

Exploring men's knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards menstruation: a qualitative study in Kallyanpur slum of Dhaka

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Abstract

Introduction

Menstruation and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) remains an underexplored topic in patriarchal societies like Bangladesh, where cultural stigma and misconceptions hinder open discussions about menstruation. This study explores men's knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes toward menstruation in Kallyanpur slum of Dhaka, aiming to fill the research gap and encourage greater male participation in MHM practices.

Methodology

Using a qualitative approach, 13 in-depth interviews were conducted with men aged 23-47 years in Kallyanpur slum. Participants were purposively sampled, and semi-structured interview guidelines and case vignettes facilitated discussions. Data were transcribed and analysed using framework analysis to identify patterns and themes related to men's knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards menstruation.

Findings

While participants demonstrated basic awareness of menstruation, significant knowledge gaps and misconceptions exist, often shaped by limited exposure and societal taboos. The primary source of information for men was their wives, with schools and formal education playing no role in educating men. Men expressed stigma toward menstruation, labelling it as impure, and exhibited hesitation in discussing it with others outside their marital relationships. Despite these barriers, there was a strong willingness to support women during menstruation by helping with household chores and purchasing menstrual products. Participants emphasized the need for NGO-led awareness campaigns to normalize conversations about menstruation and debunk myths.

Conclusion

The study highlights the need for comprehensive educational interventions to address men's knowledge gaps and foster positive attitudes toward menstruation. Men's involvement in MHM is critical for reducing stigma and improving menstrual hygiene practices. Recommendations include incorporating MHM into school curricula and using NGOs to conduct targeted awareness programs for men in urban slums.

Introduction

Menstruation is a natural physiological process in women which begins at 11 to 15 years of age (Deepa et al., 2019). WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene has defined MHM as ‘Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of a menstrual period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual materials. They understand the basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fear’ (UNICEF, 2019). Studies undertaken in developing countries show that most women are not able to sustain proper menstrual hygiene practices. Economic constraints, limited resources, availability of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in homes, coupled with traditional norms and a lack of sufficient knowledge and education, religious and cultural views create barriers for women to maintain proper menstrual hygiene (Afiaz & Biswas, 2021). In many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), menstruation is surrounded by stigma and taboos, viewed as "dirty" or "impure," and treated as something to be kept secret and silent. As a result, women are reluctant to discuss menstrual hygiene openly, limiting education about menstrual hygiene and perpetuating myths that lead to unhealthy menstrual practices and increased risk of urinary and reproductive tract infections and psychosocial stress (Ali et al., 2020). Given the context discussed, the Government of Bangladesh has prioritized menstrual hygiene management in its policies. In particular, the National Strategy for Adolescent Health and the National Menstrual Hygiene Management Strategy 2021 emphasize the vital need to address these concerns. In a patriarchal society, as menstruation is regarded as feminine issue, men’s knowledge and engagement in supporting MHM practices is barely noticed.

In Bangladesh, women do not talk to men about menstruation due to the stigma around it (Rathod & Muneshwar, 2023). As a result, most men are unaware of the normal physiology of menstruation, including the menstrual cycle and the hygienic practices that need to be taken during menstruation, even though they are most often the decision makers regarding the health facility and services for the family (Deepa et al., 2019). Schools are the ideal platform to discuss physiological change of the human body including reproductive health, puberty and menstrual cycle helping boys understand menstruation and foster empathy and advocacy (Khan et al., 2023). However, comprehensive menstrual education is rarely provided to boys in schools in low-income countries, which results in incomplete knowledge and perpetuates misconceptions and stigma (Benshaul-Tolonen et al., 2020). It was noted that the educational

material was accepted poorly by male students in schools in Taiwan and Mexico, which resulted in MHM education limited only to female students (Khan et al., 2023). It has also been observed in Taiwan that boys were even discouraged to talk to each other about menstruation at school. Furthermore, parents did not want their sons to spend time learning about menstruation, as this topic was not deemed to be important for their futures (Mahon et al., 2015). Studies reported that while teachers understand that teaching students about puberty and menstruation in schools is important, they admitted that they felt uncomfortable in delivering the lesson, despite being trained to do so (Mahfuz et al., 2021). This was mainly due to social and cultural proscriptions on discussing menstruation and puberty, which the students, teachers, parents, and even the head teachers were unaccustomed to. Apparently, education on puberty and menstruation in schools remains inconsistently implemented in Bangladesh and elsewhere impeding internalisation of such important issues while the boys turn into men or diffusion of incomplete knowledge to men and communities through boys.

Men can create a supportive environment for women and girls to manage their menstruation effectively at home, in the community, school and workplace in their various roles of father, husband, brother, teacher, peers, community leaders, employers and policymakers, (Rathod & Muneshwar, 2023). Lack of adequate knowledge about menstruation and negative attitudes among men give rise to misconceptions and stigma about menstruation among them. This leads to boys in school teasing girls during their menstruation, which is known as 'period teasing'. Studies in Bangladesh have shown that this phenomenon results in 30% or more of girls missing school during their periods. In addition to this, negative attitudes and period teasing by male classmates may lead to mental health problems among girls (Khan et al., 2023). Male attitude is one of the major factors contributing to the stigmatisation of menstruation. Studies have shown that it is important to involve men and boys in menstrual hygiene management since their involvement can have a positive impact on women's health (Rathod & Muneshwar, 2023). A key reason for inadequate menstrual hygiene is that menstruation is embedded in a "culture of shame" for girls and women, leading to insufficient support from men. In Malawi, women found it difficult to ask for financial support from men in their families to buy sanitary pads, as the men were generally unaware of menstrual hygiene (Mahon et al., 2015).

Despite government led initiatives for both male and female members in the community, social norms and perceptions of menstruation continue to prevent the dissemination of accurate information on menstruation. Involving men and boys in menstrual hygiene management initiatives can create a more supportive environment for girls, which could reduce stigma, social anxiety and negative perceptions

about menstruation. Studies conducted previously have targeted women and girls only. There are very few studies which assess men's knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards menstruation (Mason et al., 2017). Existing research often falls short in adopting a qualitative, in-depth approach to explore the nuanced beliefs and social norms that influence men's attitudes toward menstruation, which aligns with multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially goals 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), 6 (ensure clean water and sanitation) (National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2017-2030, 2016). Moreover, among the few studies conducted in Bangladesh, the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of men living in slums have not been explored. This leaves a gap in the country in understanding this important issue, and bringing behavioural change among slum-dwelling men towards menstruation. In this context, qualitative study can help understand in-depth the notions of culture, stigma, and taboo within communities when it comes to such topics. Eventually, this will lead to men participating in menstrual hygiene management and becoming advocates for better management along with women and girls.

Research questions

General

1. What is the overall understanding of menstruation among men in Kallyanpur slum?
2. What are the factors that influence men's perceptions and attitudes towards menstruation?

Specific

1. What do men know about the biological process involved in menstruation and where do men primarily obtain their information about menstruation?
2. How do men perceive menstruation in the context of women's health and what role do men believe that they should play in supporting women during their menstrual cycle?
3. How do men's attitudes affect menstruation and menstruating women?

