

Menstrual Hygiene Awareness, Challenges and Management for Improving Quality of Life.

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Abstract: Menstruation is a normal and necessary part of life, and maintaining proper menstrual hygiene is crucial for women's and girls' health as well as their right to access basic services for sanitation, hygiene, and reproductive health. The safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) aspect of menstrual hygiene has significantly gained attention in recent times. In low and middle-income nations, women face significant menstrual hygiene management challenges. These problems stem from a lack of information and inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. Women frequently struggle with a lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, or if they do, the high price of sanitary pads render them unaffordable. The lives of vulnerable women are significantly impacted by stigma and period poverty, forcing them to use unhygienic alternatives like dried leaves and soiled old clothes as sanitary pads. The Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed on May 28 because women menstruate on average five days per month and menstrual cycles last an average of 28 days. 25 percent of World Bank education projects included menstrual hygiene management components, such as the provision of sanitary and hygienic restrooms or separate restrooms for boys and girls in their schools. To empower women and tackle misinformation, this study will contribute to raising awareness regarding the management of menstrual hygiene.

Keywords: Menstrual Hygiene, WASH, Menstruation, Menstrual Hygiene Management.

1 Introduction

Menstruation, also known as menses, is a normal biological process in which the uterus releases blood and other related material through the vagina as part of the monthly cycle. [1] When a girl begins to menstruate for the first time, or at menarche, that is when menstruation begins. Management of the hygiene related to the menstrual process is referred to as menstrual hygiene management (MHM). Women make up half of the world's population, and during their lifespan, they have particular needs for managing their menstrual cycle. [2] To absorb menstrual blood and stop it from flowing during menstruation, women must utilize products or materials. A woman utilizes a menstruation product, which should be safe, available, economical, and assure dignity, to manage her monthly bleeding. [3] MHM is defined by WHO and UNICEF (2014) as "women and girls use clean menstrual hygiene management material to absorb or collect blood, that can be changed in private as and when necessary for the duration of the woman's period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials." [4]

Since 2014, May 28 has been recognized as Menstrual Hygiene Day to highlight approaches that can be taken at the global, national, and local levels to address these issues and to promote awareness of the difficulties that women and girls have in managing their menstrual cycles. [4] Many initiatives have been made in this regard throughout the years, and the most recent National Family Health Survey 4 (NFHS 4) data indicate that 57.6% of women use hygienic ways to protect themselves during their periods. [4]

Ayurveda is one of the few studies that examine reproductive issues apart from the three main life transitions of puberty, pregnancy, and menopause. [5] Furthermore, menstruation is examined especially by Ayurveda as a window into the human body. You may very clearly determine the dosha imbalances your body is dealing with on a month-to-month basis by becoming familiar with and tuned into your menstrual cycle. [5]

11 Wash: safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) problems and difficulties in low- and middle-income countries are receiving more attention from the global water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) community. [6] Daily body cleansing is crucial for maintaining menstrual hygiene, (figure 1). Since 2014, May 28 has been recognized as Menstrual Hygiene Day throughout the world to increase awareness of the difficulties women and girls encounter managing their menstrual cycles and to highlight solutions that may be put into practice at the global, national, and local levels to address these issues. [7]

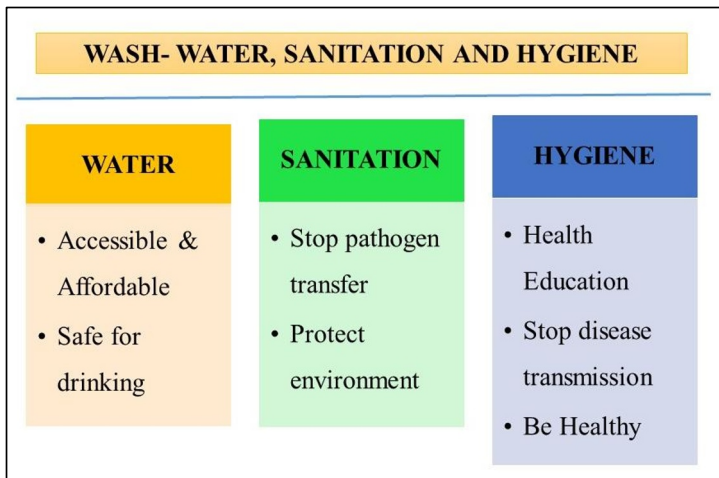


Figure 1: WASH Scheme^[7]

