

A STUDY ABOUT ISSUES RELATED TO MENSTRUAL PRACTICES IN RURAL INDIA: KEY TO DEVELOPMENT

Mansi Tiwari¹

¹*Assistant Professor, Amity Business School, Amity University Madhya Pradesh, Gwalior, 474005 (M.P.)*

ABSTRACT

Indian rural women suffers from lot of problems & issues in their daily life when it comes to equality, getting education, working as a bread earner for the family etc. But they also face the struggle during the days when they get their menstruation. They face lot of inhuman & follow unhygienic treatments just because of lack of awareness towards knowledge, safety & dignity without social taboos which is their one of the social right. This paper attempts to highlight the issues related to what women are facing especially in rural India on the name of Menstruation & to achieve the stated objectives in light of relevant literature available in the field researcher tried to focus on how to avoid negative outcomes which effect their self esteem & confidence along with their general well being. The suggestions are given related to issues mentioned in the paper like attention & promotion to the menstrual hygiene.

Keywords : *Rural India, Menstrual Practices, awareness & promotion to menstrual hygiene.*

1.Introduction

We all know that in India maximum population belongs to rural geographical boundaries where there is lack of things like education, jobs, facilities, transportation even electricity in some of the areas. Can we imagine what kind of life people are living in such areas? Difficulties may also increases when it comes to the female section that belongs to rural areas. Now a day's India is moving towards lot of advancement in the field of education, employment, health etc but still there are communities who belongs to rural areas still deficit in mentioned fields for women where they daily fight for their rights, for their education & other social taboos.

Similarly out of so many issues one is menstrual practices, hygiene & lack of awareness to it along with the non-availability of sanitary pads to rural women. As menstruation is physiological process which starts at sexual maturity in females. But, surprisingly especially in rural India it is misunderstood as a phase of transition of girl into womanhood. In rural areas is taken as unique thing for females which is unclean & dirty. It is socio-cultural factors, beliefs & taboos due to which female population bound to follow false practices even without having complete knowledge about it.

Adolescent girls from rural areas badly affected by these cultural factors in rural areas. It is very clear where almost 85% of the rural female population consider menstruation as most dirty thing happened which is only because of lack of menstruation awareness. In some rural areas women know about the mentioned practices & hygiene but they are bound to follow unhygienic ways of absorbent due to the non availability of sanitary pads in their concerned locality. Substantial knowledge towards menstruation in rural areas could also be seen in negative attitude of parents & related issues in discussing it.

Most of the woman & girls has incomplete & inaccurate knowledge about menstruation physiology & hygiene. Good menstrual hygiene will contribute in women & girls development by gender equality & empowerment.

Literature Review

As per the researcher Rajkumar Patil, Lokesh Agarwal, M Iqbal Khan, Sanjeev Kumar Gupta, Vedapriya DR , M Raghavia & Anuj Mittal (2011) studied the beliefs regarding menstruation in rural areas of Pondicherry. In this research, the objective was taken to study the various myths and misconceptions about menstruation and ascertain about if there is a difference between illiterates and literates. The findings of the study reveal that most of the population in the concerned area is not aware & strongly believes in old sayings.

Similarly researchers named Rajesh Garg, Shobha Goyal, & Sanjeev Gupta (2011) studied about the issues related to menstruation hygiene practices not only from health point of view but also from the social & human rights point of view. The results of the study concluded that whole population is having their roles to execute if target is menstrual hygiene. This paper highlighted various roles to be performed by the government, teachers & other people from the society. They have also included one provision for sanitary napkin schemes for the availability point of view.

Another researcher S Sangeetha Balamurugan, SS Shilpa & Sheethal Shaji (2013) revealed about hygiene practices during menstruation in Tamil Nadu & also studied the effect of socio- cultural factors over it. The findings reveal that most of the women were found following unhygienic practices due to the lack of their awareness towards it.