Objectives

General

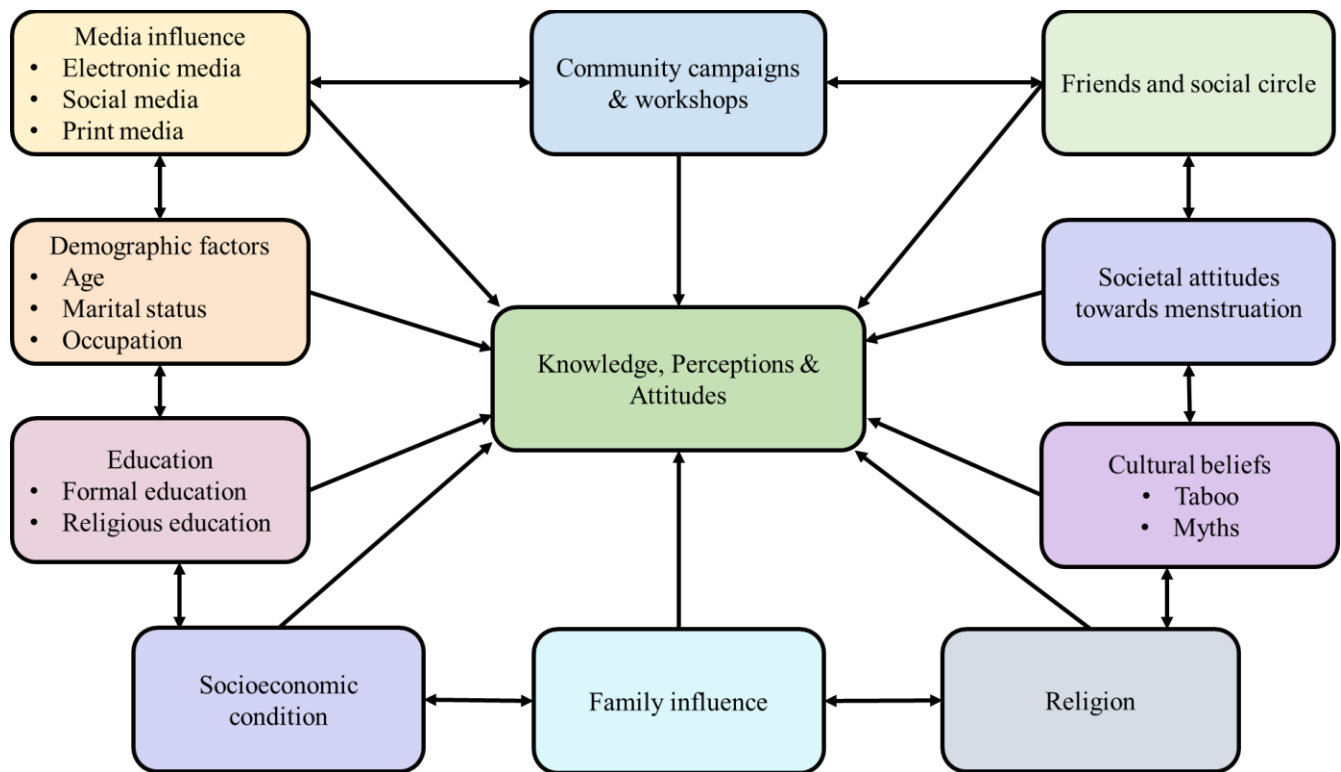
To explore the knowledge of menstruation among men in Kallyanpur slum and the factors that influence men's perceptions and attitudes towards menstruation.

Specific

1. To understand men's knowledge about the process of menstruation and their sources of information about menstruation.
2. To understand men's perceptions about menstruation in the context of women's health and their role in supporting women during their menstrual cycle.
3. To explain men's attitudes towards menstruation and menstruating women.

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework explores the knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes of men towards menstruation, emphasizing their interconnectedness and the factors influencing them. It highlights how education, socio-cultural norms, media influence and demographic factors shape men's understanding and responses to menstruation.



Operational Definitions

Slum - A slum is generally defined as a group of five or more houses that are located in municipal areas on public land, railways, roadsides, embankments, or private land, and are of very poor quality. It includes huts, tongs, tin sheds, semi-pucca, rickety structures as well as dilapidated buildings (BBS, 2022).

Adult Men - An adult is a person older than 19 years of age unless national law defines a person as being an adult at an earlier age (WHO, 2013).

Menstruation - Menstruation is a natural process of releasing blood and associated materials from the uterus through the vagina as part of the menstrual cycle (UNICEF, 2019).

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) - Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) refers to management of hygiene associated with the process of menstruation. WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene has defined MHM as ‘Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of a menstrual period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual materials. They understand the basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fear’ (UNICEF, 2019).

Menarche- Menarche marks the beginning of menstruation and is the time when a girl experiences her first menstrual period (UNICEF, 2019).

Methodology

Study Design

The study was qualitative exploratory in nature, using In-depth interviews (IDIs) and case vignettes to explore the knowledge, perception, and attitudes of adult men towards menstruation.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in Kallyanpur slum of Dhaka city. There are 2,184 households in Kallyanpur slum, and the total population of Kallyanpur slum is 8,129 of which 4,126 are men (BBS, 2015). Kallyanpur slum was purposely selected due to BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health's (JPGSPH) established rapport and prior research experience within the community. The chosen location was consistent with the research objectives, ensuring practicality, ethical considerations, and the potential to gain valuable insights into the experiences of adult men living in urban slums.

Study Population

The study population consisted of adult men of 20 years of age and above in Kallyanpur slum.

Inclusion criteria

- All men 20 years and above were eligible to participate in the study.
- Adult men who had been living in Kallyanpur slum for at least 6 months.
- Adult men who provided written informed consent.

Exclusion criteria

- Adult men who did not provide consent to participate in the study.
- Adult men who had been living in Kallyanpur slum for less than 6 months.
- Adult men outside the age limit chosen (<20 years).

Sample Size and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the study participants because we accessed the community through our ARISE project and BRAC networks. Snowball sampling was used because men knew other adult men in the community who were willing to talk about menstruation and participate in the study. 13 in-

depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted until data saturation was reached, to collect data on the knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes of men towards menstruation.

Tool Development

In-Depth Interviews

A semi structured interview guideline was developed in English from the conceptual framework by the researcher. It was further translated into Bengali. The guideline provided questions which were used to probe into what the participants knew or understood in terms of knowledge, perception, and attitude regarding menstruation.

1. Knowledge: This section explored the prevailing knowledge of men including awareness, facts, and information that men have about menstruation and their sources of information.
2. Perception: This section explored how men viewed menstruation based on their own experiences, values, societal and cultural influences.
3. Attitude: This part explored men's behaviour and their actions in relation to menstruation. This included their willingness to engage with or contribute to menstruation-related issues.

Case Vignettes

Vignettes are short stories based on fictional characters used in qualitative and quantitative research which explore participants' beliefs. Crafted from past research or local examples, they're relatable and allow participants to express their views on how characters might feel or behave in scenarios, or describe their own actions. The third-person perspective of vignettes facilitates sensitive topic discussions by normalising situations and therefore prompting participants to share personal experiences. Vignettes have been used in research on psychology and socially sensitive issues like sexual health, HIV, mental health, stigmatization, and violence, as well as vulnerable groups like children and drug users (Gourlay et al., 2014).

Data Collection

Data was collected through in-depth interviews and case vignettes with adult men in Kallyanpur slum. These interviews were conducted to understand in detail the knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes of individual men towards menstruation. Case vignettes presented scenarios that reflected real-life

situations related to menstruation. They were also used to prompt participants to share their experiences related to menstruation, which provided richer qualitative data.