2 Material and Methods

The study included data from several e-search engines, including 10% from research gate, BMJ Open (5%), Health Line Journal Volume 6 Issue 2 (5%), Google Scholar (10%), Science Direct (5%), 10% from Indian Journal of Public Health, (Volume 62, Issue 2, April-June 2018), Springer (5%), International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health (10%), 10% from Medico-Legal Journal (2021, Vol. 89(4) 241–246), and other information was collected from the online websites such as UNICEF, WHO, OrangeHelathCare.in, and nhm.gov.in. The use, disposal, and sanitary conditions of menstruation were discussed in numerous case studies and surveys that appeared in online search results.

21 Menstruation: big taboo

Despite variations by nation, culture, ethnicity, social class, or family, discrimination against women has an impact on matters of reproductive health as well as other matters on the reproductive system and its functions and processes.[8] The most noticeable aspect is the limited control that many women and girls have over their movement and behavior during menstruation due to their "impurity" including the rumors, misunderstandings, superstitions, and (cultural and/or religious) taboos regarding menstrual blood and menstrual hygiene.[9] All communities set limitations on how people can worship; for instance, Muslim girls aren't allowed to recite the namaz (daily prayers/supplication) or touch the Quran when they are menstruating. Similar restrictions apply to Hindu girls regarding the performance of puja (offerings/ceremonial worship) and touching images of the Gods. [10] Women and girls may even be denied the right to enter their own homes in some cultures; in some communities, a girl who begins to menstruate is escorted to a small "hut" outside of the community, (figure 2). For instance, a 12-year-old girl in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu died in a cyclone after being sent away from her home to a damaged tented outhouse because she was menstruating.[11] Other people have died from snake bites and asphyxia. For many young girls, the first menstrual cycle is also frequently a traumatic and extremely unhappy event, made worse by these societal norms. [11] In the majority of India's rural communities, an absorbent pad for menstruation may be made of a washable, reusable fabric.[12] However, as it is still thought that menstrual secretions might be utilized for black magic, washing, and drying must be done in private or in a remote location where it cannot be seen by others. [12] Women must therefore only wash the wrapper or cloth they wear when having their periods at night when everyone else in the house is asleep, (figure 3). [13]

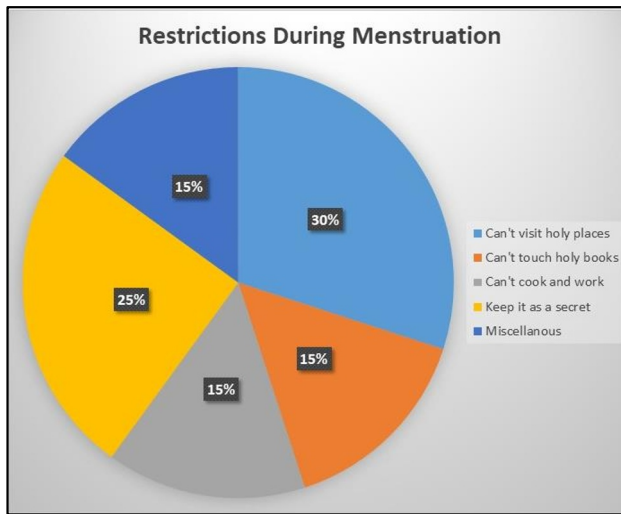


Figure 2: Type of restrictions during menstruation at home [14]

