



MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRACTICES AND BELIEFS: A SURVEY IN BERINAG BLOCK, (UTTARAKHAND)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores menstrual hygiene practices and cultural beliefs among women in Berinag block, Uttarakhand. Data was collected through online questionnaires using google forms, employing non probability sampling with 40 women participants from diverse age groups. Descriptive statistics and graphical representation via pie charts and graph charts were used for data analysis. The study aimed to investigate menstrual practices, cultural heritage's impact, and education's influence on menstrual management. Findings revealed young women changed menstrual products regularly, while old women believe menstruation is impure younger women demonstrated greater awareness and respect, and education and media improved knowledge and practices. Education emerged as a key factor shaping attitudes and practices. Overall the study contributes to understanding and rising awareness about menstrual hygiene practices and cultural beliefs in rural india.

KEYWORDS : Menstrual hygiene, Women's health.

INTRODUCTION:

Menstruation, a natural biological process experienced by women, holds profound cultural, social, and health significance across diverse communities worldwide. Yet, the manner in which menstruation is perceived, managed, and discussed varies

greatly, influenced by factors such as cultural traditions, educational backgrounds, access to resources, and generational differences. In this era of advancing knowledge and changing societal norms, understanding the complexities of menstrual hygiene practices and beliefs among women of different age groups is paramount for promoting holistic well-being and gender equity (Mishra- Et al. 2013)

This research embarks on a comprehensive survey to unravel the intricacies of menstrual hygiene practices and beliefs among women spanning different age groups. By examining the varied experiences and perspectives across generations, aim to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of menstrual health and pave the way for targeted interventions that cater to the diverse needs of women at different stages of life In India women use various materials to manage their menstrual period blood. Clean and healthy options include sanitary pads, tampons, and menstrual cups. However, some women still rely on less healthy alternatives such as old clothes, news paper, and dried leaves.

Using clean and healthy options are crucial for women's health and safety during this period. These product provide better absorbency, protection, and hygiene, reducing the risk of infections and discomfort.

Menstrual health has been defined, in alignment with WHO's definition of health, as a "state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely absence of disease or information in relation to the menstrual cycle". According to the Census of India (2011), there are 310 million women in the age group 15–49 years. A large proportion of women and adolescent girls suffer from poor quality of life during menstruation throughout their reproductive lives due to lack of information and access to sanitary facilities and safe absorbent (Maitri vayeda – Et al. 2023) .Poor menstrual management adversely touches the lives of women from all strata of society, in rural and urban areas (Maitri vayeda – Et al. 2023)

This survey is not merely an exploration of practices but a call to action. By uncovering the dynamics at play across age groups, research aspire to contribute to the development of targeted interventions, educational programs, and policy recommendations that foster improved menstrual hygiene practices and empower women of all ages. Through this collective endeavor, this research strive to create a more inclusive and supportive environment that recognizes and celebrates the diverse experiences of women on their menstrual journey.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

For conducting a survey on menstrual hygiene practices and beliefs among women of different age groups can contribute to a better understanding of this important aspect of women's health and well-being, leading to more targeted interventions and policies to promote menstrual health equity.

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive survey exploring the diverse menstrual hygiene practices and beliefs among women across different age groups. The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives.

- 1. Menstrual practices variations across age groups:** Investigating how menstrual hygiene practices vary among women of different age groups, ranging from adolescence to menopausal stages
- 2. The impact of Cultural Heritage on Menstrual Hygiene Attitudes and Practices across Successive Generations:** Examining how cultural beliefs surrounding menstruation influence practices among women of various age cohorts, considering potential changes or continuities over time.
- 3. Educational Impact on Menstrual Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices:** Assess the role of education in shaping menstrual hygiene knowledge and practices, comparing women with varying levels of educational backgrounds.
- 4. The Impact of Diverse Menstrual Practices on Women's Health and well being:** Exploring potential health implications associated with diverse menstrual hygiene practices across age groups, aiming to identify patterns and concerns.

