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Menstrual Effect on Education of Girl Student: Cases from Secondary Level School of Kathmandu, Nepal

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Abstract

Menstruation is natural phenomena occurring among the girls during the adolescent years. The situation of menstruation is considered differently as the cultural practices of society. In Nepal, some communities have strict rules for menstrual girl/women; they are not allowed to touch food items, drinking water, worship the god and participate in the religious and cultural program. The study aims to identify the menstrual effect on education of girl student. The study was conducted among the 120 girl students of one private and one public school of Kathmandu district of Nepal. The study was based on the quantitative design and students were selected from the simple random sampling technique. Structured questionnaire survey was done to collect the data. The results show that majority (89.2%) experienced the leaks in school time. 26.7% girls said that if they will have leak at school then they will go back to home. 60% girls never missed school at the time of menstruation whereas 36.7% missed sometimes and 3.3% always missed the school. The main causes of missing of school were severe stomach pain. In conclusion, it is found that there was no significant effect of menstruation on educational achievement of girl students though school should provide the menstrual hygiene kits to girl to decrease the absent rate at the time of menstruation.

Keywords: Education, Effect, Girl, Menstrual, Nepal, Student

Introduction

Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to the females. The onset of menstruation is one of the most important changes occurring among the girls during the adolescent years. The first menstruation (menarche) occurs between 11 and 15 years with a mean of 13 years (Dasgupta & Sarkar, 2008). The bodily changes associated with puberty will have an impact in the girl's physical, psychological and social development (Tiwari, Tiwari, & Oza, 2006). Menstruation is still regarded as something unclean or dirty in India and Nepal. Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to girls. However, it has always been surrounded by taboos and myths that exclude women from many aspects of socio-cultural life (Garg & Anand, 2015). Such taboos about menstruation present in many societies impact on girls' and women's emotional state, mentality and lifestyle and most importantly, health. Stigma around menstruation and menstrual hygiene is a violation of several human rights, most importantly of the right to human dignity, but also the right to non-discrimination, equality, bodily integrity, health, privacy and the right to freedom from inhumane and degrading treatment from abuse and violence (WSSCC, 2013).

The various studies have shown the menstrual effect on the academic achievement of girls. They denied to go school during the time of menstruation. There may be various causes like shyness, lack of menstrual hygiene management facilities in school, severe pain during menstruation, etc. One study has stated that girls are not being able to go to schools during their menstruation periods because of the fear of leak, lack of cleaning and washing facility and lack of safely disposal facility of sanitary pad. In a survey conducted by WaterAid in Nepal in 2009 found that over half of the respondents in the study reported being absent from school at some time, due to menstruation. Lack of privacy for cleaning and washing was the main reason given, (41 per cent), with other key factors being the lack of availability of disposal system and water supply (WaterAid in Nepal, 2009, p. 6).

The impact of menstruation on access to education is evident in many Numbers, most of them being developing ones: "More than 20% of girls in Sierra Leone miss school during

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their periods; in Nepal and Afghanistan the number rises to 30%. In India, almost a quarter of school going girls drop out of school when they start menstruating and the ones that remain miss on average five days a month” (Perczynska & Preiss, 2014). According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, one in 10 African girls skip school during menstruation. 95% of girls in Ghana sometimes miss school during their periods; 86% and 53% of girls in Garissa and Nairobi respectively and in Kenya they miss a day or more of school every two months; In Ethiopia 51% of girl’s miss between one and four days of school per month because of periods; 39% reported reduced performance (House, Mahon, & Cavill, 2012, p. 31).

In the proper context of Nepalese society, the period of menstruation is still discussed from the cultural and religious issue. The Rig Vedic concept of this “purity” is used to confine women’s sexuality in Hindu tradition (Chawala, 1992). Therefore, Hindu women are recognized as polluted during menarche and childbirth (Shah, 2004)(Shah, 2004). The concept of impurity during menstrual periods has been institutionalized in Nepali Hindu society which is locally called *mahinabari bhayeko or na chhune*, untouchable (Bennett, 2002). Menstrual women had separate bed and not allowed to enter into the kitchen, religious and cultural places. Such types of discrimination may have effect in their other social life so considering this problem; the study aims to explore the menstrual effect in education of girl student. The study is going to explore the experience of girl students about the menstrual problem during their school time and its effect in their study.

