



## Research Paper

# Impact of Menstrual Health on Economic Status and Cultural Taboos Among Women Working in Unorganized Sectors: A Sociological Study in Gorabazar, Berhampore, Murshidabad, WB

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Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>Menstrual health and hygiene are essential for every woman, including adolescent girls, to ensure their well-being and empowerment. On any given day, there are more than 300 million women worldwide who are menstruating. However, little focus has been placed on those working in informal or unorganized sectors. Women's health concerns are generally less represented in basic and transitional research. Menstrual health management remains poor among lower-income families, especially those who are the daily wage earners. Menstrual health needs of women who are working in unorganized sectors (street vendors, shopkeepers, maidservants, etc.) go unmet due to a lack of access to menstrual health and hygiene. It is crucial for all women, including adolescent girls, to ensure their well-being and empowerment. On any given day, there are over 300 million menstruating women worldwide. However, little attention has been given to those working in informal or unorganized sectors. Women's health concerns are generally underrepresented in basic and transitional research. Menstrual health management remains poor among lower-income families, especially those who are daily wage earners. Women working in unorganized sectors, such as street vendors, shopkeepers, and maidservants, have unmet menstrual health needs due to a lack of access to essential services like toilets, poverty, and cultural taboos. Despite being in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, cultural taboos still restrict women from participating in auspicious occasions or worship, as seen in the well-known Sabarimala temple case in Kerala. To manage their periods, girls and women need access to water, sanitation, hygiene, and hygienic menstrual materials, as well as information on best practices and an environment where they can manage menstruation without stigmatization. Given this context, the present research aims to analyze how menstrual health impacts women's economic background and explore the cultural taboos practised by women. Furthermore, it seeks to investigate how women maintain hygiene during menstruation. The research is primarily a purposive study based on qualitative and quantitative data from a sample size of 20 women residing in Gorabazar, Berhampore, Murshidabad. The research findings are analyzed using both primary and secondary data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397</li> <li>▪ Received: 15-05-2024</li> <li>▪ Accepted: 17-06-2024</li> <li>▪ Published: 20-06-2024</li> <li>▪ IJCRM:3(3); 2024: 130-134</li> <li>▪ ©2024, All Rights Reserved</li> <li>▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes</li> <li>▪ Peer Review Process: Yes</li> </ul> <p><b>How to Cite this Manuscript</b></p> <p>Poulomi Das, Sohan Das. Impact of Menstrual Health on Economic Status and Cultural Taboos Among Women Working in Unorganized Sectors: A Sociological Study in Gorabazar, Berhampore, Murshidabad, WB. International Journal of Contemporary Research in Multidisciplinary.2024; 3(3): 130-134.</p>

**KEYWORDS:** Menstrual health, Unorganized sectors, Hygiene and Cultural taboos, Economic background.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Menstruation, in medical science, refers to the periodic release of blood and mucosal tissue from the uterine lining through the vagina. The menstrual cycle primarily occurs due to the fluctuation of hormones. Menstruation is initiated by the decline in progesterone levels and serves as an indication that pregnancy has not taken place. Over 300 million people globally have menstruation. Donors and numerous development agencies are prioritising women's self-sufficiency to eliminate poverty by supporting women to generate income. Nevertheless, there is a lack of attention given to women's health concerns, including those linked to menstruation, such as the provision of sufficient, private, hygienic, and secure restrooms, as well as access to clean water and proper waste disposal systems. The disregard for addressing the impact of existing WASH inadequacies on women's health and productivity in the workplace, as well as the influence of menstrual health-related issues on their earning potential, is evident. The lack of hygiene is a result of insufficient knowledge and disregard for menstruation. Failure to utilize hygienic garments or sanitary pads and neglecting to promptly replace damp pads during menstruation can lead to genital pruritus, urinary tract infections, and even uterine cancer. The sole method to eliminate it is by practising cleanliness and upholding proper hygiene.<sup>[6]</sup> For millennia, numerous taboos have been established about the process of menstruation. Despite being a normal biological process, menstruation is often stigmatized and seen negatively in various regions worldwide. A significant number of girls in underdeveloped nations are absent from school for a minimum of three days each month due to menstruation. Indeed, a significant majority of women in the country experience the issue of uterine infection at some stage as a result of unhealthy menstrual cycles.<sup>[10]</sup> A significant proportion of women in our nation continue to be observed wearing unclean garments. There are numerous instances of women dying as a result of various constraints in this matter. Menstruation is a crucial element that is necessary for reproduction to occur. Nevertheless, it is crucial to ascertain if there are any disparities in the limitations faced by rural and urban areas. By eliminating the prevailing bias against patriarchal silence, it becomes feasible to provide women with a wholesome and exquisite existence by disseminating the enlightenment of knowledge to all. The global observance of "International Menstruation Day" takes place annually on May 26<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of this day is to raise awareness and dispel misconceptions regarding menstrual rituals. In 2014, the German NGO "WASH" took the lead<sup>[14][15]</sup>.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emmanuel Odongo *et al.*, (2023)<sup>[10]</sup> established in their study the prevalence of menstrual disorders and their effect on the quality of life of female UG students at Makerere University College of Health and Science. Of the 275 participants, 269 reported one of the different forms of menstrual disorders considered in this study including irregular menstrual cycle, frequent menstruation, infrequent menstruation, intermenstrual bleeding, and dysmenorrhea.<sup>[8][9]</sup>