5. Access and availability of menstrual products: Investigating the accessibility and availability of menstrual hygiene products for women in different age brackets, recognizing potential challenges and disparities.

6. The Influence of Socio Cultural Beliefs on Open Menstrual Conversations: Analyze how cultural beliefs either facilitate or hinder open discussions about menstruation within families and communities across generations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gupta, A. & Sharma, R. K. (2018)- Exploring generational differences in menstrual beliefs and practices in urban and rural India.

Hennegan, J., Shannon, A. K., Rubli, J., Schwab, K. J., & Melendez-Torres, G. J. (2019)- Women's and girls' experiences of menstruation in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review and qualitative Meta synthesis.

Mason, L., Nyothach, E., Alexander, K., Odhiambo, F. O., Eleveld, A., Vulule, J., & Laserson, K. F. (2013)- 'We keep it secret so no one should know' – A qualitative study to explore young schoolgirls attitudes and experiences with menstruation in rural western Kenya.

Mudey, A. B., Kesharwani, N., Mudey, G.A., Goyal, R.C. (2010), A Cross sectional study on awareness regarding safe and hygiene practices amongst school going adolescents girls in rural area of Wardha Districts, India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

Locale of the study and Tools and Techniques

In area of Berinag in Pithoragarh, was selected as a locale of the study. It was selected purposively for the present study as it will be convenient, so regular visit could be made authentic for data collection The study utilize a non probability sampling method, selecting participants based on their relevance to the research objectives. Participants were recruited through known contacts.

Structures questionnaire was designed with the help of *Google Forms* to collect data from different participants. Discursive diversity was ensured by recruiting different age group women from menarche to menopause. The survey was distributed across various demographics including age, marital status, education and occupation. The questionnaire covered topics such as awareness, knowledge, and the importance of menstrual hygiene, cultural beliefs, suggestions, and future outlook. The research team meet to 50 potential participants and 40 accepted to take part and show will to fill up the questioners and attended the session. Not willing woman was not included.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study employed a questionnaire survey to collect primary data from participants. Responses were analyzed and visually represented through graphical illustrations, specifically:

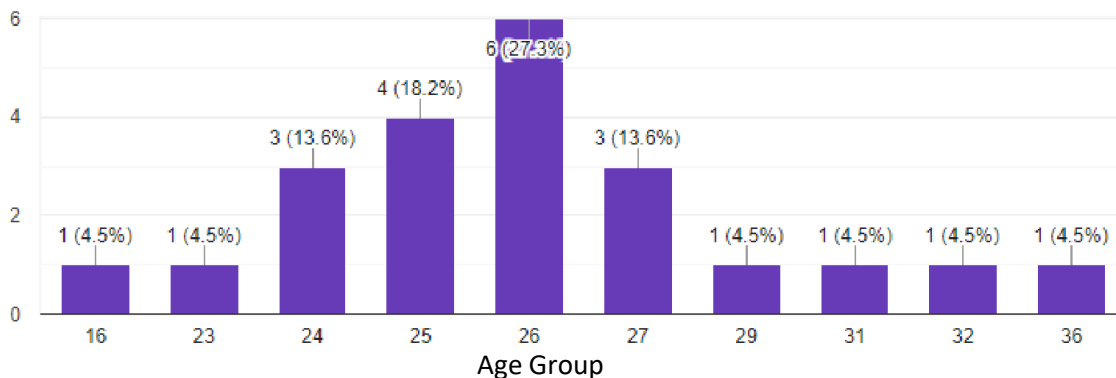
Bar charts to display comparative distributions,

Pie charts to illustrate proportional distribution

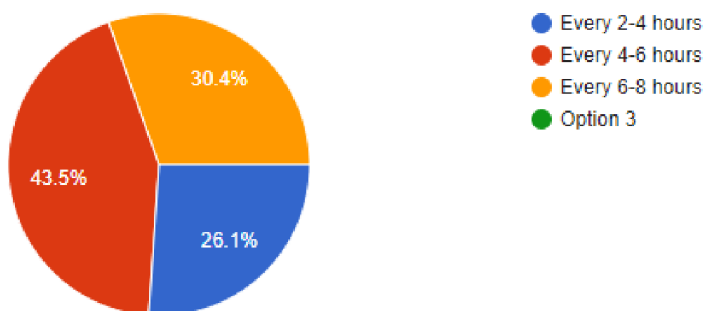
These graphical representations provide a clear and concise visualization of the findings, facilitating easy interpretation and insight extraction.

