

## Knowledge and Practice of Menstruation Period Among the Girls at J.S. Murarka Multiple Campus, Lahan (Siraha)

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### Abstract

*The article highlights knowledge and practice regarding the menstruation period of those girls who are studying at the bachelor level at J.S. Murarka Multiple Campus, Lahan (Siraha). This study is based on primary data. A questionnaire had been prepared to gather information from the students. Altogether 120 girls were purposively selected as the respondents. The result shows that half of the girls (50%) had heard about the menstruation from their mothers and only 4.1 % had received information from books or health-related materials. Likewise, majority- 41.6 % of the students faced lower abdominal pain and discomfort during their first menstruation due to lack of knowledge about menstruation. Among the respondents 12.5 % were only found to be using sanitary pads during their periods. And after use, pads/materials disposal is challenging in our culture. In our tradition, they still do not burn used pads.*

**Keywords:** *Knowledge and practice, waste bin, menstruation period, sanitary pad*

### Introduction

In Nepal, only a few girls have adequate knowledge of menstruation and proper practice in their menstruation period. Lack of adequate and consistent knowledge of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and the biological process of menstruation such as this is a signal of maturation and ability to take part in sexual and reproduction. It is reported that only 28 percent of public schools

in Nepal have separate facilities of the toilet for girls. Many girls experience fear, confusion, and concern at the time of menarche. In Nepal, 83% of the menstruating girls use cloth while only 15% use pads. Mothers are the immediate source for information, and they provide support during menstruation, followed by sisters and female friends. Furthermore, the importance of menstrual hygiene management has been in the context of Nepal, where the average age of

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menarche is 13.5 years old, menstruation is generally considered unclean and shameful (PSI/Nepal, 2017 p.1).

Sapkota D. et al. (2013, p. 122) found that 36.1% correctly reported about menstruation where the most common informant was the mother (39.3%). Dysmenorrhea was the commonest problem faced during menstruation (78.7%) followed by back pain and excessive blood loss. More than half of respondents (54.1%) used sanitary pads and the frequency of changing pads twice a day was the highest (50.8%). The initial reaction was of fear/apprehension at menarche by 36.1% of girls whereas 44.3% perceived it as an expectant process. Girls still faced different types of restrictions like not being allowed to visit holy places. Traditional beliefs regarding menstruation persist and menstrual hygiene among adolescents was found to be unsatisfactory. It highlights the need for targeted interventions to raise awareness and provision of a family health education package to all girls. Menstrual hygiene is an issue that needs to be addressed at all levels.

Menstruation is a natural phenomenon and is a sign of puberty; menarche and menopause are naturally gifted. It occurs naturally and challenges most girls because of their psychological and physiological changes. This state is a transitional phase in life from childhood

to adulthood. During this time, girls' body has acute changes; physical changes such as increase body size ability to reproduce as well as psychological changes and sensitive to body image. Some girls miss school during the menstruation period and eventually drop out because of menstruation-related issues such as the unavailability of the sanitary pad, social taboos related to menstruation. Before the onset of menstruation, girls have experienced tension, depression, tiredness, and irritability pre-menstrual symptom which affects girls to other students and teachers too.

Today's girl student involves more time in different educational activities although they stay home due to menstrual cramping, bleeding as well as menstrual signs and symptoms, hormonal changes affect on health (irritation, depression, discomfort), insufficient hygiene and sanitation materials, inadequate water and sanitation facilities in the school, unsupportive environments, even they hesitate to participate school activities for fear menstruation accidents. They have afraid of seeing other bloodstains on her cloth.