13 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with adult men aged 23 to 47 years to build an understanding of their knowledge, perception, and attitudes towards menstruation and menstrual hygiene management. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour, allowing us to gather a detailed understanding of their perspectives. It was ensured that the interviews were conducted in private settings which allowed the participants to open up and share their honest and unbiased perspectives. Written informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. After each day's interview, a debriefing session was held by the researcher with the research team to ensure that interpretation of the data was accurate.

The field research team included the researcher, research assistants, community researcher, and mentors. The research assistants assisted during interviews as note takers. All the interviews were conducted by the researcher face to face.

Data Analysis

The research used the Framework analysis approach for a comprehensive analysis (Parkinson et al., 2016) using both inductive and deductive themes from participant accounts and existing literature. The interviews were conducted in Bengali recorded in an audio device and later transcribed into English. The researcher transcribed the interviews using Apple Notes and later transferred them into MS Word. After data had been collected and transcribed, the transcripts were read and re-read by the researcher to familiarise with the data. The framework was revised through relistening and re-reading. The data was broken down into themes relevant to the research objectives using inductive coding and tabulated in MS Excel, and noteworthy patterns were identified. These codes were then matched with the conceptual framework which was drawn up previously using deductive coding. Thus, the analytical process used both inductive and deductive coding. Further, the IDIs were revisited to find quotes that reinforced the codes.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of BRAC JPGSPH, BRAC University. The purpose of the study was explained in detail to all the study participants before recruiting them. The participants were ensured of the maintenance of strict confidentiality and anonymity. Written informed consent in Bengali was taken from all the study participants after the potential risks and benefits had been

clearly communicated. When granting their consent, participants were informed of whom to contact and how to do so in case they had additional concerns. The participants were informed that at any point during the study, they could withdraw from the study without any consequences. The names of the participants were not recorded in any study materials and were replaced by their IDs. No financial incentives were provided to the study participants, but a soap was provided as a token of appreciation for their time and contributions towards the research. All the research materials, including audio recordings and documents were saved on the researcher's personal computer which was password-protected and accessible only by the researcher. The data that was collected was used only for the summative learning project.

Findings

Background of Participants

The study was conducted on thirteen adult men who were aged between 23 and 47 years, with a median age of 30 years. While the education level ranged from no formal education up to SSC, most of the participants had studied up to or less than class 5. Out of the 13 participants, 11 were married, and 2 participants were unmarried. Occupations included roles such as supervisor at car rental, manual labourer, butcher, construction worker, cameraman, driver, rickshaw driver, rice cake (*pitha*) seller, etc. The participant's monthly income ranged between BDT 15,000 to BDT 30,000, with a median income of BDT 19,000. Details of the background of all the participants have been provided in Annex 1.

Knowledge about Menstruation

Basic Understanding and Extent of Knowledge about Menstruation

All the participants had a general awareness of menstruation, recognizing the fact that women bleed during menstruation. However, in a few cases the participants had to be prompted. While most of the participants were aware that menstruation occurs every month, 3 of the participants did not have a clear understanding of this fact. All the participants knew that the duration of the menstruation typically lasted between 3 to 7 days, with 4 days being the most common response. Half of the participants were aware of the association between menstruation and women's ability to have children. One participant stated:

“The relationship is that if menstruation happens properly then women's ability to have children increases.” (*IDI 10, 30 years, Driver*)

The remaining participants were not aware of how menstruation was linked to women's ability to have children, indicating a gap in reproductive health education. Some of the participants expressed lack of knowledge and understanding about menstruation among the men in the community.

"More than 50% of the people living in the slum do not have any idea about menstruation. The boys and girls who are getting married at 14 years old do not know anything about it." (*IDI 12, 23 years, Autorickshaw driver*)

Age at Menarche

Most participants had a general understanding of when menstruation starts (between 12–14 years), but there was some misinformation or lack of awareness among a smaller group regarding the age of onset, where they mentioned that menstruation starts later, between 16 and 18 years. This could imply that these individuals either had incorrect information or may be aware of unusual cases and few participants did not know at which age menstruation starts.

Awareness of Menstrual Products

When asked about the type of products women used during menstruation, all the participants mentioned that women used either cloth or sanitary pads. While the term “pad” was familiar to some participants, few of them referred to it more generically as “something bought from the pharmacy” or ‘pampers’ (a popular brand of children’s diapers). Few participants could recall the brand names of the pads, like ‘Senora’ and ‘Joya’. It was widely acknowledged that sanitary pads were available in pharmacies near their communities and that they had easy access when required. When asked about how many hours pads can be used by women, one participant mentioned:

“I think she uses a pad for a maximum of four hours till the time it’s soaked with blood.” (*IDI 12, 23 years, Autorickshaw driver*)

There were some inconsistencies about the duration of usage of pads, with the range being between 3 to 8 hours. However, knowledge of the disposal of the used sanitary products was not very prevalent.

Sources of Information

The predominant source of information about menstruation among men was their wives. This highlights the fact that before marriage, men did not have the right access to information on this topic within their families. One participant stated:

“I did not know about menstruation before getting married, I heard about it after marriage from my wife.” (*IDI 03, 29 years, Butcher*)

Almost all the participants interviewed confirmed that they did not discuss menstruation with female members of their family like mothers, sisters, etc. because of shame. Friends were a common source of information about menstruation. Many participants were exposed to TV commercials of sanitary pads, which became a source of knowledge about menstruation. Two out of thirteen participants mentioned NGOs as their source of information on this topic.

Knowledge about Menstrual Hygiene

There was a strong consensus on maintaining hygiene during menstruation, and some of the participants explicitly linked poor hygiene to infections and diseases. However, there was no specific mention of any diseases by any participant.

“If they are not clean during menstruation, then different types of infection can occur in the body.”
(IDI 10, 30 years, Driver)

The quote from the above-mentioned participant suggested that while participants were aware of the potential health risks, they might have lacked detailed knowledge about the specific conditions related to poor menstrual hygiene.

Perception of Menstruation

First Impression of Menstruation

When participants were asked about their first impression about menstruation, most of them mentioned that they were not comfortable initially to talk about it. They also did not understand it which created several misconceptions about menstruation. Some key ideas that were picked up were menstruation was a “bad/negative” thing, and the fact that women were considered impure during this period. Some participants viewed menstruation as a negative thing for women, while others considered it as a natural and positive aspect of life.

“I think it is a normal and good thing. It is something given by Allah (it is natural).” (IDI 04, 29 years, Unemployed)

However, similar to this participant, others also perceived menstruation as a divinely ordained or normal part of life, emphasizing acceptance and perhaps a spiritual or religious perspective on the topic.

Shift in Perception over Time

There was some acknowledgement among a few participants that some conversations had started within the community, which had gradually led to an improved understanding of menstruation, and a shift in perception over time, possibly due to some of the awareness campaigns being conducted in the community.

“Compared to before, people are now more aware about these things. Before we did not discuss it because we did not know about this thing (menstruation). And now since we know, we are more careful.” (IDI 07, 32 years, Cameraman)

This indicates a progress in breaking the taboos and normalizing conversations around menstruation.

Role of Awareness Campaigns and NGO Interventions

The participants believed that the NGOs were not doing enough to raise awareness among the men in the community. There was some acknowledgement about NGO activities among women, however, they were largely absent among men.

“I think different NGOs should do more work to raise more awareness about this.” (IDI 10, 30 years, Driver)

The participants believed that the NGOs had a very vital role to play in educating men about menstruation, bridging the knowledge gaps by removing any misconceptions and stigma, and thus generating more responsibility among men during the menstruation of women in their household.