1. Socio demographic Variables The survey included women from diverse age groups. Participants were across various socioeconomic backgrounds, with educational levels ranging from high school to postgraduate degrees and using safety measures in relation to area accessibility (Distance to Health care facilities/Roads) for a sample of 40 women’s of Beringag Block.

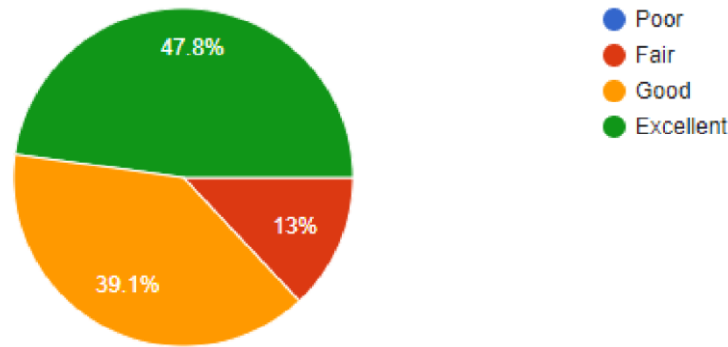
Area Accessibility



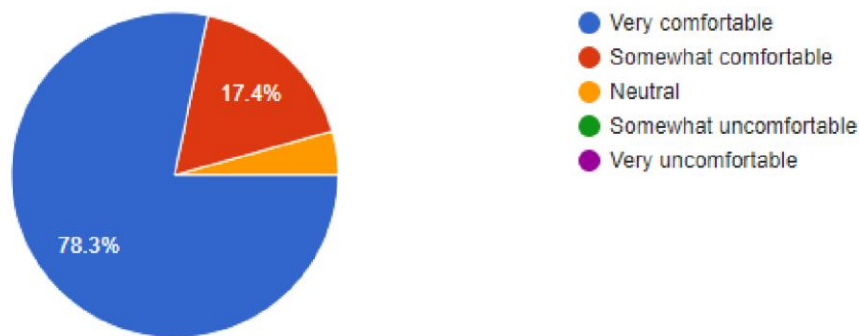
- 2. **Hygiene Practices During Menses, Types of Menstrual Products Used:** Most women across all age groups predominantly used sanitary pads (85%), citing convenience and availability. Tampons and Menstrual Cups: Few women showed a preference for tampons and menstrual cups.
- 3. **Frequency of Sanitary Product Change** Over 43.5 percent of respondents reported changing their menstrual products every 4- 6 hours, indicating good hygiene practices. However, a small percentage of women admitted to extending the use of products beyond recommended durations.



- 4. **Sanitary Practices** The majority of participants (47.8%) maintained regular bathing during menstruation, with variations in washing reusable products observed among age groups. Younger women were more likely to adopt eco-friendly menstrual products and practices, such as using cloth pads or menstrual cups.

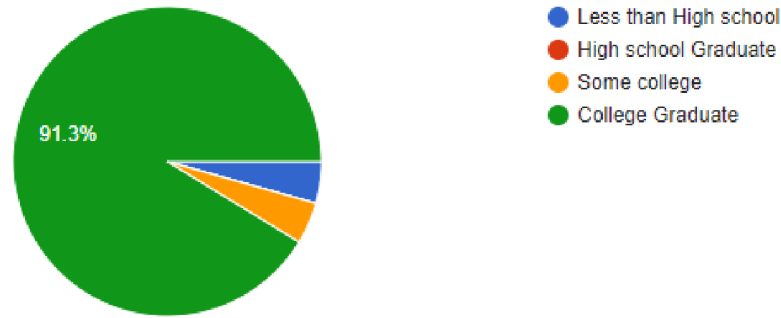


5. **Beliefs and Attitudes Comfort Level in Discussing Menstruation** Across all age groups, a significant proportion of women expressed discomfort in discussing menstruation openly, citing cultural taboos and societal norms. Older women showed a slightly higher reluctance to discuss menstruation compared to younger women.



