
Role of Men during Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Most men in developing countries are still unaware of menstruation even though it is a natural process of loss of uterine lining in the form of blood. One of the reasons behind it is gender inequality. The major intention of this study was to find out the role of men during menstruation and menstrual hygiene around Tarakeshwar Municipality, Kathmandu. Descriptive Cross-sectional Analysis was done among male respondents of age above 18 years and below 65 years in Tarakeshwar-7, Kathmandu. The sample size (n) for this study was 327 derived from Simple Random Sampling. A valid structured questionnaire was used in the collection of data about menstruation, menstrual hygiene, and the role of men in this. Data was collected, digitalized and analyzed through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version 20.0. The result of the study was represented in the form of tabular data. The majority of the family had male as head of the family. Majority of respondents i.e. 69.7% discuss about menstrual hygiene at their home and workplace. 94.5% have heard about sanitary products and 68.2% have bought sanitary products.

99.1% of the respondents help with household work and the majority of respondents suggested women to take rest during the menstrual cycle. Result clearly represent that the most of the respondents were positive towards the majority of the questions regarding menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Positive opinion was found among the respondents regarding the mensuration and menstrual hygiene. Although respondents were positive regarding the topic, they strongly believed that education and awareness is required and should be conducted for both men and women of all ages and places.

Background

Menstruation is a basic and normal aspect of human life and is just the regular loss of the uterine lining through the process of vaginal bleeding (Roos, 2018). This issue has a substantial impact on a sizable section of the world's population on an enormous scale since up to 300 million girls and women menstruate daily worldwide (Theses & Bay, 2017). In many regions of the world, menstruation and menstrual habits are still stigmatized and constrained by socio-cultural norms. Teenage females are left in the dark about facts and hygiene habits as a result, which harms their health (Chacko & Gouda, 2018).

Menstruation is considered a taboo subject and menstrual hygiene is often ignored due to gender inequality being a significant factor Men has the ability to support and impact the management of menstruation for women and girls in various settings such as the home, school, workplace, and community. They can accomplish this by playing a variety of roles, including those of husbands, dads, brothers, students, teachers, coworkers, leaders, and policymakers as stated in Kaur et al.'s research in 2018. The importance of men's contributions to reproductive health has been recognized. The majority of men are unaware of the typical physiology of menstruation, including the menstrual cycle and the hygienic precautions that should be taken during menstruation, despite the fact that they are frequently in charge of selecting what health services and facilities women and girls need as per Deepa et al. (2019).

There is limited information available regarding the involvement, understanding, and attitudes of boys and men towards menstrual hygiene, which hinders their potential to drive change. Although there have

been several studies focused on improving girls' management of menstrual hygiene. According to studies of 48 men in Australia and 23 men in the United States, menstruation was not frequently covered in the classroom and was seen as a secret by the women in the men's lives. A thorough investigation carried out in Taiwan that polled 287 female and 269 male students found that adolescent males have a more pessimistic attitude towards menstruation than their female counterparts (Benshaul-Tolonen et al., 2020). According to a study done in underdeveloped nations, a number of societal, cultural, and religious norms place substantial barriers in the way of girls and women's ability to manage their menstrual hygiene, which is why it is so difficult for them. Women living in rural areas often lack access to sanitary products or knowledge about their use, and high costs make them unaffordable (Kaur et al., 2018). A quantitative study conducted at the Central University of Tamil Nadu shows that the university male students had many types of misconceptions and prejudices as a youngster, such as the belief that girls who are always bleeding are filthy and produce impure radiation (Chacko & Gouda, 2018). Menstruating women in their houses are frequently forbidden from performing daily duties, with cooking being the most frequently frequently mentioned example, according to almost 66% of boys. These findings back up qualitative information from Tanzania about typical family proscriptions against menstrual women, which are usually based on the perception that menstruation is dirty or unclean (Benshaul-Tolonen et al., 2020). Results of a cross-sectional study carried out in Ahmedabad, India revealed that while actual behavioral involvement in menstruation and menstrual customs was found to be low, knowledge, attitude, and cognitive involvement in these topics were all high. (Shailesh Yagnik et al., 2015) According to a study on male students in India, males' lack of knowledge about menstruation support the notion that women's health issues are unimportant to men, furthering the shame and stigma associated with menstruation. This perpetuation of stigma and taboo around menstruation also results in a lack of awareness of women's needs in society (G et al., 2018). The Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research conducted a quantitative study that emphasized the importance of considering the male perspective when promoting improvements in menstrual hygiene. The educational role must be seriously considered, with training provided to teachers and members who are responsible for passing on information to present and future generations. Negative attitudes around menstruation will persist without such education to question social norms, and the intended transformation will not occur (Gaire, 2018).