Economic Barriers

There was a mixed opinion about the affordability of sanitary pads among the participants. Some of the participants expressed their concern about how expensive sanitary pads were, creating a barrier for usage among the women in their household. Other participants thought that sanitary pads were affordable for people of all income groups.

“I think the price is high. If the price was less, then each and every person would be more interested in using it.” (IDI 10, 30 years, Driver)

Perception of Menstrual Products

There was a strong perception among the participants interviewed that sanitary pads were hygienic and safe for women compared to cloth. Cloth was strongly associated with germs which could cause infection or disease.

“Of course, the thing (sanitary pad) that they use from the doctor’s shop is good. It is clean and no disease can spread from it. That’s why it is good. The one which is available at the doctor’s shop is clean and it is hundred percent clean.” (IDI 07, 32 years, Cameraman)

The participants also perceived pads to be superior in terms of protection from leakage and stains, which cloth could not prevent. One participant mentioned:

“If they use cloth then their dress can become stained with blood. But with Joya (sanitary pad) there is no chance of the dress being stained with blood.” (*IDI 04, 29 years, Unemployed*)

Social Perception of Shame and Secrecy

The topic of menstruation had been traditionally considered a taboo subject in society, keeping any conversation about this under wraps, and reluctance to bring this topic up for discussion. One participant opined:

“Presently it is mostly kept a secret. I think it is better to keep it a secret. Only the wife and her husband should know about it. Other than that, it is better that we do not know about it. From a very young age we have seen that it is a secret thing. It has always been a secret and it has been going on like this. No one has discussed these things.” (*IDI 08, 30 years, Pitha seller*)

With the exception of their wife, men did not want to have a conversation on menstruation with anyone else. This trend extended to buying sanitary pads at pharmacies where there was hesitation among both men and women while purchasing in front of others, and the practice was to wrap the pads in a packet so that it was not evident what was inside.

Misconceptions around Menstruation

Some individuals had beliefs such as menstruation was related to impurity or disease transmission. Such beliefs are often rooted in cultural or religious narratives that view menstruation as taboo or impure. There was also a strong stigma around menstruation that had fuelled many misconceptions about menstruation being a negative or harmful thing. One participant believed that menstruating women could spread diseases.

“When women menstruate, if men go near them, they get a viral disease.” (*IDI 02, 24 years, Manual labour*)

Another participant considered women to be impure or dirty during menstruation and thereby restricted women in his household from cooking during menstruation.

"I heard that in this condition if they cook it is not a good thing. In this condition they are not allowed to do work." (IDI 03, 29 years, Butcher)

Attitudes towards Menstruation

Willingness to Learn and Engage

All the participants showed a desire to learn more about menstruation and they acknowledged that improved knowledge about menstruation among men would enable men to support women during menstruation. They also advocated for more involvement of NGOs in educating men on menstruation, especially in groups rather than individually. Few participants emphasised that menstruation should not be seen as a "woman's issue" alone. Instead, both men and women should work together to address and solve the challenges related to menstruation. The idea was that men had a crucial role in supporting women through this natural process.

"This is not only a woman's problem. Men and women should together solve this problem. Women alone cannot solve this problem. If men become involved in this, then the problem will be solved, and it is good for women." (IDI 10, 30 years, Driver)

Openness to Discussions

There was very little openness while discussing menstruation amongst men as well as between men and women. There was a general shyness about discussing female reproductive/sexual health in this society. In many circles, menstruation was also considered dirty. Men would want to avoid conversation on menstruation amongst themselves unless absolutely necessary. Sometimes, publicly discussing menstruation was frowned upon and even mocked. By and large the topic of menstruation was avoided in larger circles, like primary and secondary school curriculum. Even within the family structure, the topic of menstruation was largely avoided among opposite sex siblings and between parents and children. The only exception was the discussion between spouses, where there was certain candidness, and this conversation also formed the primary source of information for men to know about menstruation.

"I cannot talk about this in front of my mother or sister. I can only talk about this with my wife. How can a father talk about this with his daughter? Something like this cannot be shared between a daughter and a father because it is a matter of shame." (IDI 12, 23 years, Autorickshaw driver)

Men's Role in Supporting Women

All the participants who were interviewed expressed their willingness to support the women, especially their wives, at home during menstruation by helping with household chores including cooking and cleaning and purchasing menstrual products. Some men were willing to help women at their workplace during menstruation, while others were hesitant. One participant acknowledged that menstruation is not just a woman's issue but a shared concern that requires mutual understanding.

“When she is in bed for two days (during menstruation) and if I cannot cook and feed her then what kind of a husband am I? During that time, I bring medicines for her and let her sleep. Whatever work is there at home like cooking, washing dishes, I do most of the work that time.”
(IDI 08, 30 years, Pitha seller)

Attitude towards Purchasing Menstrual Product

While most of the participants were willing to buy pads for women at home, some admitted feeling shy when purchasing pads. For men, there was a particular discomfort in being seen purchasing sanitary products, reflecting societal norms that consider menstruation a private or "female" issue. This reflects the stigma or embarrassment that was associated with menstruation in society.

“Sometimes there are a lot of people sitting in the doctor's shop so men might feel ashamed. Other people say that your wife should come and buy. But it's the same for women who also feel ashamed to come and buy sanitary pads from the shop, and therefore tell their husbands” (IDI 12, 23 years, Autorickshaw driver)

Recommendations and Solutions by Men

The key recommendation given by the men themselves was to build awareness and start the conversation on menstruation by external forces like NGOs. They emphasized the need for more concerted efforts by NGOs to educate the men and counsel them to remove the stigma and shame around this topic.

“I can say one thing that if you had discussed this topic among 20 men then at least the misconceptions that they have about this would have been removed. If you could conduct a group meeting then it would have been better. If more people know and understand about this topic, then this issue will become a common topic.” (IDI 01, 34 years, Car supervisor)

Discussion

Menstruation remains a sparsely explored topic of research, and there is a limited body of research in LMICs, including Bangladesh, especially from the perspective of knowledge, perception, and attitude of men. This study adds to this small body of empirical research using primary data collected from adult men in Kallyanpur slum. The study aims to explore the knowledge of menstruation among men in Kallyanpur slum and the factors that influence men's perceptions and attitudes towards menstruation.

The study highlights significant gaps in men's knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards menstruation in Kallyanpur slum, shaped by a lack of formal education and reliance on informal sources like wives or uninformed peers, which perpetuate misconceptions and stigma. Menstruation remains a deeply stigmatized topic, confined to conversations within marital relationships and rarely discussed with other family or community members due to cultural norms that label it as impure and shameful. Although men recognized sanitary pads as superior to traditional cloth for hygiene and protection, affordability remains a barrier for low-income households. Awareness campaigns by NGOs, though limited in their reach to men, have begun fostering gradual shifts in attitudes, with men expressing a willingness to support their wives during menstruation by performing household chores, purchasing sanitary products, and providing medicines. However, this support did not extend to unrelated women, reflecting persistent stigma and discomfort in broader social or workplace contexts. Men expressed a willingness to participate in group-based education to bridge knowledge gaps, dispel myths, and reduce stigma.

