

## **Perceived Experience of Girls at the Time of Menstrual Period: A Study of School Student of Kathmandu, Nepal**

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### **Abstract**

*In Nepalese society, understanding of menstruation is connected with the Hindu Religion. The Rig Vedic concept of “purity” is used to confine women’s sexuality in Hindu tradition. Therefore, Hindu women are recognized as polluted during menarche and childbirth. Such practiced has prohibited girl/women from their right of life so the study was conducted with the objective to identify the perceived experience of girls at the time of menstrual period. The study was conducted among the 120 girl students of grade 9 and 10 of public and private secondary level school of Kathmandu, Nepal. The structured questionnaire survey was done to collect the data. The statistical analysis of data reports that 65% girls felt less confidence, 80% felt some kinds of unhealthy feeling, 79.2% felt uncomfortable to participate in school activities, and 89.2% girl students felt uncomfortable to participate in social function and festival at the time of menstruation. The result indicates that still girls are mentally and physically suffering at the time of menstruation period whereas menstruation is natural phenomena. So, family members and society should be aware themselves first and also encourage the girls to be stress free at the time of menstruation. Harmful traditional belief and practices should be changed for the betterment of social life.*

### **Keywords**

Experience, Girls, Menstruation, Nepal, School, Student

### **Introduction**

Menstruation is natural phenomena of every female though due to lack of proper knowledge of causes of menstruation, girls feel shyness and negative feeling towards their first menstruation. Most of the previous literatures have shown that majority of the girls feel fear in the first time of menstruation. They feel fear due to the bleeding thinking that they will be sick because of the bleeding. Therefore, proper knowledge of menstrual hygiene and correct perceptions and beliefs can protect the girls from such anxiety and suffering.

In previous literature it has shown that many of the girls mentioned that they experienced fear (44.1%) on attaining menarche, while some of them (26.1%) were anxious. About 74.2% felt that menstrual cycle is a natural phenomenon while 17% felt that menstruation occurred due to the curse of God. Majority of them (56.8%) felt that menstruation poses a huge physical and

psychological burden on them. On the whole among the girls who had attained menarche only 43 (14.07%) showed a positive attitude towards the process of menstruation (Shanbhag, Shilpa, D'Souza, Josephine, Singh, & Goud, 2012, p. 1356).

The study conducted by Jacqueline M. Devaney stated that there is a great desire to learn more of menstrual suppression among both mothers and daughters and that there is some degree of influence of religion and ethnicity on perceptions of menstrual suppression in this population. Age on the other hand, turned out to not be an important factor shaping the positive or negative attitudes toward suppression (Devaney, 2016). Younger women have a more negative view and tend to view menstruation as debilitating, embarrassing, and a nuisance. A study with U.S. women, many of whom were in favor of menstrual suppression, viewed their period to be shameful and bothersome, and similar findings were reported from a study with women in India (Rose, Chrisler, & Couture, 2008). In an earlier study conducted by Nurse Practitioner Linda Andrist and colleagues (2004) the negative feelings of menstruation and wide acceptance of oral contraceptives for menstrual suppression was positively correlated with the desire among young women to reduce menstrual pain and discharge. Thus, it is becoming a common occurrence in many cultures to view menstruation as bothersome among this younger group, and therefore it could be expected that this population would be in favor of menstrual suppression.

A previous study explored the mother's perceptions toward their daughter's menstruation and their degree of support of possible menstrual suppression. Majority of mother's observed that their daughter had some degree of pain during menstruation with 43.5% reporting the pain to be severe. Some mothers felt that in some way their daughter's period interfered with their daily lives, with the highest percentage being moderate interference (36.6%). When mothers were asked if they would support their daughter suppressing her period, 41.1% reported "maybe, it depends," with the next frequency reported as not supportive of their daughters at 27.1%. However, 24.3% would support their daughter in suppressing her menstruation (Devaney, 2016, p. 24). In such time, girls should be aware about the naturalness of menstruation and it should be properly managed. Girls will seek the proper management way and treatment of menstrual problem if they will have right information. How they perceived the seriousness of menstruation and need of proper menstrual hygiene behavior. Depression, worry, fear and negative thought are the negative factors which prevent girls from the proper menstrual hygiene behavior. So, there is need to understand the perception of girl towards the menstruation.