Similarly S Senthil, Priya, AS Al Iratnam, & R Shankar (2016) studied about the different types & frequency of menstruation problems faced by the adolescent girls in Tamil Nadu only. They have studied about the cross-sectional 500 adolescent girls aged around 14-19 years. Poor menstruation hygiene was found as a result of the study. Researchers also suggested awareness programmes to be conducted in rural schools in context to genital hygiene practices.

Nivedita Pathak & Jalandhar Pradhan (2016), wrote about the menstrual management & low cost sanitary napkins. In this paper they tried to highlight the issues related to social taboos, lack of toilets, water availability, privacy for changing etc. rather focusing on how to provide the low cost sanitary napkins to rural women. Researchers strongly believe that there should be change in the attitude of individuals towards it. Only providing sanitary napkins is not the only solution to the problem.

Balaji Arumugam, Saranya Nagalingam, Priyadharshini Mahendra Varman, Preethi Ravi, & Roshni Ganesan (2014) conducted a study to analyze how hygienic female is during her menstruation time period in rural as well as in urban areas. The findings of the study results in that hygiene practices are better in urban areas in comparison to rural areas. And also from socio-cultural point of view both the areas women face lot of restriction during menstruation.

P. Seenivasan, K. Caroline Priya, Arthi .E, Gaviya.G, Kanchana Devi.B, Karunya.C, Midhuna.G, Priyadharshini.R & Priyadharshini.S (2016) studied about the knowledge, attitude & practice about menstruation hygiene among the women from rural areas. In this study they conclude that though awareness level in rural areas is now ok but when it come to practice part results were seems to be poor.

Dr Dipanwita Pandit, Dr Prasanta Kumar Bhattacharyya & Dr Raja Bhattacharya (2014) in their study named Menstrual Hygiene: Knowledge and Practice among Adolescent School Girls In rural areas of West Bengal tried to find out the knowledge & practices among school girls. In this study revealed that mother of girl child to be armed with the correct and appropriate information on reproductive health, so that she can give this knowledge to her growing girl child.

Shanbhag D, Shilpa R, D'Souza N, Josephine P, Singh J, Goud BR(2012) studied about the perceptions of individuals regarding menstruation & practices among high school going girls in Karnataka & Bangalore city around areas. This study was conducted in 4 government selected schools. The study reveals that only 28.7% of the girl population had knowledge & awareness about it & rest of the 48.1% only know that it relates to pregnancy. Most of the girls were using clothes.

Likewise Shobha P Shah, Rajesh Nair, Pankaj P Shah, Dhiren K Modi, Shrey A Desai, & Lata Desai (2013) in their paper titled Improving quality of life with new menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent tribal girls in rural Gujarat,

India studied about menstruation health, hygiene practices taken in the tribal areas of Gujarat among adolescent girls. The study concluded that clothes were rapidly used as they were easily available & also cheap in comparison to sanitary napkins.

After reviewing the above literature it is clearly understood that still there is lot of work to be done on the part of government & also as an citizen of the country we need to take initiative in this regarding menstruation & hygiene practices as it is also natural as any other physiological change is men or women. No studied have been found which is done for understanding the routine issues on the basis of experience of women & girls. So, the researcher got the idea to conduct the research by collecting experience of women & girls through interviews.

2.Objective of the study

1. To study the issues & problems related to menstruation practices & hygiene in rural areas for women
2. To understand how the traditional myths & social taboos are effecting rural women health, well being & their confidence
3. To highlights the measures taken by some concerns & government of India for menstrual hygiene & awareness.

Methodology Adopted

Data- secondary & primary

Sampling method- convenience sampling

Sample size – 5 (cases)

The methodology adopted for this study is that researcher contacted few of the females from villages near by Gwalior city (Madhya Pradesh). Out of 15 females only 5 were ready to share about their experiences. So the researcher asked about their experience for menstruation treatments received by them from their parents, in-laws & society. On the basis of their responses researcher compiled few of the situations in the form of cases which are being explained in the paper.