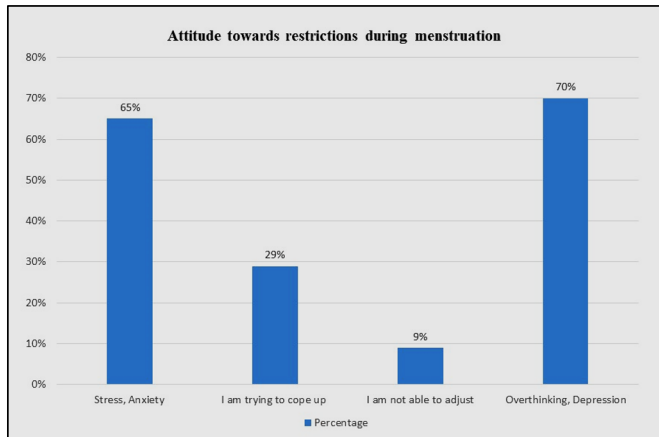


Figure 3: Attitude toward restrictions during menstruation at home [14]

22 Initiatives in India relating to menstrual hygiene, human rights, and hygiene management

The exclusion of menstruation and menstrual hygiene represents a violation of human rights, most notably the right to human dignity, as well as the rights to non-discrimination, equality, bodily integrity, health, and privacy, as well as the freedom from abuse and violence. [15]To improve children's health and hygiene via bettering their own health and hygiene practices as well as those of their families, communities, and the world at large, the Government of India began a national campaign in 2014. [16]The Indian government's campaign slogan, "Toilets before temples," and the subsequent rollout of the Swachh Bharat, Swachh Vidyalaya (SBSV), Clean India, Clean Schools, an initiative in 2015, which sought to provide universal access to sex-segregated toilets in all 1.2 million government schools, both reflect the increased policy emphasis on school sanitation that followed the Swachh Bharat Mission's launch in 2014.[16] Menstrual hygiene management has also been an important concern for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Ministry of Women and Child Development's Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SABLA) program, which has incorporated a menstrual hygiene management awareness program, (figure 5). [17] The Indian government introduced the Suvridha brand of 100% biodegradable sanitary pads on March 8, 2018, with packs of four costing Rs. 10 (\$0.13), (figure 4). [18]Many campaigns and organizations in India are also working to start conversations, raise awareness of menstruation and menstrual hygiene, and instruct individuals on how to make their own reusable sanitary napkin kits. [19]

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a program to encourage adolescent females in rural regions between the ages of 10 and 19 to practice good menstrual hygiene. [20]The program was first put into effect in 2011 in 107 selected districts across 17 States, where rural adolescent girls were given a pack of six hand towels named "Freedays" for a cost of Rs. 6. Since 2014, funds under the National Health Mission have been given to States and UTs for the localized purchase of sanitary napkin packs for distribution to rural teenage girls at a discounted rate of Rs 6 for a pack of 6 napkins. [21]

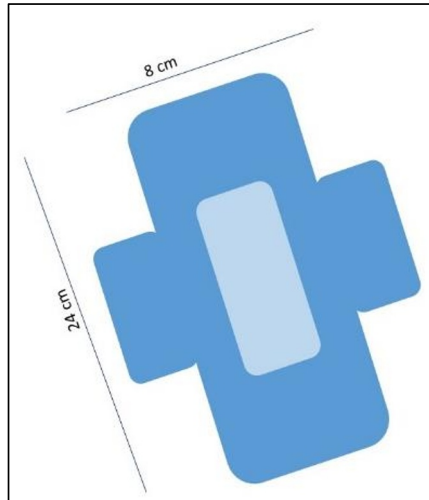


Figure 4: Sanitary pad^[21]

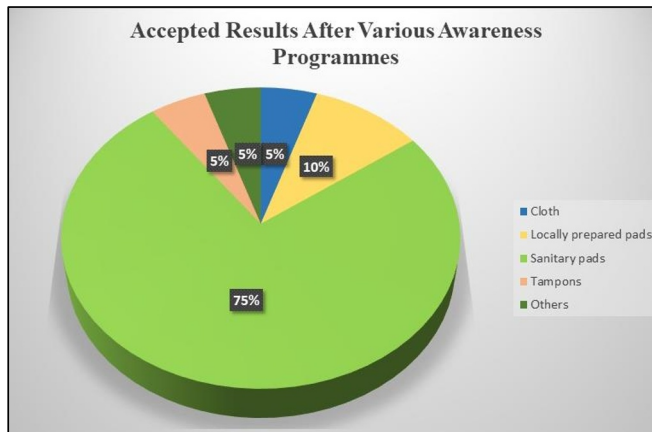


Figure 5: Accepted results after various awareness programs^[22]