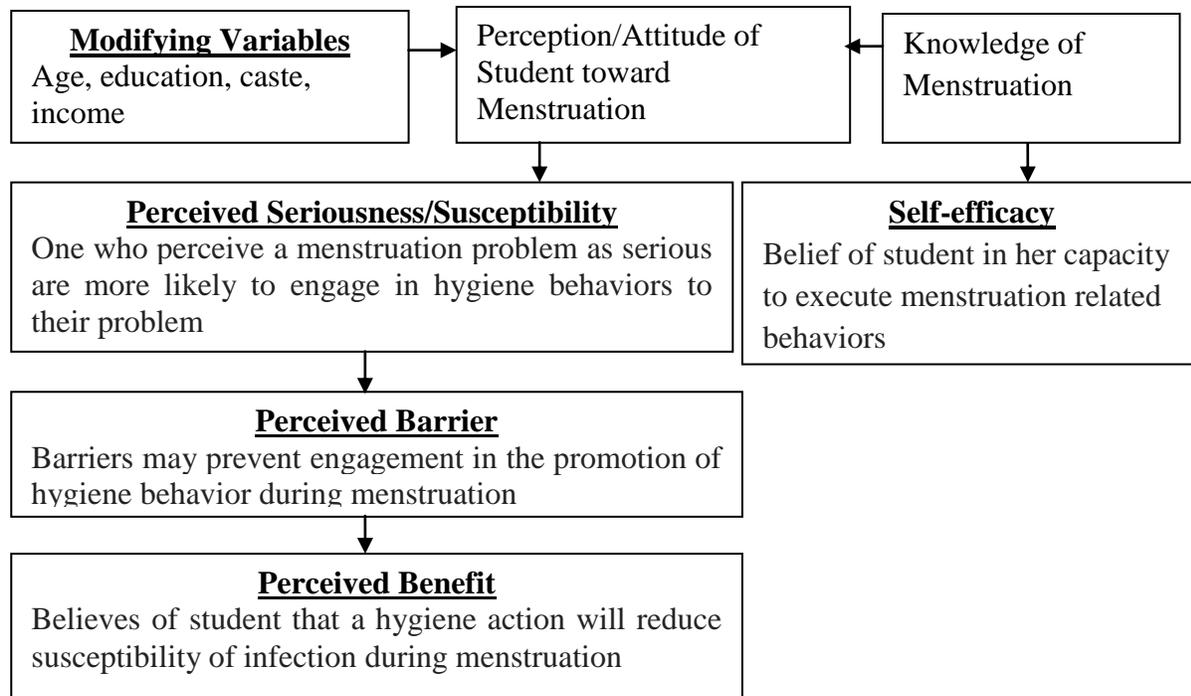
### **1.1 Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to explore the perceived experience of girls towards the menstruation period. Specifically, the study had explored the feeling of self-confident, health status, participation in school and social activities.

## **1.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

The study is based on the concept of Health Belief Model. The health belief model (HBM) is a psychological health behavior change model developed to explain and predict health-related behaviors, particularly in regard to the uptake of health services (Siddiqui, Ghazal, Bibi, Ahmed, & Sajjad, 2016). The health belief model was developed in the 1950s by social psychologists at the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) (Janz & Becker, 1984) and remains one of the best known and most widely used theories in health behavior research (Carpenter, 2010). The health belief model suggests that people's beliefs about health problems, perceived benefits of action and barriers to action and self-efficacy explain engagement (or lack of engagement) in health-promoting behavior (Rosenstock, 1974). A stimulus, or cue to action, must also be present in order to trigger the health-promoting behavior.