Experienced based Analysis & its Repercussions

S.No	Status of Respondent	Situation / Case Description	Repercussions
1	Ms. Savitri, house wife in village “Badagaon” nearby Gwalior,(M.P.)	Described about her experience in her early childhood about menstruation treatment & practices. She said that during those days she was not allowed to sit along with other members of the family. She has been taught that every time during menstruation she have to use cloth only & she was not even allowed to speak about it in front of other male members of the family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lot of secrecy to maintained on the part of female & only died clothes was available. • She got stressed, worried all the time during her menstruation. • She tolerated lot of pain during her menstruation.
		She explained that her mother doesn't allow her to eat food in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This led the arousal of a question & stressed to

2	Ms. Guddi, house maid & her native place is “Banmor” nearby Gwalior (M.P.)	common utensils during her menstruation. She used to be kept locked in a secret room where all the arrangement were provided to use during her menstruation.	Guddi that is menstruation is a crime? Why everyone is behaving an evil to me? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She perceived it negatively.
3	Ms.Usha belongs to “Banmor” nearby Gwalior (M.P.)	She shared about her experience how in initial days she was not allowed to touch any pickle, not allowed to worship & even not allowed to move to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This results in taking menstruation as a most unfortunate thing for her • He thought the fault is her & he is not capable of even study for this. • It further resulted in high stress
4	Ms. Shakun, vegetable vendor belongs to remote area near by Gwalior (M.P.)	She described her experience by sharing information that she used clothes during her menstruation & she used to use single cloth for whole cycle. She further described, because of this she got infection one time due to which she faced lot of problem. After marriage her in-laws never allowed her to enter into the kitchen during menstruation cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This resulted in infection which is again not good for the health. • Unfair treatment from family leads to high level of stress. • These unhygienic ways to cure the menstruation may results in major physical problems in future.
5	Ms. Soni, 17 year old girl.	She shared about her experience when she got first time her periods she was in school. Her clothes got dirty & fellow mates started laughing. There was no one to provide her moral support & even no one there to provide her any sanitary pads. She thought she savior injury at her private part due to which she will die.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of stress • No guidance even at school • Lot of humiliation • Non availability of sanitary pads at school & not awareness.

Common myths & restrictions

On the basis of experiences which has been shared by girls & women from rural areas & also after studying so many literature reviews the following are some common taboos & restrictions have comes out. These are –

- Menstruation occurred due to the curse of God
- The restrictions were not to go to the temple, not to see the god images,
- Not to go to school,
- Not to touch flowers, not to touch males,
- Not to enter kitchen
- Separate room and to sleep separately during menstruation
- Women say that the shame associated with menstruation prevents them from buying products from male shopkeepers
- Girls experience some problems associated with menstruation⁸, which might indirectly have an impact in their academic excellence, sports activities and their self-esteem
- The lack of clean and separate sanitation facilities in schools discourages many girls from attending school full time and forces some of them to drop out.

Measures / initiatives

Now a day's awareness has increased at the ground level about so many things be it education, be it about rights etc. similarly rural women have also confronted so many things about menstruation practices & hygiene but still there should be some more efforts to be taken by government for country development point of view & also as an individual we need to fulfill some obligation through changing our attitude towards menstruation. There are so many initiatives taken for the improvement in the field of menstruation hygiene & practices. Few of them mentioned below for the betterment in the concerned field. These are –

