

***Menstrual Health, Hygiene and Social Taboos
amongst the women: A Sociological Study at
Berhampore , Murshidabad, WB***

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Abstract:

Menstrual health and hygiene are essential for each and every woman an adolescent girl to the wellbeing and empower them. On any given day there are more than 300 million women in worldwide who all are menstruating. In total, an estimated 500 million women who are lack access to menstrual products and adequate information for manage their menstrual health. Standing in the 21st century we still see that many women are strictly adhere social taboos. Specially in slums and villages or they are barred from entering the temple. As an example we can see that famous Sabarimala temple case located in Kerala. To practically manage their periods girls and women need to access water, sanitation and hygiene. Hygienic menstrual materials, information on good practices and their supportive environment where they can freely manage their menstruation without any stigmatization. According to The WHO and UNICEF joint monitoring programme 2012, menstrual hygiene management is defined as:

“women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary using soap and water for washing the body as required and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials. They understand the basic facts linked to menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fair”. In the light of above context, the present research aims to analyse physical or mental health issues during menstruation. It aims to analyse social taboos related to menstruation. Also, it aims to analyse they maintain hygiene during menstruation. The research is mainly purposive study based on both qualitative and quantitative data sample size is 20 women residing in Berhampore, Murshidabad. The research findings are analysed with the help of both primary and secondary data.

Keywords: Menstruation, Physical and Mental health issues, Hygiene and Social taboos.

Introduction:

In medical science menstruation is the regular discharge of blood and mucosal tissue from the inner lining of the uterus through the vagina.

The menstrual cycle is mainly occurred by the rise and fall of hormones. Menstruation is triggered by falling progesterone levels and it is a sign that pregnancy has not occurred. More than 300 million women worldwide are menstruating. Most of the girls have no prior knowledge about it due to the ignorance of family elders. Lack

of hygiene has seen due to inadequate information and ignorance of menstruation. Not using clean clothes or pads during menstruation can cause genital itching, urinary track infections as well as uterine cancer. The only way to get rid of it is to stay clean. Many taboos have been in place for centuries regarding this menstruation process.

Although menstruation is a normal natural phenomenon it is considered shamefully dirty and negative in many parts of the world. Most of the girls in developing countries miss the school for at least 3 days every month because of their periods. No, most of the women in the country face the problem of uterine infection at one point or another due to unhealthy periods. Most of the women in our country are still seen wearing unhygienic cloths. There are many incidents like the death of women due to various restrictions in this regard. Menstruation is an important factor without which reproduction is not possible. however, it is important to find out whether there are any differences between rural and urban constraints by removing this prevailing prejudice against patriarchal silence, it is possible to give women a healthy and beautiful life by spreading the light of knowledge among all. “International menstruation day” is celebrated every year on May 26th all over the world bust the myths of menstruation and create awareness of and importance of menstrual hygiene. In 2014 at the initiative of the German NGO “WASH”.

Review of Literature:

Emmanuel Odongo et.al, (2023) established in their study the prevalence of menstrual disorders and their effect on the quality of

life of female UG students in Makerere University College of Health and Science. Of the 275 participants, 269 reported one of the different forms of menstrual disorders considered in this study including irregular menstrual cycle, frequent menstruation, infrequent menstruation, intermenstrual bleeding, and dysmenorrhea.

Nazish Rafique et.al, (2018) discussed that 91% of the students were suffering a different kind of menstrual problems reported, and their incidences included irregular menstruation (27%), abnormal vaginal bleeding (9.3%), amenorrhea (9.2%), menorrhagia (3.4%), dysmenorrhea (89.7%) and premenstrual symptoms (46.7%). High perceived stress was identified in 39% of the students.

G. Alekhya et.al, (2023) discussed that “there were 100 articles with 100 and more citation pertaining to the menstrual health of adolescent girls cross sectional study design, obstetrics and gynaecology department India and US countries, and PLOS ONE journal had the most citations in research on menstrual health among adolescent girls the top 10 articles were on menorrhagia, menstrual hygiene practices water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) stigma on menstruation and education on menstrual health.