23 Why it is important to manage menstrual hygiene?

However, poor menstrual hygiene can result in major health hazards such as reproductive and urinary tract infections, which can cause infertility in the future and complicate labor and delivery. After changing menstruation products, it's important to wash your hands to prevent the spread of diseases including hepatitis B and thrush, (figure 6). [23]

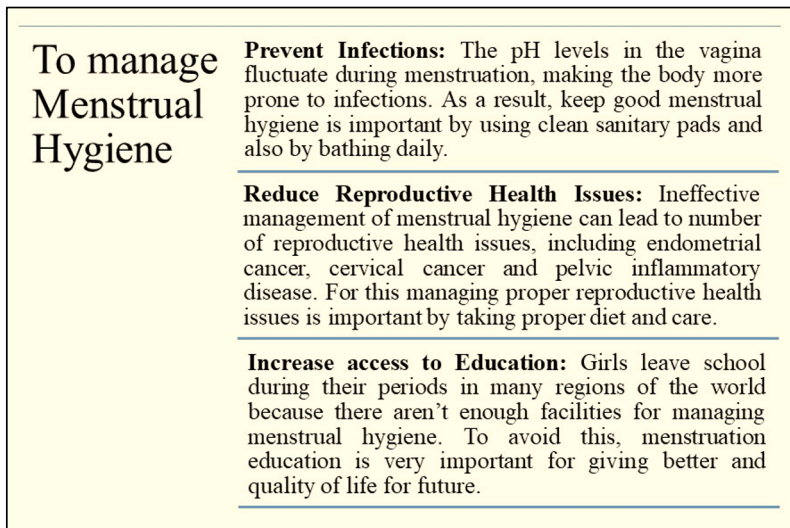


Figure 6: Importance of managing menstrual hygiene ^[23]

3 Result and discussion

Menstrual hygiene is important because it affects women's health, confidence, and self-esteem and is associated with gender equality and fundamental human rights. They noticed a rise in source and hygiene maintenance awareness. [24,25] The studies addressing menstrual hygiene and health issues put a special emphasis on comprehending the MHM requirements in rural schools.[26,27] Many factors have been examined in studies that contribute to MHM discrepancies between girls in rural and urban regions. [28,29]In June 2011, the Indian government introduced new programs to provide sanitary pads in a few rural communities at a reduced price of Rs 6 for a pack of six, delivered by frontline health professionals from the villages known as certified social health activists (ASHAs). [30] In an Indian survey, 9% of respondents belonged to the upper-middle class, 48% to the middle class, 2% to the upper class, and 1% had a low degree of social status.[31] Mothers of the subjects made up 61% of those with tertiary education, 20% with primary education, and 19% with secondary education. [32]According to normative data, there is a 28-day gap between two consecutive cycles.[33] 31% of subjects reported a gap of more than 30 days, which could be due to an irregularity that necessitates medical attention or it could normalize in adulthood. [34]The menstrual cycle will be irregular until the age of 18 to 20 years due to a change in physiology or the transition from adolescent to adult, according to medical news today. [35]

4 Conclusion

The goal of this article was to determine what information about menstruation and the usage of sanitary goods that are often used by women had previously been established and what facts were still unknown. A quick literature review was conducted for this study. The study was conducted using a review that will provide current information on menstrual hygiene knowledge, problems, and its effectiveness in enhancing life. A comprehensive review was conducted using four categories based on the diligently coded appropriate data and information from the last 25% of papers out of 50% of papers:

- Studies have emphasized raising awareness of menstruation and menstrual health.
- Investigations into the viability and acceptance of menstruation products.
- Studies looking into the widespread taboo of menstruation.
- Research centered on maintaining menstrual hygiene.
- Research centered on maintaining menstrual hygiene.

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