6. **Cultural Beliefs and Myths** A common belief among participants was that menstrual blood is impure, leading to practices such as avoiding certain activities or places during menstruation. Younger women exhibited greater awareness and skepticism toward such myths, indicating a shift in cultural attitudes over generations. Socioeconomic Factors Influencing Practices and Beliefs Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds faced challenges in accessing affordable and quality menstrual products, influencing their hygiene practices. Education level was positively correlated with better hygiene practices and more progressive attitudes toward menstruation.

7. **Influence of Media and Education** Women who had access to menstrual health education through schools or media channels demonstrated better knowledge and practices regarding menstrual hygiene. Lack of comprehensive education was cited as a barrier, especially among older age groups who relied on traditional beliefs and practices.



- 8. Comparison Across Age Groups Evolution of Practices** The study revealed a shift in menstrual hygiene practices and beliefs across age groups, with younger women adopting modern products and practices while older women often adhered to traditional methods. Cultural influences played a significant role in shaping these differences, highlighting the importance of culturally sensitive menstrual health interventions.
- 9. Barriers and Challenges Access and Affordability** Though there was not such challenges faced by the women. Most of the women purchased their hygiene products online or from the local shops. Cost emerged as a significant barrier, particularly for women in rural areas and those from low-income households, leading to compromised hygiene practices. Lack of access to private sanitation facilities also hindered proper menstrual hygiene management, especially in public settings

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Diverse Menstrual Product Preferences: Women across age groups exhibit diverse preferences in menstrual hygiene products. Younger women often opt for modern products like tampons and menstrual cups, while older generations may adhere to traditional practices such as cloth pads.

2. Cultural Influences Remain Strong - Cultural beliefs significantly impact menstrual practices across generations. Older women tend to adhere more closely to traditional customs, while younger generations show a greater tendency to challenge these norms, seeking more modern approaches to menstrual hygiene.

3. Educational Attainment Matters: - Women with higher educational backgrounds tend to adopt more informed and hygienic menstrual practices. Education plays a crucial role in breaking down taboos, fostering open discussions, and influencing the adoption of modern menstrual products.

4. Health Implications Vary by Age: - Different age groups experience varying health implications associated with menstruation. Older women may face challenges related to menopause, while younger women encounter issues linked to reproductive health. Tailored interventions are necessary to address age-specific health concerns.

5. Access to Menstrual Products Is Unequal: - Accessibility and affordability of menstrual hygiene products remain significant challenges, particularly for older and rural women. Bridging these gaps is crucial to ensure equitable access to suitable menstrual products for all women.

6. Community Support Influences Practices: - Community support plays a pivotal role in shaping women's attitudes towards menstruation. Strong support systems positively impact women's practices and reduce stigma. Cultivating supportive environments is essential for fostering open discussions and shared experiences across age groups.

7. Openness to Discuss Menstruation Varies: - The willingness to discuss menstruation openly varies across age groups. Younger women tend to be more comfortable discussing menstrual matters, whereas older women may be more reserved due to cultural norms and generational differences. More reserved due to cultural norms and generational differences.

CONCLUSION:

A recent survey on menstrual hygiene practices among women of different age groups has shed light on the diverse perspectives, practices and challenges related to menstrual health. The findings highlight several key points that have significant implications for policy, education healthcare interventions, and promoting menstrual hygiene management. This survey research also advocates that empowering women through comprehensive education, improved access, and open discussion is crucial for promoting health equity and address cultural stigma, affordability and limited education.

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