Pratiksha Puranik & Jayashree Dhote, suggested that hormonal imbalances have relation with food intake because that females are faced irregular periods and the problems suffered by females regarding their reproductive cycle and due to psychological stress anxiety and depression.

BJOG: an international journal of obstetrics & Gynaecology suggested that “Approximately 4-8% of women report having menstrual period longer than 7 to 8 days when interviewed. similarly, the self-reported prevalence of excessive, profuse or heavy bleeding was 4-9% in most studies the 3-months self-reported prevalence of excessive bleeding was higher ranging from 8% to 27%.”

Delfin A. Tan et.al studied various cultural aspects and mythologies about menstruation “mythological tales characterise menstrual blood variously as sacred, a gift from the gods or a punishment for sin but it is always magical and powerful.”

Significance for the selection of the study:

the reason I choose the study to try to understand what the physical or mental problems are they have faced due to menstruation. I have also tried to find out how much they are aware about the hygiene of menstruating health and how much they have proper information about menstruation living in Berhampore, Murshidabad district.

Objectives:

Incongruence with the title of the research topic study was conducted with the following objectives,

- To find out the types and frequency of problems related to menstruation in women and the effect of these problems on daily routine.
- To how much women are aware of sanitation and hygiene

during menstruation.

- To find out how the women are adhering social taboos due to menstruation.

Methods and materials:

The research methodology can be expressed followingly: -

Since this study is a descriptive type. So, I have used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to carry out this research to find out what and how women experienced menstrual cycles in the sample size was 20. Women are selected through purposive sampling residing in Berhampore, Murshidabad district. I used semi structured questionnaire to collect their responses by personal interview.

Result and Discussion:

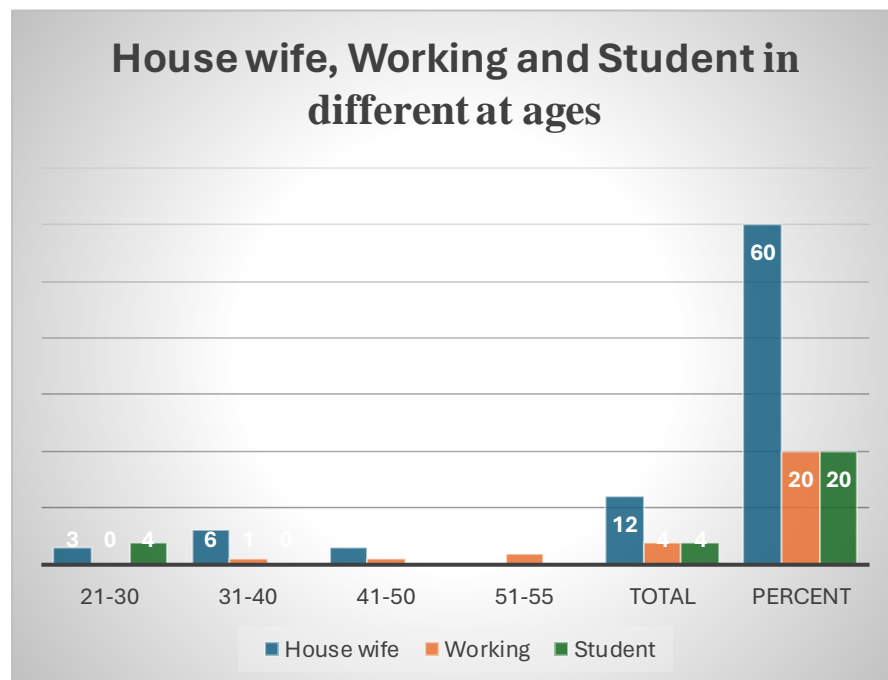


Figure-1

The sample size was 20. And majority of them housewife 60%, 20% respondents are working in various sectors (Academic, shop keeper and maid servant). And rest of 20% respondents are students. Only 5 women are facing health issue out of 20.