Nazish Rafique *et al.*, (2018)<sup>[1]</sup> discussed that 91% of the students were suffering a different kind of menstrual problems reported, and their incidences included irregular menstruation (27%), abnormal vaginal bleeding (9.3%), amenorrhea (9.2%), menorrhagia (3.4%), dysmenorrhea (89.7%) and premenstrual symptoms (46.7%). High perceived stress was identified in 39% of the students.

G. Alekhya *et al.*, (2023)<sup>[2]</sup> discussed that "there were 100 articles with 100 and more citations about the menstrual health of adolescent girls cross-sectional study design, obstetrics and gynaecology department India and US countries, and PLOS ONE journal had the most citations in research on menstrual health among adolescent girls the top 10 articles were on menorrhagia, menstrual hygiene practices like water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) taboos on menstruation and education on menstrual health.<sup>[11]</sup>

Pratiksha Puranik, Jayashree Dhote *et al.*, (2020)<sup>[12]</sup> suggested that hormonal imbalances are related to food intake because females face infrequent periods and problems suffered by females regarding their menstrual cycle and due to psychological stress anxiety and depression.

BJOG: an international journal of obstetrics & Gynaecology suggested that "Approximately 4-8% of women report having menstrual period longer than 7 to 8 days when interviewed. similarly, the self-reported prevalence of excessive, profuse or heavy bleeding was 4-9% in most studies the 3-month self-reported prevalence of excessive bleeding was higher ranging from 8% to 27%."<sup>[5]</sup>

*Delfin A. Tan et al.*, studied various kinds of cultural aspects and mythologies about menstruation "Mythological stories characterise menstrual blood variously as sacred, a gift from the gods or a punishment for sin but it is always magical and powerful."<sup>[13]</sup>

## SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE SELECTION OF THE STUDY

The researcher chooses the study to understand the challenges related to menstruation faced by these women that affect their economic background. The researcher has also tried to find out how much they are aware of the hygiene of menstruating health and what are the cultural taboos practised by these women living in Gorabazar, Berhampore, Murshidabad district.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Incongruence with the title of the research topic study was conducted with the following objectives,

- ❖ To find out the types and frequency of problems related to menstruation in women and the effect of these problems on their productivity and economic background.
- ❖ To know how much these women are aware of sanitation and hygiene during menstruation.
- ❖ To find out what cultural taboos have been followed due to menstruation.

## 4. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The research methodology can be expressed following: -

Since this study is a descriptive type. So, we have used both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to carry out this research to find out what and how women experienced menstrual cycles the sample size was 20. Women are selected through

purposive sampling residing in Gorabazar, Berhampore, Murshidabad district. We used semi semi-structured questionnaire to collect their responses by personal interviews.