The following conceptual framework is based on the concept of Health Belief Model which explains the research problem of this study:



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the study**

The above framework has explained the relationship between the study variables. It has shown the modifying variables which affect in the perception and behavior of student. Individual characteristics, including demographic, psychosocial, and structural variables, can affect perceptions. Students perceived their health problem differently.

## **Materials & Methods**

The study is based on the descriptive research design. The primary data were collected by using the cross-section study design. The study followed quantitative research involves the use of methodological techniques that represent the human experience in alpha-numerical categories. Kathmandu district was the study area. The study had used the both primary and secondary source for the collection of data. The study adopted the simple random sampling design to select the respondent from selected school. The study selected the one public and one private school from Kathmandu districts and selected the 120 girl students from grade 9 and 10. There were 60 students from public and 60 from private schools. Similarly, there were 65 from grade 9 and 55 from grade 10 and 75 from 13-15 age and 45 from 16-19 age group. Lottery system was adopted to select the student. The statistical formula was adopted to calculate the sample size considering the confidence levels and margin of error. The study used the structured questionnaire to collect the primary data from field. Close ended questions were included in the questionnaire. The statistical data are presented in tabular form.

## Result & Discussion

Attitude is the psychological phenomenon, is a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Attitude is the affecting factor on the behavior of people and personality development. It is the human nature that when people see or observe any good, persona or event then they develop attitude towards that particular goods or persona or event which guide their physical reaction. Here, the study discussed about the attitude of students towards their menstruation.

### 1. Feeling of less confident during menstrual period

Self-esteem and self-confidence are the major factors to succeed in professional life. It gives the positive energy to do the creative and critical work but sometimes people lose their self-confidence due to some physical and mental effects. During the time of menstruation period, girls have both types of effect: physical pain as well as some mental effects too. In Nepalese culture, menstruation period is linked with the concept of 'purity' and 'impurity' so at that time, they are prohibited to touch the food items, not allowed to enter into the kitchen, religious and cultural places which may affect in their level of confidence.

Considering the socio-cultural practices related to the menstrual period, the study had discussed with the girl students about their experience at the time of menstrual period. From the discussion with students, 51.7% reported that they felt less confident during the time of menstruation in comparison of other normal day followed by 12.5% reported always. The result shows that higher number (more than 85%) of girls felt less confident during the menstruation period.

**Table 1: Feeling of less confident during menstrual period**

	Types of school		Grade		Age		Total
	Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
<b>Never</b>	41.70%	30.00%	40.00%	30.90%	38.70%	31.10%	35.80%
<b>Sometimes</b>	43.30%	60.00%	50.80%	52.70%	52.00%	51.10%	51.70%
<b>Always</b>	15.00%	10.00%	9.20%	16.40%	9.30%	17.80%	12.50%
<b>Total</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Source:** Field Survey 2017

Similarly, the school wise data show that there was significant different in feeling of less confident between the public and private school students. 41.7% student of public school student did not feel less confident in comparison of 30% student of private school. It shows that more student of private school felt less confident than the public school students. Losing of confidence is not good for the academic achievement and performance for girl at school time. The mental stress will disturb them to grasp the new knowledge shared by the teachers, and other students.

### 2. Feeling of unhealthy during menstruation period

Menstruation is directly concerned with the health of girls. Good health determines the less pain, during the menstruation period also. Regularity of menstruation cycle also supports to maintain

the good health. Women who bleed a lot at the time of menstruation; her quality of life can be reduced. So perceived benefit from the caring of health is important. As discussed with the respondents, 26.1% never felt unhealthy during the time of menstruation period whereas 31.1% always felt unhealthy. In total, majority (80%) felt some kinds of unhealthy feeling during the time of menstruation period.