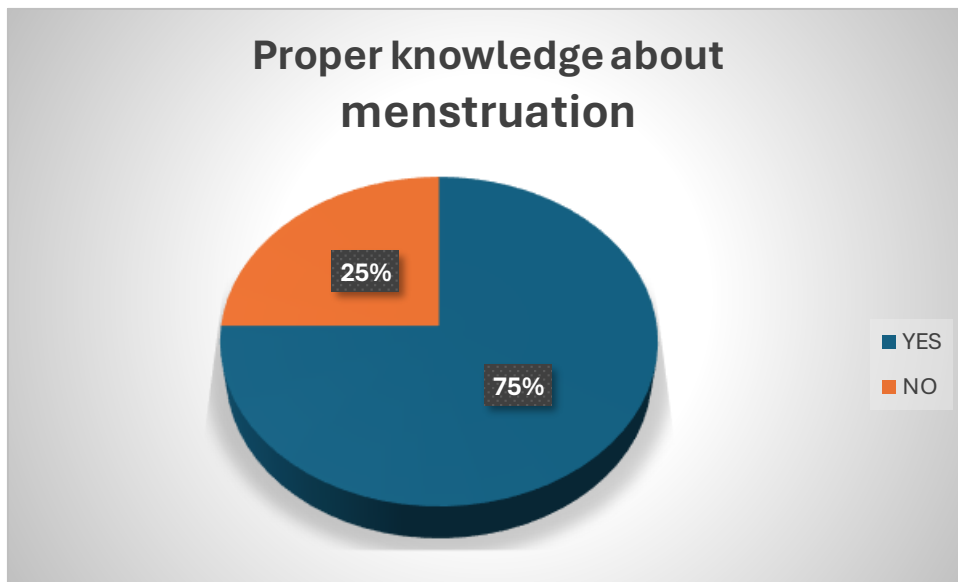


Figure- 2

There are 75% of respondents have idea about menstrual cycle. That how menstruating it, how to maintain hygiene and stay aware about the menstruating health. Totally they have adequate information. On the other hand, 25% of respondents have no proper knowledge about menstruating health and lack of information they have faced some health issues like genital itching and urinary tract infections.

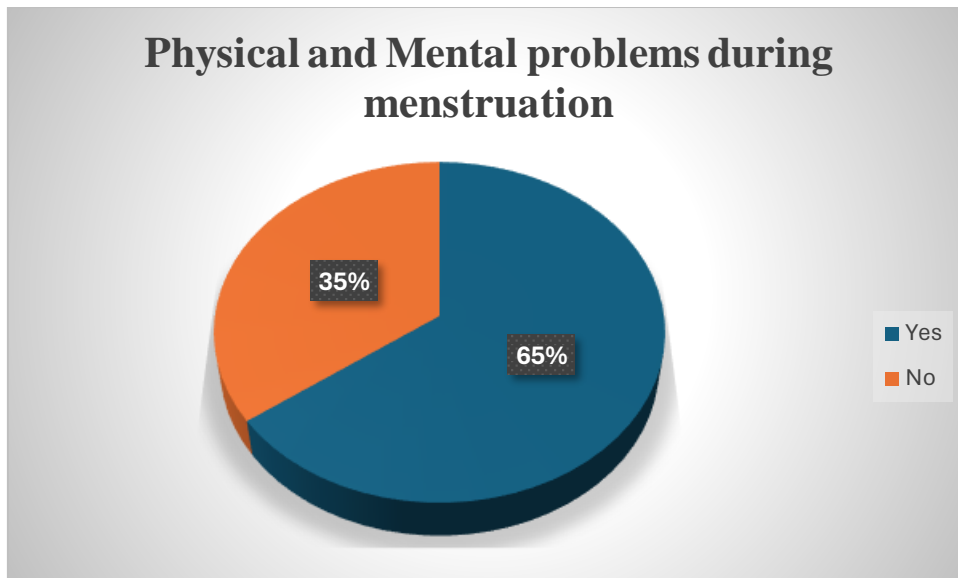


Figure-3

There are 65% respondents have faced health problems (menorrhagia, irregular periods, and pelvic pain). One of them (40 old) recently operate uterus for continue heavy flow. Another (52 old) respondent suffering from anxiety and heavy bleeding. (48 and 52) aged another two women faced irregular and painful periods since 1yr ago. It's called dysmenorrhea. After consulting with doctor, they are cured now. 35% respondents have no problem. They regular clearly menstruating.