### **Statement of the problem**

This is an important part of Reproductive Health (R.H) that is left behind and without the proper management of their menstruation period eventually, they

have chances to suffer many STIs. During the period of menstruation, lack of proper knowledge of its management makes them uncomfortable and unhygienic ways, especially using dirty clothes. Most of them use re-useable cloths during menses. The use of sanitary pads among adolescent girls in urban areas is higher in comparison to adolescent girls in rural areas. Due to the high cost of readymade sanitary pads and the availability of low economic status rural villagers, adolescent girls can't use them. Adolescent girls, as well as women in rural villagers, dry their reusable pads outside the home, but private place because if seen by other boys/men, they may tease them. The majority of adolescent girls bury or throw the used pads with other waste, while very few of them burn the used pads. In both rural and urban schools, proper disposal of pads and cloths poses a significant challenge (PSI, 2017).

(USAID, 2016) reported on girls are not attending school because of periods. Some girls have experienced during the period physical pain; discomfort and fatigue; heavy bleeding; leaking through clothing; fear that everyone will know or find out that they are menstruating; shame and embarrassment; not feeling free to be with friends or classmates; not feeling comfortable around males; and washroom facilities not being available.

Women and adolescent girls use clean material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, and this material can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of menstruation. MHM also includes using soap and water for washing the body as required and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials (WHO-UNICEF). According to (DHS 2016) during menstruation, a majority of girls (89%) also experienced some form of restrictions or exclusion. Only 28% of public schools in Nepal have separate facilities with toilets for girls. In Nepal, 83% of the menstruating girls use cloth while only 15% use pads.

In public schools there is no adequate water facility in the toilet, it is so difficult. Also, there is no arrangement of disposing of the cloth. Sometimes the used cloth has to be put in her bag and dispose of it after school/campus time. Without proper hygiene and sanitation facilities, separate rooms for bathing, cleaning, and washing in schools/campus, the girls with this period body becomes offensive or bad odor environment becomes an inconvenience.

Menstruation is a natural phenomenon and is a sign of puberty; menarche and menopause are naturally gifted. It occurs naturally and challenges most girls because of their psychological and physiological changes. This state is a

transitional phase in life from childhood to adulthood. During this time, girls' body has acute changes; physical changes such as increase body size ability to reproduce as well as psychological changes and sensitive to body image. Some girls miss school during the menstruation period and eventually drop out because of menstruation-related issues such as the unavailability of the sanitary pad, social taboos related to menstruation. Before the onset of menstruation, girls have experienced tension, depression, tiredness, and irritability pre-menstrual symptom which affects girls to other students and teachers too.

Today's girl student involves more time in different educational activities although they stay home due to menstrual cramping, bleeding as well as menstrual signs and symptoms, hormonal changes affect on health (irritation, depression, discomfort), insufficient hygiene and sanitation materials, inadequate water and sanitation facilities in the school, unsupportive environments, even they hesitate to participate school activities for fear menstruation accidents. They have afraid of seeing other bloodstains on her cloth.

### **Objectives**

- To study the culture of practice of students' menstruation period
- To find out problems faced by students during the menstruation

period

- To assess materials used during menstruation period and its disposal.

### **Significance of the study**

- The study has explored that school where lack of proper management, washing, cleaning, water supply, separate toilet for girls, and changing room for privacy.
- It motivates the teacher to focus to teach reproductive health.
- This study guides to plan and policies of girls' friendly school.
- This study is useful to find out knowledge and exiting practice of menstruation.
- This study supports to find out problem faced during the period.
- The study uses part of the literature for further research in a similar study.
- The study result is helpful to lecturers and staffs to manage present situation.
- The study is useful for the NGOs, INGOs, MOHP, DHO/PHO, DEO, and DDC, to implement a program in this area.

