

# A Study on Socio- Economic Conditions on Menstrual Hygiene Management of Adolescent Girls

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**Abstract** – Menstrual hygiene, as well as proper perception and belief, will protect women from suffering. The majority of women learn about menstruation and menstrual hygiene from their mothers, sisters, and aunts. Only a few people learn the correct information from teachers or health professionals. Infections of the reproductive tract and their consequences can be avoided with better knowledge and safe menstrual practices. The ideal menstrual health education program would encourage students to consider the connections between knowledge, behavior, and improved human health. It would also assist in the improvement of maternal health.

**Keywords** – Menarche, Menstruation, Menstrual Hygiene, Adolescent Girls, Menstrual Health, Management

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## INTRODUCTION

When adolescent females attend school in certain countries, menstrual hygiene management is an issue. There is no scientific evidence to support qualitative study that claims that leaking blood and body odor cause girls fear and humiliation, causing them to miss school 267. Girls' issues are exacerbated by cultural taboos, which hinder them from seeking therapy and limit their lifestyle and habits during menstruation. MHM deficiency might cause health problems. Recent international concern about MHM has centered on the need for integrity and privacy, as well as increasing visibility to end stigma and secrecy, having clean and reliable MHM absorbents available, and improving the school WASH system, which has been spearheaded by work to improve WASH in schools. Separate toilets for youngsters, as well as water and cleaning supplies, as well as proper treatment of filthy materials, are all included in the above.

Menarche refers to a female adolescent's first menstrual phase. On average, it occurs every 28 days, although it can occur at any time between 21 and 45 days. Menarche starts at the 12.4 years ago on average. Cycles usually last 3 to 7 days, with periods of more than 10 days being rare, Menarche is a precursor of female body maturation in adolescence. It is frequently linked to the ability to

ovulate and reproduce. Menarche, conversely, is not a guarantee of ovulation or fertility.

Menarche and menstruation are issues that each girl and woman must deal with from the time she enters adolescence at the 12 age she reaches menopause in her 40s. Menstruation is not a rare or unusual occurrence; however, it is a private and largely hidden one in many cultures. Menstruation was considered taboo due to no words for it. in the English language that can adequately describe the experience. Similarly, Lovering (1995) discovered that adolescents are uninterested in discussing menstruation. They have no other discourse with which to explain their knowledge than medical discourse, which describes pain, distress, and disorder. Unless these young ladies are experiencing period pain or are having difficulty obtaining a sanitary towel, they have nothing to say. When it comes to their menstruation, there is an unspoken "culture of silence." Nonetheless, girls have questions and concerns about their own menstruation, and they feel compelled to talk about it with their friends. Because it is socially taboo to, many parents avoid discussing it with their daughters, leaving them feeling unprepared for menarche (1).

## MENSTRUAL CYCLE AND OVULATION

Every adolescent boy and girl goes through puberty, which is the process by which a child's body transforms into an adult body capable of reproduction. Puberty is the time when a person's sexuality matures and they become fertile. Girls begin to develop breasts and their periods. Boys' voices become deeper, and facial hair begins to appear. Puberty can start at any age, but it usually starts in girls between the ages of 10 and 14, and in boys between the ages of 12 and 16. Puberty is linked to the emergence of secondary sex characteristics as well as rapid growth.

Menstruation (also known as menses/period/bleeding) is the process in which a woman discharges blood and other materials from the uterine lining (via the vaginal canal) at about one monthly intervals from puberty until menopause (the end of regular menstrual cycles), with the exception of pregnancy.

At birth, the ovaries of a female fetus contain 1 to 2 million immature eggs known as oocytes, which are the only eggs she will ever generate.

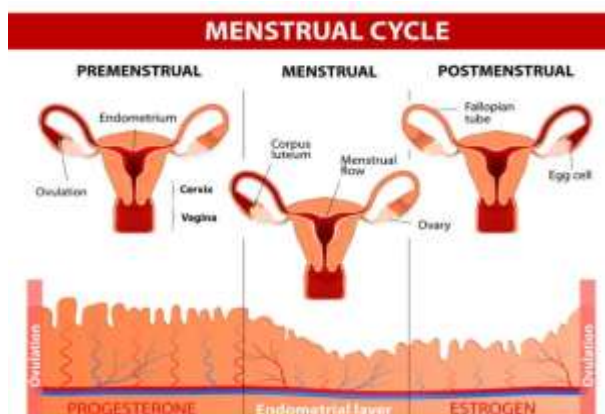


Figure 1: Menstrual cycle

### • Ovulation

The release of an egg from one of a woman's ovaries is known as ovulation. Ovulation is a one-day occurrence that happens roughly two weeks before a woman's menstruation is due, in the midst of her menstrual cycle. However, each woman's procedure takes a different period of time, and it might even alter month to month.