5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

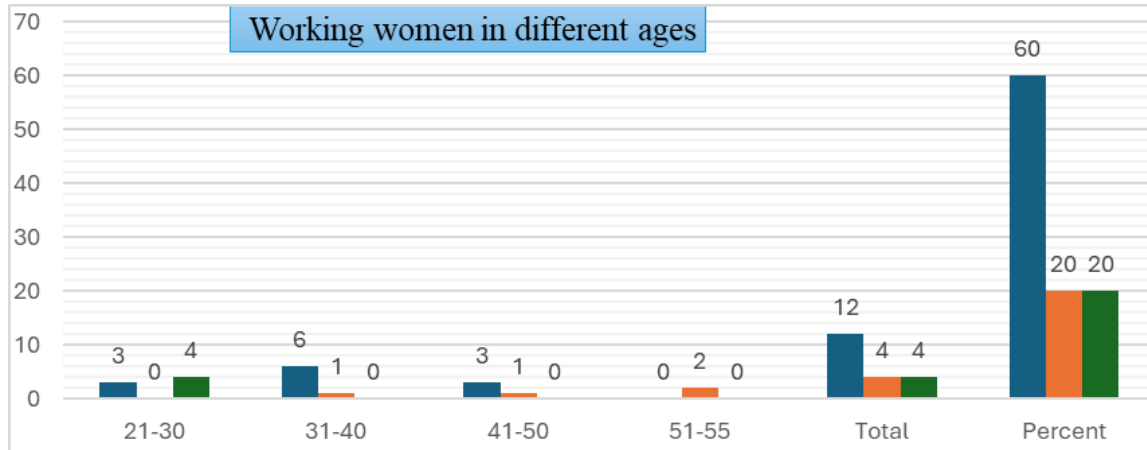


Figure 1: Working Women in Different Ages

The sample size was 20. And majority of them 41 to 50 aged 60%, and 20% of respondents are 31 to 40 working in various sectors (street vendors, shop keepers and maid servants). And rest of 20% of respondents are 21 to 30 years old. In that time of data collection, I found that between 41 to 50 years aged women

are facing challenges as they are daily wage earners if they take a rest during this period their income will be stopped. Some of them face lower abdomen pain and frequent bleeding. Despite suffering from these problems, they have to go to work.

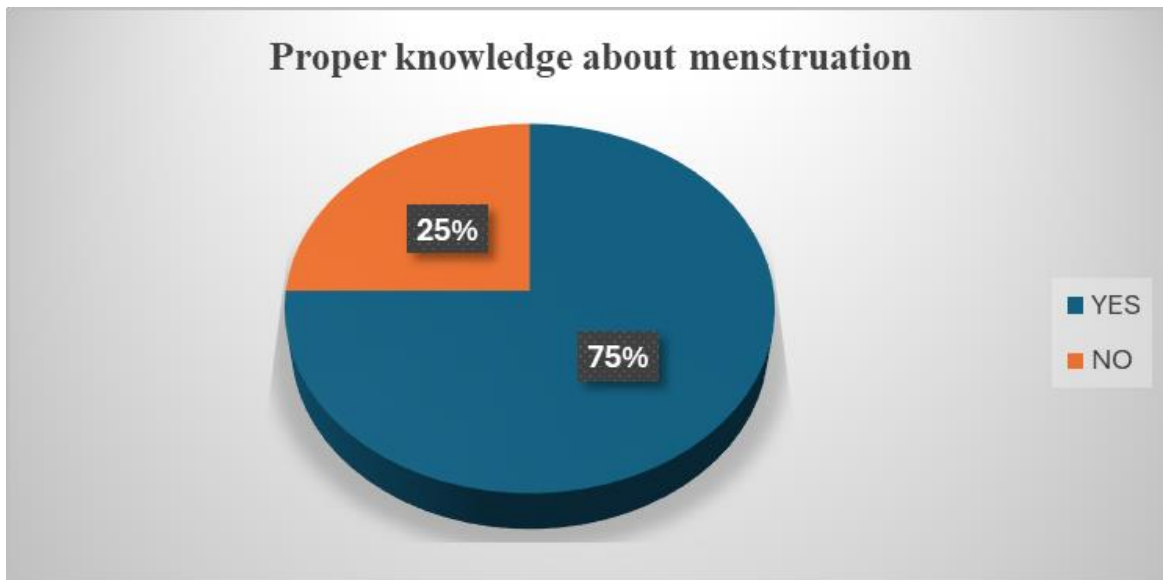


Figure 2: Proper Knowledge About Menstruating

There are 75% of respondents have no idea about the menstrual cycle. That is how menstruating is, how to maintain hygiene and stay aware of menstruating health. They have adequate information. On the other hand, 25% of respondents have no

proper knowledge about menstruating health and lack of information they have faced some health issues like genital itching and urinary tract infections.