**Table 2: Feeling of unhealthy during menstruation period**

	Type of school		Grade		Age in Year		Total
	Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
<b>Never</b>	23.90%	28.30%	27.70%	23.60%	30.70%	17.80%	26.00%
<b>Sometimes</b>	47.50%	38.30%	38.50%	49.10%	38.70%	51.10%	42.90%
<b>Always</b>	28.80%	33.30%	33.80%	27.30%	30.70%	31.10%	31.10%
<b>Total</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Source:** Field Survey 2017

In comparison of public and private school, slightly higher number of student of private school reported feeling of unhealthy during the time of menstruation period. Similarly, grade 9 students had higher response of unhealthiness than grade 10. But there was no significant difference in between the age groups. Feeling of pain was reported by all groups of girls in similar numbers.

### 3. Feeling of uncomfortable to participate in school activities during menstruation period

Following the above question, the students were asked about their feeling of uncomfortable to participate in school activities during the menstruation period. The feeling of less confidence and unhealthiness are become the obstacle to participate in the school activities; especially in physical activities. The response found that in total only 20.8% never felt uncomfortable to participate in school activities whereas majority (79.2%) felt uncomfortable.

**Table 3: participate in school activities during menstruation period**

	Type of school		Grade		Age in Year		Total
	Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
<b>Never</b>	23.30%	18.30%	23.10%	18.20%	21.30%	20.00%	20.80%
<b>Sometimes</b>	33.30%	55.00%	46.20%	41.80%	49.30%	35.60%	44.20%
<b>Always</b>	43.30%	26.70%	30.80%	40.00%	29.30%	44.40%	35.00%
<b>Total</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Source:** Field Survey 2017

The school wise comparison shows that in total 16% more students of public school always felt uncomfortable to participate in school activities than the private school during the time of menstruation. Similarly, grade 10 students felt more problem than the grade 9 students and 16-19 age group felt more problem than 13-15 age groups.

#### 4. Feeling of uncomfortable to participate in social function/festival during menstruation period

The social and family rules are stronger than the legal rules in some traditional societies. Nepalese society is also much closed society so basically girls are compelled to accept the social and family rules. Girls, who are in menstrual period, are not allowed to participate in rituals, religious activities and many social function or festivals. So in this connection, in total 89.2% girl students reported that they felt uncomfortable to participate in social function and festival during the time of menstruation period.

**Table 4: participate in social function/festival during menstruation**

	Type of school		Grade		Age in Year		Total
	Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
<b>Never</b>	16.70%	5.00%	9.20%	12.70%	8.00%	15.60%	10.80%
<b>Sometimes</b>	53.30%	46.70%	43.10%	58.20%	46.70%	55.60%	50.00%
<b>Always</b>	30.00%	48.30%	47.70%	29.10%	45.30%	28.90%	39.20%
<b>Total</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

**Source:** Field Survey 2017

School wise comparison shows that 30.0% students of public school always felt uncomfortable whereas 48.30% student of private school reported that they always felt uncomfortable to participate in social function and festival during the time of menstruation period. Similarly, grade wise, more students of grade 9 felt uncomfortable to participate in the social function that grade 10 during the time of menstruation period, and age wise, 13-15 age group felt more uncomfortable than age 16-19 years.

#### Conclusion

The study found that 65 girls out of 100 felt somehow less confident at the time of menstrual period. As this study, more students of grade 10 students felt less confidence than grade 9. Similarly, more student from 16-19 age groups reported less confidence than 13-15 age group. Menstruation effects the health status also because quantity and days of bleeding determines the health status of girl/women. In this study, majority (80%) felt some kinds of unhealthy feeling during the time of menstruation period. Basically stomach pain, fatigue was reported by majority girls. The family members should care about the hygienic food, sanitation, right information, rest and education. In the discussion of participation in school activities, majority (79.2%) felt uncomfortable to participate in school activities at the time of menstruation and in total 89.2% girl students reported that they felt uncomfortable to participate in social function and festival during the time of menstruation period.

Participation of girl/women in social, cultural and religious activities are strictly prohibited by social rules in some communities and caste groups of Nepal. The traditional belief system is still established in the society which becomes the barrier for personal and professional growth and

development of girl/women. So, family members and society should be aware on the right of girl/women to be healthy, high-self-esteem, and participate in socio-cultural activities.

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