At the start of the menstrual cycle, the pituitary gland in the brain produces follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH). This is the primary hormone in the ovaries that stimulates the production of mature eggs or ovum. The Graafian follicle in the ovary is where an ovum develops. The fluid-filled cavities in the ovaries are known as follicles. One undeveloped egg is found in each follicle. The hormone FSH causes a number of follicles to develop and begin producing estrogen. The corpus luteum shrinks and the womb

lining is shed during menstruation if the ovum is not fertilized.



Figure 2: Overview of Menstrual Cycle

## INDIAN PRACTICES RELATED TO MENARCHE AND MENSTRUATION

Menarche is associated with a wide range of meanings. Menarche is met with a range of emotions, from joy and pride to fear and shame. Many anthropological accounts describe societies in which women withdraw to special menstrual huts and lodges during their periods, which may also be used during postpartum bleeding (2).

The onset of menstruation is often accompanied by a wide range of emotions. In the Indian cultural context, a girl's attainment of menarche is regarded as a biological indicator that she is ready to begin sexual relations. This can be seen in the traditional practice of "Gauna," which was popular in the past. Girls were married off at a young age in this system, but they remained at home with their parents until the marriage was consummated. When a girl reached menarche, however, the Gauna ceremony was performed, and the girl then went to live with her husband, where she began her married life (3). It's referred to as a river that rises once a month in traditional songs. When a girl reaches menarche in some parts of lower Assam, such as Pathsala, she is not given anything to eat or allowed to see male members of the family until the fourth day, when she is given the ritual bath of a bride. She is then married to a banana tree, as is customary, and there is much feasting and revelry (4).

Menstruation, and everything associated with it, has been viewed as simply negative in cross-cultural studies of many ethnic groups. Menstrual blood, as well as menstruating women, have been identified as hazardous, poisonous, and polluting. Menstruating women were thought to contaminate everything they came into contact with, including

horses, food, hunting gear, weapons, canoes, and water, as well as men's wealth and spiritual items. They were thought to ruin men's "luck" when it came to hunting and gambling (5). Menstruation has become unwelcome among adolescent girls as a result of these customs. The majority of these customs revolve around the question of whether a girl is pure or impure during menstruation. These taboos, which are still prevalent, are not only a threat, but also a serious consideration for health-care professionals (6).

## RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATION OF MENSTRUATION

Many cultures forbid menstruating women from accessing shrines and religious activities, as well as handling or touching holy artifacts or persons. For example, in African traditional religion, one of the requirements that trainee priestesses must follow is that she must leave the shrine for seven days each month during her menstrual cycle since menstrual blood is severely destructive to holy things (7, 8).

Menarche and menstruation are the subject of many myths and misinformation in various religions. These religious and cultural myths can become a part of a woman's life, despite the fact that they are socially constructed, and are passed down to girls around puberty. As a result, such attitudes reinforce shame and embarrassment, lowering girls' self-esteem. Many communities around the world have endured centuries of myths and taboos that have resulted in a female body ideology that has influenced the lives of women and girls in modern society. Religious teachings, traditional practices, and cultural beliefs have all contributed to the stigmatization of menstruating women's bodies (9).

## CELEBRATION OF MENSTRUATION ALL OVER THE WORLD

Women and girls are prevented from participating in everyday activities such as school because of period stigma and taboos. Some women and girls are even prohibited from living in their homes, eating certain foods, participating in religious activities, or socializing while on their period.

## PUBERTY RITUALS IN HINDUISM

Puberty rituals are observed by the majority of people in India, including the Assamese and the Kulu Paharis. With minor variations, all of these puberty rituals have the same undercurrent. These rituals are built on the foundations of confinement, nutritious food, and a ceremonial feast. Until recently, Maharashtra had austere puberty rituals, similar rituals but only for women, and a four-day ritual.

Menstruation and menstruating women are not immune to this sense of sacredness—a sense of

worship and celebration—attached to various aspects of life. The clearest illustration of this is the observance of the 'Ritu Kala Samskara.' Ritu Kala Samskara is a young girl's coming-of-age event that marks the start of menstruation.

## WORLD'S MAJOR RELIGIONS SAY ABOUT MENSTRUATION

Look no further than how most major world religions approach menstruation for proof that they were created by men for men. Most religions regard a woman's period as a problem, rather than seeing it as a natural part of God's creation. During a woman's monthly cycle, she must be kept apart from the religious community until she is "purified" once more.