Lack of formal education on menstruation clearly stood out from the interviews. While there was a general understanding and awareness of menstruation, such as its monthly occurrence and duration, there was a clear gap in knowledge regarding the significance of this phenomenon, especially its association with reproductive health. The most prevalent source of information for men happened to be their wives, which suggests that prior to marriage men did not have accurate information about menstruation. Schools and formal curricula were completely absent as sources of knowledge for men, pointing to a significant gap in institutional education on SRH. This has also been well documented in previous research which pointed out that menstruation has remained unexplored in the national curriculum in the primary schooling system, and inadequately in the secondary schooling system (Islam et al., 2019). Even among women, school has been the source of knowledge for menstruation in less than 1% of the cases (Alam et al., 2017). There was also a lack of awareness campaigns by NGOs targeted towards men, while there have been successful campaigns engaging women. This further perpetuated the knowledge gap which

fostered the stigma and other misconceptions about menstruation among the men. There were strong recommendations from the participants themselves on how group-based education through NGOs could help alleviate this situation and recognised the potential of these NGO initiatives to reduce stigma about this topic and dispel the myths. There was a strong willingness to learn more about menstruation, to remove any misconception and increase understanding, so that they can help women in their families.

The superiority of sanitary pads over traditional cloth-based solutions was clearly established in this population. They recognized sanitary pads as hygienic and superior to cloth due to safety and protection against leakage which prevents clothes from getting stained. The popularity of sanitary pads reflects successful marketing efforts by the manufacturers and growing awareness about menstrual hygiene management. However, affordability of sanitary pads remains a concern for low-income households, who were forced to use cloth, despite having preference for the product.

The findings from this study revealed that menstruation still remains a stigmatized topic with conversations between spouses being the only fully open channel of communication. There was reluctance to discuss menstruation within the circle of the family, especially with female members other than wife such as, mother, daughter, sister, etc. as it was considered inappropriate to discuss menstruation outside marital relationships. This arises from societal and cultural norms which label menstruation as impure and shameful. It was further evident in the hesitancy while buying sanitary pads, where the practice has become wrapping the menstrual product in such a way that it remains hidden. Past studies have revealed that more than half of the women reported increased feeling of shame during menstruation, mainly concerned about others noticing that they were menstruating (Castro & Czura, 2024). Similar studies conducted in India have also reported that girls are considered filthy or impure during menstruation (Rathod & Muneshwar, 2023). The limited knowledge the men had prior to marriage was distorted with misconceptions, primarily because the sources of information were other men (friends in the community), who themselves were largely ignorant.

Despite the pervasive stigma that exists, there has been a gradual shift in perception among few men possibly due to the influence of awareness campaigns by NGOs. The importance of men's involvement in MHM had been acknowledged in some cases. This shows a promising change among men, demonstrating that interventions by NGOs can help dismantle misconceptions prevailing in the community. Our data revealed that, there was a strong willingness among the men to help their women, especially their wives during menstruation by assisting in household chores like cleaning and cooking,

and as well as by buying sanitary pads and medicines. This was also recommended in the National Menstrual Hygiene Management Strategy 2021 that men should share the burden of household chores when women have menstruation. Moreover, it was mentioned that women may suffer from emotional stress during menstruation and men need to be compassionate and understanding towards them during this period (National Menstrual Hygiene Management Strategy, 2021). However, this willingness did not extend to women outside their homes or in their workplaces, where there was still reluctance, stemming from shame and stigma, to discuss menstruation with unrelated women. This highlights the need for more open discussions around menstruation facilitated by NGOs.

Implications

The study has some implications on the need for developing comprehensive menstrual health education for the schools from primary to secondary to reach out to both boys and girls. NGOs should design campaigns specifically targeted at men to educate them about menstruation and address common misconceptions and stigma. As suggested by the participants themselves, group-based education programs should be conducted for men in the community. Religious and community leaders can be engaged to advocate for menstrual health. Media especially TV and social media can play a role in portraying menstruation as a natural phenomenon to normalise menstruation and disseminating accurate information about menstruation and MHM. This will enhance knowledge and awareness of men creating an enabling environment at home and workplace. Policymakers and NGOs should focus on making sanitary pads more affordable and accessible for low-income households to ensure that menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is not compromised due to economic constraints. Programs should aim to address stigma in workplaces and public spaces, ensuring menstruating women feel supported and comfortable outside their homes. In addition, policy-makers should be made aware of the findings of the study so that they support male inclusion in MHM. Furthermore, comprehensive research should be conducted to understand the perspectives of men from different categories along with their counterparts.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has some limitations in terms of small sample size and specifically selected slum locations which may raise concern on the generalisability of the findings. However, data generated from 13 participants were rich and in depth revealing diverse perspectives on knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of diverse men groups about menstruation in a slum community. Recall bias was minimized by

asking multiple questions, spending more time and interviewing men from a wide age range. Researcher bias may arise in interpreting the data, which was addressed by reflexivity, reviewing and debriefing with mentors, documenting each research step clearly and avoiding any leading questions during the interviews.

Conclusion

This study highlights critical insights into men's knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes towards menstruation in Kallyanpur slum of Dhaka. While participants showed basic awareness, significant knowledge gaps and misconceptions were evident, influenced by societal taboos and lack of formal education on menstrual health. Menstruation remains a stigmatized topic, with discussions largely confined to marital relationships. Cultural norms and beliefs perpetuate the perception of menstruation as impure, resulting in secrecy and discomfort in discussing it openly. To address these challenges, it is imperative to introduce menstrual health education in school curricula. NGOs should target men through campaigns, group education programs, and the involvement of religious and community leaders to address misconceptions. Media platforms like TV and social media can help normalize menstruation and spread accurate information. Financial support, such as subsidies, should be provided to make sanitary products affordable for low-income families. Additionally, menstrual health education should be prioritized in national health and education policies. Such initiatives can dismantle stigma, enhance male involvement in MHM, and create a supportive environment for women and girls.

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Annex

Annex 1: IDI Participants

Participant	Age	Education	Occupation	Marital Status	Income
IDI 01	34 years	Class 10	Car supervisor	Unmarried	15,000
IDI 02	24 years	No education	Manual labour/Mover	Married	15,000
IDI 03	29 years	Class 1	Butcher	Married	30,000
IDI 04	29 years	Class 4	Unemployed, was a shopkeeper before	Married	15,000
IDI 05	34 years	Class 5	Construction worker	Married	19,000
IDI 06	28 years	Class 5	Cooking Gas delivery	Unmarried	15,000
IDI 07	32 years	Class 8	Cameraman	Married	20,000
IDI 08	30 years	No education	Pitha seller	Married	25,000
IDI 09	47 years	Class 4	Auto rickshaw driver	Married	15,000
IDI 10	30 years	SSC	Driver	Married	20,000
IDI 11	37 years	Class 8	Business	Married	15,000
IDI 12	23 years	Class 5	Auto rickshaw driver	Married	30,000
IDI 13	40 years	No education	School car driver	Married	8,000

Annex 2: In-depth interview guideline (English)

Title of the study: Exploring men's knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards menstruation: a qualitative study in Kallyanpur slum of Dhaka

IDI Guideline with Men

Interviewer		Start time	
Notetaker		End time	
Date		Duration of interview	
Details of the study site			

Background history

# of Family member		Marital status	
# of Female family members		No of Children (Age and Gender)	
Monthly Family Income		Educational Status	
Age at menarche		Parental educational status	
Toilet facilities (Pvt/ Communal)		Spousal age and educational status	
Sources of water		Occupation	
Menstrual water disposal at home		Parental Occupation	
		Spousal Occupation	

General questions

- What is your age?
- Are you married or unmarried? (*Probe: if married, how many children?*)
- How far have you studied?
- What is your occupation? Where do you work and how long do you work in a day?