Despite the fact that menstruation is a crucial public health concern for women and that men can play a vital role in completed their education up to the secondary level, with 38.2% falling into this category. This was followed by those with a Bachelor's degree or higher, which accounted for 30% of the

respondents. Among the respondents, the majority live in nuclear family i.e., 60.6% and lower percentage of respondents live in Extended family i.e., 1.5%. The majority of the families have Male as the head of family i.e., 89.3%.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency (n=327)	Percentage (%)
Marital status of respondents		
Married	218	66.7
Unmarried	109	33.3
Ethnicity of respondents		
Brahmin	47	14.4
Chhetri	137	41.9
Janajati	87	26.6
Dalit	56	17.1
Religion of respondents		
Hindu	283	86.5
Buddhist	10	3.1
Muslim	4	1.2
Christian	30	9.2
Educational status		
Illiterate	14	4.3
Literate but no formal	23	7.0
Schooling		
Primary level	67	20.5
Secondary level	125	38.2
Bachelor and above	98	30.0

Role of men during menstruation

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents have heard about menstruation and menstrual hygiene i.e., 97.2% and 48.6% of respondents got the information from educational institutes. 100% of the

respondents think that men should know about menstruation and menstrual hygiene. All participants in the study recognized significance of menstrual hygiene and menstruation for women's health and well-being. Furthermore, none of the respondents expressed the belief that women should avoid talking about their menstrual cycles in the presence of men. When asked about menstrual restrictions that women at their home follow, 66.1% agreed on restriction and among them 33.3% stated that restriction was not attending religious places. Most of the respondents (92.7%) do not hesitate to support financially regarding sanitary products. Almost all respondents, 99.1% help with household work during menstrual cycle of women at home. When asked about the health problems they observe in women during menstruation at home and workplace, the majority i.e., 82.9% answered lower abdominal pain. All the respondents suggest remedies/solutions for a woman when health problems arise during menstruation and 48% suggest woman to take rest.

Table 2. Role of men during menstruation

Characteristics	Frequency (n=327)	Percentage (%)
Heard about menstruation and menstrual hygiene		
Yes	318	97.2
No	9	2.8
Source of Information about menstruation and menstrual hygiene		
Family members	69	21.1
Educational institutions	159	48.6
T.V./ Radio/newspaper	88	26.9
Social media	11	3.4
should men know about menstruation and menstrual hygiene		

Yes	327	100.0
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Do you believe that menstruation and proper menstrual hygiene are essential for women's health and wellbeing?

Yes	327	100.0
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Think woman should avoid talking about their period when men are present

No	327	100.0
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Menstrual restrictions that women at follow

Yes	216	66.1
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No	111	33.9
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If yes, what restrictions

(Total Yes = 216)

Not touching male members or plants	27	8.3
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Not entering inside kitchen	80	24.5
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Not attending religious places	109	33.3
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Hesitate to support financially regarding sanitary products

Sometimes	24	7.3
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Never	303	92.7
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Help in household work during menstrual cycle of women at home

Yes	324	99.1
No	3	0.9
Health problems in women during menstruation at home and workplace		
Lower abdominal pain	271	82.9
Back pain	42	12.8
Fatigue	14	4.3
Remedies/solutions to woman when health problems arise during menstruation		
Yes	327	100.0
Remedies/solutions		
Drinking plenty of water	117	35.8
Taking rest	157	48.0
Doing simple exercise	30	9.2
Hot compress	23	7.0

Role of men during Menstrual Hygiene

Table 3 represents that majority of respondents i.e., 69.7% discuss about menstrual hygiene at their home and workplace. All the respondents have heard about sanitary products. Majority i.e. 94.5 % have heard about the sanitary pads and a minority 5.5% have heard about clothes. 68.2% of respondents have bought sanitary products.