Figure 3: Physical and mental problems during menstruation (Own survey)

There are 65% of respondents have faced health problems (menorrhagia, irregular periods, and pelvic pain). One of them (40 years old) recently operated uterus for continued heavy flow. Another (52 old) respondent suffering from anxiety and heavy

bleeding. (48 and 52) aged another two women faced irregular and painful periods since 1yr ago. It's called dysmenorrhea. After consulting with the doctor, they are cured now. 35% of respondents have no problem. They are regular menstruating.

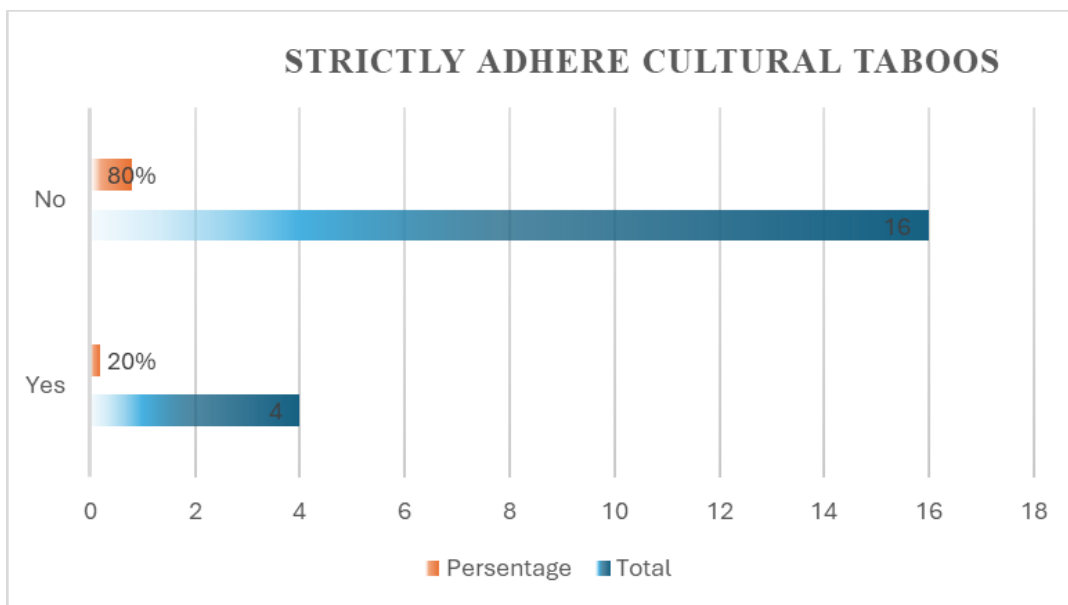


Figure 4: Strictly Adhere to Cultural Taboos (Own calculated)

There are 80% of the respondents strictly adhere to cultural taboos. women who are strictly adhering these types of social rules like prohibited from entering the temples, cannot participate in any kind of auspicious occasions due to this biological natural process. On the other side rest of the 20% of women are not following these types of social rules. Now we are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where AI tools are the fastest and control majority of the things, India goes on the moon but still majority of the women believe in these practices and it's traditionally gone on.

## 6. FINDINGS

The study reveals the following findings which are: -

1. Between the ages of 40 to 50 years 13 women are found to suffer from various kinds of physical and mental problems like menorrhagia, pelvic pain, irregular periods, dysmenorrhea and anxiety.
2. 80% of the respondents strictly adhere to some kind of cultural taboos. They do not enter temples, are forbidden to participate in any kind of auspicious occasions also they are isolating themselves from the adoration of God due to menstruation.

3. 25% of women have no proper knowledge about menstruating health and maintaining hygiene. Most of them do hard work during this period. And feeling very weak. Also, they have neglected to take care of their health. Because they are daily wage earner. To run their family, they have to go to work they neglect their health issues as well.
4. Few women do not intake healthy and nutritious food despite doing hard labour in factories and as maidservants at other houses they look very weak also they are economically poor section.
5. Majority of the women suffer from menstruating health issues due to negligence and work pressure they do not take proper care of their health.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Why the studies are important because women play an important role in both family and building society these menstrual health issues majority impacted their health in the study, I try to find out how menstruating health problems affect wage-earning workers of informal sectors regarding their perception of their menstruating health and hygiene menstruating health issue and social taboos regarding this study I had concluded the following points: -

1. Do not intake healthy and nutritious food and do heavy work economically poor women fall sick.
2. Despite health issues related to menstruation they have to go to work.
3. The majority of the women followed the cultural taboos due to traditional beliefs.

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