- What is your monthly income from your job?
- What is your monthly household income?
- How many people live in your household? (*Probe: No of female family members and their age*)
- Do you have a separate toilet in your home or do you use a shared toilet? (WASH facilities including water supply, source, disposal facility)

Knowledge and perceptions on menstruation

- What do you know about menstruation? (*Probe: From whom, where, how?*)
- How old were you when you first heard about menstruation? How did you feel? Why did you feel this way? What did you think?
- Do you know about the menstrual cycle? (How often does it happen?) What is it? How many days does it stay?
- Do you know at what age menstruation usually starts in women?
- Do you know what are the causes behind menstruation in women? Please tell me more about it.
- Do you think your knowledge about menstruation has changed with time? If yes, how has it changed and why? If not, why not?

Sources of information

- When and where did you first hear about menstruation? (family, friends, media) Can you please tell me more about it? What did you hear?
- How do other men in your family and community learn about menstruation? Why do you think (sources mentioned) are a popular way for men in your family or community to learn about menstruation?
- Do you think each and every man should be aware about menstruation (*Probe: father, husband, son*)? Why or why not?

- Have you seen any campaigns in your community that talk about menstruation? How do you feel about them? Who holds these campaigns?
- Do you think there should be more campaigns to educate men about menstruation? Why do you think so?
- Do you think men in your community have accurate information about menstruation? Why do you think so?

Menstrual product

- Do you know about the type of products women use during menstruation? Where did you learn about these products from? (*Probe: old clothes, pads, others, etc*)
- Do you have any idea about the brands? What are those? Can you tell me where to find these products?
- Do you think menstruation products are easily accessible to women and do you think they are affordable? We want to know about your opinion.
- Do you know which type of product is safe for women to use during menstruation? Why do you think these products are safe?
- Do you know how long women should use a sanitary napkin and where do they dispose of it? Please tell me more about it.

Menstrual hygiene

- What do you know about menstrual hygiene? What are the ways women have to maintain hygiene during periods?
- Do you think it is important for women to maintain good hygiene during menstruation? Why or why not?

Menstrual hygiene and health consequences

Case vignette 1

Shirin is a 30-year-old woman who lives in a crowded slum in Dhaka. One day she lay on the floor of their home curled up in pain. She had severe abdominal pain and her body felt very weak. She had been bleeding heavily for the past 2 days. The thick cloth pad she used wasn't enough to absorb the flow, and the constant worry about leakage made her even more anxious. Her husband Ahmed was sitting across the room watching television. Ahmed asked Shirin to get up and cook for the family but Shirin's pain was unbearable and she could not get up. He didn't know what to say. He had always assumed that the pain was something that could be endured.

In this section I will provide this story and ask the following questions:

- What do you understand from this story?
- Do you know about the physical symptoms associated with menstruation? Please tell me more about it.
- Do you know about any health problems and health consequences that may arise if women do not maintain hygiene during their menstrual cycle? Please give me some examples.
- Do you know about any emotional symptoms that women experience during menstruation? Please explain to me.

Attitudes towards menstruation

- Are you comfortable discussing the topic of menstruation with the women in your family? (*probe: wife, sister, mother, daughter and others*) Why or why not? Who do you usually discuss with and why?
- Do you think men and women should talk about menstruation? Why or why not?
- Do you discuss menstruation with other men in your family/friend circles/ the community?
- Are there any myths or misconceptions about menstruation in your family or community? Can you share some of them with me? Why do you think people say/believe in these myths/misconceptions? How do these affect women in your opinion?
- Are there any religious beliefs or practices related to menstruation in your family or community? Can you share some of them with me? How do these affect women in your opinion?

- Do women in your family or community have any restrictions during their menstrual cycle? What kind of restrictions and why?

Stigma

- Do you think menstruation is a shameful thing and something to hide? Why or why not?

Role of men in menstruation and menstrual hygiene

Case vignette 2

Kamal is a 40-year-old rickshaw puller in Dhaka who lives with his wife Ayesha and his 11-year-old daughter Khadija in a crowded slum in Dhaka. His wife Ayesha is away visiting her sick mother in the village leaving Kamal to care for their 11-year-old daughter Khadija. One day Kamal comes home after a long day of working as a rickshaw puller and sees his daughter sitting on the edge of the bed and her school bag at her feet. Kamal notices that she's unusually quiet and uncomfortable. When Khadija walks towards another room after greeting him, Kamal notices that there is a dark stain of blood at the back of Khadija's dress. When Kamal asks her what is the stain on her dress, she pulls her dress away from her body trying to hide it and after sometime she starts crying. Kamal feels a mix of concern and confusion and he is not sure how to handle this.

In this section I will provide this story and ask the following questions:

- What do you understand from this story?
- What should Kamal do to help his daughter in this situation?
- What difficulties or challenges do girls and women in your family and community face during menstruation? Can you please give some examples?
- Do you think menstruation affects girls and women's daily activities and social relationships? In what ways/how?
- Do you purchase sanitary napkins for girls and women in your family? Why or why not? Where from? Are there any challenges in doing this, what, and why?

Case vignette 3

Hamid is a 30-year-old garment worker who works in a garment factory in Dhaka. One day after finishing his work he was waiting at the exit and he saw his female colleague Mita walking past him. She looked distracted and very worried. Hamid noticed that there was a small patch of blood stain on her dress, clearly visible against the white fabric. Hamid hesitated for a while and was not sure what to do. He became concerned but was not sure how to ask Mita about the stain on her dress.

In this section I will provide this story and ask the following questions:

- What do you understand from this story?
- What should Hamid do to help his female colleague in this situation?
- What kind of support do you think women in your family need during their menstruation? In your opinion who should provide this support?
- Do you think men should take part in helping women manage their menstruation? How? Why or why not?
- What kind of help and support do you offer to women at your workplace during their menstruation? Please give some examples.
- What role do you think men should play in reducing the stigma around menstruation in the community?

Closing questions

- Do you want to ask anything to me or do you want to share your thoughts about anything that we have not discussed yet- please let me know.

Thank you for your time.

Annex 3: In-depth interview guideline (Bangla)

গবেষনার শিরোনাম: ঢাকার কল্যাণপুর বস্তিতে মাসিক সম্পর্কে পুরুষদের জ্ঞান, ধারণা এবং মনোভাব নিয়ে গবেষণা: একটি গুণগত গবেষণা

পুরুষদের সাথে আইডিআই গাইডলাইন

ইন্টারভিউয়ার		শুরুর সময়	
নোট লেখক		শেষ সময়	
তারিখ		ইন্টারভিউ-এর সময়কাল	
গবেষণা স্থানের বিবরণ			

পরিবারের প্রেক্ষাপট

পরিবারের সদস্য সংখ্যা		বৈবাহিক অবস্থা	
পরিবারে মহিলা সদস্য সংখ্যা		সন্তান সংখ্যা (বয়স এবং লিঙ্গ)	
মাসিক পারিবারিক আয়		শিক্ষাগত অবস্থা	
মাসিক শুরু হওয়ার বয়স		পিতামাতার শিক্ষাগত অবস্থা	
টয়লেট সুবিধা (ব্যক্তিগত/সমষ্টিগত)		স্বামীর বয়স এবং শিক্ষাগত অবস্থা	
পানির উৎস		পেশা	

