomiting etc.. Experience of puberty among boys and girls is very different. As per UNESCO Globally, it is very narrative thinking behind puberty and shameful for girls where male feeling masculinity². At this point it is very important to give early information about puberty and related changes. In the rural area many of the adolescents unaware and informed very late about pubertal changes, when their lives already affected and affect psychological development also³.

Many of Social-cultural taboos related to puberty and most commonly towards girls about menstruation, which affect physically and psychologically their lives. Most of the belief like girl is impure during menstrual periods, restriction of cooking and entering in kitchen, certain foods she should avoid to eat, touching water pot for drinking self, washing and bathing, avoid discussing about menstruation in

family, menstrual hygiene products purchasing and even purchasing from male feeling shameful etc.⁴.

In other countries similar belief found for menstruation and menstruating girls, for example in remote area of nepal they follow the old tradition named it chaupadi. Government banned such tradition in 2005 also but somewhere still they continue such tradition. In which during menstruation period woman eat her food separately; she cannot touch anything even woman cannot make physical contact with other. In this tradition menstruating women and girls sleep outside under separate "chhau huts" even during winter also⁴. Some of the researcher studied Ethiopia jewish communities and they also follow the tradition that women staying in "margamgojo" place of speculation during menstruation⁵. Some belief in the Bangladesh people, like they buried old menstrual cloths in the ground for fear of evil spirits. They believe that evil spirit will be attracted to the menstrual blood. Even restriction to going temple or mosque, reading the Koran. Similarly, some Hong kong studies beliefs that menstruation brings "bad luck"⁶.

From Overall studies in the worlds we found very few studies available about awareness among male population related to menstruation and associated problems among female. Some studies found boys are unaware about puberty and menstruation cycle⁷. One of the studies from taiwan reported no one of the boys wanted to talk related to menstruation. Even they could not discuss with their family. Boy's attitude towards menstruation and related topics found not interested⁸. Male's role has been found very important in menstrual hygiene management. Knowledge about

menstruation along with menstrual hygiene management is a key role towards reproductive health of girls and women. Even they can help her to reduce reproductive tract infection by guiding them for proper WASH (water sanitation and hygiene) practice⁷. This study aims to access the level of awareness and supportive behaviors among males regarding menstruation and menstrual hygiene, while identifying persistent cultural myths.

2. Materials and Methods

A community based crossed sectional survey was carried out among male population aged above 18 years from any of the field were included in the study. The research omitted those participants who was suffering from any psychological and learning illness and disapproved the study. A structured questionnaire was used, incorporating validated questions from previous research on menstrual awareness and hygiene practices. A convenient sampling method was carried out from various fields. In addition, a survey was done among 84 male to assess their knowledge, and attitude towards menstruating female after ethical approval. The study followed ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent and participants confidentiality. Structured questionnaire was explained to everyone and informed about the study's purpose. The questionnaire was used to collect data from participants includes details about headings with "knowledge about menstruation", "menstrual hygiene practice" and "social restrictions or believe in myths". All data was entered in Microsoft excel and evaluated in SPSS software version 16. By assessing male awareness and

attitude, this study provides insights that can inform public health interventions and educational programs.

3. Result

A total of 84 male took part in the study. Out of them majority fifty percent of participants were in age group 18-28 years, while 26.2%, 13.1 % and 10.7% participants were in 28-38 years, 38-48 years and above 48 years of age respectively shown in fig 1. Seventy five percent (n=63) participants in the study were unmarried and rest of twenty five percent (n=21) participants were married.

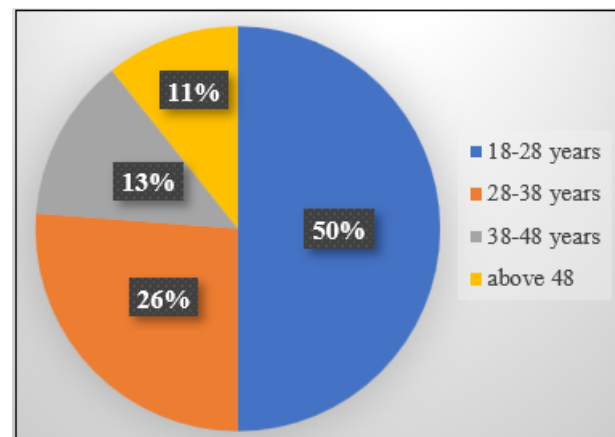


Figure 1: Distribution of participants as per age group (with percentage)

Table 1: Men and boys' knowledge about menstruation

No	Knowledge and description about menstruation	N	Menstruation Knowledge score %
1	Starting of menstrual period	Yes	82
		No	2
2	Girls and women facing pain other related problems during menstruation	Yes	84
		No	0
3	Cause of menstruation	Human physiological process	82
		Curse of God	2
		Don't know	0
4	Blood comes from which organ	Vagina	3
		Uterus	79
		Urinary bladder	2
5	Psychological changes like mood swing, anxiety, irritability, loss of appetite or over eating etc. changes before and during menstruation	Yes	22
		No	62

As per table one 97.8% participants know about the menstruation and its approx. starting age of menstruation, even 97.6% participants also know about the cause of the menstruation. Related to anatomical region questions about blood comes from which organ, 94% participants answered correctly, where's other answered 36% and 2.4% from vagina and urinary bladder respectively. Girls and women faces psychological changes along with physical problem during menstruation many of them complaining mood swing, anxiety, irritability, change in appetite, bloating, decrease confidence level etc. in present study most of the participants aware about physical pain and weakness-like symptoms but lack of awareness regarding psychological symptoms. As per above 73.8% participants unaware about it where few 26.2% of them aware about psychological

symptoms also occurs along with physical symptoms during or before menstruation.