### **Literature review**

Pandey (2014) had studied entitled "Challenges Experienced by Adolescent

Girls while Menstruation in Kathmandu, Valley” showed that the menstrual period of a girl is more vulnerable to infection. They mostly use clothes during the period and practices in restrictions to go to any holy places. Most of them are not use sanitary pad because they cannot afford always. They usually use old cloth material when staying at home and use a sanitary pad only when they need to go out. Modern safety pads are frequently used in school times. They re-use a single cloth for two to three menstrual cycles; it is okay during winter, however summer it is very uncomfortable. It rubs against the skin and becomes smelly. They added that the number of times of use also depends on the nature of blood stain on the cloth-if the stain is strong they don't use it again. It was identified that in the time of menstruation girls are prone to diseases like hemorrhage, anemia, UTI, STI, overflow of blood, with symptoms like weakness, headache, back pain, backbone pain, leg pain, lethargy. In public schools, there is no adequate water facility in the toilet it is so difficult. Also, there is no arrangement of disposing of the cloth. Sometimes the used cloth has to be put in her bag and dispose of after school time.

Sapkota (2013) had conducted a study entitled ' Knowledge and practices regarding menstruation among school-going adolescents of rural Nepal' highlighted menstruation is a sign of

a girl's childhood to adulthood and sexual maturation takes place. Menstrual hygiene and management is an issue that is insufficiently acknowledged and has not received adequate attention. This study was done to assess the knowledge and practices regarding menstruation among school-going adolescents. A descriptive study was done among sixty-one female adolescents of Shree Himali Secondary School, Panchkanya, Sunsari, where data were collected from the adolescents meeting the inclusion criteria. It was found that 36.1% correctly reported about menstruation where the most common informant was the mother (39.3%). Dysmenorrhea was the commonest problem faced during menstruation (78.7%) followed by back pain and excessive blood loss. More than half of respondents (54.1%) used sanitary pads and the frequency of changing pads twice a day was the highest (50.8%). The initial reaction was of fear/apprehension at menarche by 36.1% of girls whereas 44.3% perceived it as an expectant process. Girls still faced different types of restrictions like not being allowed to visit holy places, not being allowed to cook and touch male family members, etc. Traditional beliefs regarding menstruation persist and menstrual hygiene among adolescents was found to be unsatisfactory.

PSI/Nepal (2017) had carried out a study “Menstrual health and hygiene in Nepal”

and is elaborated that menstruation is signals of a girl's entry into womanhood, sexual activity, reproduction ability of adolescents, and in this period girls learn as well as takes experiences their body changes. Girls have not enough knowledge yet to knowledge for management of this period so that they do the unhealthy practice. In Nepal, only a few girls have adequate knowledge about menstruation and its good management. Also, girls have sexual and reproductive health problems. They are faced many challenges, gender disparity, and other discriminatory social norms in society. According to (DHS 2016) child marriage is legally prohibited but 17% of girls aged 15-19 become married. During menstruation, a majority of girls (89%) also experienced some form of restrictions or exclusion. There exists limited research on menstrual health and hygiene in Nepal, even though studies confirm that adolescent girls lack consistent access to education on sexual and reproductive health and menstrual health. With inadequate education, they lack even a basic understanding of the biological process of menstruation, such as knowing that the menstrual blood flows from the vagina. Poor sanitation facilities and unavailability of the water supply has exacerbated poor menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls. Only 28% of public schools in Nepal have separate facilities with toilets for girls.

In Nepal, 83% of the menstruating girls use cloth while only 15% use pads. Mothers are the immediate source for information, and they provide support during menstruation, followed by sisters and female friends.

Ravi (2018) had mentioned in this studied 'Social impact of menstrual problems among adolescent school girls in rural Tamil Nadu' reveals that menstruation is a period of physiological social transition between childhood and adulthood and characterized by the onset of menstruation in girls. This study was carried out to assess the psychosocial impact of menstrual problems among school-going adolescent girls. Data regarding background characteristics and psychosocial impact of menstrual problems were collected. Data were analyzed using SPSS ver. 15 software; the mean age of the participants was 14.7 years. In this study, 87.7% of the girls had at least one menstrual problem. Among these, 78.5% could not attend school during menstruation. It was observed that dysmenorrheal and menorrhagia was at increased risk of absenting the girls from school.