বাসায় মাসিক ব্যবহৃত জলের নিষ্পত্তি		পিতামাতার পেশা	
		স্বামীর পেশা	

সাধারণ প্রশ্ন

- আপনার বয়স কত?
- আপনি বিবাহিত নাকি অবিবাহিত? (প্রোব করুন: যদি বিবাহিত হন, তাহলে আপনার কতজন সন্তান আছে?)
- আপনি কতদূর পর্যন্ত পড়াশোনা করেছেন?
- আপনার পেশা কী? আপনি কোথায় কাজ করেন এবং দিনে কতক্ষণ কাজ করেন?
- আপনার চাকরি থেকে মাসিক আয় কত?
- আপনার পরিবারের মাসিক মোট আয় কত?
- আপনার পরিবারে কতজন সদস্য বসবাস করেন? (প্রোব করুন: কতজন মহিলা সদস্য আছেন এবং তাদের বয়স কত?)
- আপনার বাড়িতে আলাদা টয়লেট আছে নাকি শেয়ার করা টয়লেট ব্যবহার করেন? (পানির সরবরাহ, উৎস এবং নিষ্কাশন সুবিধাসহ WASH সুবিধা)

মাসিক সম্পর্কে জ্ঞান ও ধারণা

- আপনি মাসিক সম্পর্কে কী জানেন? (প্রোব করুন: কার থেকে, কোথা থেকে, কীভাবে জানলেন?)
- প্রথমবার যখন মাসিক সম্পর্কে শুনলেন, তখন আপনার বয়স কত? আপনার তখন কেমন অনুভূতি হয়েছিল? কেন এমন অনুভূতি হয়েছিল? আপনি কি ভেবেছিলেন?

- আপনি কি মাসিক চক্র সম্পর্কে জানেন? (মানে কত দিন পর মাসিক হয়?) এটি কী? এটি কতদিন থাকে?
- আপনি কি জানেন মহিলাদের সাধারণত কত বছর বয়সে মাসিক শুরু হয়?
- আপনি কি জানেন মহিলাদের মাসিকের পেছনে কী কারণ রয়েছে? বিস্তারিত বলুন।
- আপনি কি মনে করেন আপনার মাসিক সম্পর্কিত জ্ঞান সময়ের সঙ্গে বদলেছে? যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কীভাবে এবং কেন বদলেছে? যদি না হয়, তাহলে কেন বদলায়নি?

তথ্যের উৎস

- প্রথমবার আপনি কখন এবং কোথায় মাসিক সম্পর্কে জেনেছিলেন? (পরিবার, বন্ধুবান্ধব, গণমাধ্যম) বিস্তারিত বলুন। আপনি কী শুনেছিলেন?
- আপনার পরিবারের বা সমাজের অন্য পুরুষরা কীভাবে মাসিক সম্পর্কে জানেন? আপনি কেন মনে করেন (উল্লেখিত উৎসগুলো) আপনার পরিবারের বা সমাজের পুরুষদের জন্য মাসিক সম্পর্কে জানার জনপ্রিয় মাধ্যম?
- আপনি কি মনে করেন প্রত্যেক পুরুষের মাসিক সম্পর্কে সচেতন থাকা উচিত, সে ছেলে, স্বামী বা বাবা যে ই হোক না কেন? কেন বা কেন নয়?
- আপনার এলাকায় কি এমন কোন কর্মকান্ড দেখেছেন যেখানে মাসিক নিয়ে আলোচনা করা হয়েছে? সেগুলো সম্পর্কে আপনার অনুভূতি কী? এইগুলি কারা আয়োজন করে?
- আপনি কি মনে করেন পুরুষদের মাসিক সম্পর্কে শিক্ষিত করার জন্য আরও এ ধরনের কর্মকান্ড থাকা উচিত? কেন মনে করেন?
- আপনি কি মনে করেন আপনার সমাজের পুরুষদের কাছে মাসিক সম্পর্কে সঠিক তথ্য রয়েছে? কেন এরকম মনে করেন ?

মাসিককালীন পণ্য

- আপনি কি জানেন মহিলারা মাসিক চলাকালে কী ধরনের পণ্য ব্যবহার করেন? আপনি এসব পণ্যের সম্পর্কে কোথায় জানলেন? (প্রোব করুন: পুরনো কাপড়, প্যাড, অন্যান্য, ইত্যাদি)
- আপনি কি এসব পণ্যের কোনো ব্র্যান্ড সম্পর্কে জানেন? সেগুলো কী? আপনি কি আমাকে বলতে পারেন কোথায় এসব পণ্য পাওয়া যায়?
- আপনি কি মনে করেন এই পণ্যগুলি মহিলাদের জন্য সহজে পাওয়া যায় এবং আপনার কি মনে হয় যে এটা সাশ্রয়ী মূল্যে পাওয়া যায়? আপনার মতামত জানতে চাই।
- আপনি কি জানেন মাসিককালীন সময় কোন ধরনের পণ্য মহিলাদের জন্য নিরাপদ? কি জন্য এই পণ্যগুলি নিরাপদ মনে করেন?
- আপনি কি জানেন মহিলাদের একটি স্যানিটারি ন্যাপকিন কতক্ষণ ব্যবহার করা উচিত এবং এটি কোথায় ফেলতে হয়? বিস্তারিত বলুন।

মাসিককালীন স্বাস্থ্যবিধি

- আপনি মাসিককালীন স্বাস্থ্যবিধি সম্পর্কে কী জানেন? মহিলাদের পিরিয়ডের সময় স্বাস্থ্যবিধি বজায় রাখার জন্য কী উপায় রয়েছে?
- আপনি কি মনে করেন মাসিকের সময় মহিলাদের জন্য স্বাস্থ্যবিধি বজায় রাখা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ? কেন বা কেন নয়?

মাসিককালীন স্বাস্থ্যবিধি ও স্বাস্থ্যগত পরিণতি

কেস ভিনিয়ট ১

শিরিন ৩০ বছর বয়সী একজন মহিলা, যিনি ঢাকার একটি ঘনবসতিপূর্ণ বস্তিতে বসবাস করেন। একদিন তিনি তাদের বাড়ির মেঝেতে শোয়া অবস্থায় প্রচণ্ড ব্যথায় কঁকড়ে গিয়েছিলেন। তার পেটের তীব্র ব্যথা ছিল এবং তার শরীর খুবই দুর্বল লাগছিল। তার গত ২ দিন ধরে প্রচুর রক্তক্ষরণ হচ্ছিল। যে মোটা কাপড়ের প্যাডটি তিনি ব্যবহার করতেন, তা রক্ত শোষণে যথেষ্ট ছিল না এবং বারবার লিক হওয়ার ভয় তাকে আরও উদ্বেগ করে তুলছিল। তার স্বামী আহমেদ ঘরের এক কোণে বসে টেলিভিশন দেখছিলেন। আহমেদ শিরিনকে উঠে পরিবারের জন্য রান্না করতে বলেছিলেন, কিন্তু শিরিনের ব্যথা এতটাই অসহনীয় ছিল যে

তিনি উঠতে পারছিলেন না। আহমেদ বুঝতে পারছিলেন না কী বলবেন। তিনি সবসময় ভেবেছিলেন যে, এই ধরনের ব্যথা সহ্য করা সম্ভব।

এই গল্পটি পড়ে নিচের প্রশ্নগুলোর উত্তর দিন:

এই গল্পটি থেকে আপনার অনুধাবন কি?