Table 2: Source of information related to menstruation

Informer about menstruation	N	%
School teachers	21	25%
Friends	15	17.9%
Parents/family member	16	19%
Social media	20	23.8%
Others	12	14.3%

Family and school Discussion related to puberty and female menstrual process is very important but Nowadays generations are very fast and social media users also increased. Above table 2 shows school and teachers 25% are play major role to informed about menstruation along with social media users are 23.8%. where parents and family

members, friends and others informer were 19%, 17.9% and 14.3 % respectively.

Table 3: Knowledge related to absorbent uses during menstruation

NO	Knowledge related to absorbent uses during menstruation	N	%
1	Types of absorbent women or girls mostly use and available in the markets		
	Cloths	4	4.8%
	Sanitary napkins	70	83.3%
	Tampons	4	4.8%
	Menstrual cups	6	7.1%
2	No of sanitary napkins should change in a day		
	Once in a day	6	7.1%
	Twice in a day	42	50%
	Thrice in a day	10	11.9%
	More than thrice in a day	10	11.9%
	If feeling wet	12	14.3%
3	Absorbent disposed		
	Direct in the dustbin	2	2.4%
	Wrap and throw in dustbin	78	92.8%
	Burned it in open space	0	0%
	Dumping	4	4.8%
	Flush in toilet	0	0%
	Throw anywhere	0	0%

As per table 3 knowledge about absorbent uses during menstruation most of the participants aware about sanitary napkins (83.3%), which is most commonly used during menstruation. Nowadays tampons and menstrual cup users are also increase and some of the participants also know about tampons (4.8%) and menstrual cup (7.1%) and few of them still believe in cloths (4.7%). Menstrual hygiene management is very important in routine practice. If same napkins used throughout the day and night leads to develop serious illness. we found half of the participants (50%) answered sanitary napkins should change twice in a day. Other 7.1%, 11.9%, 14.3% and 4.8% answered once, thrice or more than thrice, if feeling wet and no idea respectively. Worldwide absorbent disposed issue is a major concern but good part we seen our study where 92.8% participants agree and know perfect disposed technique like wrap and proper disposed in dustbin.

Table 4: Attitude of men and boys' towards menstruation

NO	Attitude towards menstruation	Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	n	%
1	Freely discuss about menstruation with family	80	95.2%	4	4.9%
2	Important to involvement of men & boys towards menstrual awareness	70	83.3%	14	16.7%
3	Helping women/girl for purchasing absorbent	74	88.1%	10	11.9%
4	Approach to doctors or gynecologist during any menstrual related problems	84	100%	0	0%
5	Girl/female school, college, office absenteeism	70	83.3%	14	16.7%
6	Avoid social function	70	83.3%	14	16.7%
7	Proper sleep/rest during period	68	80.9%	16	19.0%
8	Access to clean water and used soap for cleaning genitals are important	84	100%	0	0%

Male in a different role in the society as a father, brother, husband, friend, teacher and many more with female, is a very important to understand her feelings and any problems related menstruation at every aspect of her life. Because girls and women face various changes in her body since teens menstruation, adulthood pregnancy and at the later stage menopause. In the present study as per above table 4 we found positive attitude of participants towards female. 95.5% participants agreed to freely discuss about menstruation with family members. 83.3% participants agreed to involvement of them in menstrual awareness program. 88.1% participants positively agreed for helping women and girls for purchase any kind of menstrual needs where others 11.9% feeling hesitate and disagreed to helps female. All participants agreed to approach gynecologist if they found any problems related to menstruation. 83.3% participants believed that girls or women should avoid social function and even take a leave from school or work place during menstruation were rest of the 16.7 % male disagreed. 80.9% participants agreed for importance of rest during menses were rest of 19% disagreed and believe in that girls and women should active during menses also like other days. All participants agreed to maintain hygiene during menses.

Table 5: Believe in cultural restriction

NO	Believe in cultural restriction	Agree		Disagree	
		n	%	n	%
1	Women and girls are unhygienic during menstrual periods	0	0%	84	100%
2	Do not touch others during menstruation	4	4.9%	40	95.2%
3	Do not enter in the kitchen	0	0%	84	100%
4	Do not wash head	0	0%	84	100%
5	Do not sleep on the bed	0	0%	84	100%
6	Do not enter in the temple	84	100%	0	0%
7	Severe pain during menstruation is normal	0	0%	84	100%
8	Do not drink cold beverage	0	0%	84	100%
9	Avoid sour food like curd, pickle, etc.	4	4.9%	80	95.2%

Many of the people still believe and follow the myths and cultural restriction during menstruation. In the present study many of the participants disagreed about certain myths. As per above table 5 all participants disagreed in cultural restriction of women and girls are unhygienic during menstrual periods, do not touch others, do not wash head, do not sleep on the bed, severe pain during menstruation is normal and do not drink cold beverage. Where all 100% participants agreed in do not enter in the temple. 4.9% participants agreed to avoid food like pickle, curd during menstruation and do not touch others during menstruation.