1. Awareness programme should be conducted on the regular basis especially in rural areas of where women & girls could freely attend & understand the importance of menstrual hygiene & practices.
2. The disposal of used sanitary napkin should be done through the installing incinerators in schools where girls can easily dispose the solid waste.
3. There should be the promotion of local production of sanitary napkins by self help groups.
4. Medical and Para-medical health professional's attention is necessary to promote menstrual hygiene.
5. The availability of proper washing facilities at schools and work place for menstrual management should be maintained.
6. Mother, family and the community should all be counseled regarding menstrual physiology and hygiene on regular basis.
7. Menstrual hygiene promotion needs to be included in school curriculum. The school teachers should be trained regularly so that they can have the clear idea about how to impart the reproductive health education in classes.
8. The availability of services including the subsidized sanitary napkins is a step forward for initiating the acceptance of the practice.
9. Kishori Shakti Yojana (Adolescent girl empowerment scheme) under Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in 1991 and this scheme could be utilized to cater the adolescent's reproductive health demands.

10. Mahila Mandal and Stri-Sabha), traditional birth attendants, female shopkeepers etc. should be involved to store and distribute sanitary napkins as girls would be more comfortable to purchase sanitary napkins from them

3. Conclusion

The women & girls are facing lot of problem as we can see from their experiences about menstruation management, hygiene practices related to that, availability of sanitary napkins, clean water facilities; disposal of napkins, usage of old clothes during menstruation cycle & so many like that. But, the point is these issues could not be solved by only having discussion on it or by running any scheme for it. The mindset regarding menstruation of people who belongs to rural areas should be channelized in such a way that girls feel safe & secure in sharing their physiological changes front of their family members. This required lot of work to be done by the stakeholder of our societies where they have to take initiatives in counseling the people around in creating health & productive environment for girls or women.

The government of India is also taking several initiative but they need to actually work on ground reality which is still negative when is comes to the execution of their scheme. Effective review is highly required on the part of government of India. Similarly academic institutions should also take the initiatives to teach how menstruation practices could affect health of girls or women. So, teachers should also take the responsibility in promoting right information to others so that myths or social taboos could be eradicated.

4. References

- [1]. Arumugam, B., Nagalingam, S., Varman, P. M., Ravi, P., & Ganesan, R. (2014). Menstrual hygiene practices: Is it practically impractical?. *International Journal of Medicine and Public Health*, 4(4)
- [2]. Garg, R., Goyal, S., & Gupta, S. (2012). India moves towards menstrual hygiene: subsidized sanitary napkins for rural adolescent girls—issues and challenges. *Maternal and child health journal*, 16(4), 767-774.
- [3]. Pandit, D., Bhattacharyya, P. K., & Bhattacharya, R. (2014). menstrual hygiene: knowledge and practice among adolescent school girls in rural areas of Westbengal. *IOSR Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences (IOSR-JDMS)*, 13(6), 19-24.
- [4]. Pathak, N., & Pradhan, J. (2016). Menstrual management and low-cost sanitary napkins. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 51(12), 27.
- [5]. Priya, S. S., Alliretnam, A. S., & Shankar, R. (2016). Menstrual problems and hygiene among rural adolescent girls of Tamil Nadu-a cross sectional study. *Indian J Obstetr Gynaecol Res*, 3(2), 126-31.
- [6]. Shah, S. P., Nair, R., Shah, P. P., Modi, D. K., Desai, S. A., & Desai, L. (2013). Improving quality of life with new menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent tribal girls in rural Gujarat, India. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 21(41), 205-213.
- [7]. Shanbhag, D., Shilpa, R., D'souza, N., Josephine, P., Singh, J., & Goud, B. R. (2012). Perceptions regarding menstruation and practices during menstrual cycles among high school going adolescent girls in resource limited settings around Bangalore city, Karnataka, India. *International Journal of Collaborative Research on Internal Medicine & Public Health*, 4(7), 1353-1362.
- [8]. Tiwari, M. (2017). *Green Orientation & Green Management Practices as CSR in Academic Institutions*.
- [9]. Tiwari, M. (2017). *Work Life Balance of Female Employees in Private Institutions, Gwalior: An Investigation*.
- [10]. Tiwari, M., & Pant, P. (2017). *Changing Roles of Teaching Professionals: Issues & Challenges*.