### • Judaism& Menstruation

Judaism, of all religions, is perhaps the most anti-menstrual. This phase begins with the first drop of menstrual blood and lasts for the entire week following menstruation. She takes an elaborate ritual bath known as the mikveh at the end of the week. During this time, everything about the woman is considered unclean, including her clipped toenails. The death penalty is reserved for any man who has sexual intercourse "with a menstruous woman," according to the Babylonian Talmud.

### • Christianity & Menstruation

Of all the major world religions, Christianity has the least harsh attitude toward menstruation. Although some sects share the Old Testament attitude that a simple monthly period is "impure," they rarely go to the extreme of isolating a woman from the general community as if she were a leper. Women are forbidden from receiving communion while on their period in the Eastern Orthodox Church, which is the most anti-menses strain of Christianity.

### • Islam& Menstruation

The menstrual adha prevents women from conducting the five necessary prayers, touching the Qur'an, doing tawaf around the Ka'aba, or fasting. Some Muslim women avoid attending to the prayer hall or religious center while they are menstruating. In one hadith, Aisha relates that the Prophet ordered her to bring him a prayer mat when she was menstruating. When she informed the Prophet about her dilemma, he answered, "Your menstruation is not in your hand." Women are not fully excluded from the ceremony, according to this interpretation. During menses, a woman may perform personal prayers (du'a), read or listen to the Qur'an in secret, study other religious books, including hadith, and participate in

Eid festivities. Purification is achieved by washing the whole body, including the head, in a ceremonial bath (ghusl).

- **Buddhism& Menstruation**

Menstruation, according to Buddhism, is no more impure than any other bodily function. Some schools of Japanese Buddhism, however, forbid menstruating women from entering temples. The Vinaya Pitaka, a Buddhist Theravada text for nuns, contains a similar prohibition: If a novice is menstruation or has amenorrhea, her initiation cannot take place.

- **Jainism& Menstruation**

This religion has even questioned whether a person may reach emancipation while living in a female body, which is prone to diseases such as menstruation. When the Suttapahuda was composed some 150 years ago, this was the opinion of the Digambara (or naked) portion of the Jains. In this literature, the author Kundakunda claims that a woman's menstrual flow adds to her overall incapacity to be pure-minded, and that she is never entirely safe (himsa). This, more than the inappropriateness of female nudity, was the reason why women were unable to reach moksha (freedom), which was only possible to complete mendicants. In both Digambara and Svetambara ("white clad") schools in the early twenty-first century, all women are forbidden from the main cella of the mandir, which is near to the adored images, and women in menses are forbidden from the main hall.

- **Hinduism& Menstruation**

In Hinduism, menstruation is seen as a time of cleansing, and women are typically secluded from places of worship or any artifacts linked with it for the length of their cycle. Menstruating women have always been urged to observe specific norms. This is the basis for the majority of Hinduism's cultural rituals and limitations on menstruation.

- **Shaktism& Menstruation**

During the Ambubachi Mela, an annual fertility celebration held in June in Assam, India, menstruation is commemorated by Shaktism, a significant Hindu sect. During Ambubachi, the goddess Kamakhya's yearly menstrual phase is honored at the Kamakhya Temple. The temple reopens to visitors and worshipers after three days of shutdown. It is one of the most significant pilgrimage destinations in the world, receiving millions of tourists each year, particularly during the Ambubachi Mela, which draws up to 100,000 pilgrims every day over the duration of the four-day festival.

- **Menstruation & Zoroastrianism**

One of the world's oldest continuously practiced religions is Zoroastrianism. In Zoroastrianism, menstruation is considered a major source of pollution. Menstruation is considered an incursion of Angra Mainyu (the Destructive Spirit) in one of the Zoroastrians' ancient texts, the Vendidad, and menstruating blood is extremely polluting.

During their monthly cycle, women may opt to isolate themselves; they may not visit the fire temple, attend festivals, weddings, initiations, or burial rituals where fire will be present, or kindle a fire; they may not touch sacred texts or items; and they may refrain from sexual intercourse.

- **Menstruation & Shintoism**

Menstruating women are not only considered impure during their cycle, but also permanently impure simply because they menstruate, according to Japan's national religion. They were, however, forbidden from entering shrines and temples while on their period. Because of their "impurity," they are also prohibited from climbing certain "sacred" mountains. In the early Shinto holy writings, the Kojiki and Nihongi, which are the principal sources of Shinto myths and tales, menstruation was viewed as a sign that a woman was ready to take on the role of a spirit medium (miko).