4. Discussion

There is a paucity of research in the field of male awareness towards female reproductive health and related issues, lack of knowledge regarding gender puberty and related changes among male and female. Some of the researcher found narrative attitude towards female during menstruation and lack of knowledge about MHM among male^{16,17}. The current study shared that the majority of the participants know about the menstruation and related issues especially about the

cause of menstruation, organ related to menstruation, psychological issues during menstruation. And most of the participants show positive attitude towards female.

Allen et al. revealed that how boys directly and indirectly learn and know about menstruation. In their study, participants reported that learning first from the family conversations commonly at the onset of a sister's menarche and later developed by communication with women such as friends and girlfriends⁹. Other researcher also found that Most of the adolescent boys had heard about menstruation and an idea about what menstruation is, most of the boys describing menstruation as a natural process of body. However, they found lack of knowledge about the menstruation process. other studies from several countries have reported similar results among adolescent boys (10-12). Boys and male in our study were obtained information about menstruation by teachers. One of the research projects from Taiwan by Chang et al reported that boys prefer going online to find this topic like some of our participants did report that used of social media for knowing about menstruation¹³. We found some of the parents also discuss this topic with their family. Therefore, importance of educate them prior at the school and family level, when they are at the age of puberty and eager to know about it, so they can manage themselves and helps others. Fewer studies reported that teachers feeling discomfort during teaching adolescent health and related issues in the school^{14,15}.

Furthermore, our study focus on knowledge about absorbent materials most commonly used by female and how to manage hygiene during menstruation. We found lack of the data about this aspect. Very few of the studies reported that boys wrongly believe that such kind of absorbent smell are unpleasant odor from the menstrual blood. This paucity of the research among male the need to provide sufficient menstrual hygiene education to them¹⁹.

Several researches have shown that old rigid cultural practices and myths about menstruation have effect on the girl and women lives^{20,21,22}. Even they found that girls were debarred from attend any of religious activities during the menstruation. We also found same from our participants to confirmed this practice. One of the researcher in Nepal also found common restriction among the respondents was abstinence from religious activities²¹.

Some of the researcher reported, in india most of the male and school educators are feeling uncomfortable and effeminate to talk related to menstruation²³. Even they alloy and fact that they don't have any experience about menstruation where few of them have good knowledge and understanding and supporting behavior towards female. Many of girls and women have premenstrual and perimenopausal symptoms which cause a lot of distress. Some of the women received support from male and other family members who experienced better emotionally and physically. Whereas most of the women reported they worked without compromised and continue with household activities²⁴. In present study we found very positive and supportive attitude of participants male towards female as a various role in community.

In India many of the region follows the cultural myths, most of the girls and women are not allow daily activities during menstruation. She can not enter in the puja room of home and not enter in the temple in modern society where Women belong to ruler area not entering in the kitchen also²⁵. Our study also found similar cultural myths of impurity during menstruation and she cannot go to the temple.

Some of the researcher reported that during menstruation women are unhygienic and unclean and if she touched preserve food like pickle during menstruation it turns to bad. Therefore, they are refrain to touch preserved food and kitchen storage food. In present study we found lack of the similarity in dietary restriction. However, most of the participants disagree in such kind of belief. Some of the researcher found that in some Indian region, people followed some strict food restrictions like sour food curd, pickle, tamarind during menstruation. They believed that such kind of foods will affect the flow of menstruation^{25,26,27}.

When Young girls grow towards reproductive age, they have lack of knowledge about menstruation and related issues because their mothers and other family member just explain basic terms and feel shy and away from discussing the issues with them. Same in Adult phase many of women may not be aware of the physiological process of body changes during adulthood and related issues, but they surrounded by cultural taboos and restrictions. There is also need to spread awareness by community-based health education, increased school teachers awareness regarding menstruation and include topic in education and explain to both gender students. There is also need to Increasing the role of the male partner to stand with her and confronting all deep-rooted cultural myths and taboos^{28,29}.

We acknowledge some limitations in the present study including only boys and male from urban area most they all are educated, Male from ruler area may have different thinking about menstruation were not enrolled. Thus, we need to provide health education and reproductive health awareness program in ruler and urban places in which specially includes male and discuss various problems of female with them without feeling shy.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights that males are increasingly aware of menstruation as a physiological process and recognize the importance of menstruation hygiene. However, cultural myths persist, indicating the need for targeted awareness programs. Integrating menstrual education for both genders in schools and communities can foster a supportive environment for women and girls.

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Data Availability: The authors confirm that the data supporting the finding of present study are available as on requirement or request.

Abbreviation:

MHM: Menstrual hygiene management

WASH: Water Sanitation and Hygiene

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