Materials & Methods

The study is based on the descriptive design from quantitative approach. The study was conducted among the 120 public and private school student reading in the grade 9 and 10. The study has explored the experience and opinion on the basis of types of school, grade wise and age wise. The students were selected from the lottery method under the simple random sampling technique. The consent of individual students was taken before starting the interview and they were ensured about the confidentiality of their privacy. Their name and address are not disclosed in the study. Structured questionnaire survey was done to collect the data. The collected data is analyzed from the statistical software (SPSS V. 20) and presented in the tabular form.

Result & Discussion

Leaks in school

Menstruation is the natural phenomenon and release of blood from a girl's uterus, out through her vagina. But sometimes there may be leaks of blood in outside of wearing cloth during the time of menstruation if there is no proper caring or use of sanitary pad. Girls feel the shyness or hesitation if other people will see or know the leaks. Basically in school or offices, girls become more sensitive during the time of menstruation period about their sanitation. The girls said that in total only 10.8% never experienced the leaks in school time whereas rest (89.2%) experienced the leaks in school.

Table 1: Leaks in school

	Type of school		Grade		Age in Year		Total
	Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
Never	13.3%	8.3%	10.80%	10.90%	13.30%	6.70%	10.8%
Sometimes	86.7%	88.3%	89.20%	85.50%	86.70%	88.90%	87.5%
Always	0%	3.3%	0.00%	3.60%	0.00%	4.40%	1.7%
Total	100%	100%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100

Source: Field Survey 2017

More girls of private school experienced the leaks in school than the public school students. The reason may be that the private school has very few holidays than the public school. Student has to spend more time in school activities which may cause the high chances of leaks in school.

Response if leakage at school

In Nepalese culture, menstruation is linked with the religion; explained as a ‘purity’ and ‘polluted’ concept. The Rig Vedic concept of this “purity” is used to confine women’s sexuality in Hindu tradition (Chawala, 1992).

Therefore, Hindu women are recognized as polluted during menarche and childbirth (Shah, 2004). So, in this situation, girls try to live quietly and separately. Girls feel shy if there is any leakage when she will be out of home so in this connection, the girl students were asked the question that if there was leaks in school then what was there response. In total 26.7% said that if they will have leak at school then they will go home, change and stay at home, 25.8% said that they will go home, change and come back to school and 47.5% said that they will stay at school if they will have leakage at school.

Table 2: Response if leakage at school

	Type of school		Grade		Age in Year		Total
	Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
Go home, change and stay at home	13.3%	40%	27.7%	25.5%	28%	24.4%	26.7%
Go home, change and come back	40%	11.7%	13.8%	40%	14.7%	44.4%	25.8%
Stay at school	46.7%	48.3%	58.5%	34.5%	57.3%	31.1%	47.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Field Survey 2017

More girl student of private school said that they will go home, change the cloth and will stay at home than the

public school.

Missing of school during menstruation period

Various previous literatures have shown the effect of menstruation on academic achievement of girl student. Due to misconception and traditional culture of menstruation, girls are prohibited from the movement and mobility at the time of menstruation which directly effect in their

education of profession. The present study shows that in total only 3.3% students always missed the school during the menstruation period whereas 60% never missed school. It is reported that 36.7% sometimes missed the class due to menstruation.

Table 3: Missing of school during menstruation period

	Type of school		Grade		Age in Year		Total
	Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Never	63.3%	56.7%	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%	60%
Sometimes	33.3%	40%	36.9%	36.4%	38.7%	33.3%	36.7%
Always	3.3%	3.3%	3.1%	3.6%	1.3%	6.7%	3.3%
Total	100%	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%

Source: Field Survey 2017

The ratio of school missing is found similar in between the public and private school students. Regular attendance of public school student (63.3%) is slightly higher than the private school student (56.7%) in comparison.

A previous study conducted in in four schools in Chitwan, Nepal, the result shows that 47 percent of the girls reported missing school due to menstruation. In the case of day, they missed school due to menstruation, data shows, on days when they were not menstruating, girls attended school 85.7 percent of the time, compared to 83 percent of the time during their periods. This translates to girls missing only 0.35 school days per year because of their periods (The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), 2011). The data of missing school at the time of

menstruation is found slightly higher among the student of Chitwan than the present study of Kathmandu district.