Table 3. Role of men during menstrual hygiene

Characteristics	Frequency (n=327)	Percentage (%)
Discuss about menstruation and menstrual hygiene at home and workplace		

Yes	228	69.7
No	99	30.3

Heard about Sanitary Products

Yes	327	100.0
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Sanitary products heard

Sanitary pad	309	94.5
Clothes	18	5.5

Ever brought sanitary products

Yes	223	68.2
No	104	31.8

Discussion

The total participants of this study were 327 male participants from ward no.7, Tarakeshwor Municipality. The age of all participants was 18 to 65 years. The majority of the respondents were married i.e. 66.7%. The majority of the respondents Chhetri and occupy 41.9% and most of them follow Hinduism i.e. 86.5%. The majority of responders had only completed their secondary education which occupies 38.2% followed by Bachelors and above which is 30%. Among the respondents, the majority live in the nuclear family i.e. 60.6%, and a lower percentage of respondents live in Extended family i.e., 1.5%.

Majority of the families have Male as the head of family i.e. 89.3%. In a South African survey, it was discovered that the vast majority of the sample (70%) identified themselves as Christians, while 12% identified as Muslims, and 16% had no religious affiliation (Roos, 2018).

This study shows that menstruation is positively viewed by the majority of men as all of the participants think that women should discuss about menstruation with men. A study conducted by the Rima Budha Magar & Sanjaya Kumar Shah

University of The Western Cape states, menstruation is generally viewed negatively by males with men seeing menstrual blood as a source of sickness and contamination in some circumstances. Such unfavorable sentiments have been demonstrated to increase sexism and negative attitudes toward women, with consequences for personal relationships and reproductive decision-making (Roos, 2018). This study shows that half of the participants acquired menstruation-related information formally. In a quantitative survey conducted in a school in Northern Tanzania, it was found that most boys received information about menstruation through formal routes. Additionally, approximately two-thirds of the boys claimed that menstrual women were forbidden from doing home responsibilities, with cooking being the most frequently forbade task. (Benshaul- Tolonen et al., 2020) According to a study done in a college in the Bengaluru Urban area, the participants' moms were their main source of information about menstruation. However, they also reported obtaining knowledge about menstruation and menstrual products from the internet (Deepa et al., 2019). The study found that around 50% of the participants study conducted in the Dailekh District of Nepal, among rural communities, revealed that girls were often forbidden from engaging in various activities during menstruation. For instance, in addition to being forbidden from touching male family members, they were also forbidden from using their own kitchens, going to temples, celebrating, eating particular foods including dairy products, and sleeping in their own beds. (Thomson et al., 2019). In this study all participants agreed in supporting women financially. According to a study done in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, households have started setting aside money for sanitary napkins, which has made it easier for women and girls to manage their periods in a more hygienic manner. This has also supported their mobility as there is a reduced chance of staining and feeling ashamed during menstruation (Mahon et al., 2015). The study conducted among male students in India highlights the importance of educating boys about menstruation and menstrual hygiene. It highlights that ignoring such information feeds into the notion that males don't care about women's health issues, and that menstruation still carries with it a stigma and a sense of shame. This perpetuates a society that is disconnected from women and their needs (G et al., 2018) whereas in this study majority of participants (69.7%) discuss about menstruation at home and workplace, more than half (68.2%) of the participants bought sanitary products and nearly half of the participants suggest women to take rest during their menstruation and helped in household works during menstruation. In this study, 82.9% of participants answered that lower abdominal pain was the most common health problem they noticed in women during menstrual cycle. All the participants suggest remedies/solutions to women when health problems arise during menstruation and 48%

suggest a woman to take rest. A study conducted among adolescent girls in Kaski district of Nepal reported that the most prevalent problems were determined to be tiredness and back pain. The majority of them (75.4%) maintained personal cleanliness for the corrective actions for menstrual difficulties (Poudel & Gautam, 2020).

Limitations of the study:

The study has limitations as it only included men from one municipality, which may not be representative of the broader population. Further research could be conducted in larger and more diverse areas, and could explore additional factors related to menstrual hygiene and men's attitudes towards menstruation.

Conclusion

Finding out how men in the Tarakeshwar Municipality participate in menstrual hygiene and their role during menstruation was the goal of this study. The majority of respondents had favorable attitudes toward menstruation and menstrual hygiene, according to the study's findings. The participants recognized the importance of menstrual hygiene for the health and well-being of women, and did not consider it a taboo topic. However, the study suggests that more education and awareness about menstruation should be provided to both men and women of all ages and in all areas.

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