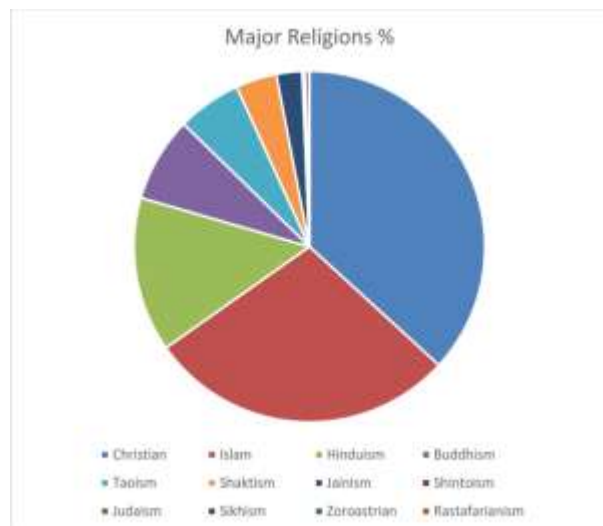
- **Menstruation and Taoism**

According to Chinese elders, menstrual blood represents the essence or vitality (chi) of Mother Earth, the yin principle that provides life to all things. Taoists believe that the essence of a woman's menstrual blood may be used to lengthen her life. A man's semen (Xing) serves a same purpose, storing all of his yang energy. When these two physiological fluids combine, they generate the Tao, or Way, which is the natural and everlasting source of life. Inner alchemy is claimed to enable higher-level Tao practitioners to halt the menstrual cycle, enabling its energy to flow up to the heart and brain. "Cutting the Red Dragon" is the term for this.

- **Menstruation & Sumerian Religion**

The snake is associated with the onset of menstruation in many cultures' mythologies. In legends given by the Wawalik people of northern Australia, women are followed, bitten, swallowed, or pierced by snakes, and it is this event that induces menstruation. Biblical authors have connected the Levitical bans on women in menses to the divine retribution of Eve when she consorts with the snake throughout history. As a result of Eve's "curse," all women have been "cursed".





**Figure 1.6: Menstruation & Sumerian Religion**

#### • **Impact of Greek & Roman Attitudes**

In the sixth century BCE, Hippocrates, a Greek physician, identified the four sensory characteristics of the human body as hot, cold, wet, and dry, which Empedocles subsequently linked to the four elements of fire, earth, water, and air. Males were formed up of the hot and dry positive elements and qualities of fire and air, while females were made up of the damp and cold negative elements and characteristics of water and earth. This natural science influenced Aristotle's (384–322 BCE) conclusion that menstrual blood was derived from the residue generated by women's cold, wet (passive) nature; women couldn't produce seed (semen) due to their coldness, so menstrual blood was simply the matter from which the fetus was conceived after the sperm had provided the form. Because menstrual blood represents unformed dead stuff, it was supposed to be an indication of a failed conception and consequently a failed existence. This negative idea endured throughout the Greek and Roman ages, as well as the origins of Christianity and beyond.

#### • **Hindu and Buddhist Perspectives - Modern Attitudes**

Women who prefer to observe a degree of isolation during menstruation for religious reasons claim to be freed from normal chores such as cooking, attending congregational worship, or addressing their spouse's sexual demands.

A contemporary gynecologist, Christiane Northrup, has revived the traditional relationship between the moon's cycle and a woman's monthly cycle. She argues that hormonal fluctuations throughout a woman's cycle impact her energy and emotions, so taking a vacation from the responsibilities of everyday life, particularly during the luteal phase of the cycle, when progesterone levels are high and the "dark of the moon" is represented, may be good

(Northrup 2002, pp.105-107, 134f.). This technique connects female biology to a creative psychological cycle that parallels nature's cycles.

### **MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN INDIA**

Millions of women are held back by stigma about their most basic sanitary need in the world's largest. Teenage girls and young women are expected to pursue education and jobs to some extent, but they lack access to technology and user-friendly products that can assist them in succeeding. India is Asia's third-worst country for gender discrimination, with sexual health taboos reflecting a dissatisfaction with the female body, which has an impact on women's economic contribution (10, 11).

### **CONCLUSION:**

In the field of menstrual hygiene, there is a lot of room for more research. Only 500 girls were examined in this study. As a result, future research involving a larger group of adolescent girls may be conducted in order to generalize the findings. This would aid in the development of appropriate health policies to address the issues faced by women who are heavily involved in social reproduction.

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