Geeta (2016) had briefed in quality research entitled 'Menstrual Hygiene Management among Schoolgirls in Eastern Province of Zambia' that defines Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) girls use a clean material to



absorb or collect menstrual blood, and this material can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of menstruation. It includes using soap and water for washing the body as required and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials (WHO-UNICEF). Some girls are not attending school during their periods because of physical pain because of discomfort and fatigue, heavy bleeding, blood leaking through clothing, and fear that anyone will know they are menstruating.

### Study design and methodology

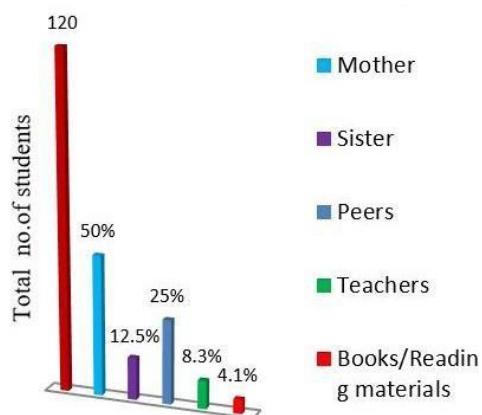
This is based on a descriptive and qualitative type of research design. The sampling population is all bachelor level girls who are studying at J.S. Murarka Multiple Campus, Lahan where 120 students were selected as respondents by the purposive method.

The question was in the Nepali language structured and questionnaires were mentioned both close and open so that information from the respondents could be taken correctly. Source of information regarding menstruation, problem faced by students during menstruation period, assess things to use during menstruation period, and disposal of used cloths/pad after a period were included.

### Data collection procedure and interpretation

J.S. Murarka Multiple Campus was chosen for the study. The girls of bachelor level having age above 19 years who had already experienced menarche were included in this study. The data was collected from the respondents by the help of interview. Data was collected only from those who were interested and available at the time of data collection. After completing the data collection, the data was interpreted using a simple percentage.

**Figure No. 1**  
**Source of Information**

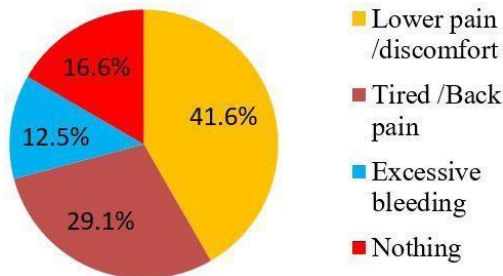


Data source: Primary JSMMC Survey 2018

Among the respondents of the study, from Figure 1 it has found that almost half of girls 50% heard about the menstruation period from their mothers. Therefore, mothers were the first source of information. Likewise, 12.5% respondents heard from sisters. The majority of respondents 25% were shared their menarche with their peers while only

8.3% respondents had got information from their teachers or elderly people. It is noted that only 4.1 % respondents claimed that they received information from books or health-related materials.

**Figure No. 2**  
**Problem during menstustion**

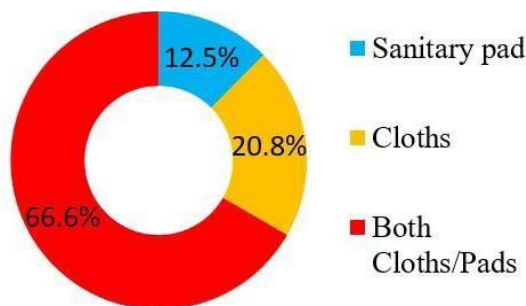


Source: Primary data, survey, JSMMC, 2018

The above data shows that majority of the girls during the period 41.6% have faced lower pain and discomfort. Likewise 29.1 % respondents have experienced tired and back pain. Among them 12.5% respondents have excessive bleeding, and the rest of the respondents 16.6% have not any problem.