আপনি কি মাসিক সম্পর্কিত শারীরিক লক্ষণ সম্পর্কে জানেন? একটু বিস্তারিত বলুন।

- আপনি কি জানেন, মাসিক চলাকালীন স্বাস্থ্যবিধি না মানলে কোন স্বাস্থ্য সমস্যা হতে পারে? কিছু উদাহরণ দিন।
- মাসিকের সময় মহিলারা কোন ধরনের মানসিক লক্ষণের সম্মুখীন হন তা সম্পর্কে কি জানেন? একটু বুঝিয়ে বলুন।

মাসিক সম্পর্কে মনোভাব

- আপনি কি আপনার পরিবারের মহিলাদের সাথে মাসিক নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে স্বাচ্ছন্দ্য বোধ করেন? (প্রোব করুন: স্ত্রী, বোন, মা, মেয়ে ও অন্যান্যরা) কেন বা কেন নয়? আপনি সাধারণত কার সাথে আলোচনা করেন এবং কেন?
- আপনি কি মনে করেন, পুরুষ ও মহিলাদের মাসিক নিয়ে কথা বলা উচিত? কেন বা কেন নয়?
- আপনি কি আপনার পরিবার/বন্ধুদের মধ্যে/সমাজের অন্য পুরুষদের সাথে মাসিক নিয়ে আলোচনা করেন?
- আপনার পরিবার বা সমাজে মাসিক সম্পর্কিত কোনো ভুল ধারণা বা মিথ আছে? কিছু উদাহরণ শেয়ার করতে পারেন? আপনি কেন মনে করেন মানুষ এই ভুল ধারণাগুলো বলে বা বিশ্বাস করে? এসব মহিলাদের উপর কীভাবে প্রভাব ফেলে?
- আপনার পরিবার বা সমাজে কি মাসিক সম্পর্কিত কোনো ধর্মীয় বিশ্বাস বা প্রথা আছে? কিছু উদাহরণ শেয়ার করতে পারেন? এসব মহিলাদের উপর কীভাবে প্রভাব ফেলে?

- আপনার পরিবার বা সমাজে কি মহিলাদের জন্য মাসিক চলাকালীন কোনো বিধিনিষেধ আছে? কেমন ধরনের বিধিনিষেধ এবং কেন?

কলঙ্ক

- আপনি কি মনে করেন মাসিক একটি লজ্জাজনক বিষয় এবং যা লুকিয়ে রাখা উচিত? কেন বা কেন নয়?

মাসিককালীন স্বাস্থ্য ও স্বাস্থ্যবিধিতে পুরুষদের ভূমিকা

কেস ভিনিয়ট ২

কামাল ৪০ বছর বয়সী একজন রিকশাচালক, যিনি ঢাকার একটি ঘনবসতিপূর্ণ বস্তিতে তার স্ত্রী আয়েশা এবং ১১ বছর বয়সী মেয়ে খাদিজার সাথে বসবাস করেন। তার স্ত্রী আয়েশা গ্রামের অসুস্থ মা'কে দেখতে যাওয়ার কারণে কামালকে তাদের ১১ বছর বয়সী মেয়ে খাদিজা কে দেখে রাখতে হয়। একদিন দীর্ঘ পরিশ্রমের পর বাড়ি ফিরে কামাল দেখেন তার মেয়ে খাদিজা বিছানার কিনারে বসে রয়েছে, তার স্কুল ব্যাগ পায়ের কাছে রাখা। কামাল লক্ষ্য করেন যে খাদিজা অস্বাভাবিকভাবে চুপচাপ এবং অস্বস্তিতে রয়েছে। যখন খাদিজা তাকে সালাম দিয়ে আরেকটি রুমে চলে যেতে থাকে, কামাল লক্ষ্য করেন তার পোশাকের পেছনে রক্তের দাগ লেগে আছে। কামাল যখন তার মেয়েকে পোশাকে দাগ সম্পর্কে জিজ্ঞেস করেন, খাদিজা সেসময় পোশাকটি শরীর থেকে টেনে সরিয়ে দিতে চেষ্টা করে এবং কিছু সময় পরে কান্নায় ভেঙে পড়ে। কামাল অস্বস্তি ও উদ্বেগের মিশ্র অনুভূতি অনুভব করেন এবং জানেন না কীভাবে পরিস্থিতি সামলাতে হবে।

এই গল্পটি পড়ে নিচের প্রশ্নগুলোর উত্তর দিন:

এই গল্প থেকে আপনার অনুধাবন কী ?

কামাল এর এই পরিস্থিতিতে তার মেয়েকে সাহায্য করতে কী করা উচিত?

- মাসিক চলাকালীন আপনার পরিবার ও সমাজের মেয়ে এবং মহিলারা কী ধরনের অসুবিধার সম্মুখীন হন? কিছু উদাহরণ দিন।
- আপনি কি মনে করেন, নারীদের মাসিক, মেয়ে এবং মহিলাদের প্রতিদিনের কাজে এবং সামাজিক সম্পর্কের উপর প্রভাব ফেলে? কীভাবে?

- আপনি কি আপনার পরিবারের মেয়ে বা মহিলাদের জন্য স্যানিটারি ন্যাপকিন কিনে থাকেন? কেন বা কেন নয়? কোথা থেকে কিনেন? কিনতে কি কোন ধরনের সমস্যার মুখোমুখি হন? কি ধরনের সমস্যা ও কেন?

কেস ভিনিয়েট ৩

হামিদ ৩০ বছর বয়সী একজন গার্মেন্টস কর্মী, যিনি ঢাকার একটি গার্মেন্টস ফ্যাক্টরিতে কাজ করেন। একদিন কাজ শেষে তিনি গেটে দাঁড়িয়ে ছিলেন এবং তার মহিলা সহকর্মী মিতা তাঁর পাশ দিয়ে হেটে যাচ্ছিলেন। মিতাকে অস্বাভাবিকভাবে বিচলিত এবং উদ্ভিগ্ন দেখাচ্ছিল। হামিদ লক্ষ্য করেন, তার সাদা পোশাকে রক্তের একটি ছোট দাগ দেখা যাচ্ছিল। হামিদ কিছু সময় দ্বিধায় পড়ে যান এবং তিনি বুঝতে পারছিলেন না কী করবেন। তিনি উদ্ভিগ্ন হন, তবে মিতাকে পোশাকের দাগ সম্পর্কে কীভাবে জিজ্ঞেস করবেন, সেটা তিনি বুঝতে পারছিলেন না।

এই গল্পটি পড়ে নিচের প্রশ্নগুলোর উত্তর দিন:

এই গল্পটি থেকে আপনার অনুধাবন কি?

হামিদ এই পরিস্থিতিতে তার সহকর্মীকে কিভাবে সাহায্য করতে পারেন?

- আপনার মতে, মাসিকের সময় নারীদের কী ধরনের সাহায্য লাগতে পারে? আপনার মতে, কার এ সাহায্য করা উচিত?
- আপনি কি মনে করেন পুরুষদের মহিলাদের মাসিক পরিচালনায় সাহায্য করা উচিত? কীভাবে? কেন বা কেন নয়?
- আপনি আপনার কর্মস্থলে মহিলাদের মাসিক চলাকালীন কী ধরনের সাহায্য করেন? উদাহরণ দিতে পারেন?
- আপনার মতে, পুরুষদের সমাজে মাসিক সম্পর্কে কলঙ্ক কমানোর ক্ষেত্রে কী ভূমিকা রাখা উচিত?

শেষের প্রশ্ন

- আপনি কি আমার থেকে কিছু জানতে চান বা এমন কিছু শেয়ার করতে চান যা আমরা এখনও আলোচনা করিনি?

আপনার সময় দেওয়ার জন্য ধন্যবাদ।