Causes of missing the school during menstruation period

There are different causes reported by girl student of public and private school but effect of these causes on attendance of school is very low. The data shows that there were only 1.7% students missed school due to fear of staining clothes during the time of menstruation and the same number (1.7%) reported the fear of bullying by friends, 6.7% missed school due to stomach pain in menstrual time, 3.3% missed due to the tiredness.

Table 4: Causes of missing the school during menstruation period

Causes		Types of school		Grade		Age in Year		Total
		Public	Private	9	10	13-15	16-19	
Fear of staining clothe	Never	78.3%	75%	78.50%	74.50%	81.30%	68.90%	76.7%
	Sometimes	20%	23.3%	20.00%	23.60%	17.30%	28.90%	21.7%
	Always	1.7%	1.7%	1.50%	1.80%	1.30%	2.20%	1.7%
Fear bullying by friend	Never	83.3%	85%	90.80%	76.40%	90.70%	73.30%	84.2%
	Sometimes	15%	13.3%	9.20%	20.00%	9.30%	22.20%	14.2%
	Always	1.7%	1.7%	0.00%	3.60%	0.00%	4.40%	1.7%
Stomach pain in menstrual time	Never	63.3%	55%	69.20%	47.30%	64.00%	51.10%	59.2%
	Sometimes	30%	38.3%	26.20%	43.60%	30.70%	40.00%	34.2%
	Always	6.7%	6.7%	4.60%	9.10%	5.30%	8.90%	6.7%
Due to the tiredness	Never	73.3%	66.7%	78.50%	60.00%	77.30%	57.80%	70%
	Sometimes	23.3%	30%	20.00%	34.50%	21.30%	35.60%	26.7%
	Always	3.3%	3.3%	1.50%	5.50%	1.30%	6.70%	3.3%
Lack of place for girls to wash and change the pad	Never	85%	91.7%	93.80%	81.80%	94.70%	77.80%	88.3%
	Sometimes	13.3%	8.3%	6.20%	16.40%	5.30%	20.00%	10.8%
	Always	1.7%	0%	0.00%	1.80%	0.00%	2.20%	0.8%
No facility of disposal of sanitary pad	Never	83.3%	95%	96.90%	80.00%	96.00%	77.80%	89.2%
	Sometimes	15%	3.3%	3.10%	16.40%	4.00%	17.80%	9.2%
	Always	1.7%	1.7%	0.00%	3.60%	0.00%	4.40%	1.7%
Due to lack of sanitary pads	Never	93.3%	93.3%	100.00%	85.50%	100.00%	82.20%	93.3%
	Sometimes	5%	6.7%	0.00%	12.70%	0.00%	15.60%	5.8%
	Always	1.7%	0%	0.00%	1.80%	0.00%	2.20%	0.8%
Total		100%	100%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100%

Source: Field Survey 2017

From the observation of selected school, there was separate toilet facility in all school which may be safe place to change the sanitary pad. So, it might be the reason that only 0.8% girls missed the school due to lack of proper place to wash and change the sanitary pad. In total, 1.7% said that there was no facility to dispose the sanitary pad in school

which made difficult the change and dispose the already used pad. Similarly, only 0.8% girls said that they missed the school due to lack of sanitary pad.

Conclusion

The study has explored the experience of girl students about the menstrual problem at school and its effect in their study. The study shows that majority (89.2%) experienced the leaks in school time. As from the observation of facility of school, there was no proper facility for menstrual girl to get the sanitary pad and its safe disposal. So, girls themselves have to manage the sanitary pad. In such condition, 26.7% said that if they will have leak at school then they will go home, change and stay at home, 25.8% said that they will go home, change and come back to school and 47.5% said that they will stay at school if they will have leakage at school. The menstrual effect was shared by the girls during the field visit. 3.3% students shared that they always missed the school during the menstruation period 36.7% sometimes missed the class. Main causes of missing class were stomach pain at the time of menstruation followed by tiredness, fear of staining clothe, fear of bullying by friends. But there was no significant effect of menstruation on education of girls though school should provide girls facilities and special care during the time of menstruation to decrease the rate of absence of school at the time of menstruation.

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