**Figure No. 3**

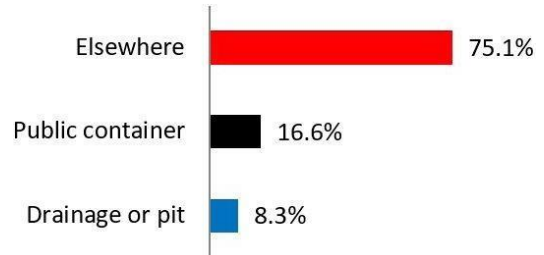
**The thing to use during menstruation**



Source: Primary data, survey, JSMMC, 2018

The above data shows that only some 12.5 students told that they usually used the sanitary pad whereas 20.8% used clothes and a majority 66.6% used both pad and cloths as far as possible.

**Figure No. 4**  
**Dispose of used cloth/pad**



Source: Primary data, survey, JSMMC, 2018

After the use of pads/materials during the period proper disposal is a challenging in our culture so far. They told that they do not burn used pad in our culture and they 8.3 % kept in drainage or pit. Likewise, 16.6 % kept it in a public container whereas the majority 75.1% said that they throw it elsewhere.

### Result and discussions

Categories	Student Responses	Total N=120	%
Source of information	Mother	60	50
	Sister	15	12.5
	Peers	30	25
	Teachers	10	8.3
	Books/Reading materials	5	4.1
Problem during menstruation	Lower pain /discomfort	50	41.6
	Tired /Back pain	35	29.1
	Excessive bleeding	15	12.5
	Nothing	20	16.6
The thing to use during menstruation	Sanitary pad	15	12.5
	Cloths	25	20.8
	Both Cloths/Pads	80	66.6
Dispose of used cloth	Drainage or pit	10	8.3
	Public container	20	16.6
	Elsewhere	90	75.1



As a result, many girls lack appropriate and sufficient information regarding menstruation hygiene only a few (4.1%) get information from the teacher and reading books. Therefore, they have faced many reproductive health problems. The majority (41.6%) of students have experienced lower abdominal and back pain (Dysmenorrhea) and excessive bleeding. Those girls are residing in a rural community and the poor cannot buy a sanitary pad. After using pad its proper disposal is a burning problem in our society due to cultural taboos.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

At the end of this research's findings the following recommendations are given below:

Half (50%) of the students are getting information about the menstrual period from the mother, sister, and female friends although reproductive health (RH) has been included in the curriculum. For this, lecturers should highlight this matter as well as more clear to the students in the class room.

As we all have already known that period is the sign of maturity of girls, generally menarche started from age of 16 and menopause at the age of 45 years in the female. During this period they have faced problems like lower abdominal pain, irritation, itching groin, infection of

interior part and discomfort. Therefore, campus should be providing minimum requirement like a changing room with soap and water for cleaning and washing. Furthermore, emotional support as well as minimum requirement only possible if nursing staff can recruit.

The majority (66.6 %) students use to be cloth and sometimes use sanitary pad because it is not easily found anywhere and the cost of the sanitary is high as general people cannot easily afford to buy frequently. We all have known at JSMCC has more than six hundred girls and they are being faced with problems day by day. Therefore, it is challenging although, it is recommended to need separate budget to fulfill minimum requirement.

Regarding proper disposal of used pads are challenging in our culture. Majority (75.1%) of students throw used pads and clothes improperly due to the lack of container and proper place of disposal. For this, it is recommended to keep a waste disposal container in the toilet for their privacy.

## **Abbreviations**

DHS	: Demography Health Survey
JKMC	: Journal of Kathmandu Medical College
PSI	: Population Services International
STI	: Sexually Transmitted Disease
SRH	: Sexual Reproductive Health

USAID : Unites States Agency for International Development  
 UNICEF : United Nations Children's Fund  
 WHO : World Health Organization  
 INGO : International Non-Governmental Organization  
 JSMMC : Jwala Prasad Syo Wali Devi Murarka Multiple Campus

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