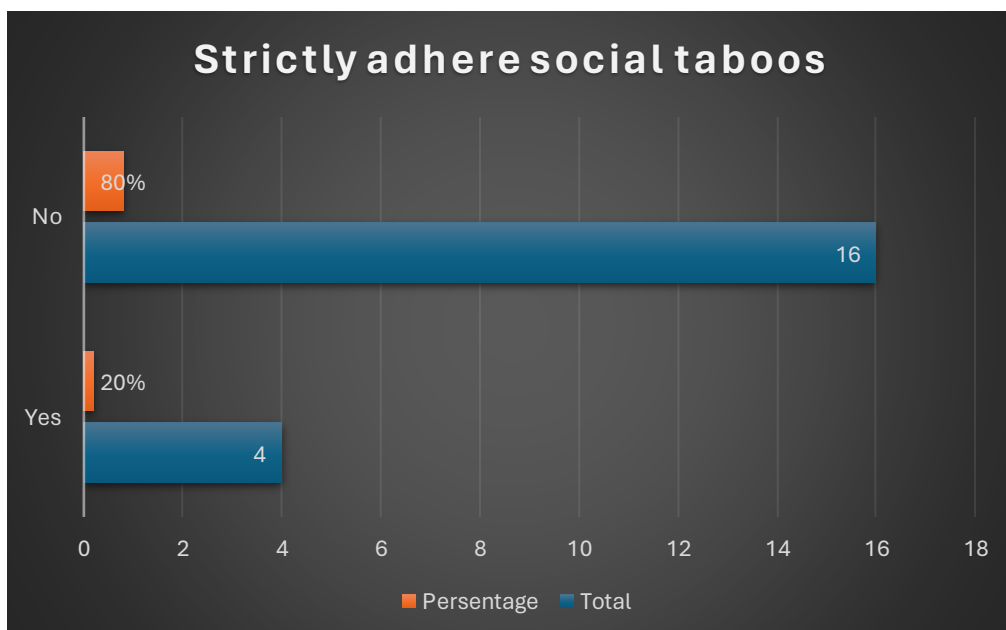


Figure- 4

There are 20% of the respondents strictly adhere social taboos. women who are strictly adhering these types of social rules like prohibited to enter in the temples, cannot participate at any kind of auspicious occasions due to this biological natural process. On the other side rest of the 80% women are not following these types of social rules.

Findings:

The study reveals the following findings which are: -

1. Between the ages of 40 to 50 years 13 women are found suffer from various kind of physical and mental problems like menorrhagia, pelvic pain, irregular periods, dysmenorrhea and anxiety.
2. 20% of the respondents strictly adhere some kind of social taboos. They do not enter temples, forbidden to participate any kind of auspicious occasions also they are isolating themselves from adoration of God due to menstruation.
3. 25% women have no proper knowledge about the menstruating health and how to maintain hygiene. Most of them do hard work during this period. And feeling very weak. Also, they have neglect to take care of their health.
4. Few women do not intake healthy and nutritious food despite of doing hard labour in factories and as maid servant at other house they are looking very weak also they are economically poor section.
5. Majority of the women suffer in menstruating health issue due to negligence and work pressure they do not take proper care of their health.

Conclusion:

Why the studies important because women play an important role to both family and building a society these menstrual health issue majority impacted on their health in the study, I try to elucidate the

difference between the literate and illiterate workers and housewife employed and student regarding perception of their menstruating health and hygiene menstruating health issue and social taboos regarding this study I had concluded the following points: -

1. Do not intake healthy and nutritious food and doing heavy work economically poor women are fall in sickness.
2. In literate women due to negligence and work pressure they suffer in health issue.
3. Due illiteracy some women strictly adhere the social taboos.

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