



## Menstrual Cycle–Related Issues among Degree College Girls: A Sociological and Health Perspective

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### Abstract:

Menstrual health is a critical yet often neglected aspect of women’s overall well-being, particularly among young women pursuing higher education. The present study examines menstrual cycle–related issues among degree college girls from a combined sociological and health perspective. It explores the prevalence of menstrual problems such as dysmenorrhea, irregular cycles, premenstrual symptoms, and menstrual hygiene challenges, while also analysing the socio-cultural beliefs, taboos, and institutional factors that influence menstrual experiences. Using primary data collected through structured questionnaires and interviews, the study highlights how factors such as dietary habits, stress, physical activity, access to sanitary products, and awareness of reproductive health affect menstrual health outcomes. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of college girls experience menstrual discomfort that adversely impacts academic performance, class attendance, and psychological well-being. Social stigma, lack of open communication, and inadequate health education further exacerbate these challenges, leading to delayed healthcare-seeking behaviour. The study underscores the need for comprehensive menstrual health education, improved access to affordable menstrual hygiene products, and supportive college environments that promote menstrual well-being. Addressing menstrual health concerns through a sociological lens is essential for fostering gender-sensitive health policies and ensuring the holistic development of young women in higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Menstrual health, Degree college girls, Menstrual hygiene, Socio-cultural factors, Reproductive health

### Introduction

The transition into young adulthood, higher education, represents a crucial often accompanied by the pursuit of phase in a woman’s life. However, for

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many degree college girls, this period is frequently complicated by the recurring physical, emotional, and social challenges associated with the menstrual cycle. Although menstruation is a universal biological process, individual experiences are shaped by a complex interplay of socio-economic conditions, cultural norms, and the preparedness of educational institutions to address menstrual health needs.

From a health perspective, menstrual-related issues such as dysmenorrhea (painful menstrual cramps), menorrhagia (excessive menstrual bleeding), and premenstrual syndrome (PMS) extend beyond temporary discomfort and constitute significant clinical concerns. These conditions are often underreported, undiagnosed, or normalised by students, families, and even healthcare providers. When left unmanaged, they can result in chronic fatigue, anaemia, reduced academic performance, and considerable psychological distress, thereby affecting the overall well-being and quality of life of young women.

### **Review of literature**

A growing body of literature highlights menstruation as a significant health and social concern among young women, particularly those pursuing higher education. Studies across India and other developing countries indicate that menstrual-related problems are highly prevalent among college-going girls, yet remain inadequately addressed due to

social stigma, lack of awareness, and limited institutional support. Researchers have consistently observed that the transition into young adulthood coincides with heightened academic stress, lifestyle changes, and nutritional imbalances, all of which can exacerbate menstrual irregularities and related health issues (Patel et al., 2018).

From a biomedical perspective, several studies report dysmenorrhea as the most common menstrual complaint among college students, with prevalence rates ranging from 50 to 80 per cent (Sharma & Gupta, 2017). Menorrhagia and premenstrual syndrome (PMS) have also been identified as widespread concerns, often contributing to fatigue, anaemia, mood disturbances, and reduced daily functioning. Despite the severity of symptoms, many young women do not seek medical intervention, largely due to the normalisation of pain and discomfort as an inevitable part of menstruation (Kumar et al., 2019).

Sociological research emphasises the role of cultural beliefs, taboos, and gender norms in shaping menstrual experiences. Menstruation is frequently surrounded by silence and restrictions, limiting open discussion within families and educational spaces. Studies by Das and Sarkar (2016) reveal that inadequate menstrual health education leads to misinformation, fear, and poor hygiene practices among adolescent and young adult women. Language barriers, embarrassment, and the absence of female-friendly healthcare

facilities within college campuses further discourage help-seeking behaviour.

Institutional factors also play a crucial role in menstrual well-being. Research indicates that lack of access to affordable sanitary products, inadequate sanitation facilities, and absence of counselling or health services within colleges negatively impact attendance and academic performance (UNICEF, 2019). Several studies report that female students miss classes, examinations, or extracurricular activities during menstruation due to pain, fear of leakage, or lack of proper restrooms, reinforcing gender-based educational inequalities.

Recent literature increasingly calls for an integrated approach that combines health interventions with sociological understanding. Scholars argue that menstrual health should be addressed not only as a medical issue but also as a matter of gender equity, dignity, and reproductive rights (Hennegan & Montgomery, 2020). While existing studies provide valuable insights into the prevalence and nature of menstrual problems, there remains a gap in research that holistically examines menstrual cycle-related issues among degree college girls through both sociological and health perspectives. This study seeks to contribute to this gap by exploring menstrual experiences within the broader context of social norms, institutional support, and health awareness

### **Need for the Study**

Menstrual cycle-related problems significantly affect the health, academic performance, and well-being of degree college girls, yet they are often overlooked due to social stigma and lack of awareness. Most existing research focuses on school-aged adolescents, leaving limited evidence on menstrual health challenges among women in higher education. Additionally, inadequate institutional support and culturally rooted taboos hinder timely healthcare-seeking and effective management of menstrual issues. Hence, this study is necessary to examine menstrual health concerns from both sociological and health perspectives and to provide evidence-based insights for developing gender-sensitive interventions in higher education institutions.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To measure the prevalence and severity of menstrual health problems (dysmenorrhea, irregular cycles, PMS) and patterns of healthcare-seeking and self-medication among degree college girls.
2. To assess the influence of socio-cultural beliefs and taboos on perceptions and communication regarding menstruation.
3. To evaluate the adequacy of menstrual hygiene-related infrastructure and facilities available on college campuses.
4. To analyse the impact of menstrual-related problems on academic

attendance, participation, and concentration.

- To assess the level of knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene management and nutrition among degree college girls.

### Research Design

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design to investigate menstrual cycle-related issues among degree college girls. This design was chosen because it allows for the assessment of the prevalence, patterns, and associated factors of menstrual symptoms and hygiene practices at a single point in time. The cross-sectional approach is suitable for identifying correlations between menstrual health, sociological factors, and academic participation, providing a snapshot of the current status of menstrual well-being among the target population.

### Result and Discussion

**Table 1: Student Satisfaction with College Hygiene Infrastructure**

Hygiene Infrastructure Facility	Percentage of Students Satisfied (%)
Water Supply	65%
Privacy in Washrooms	42%
Disposal Bins	38%
Emergency Health Room	22%
Sanitary Pad Vending Facility	15%

The above table illustrates students' satisfaction with college hygiene infrastructure, expressed as percentages across five key facilities. Overall, it reveals uneven levels of satisfaction, highlighting both strengths and critical gaps in institutional support for menstrual hygiene. The highest level of satisfaction is reported for water supply (65%), indicating that a majority of students find access to water in washrooms to be adequate. Privacy in washrooms (42%) and the availability of disposal bins (38%) show moderate satisfaction, suggesting partial compliance with hygiene and dignity requirements but with significant scope for improvement.

In contrast, satisfaction levels are notably low for emergency health rooms (22%) and sanitary pad vending facilities (15%), pointing to serious deficiencies in essential menstrual support infrastructure. These low percentages indicate that most students lack access to immediate health assistance and affordable emergency menstrual products on campus.

Overall, the graph demonstrates that while basic facilities like water supply are relatively satisfactory, colleges fall short in providing comprehensive menstrual hygiene support systems. This inadequacy can adversely affect students' comfort, health, and academic participation, underscoring the need for targeted institutional interventions to improve menstrual-friendly infrastructure.

**Table 2: Frequency of College Absenteeism due to Menstrual Issues**

Frequency of Absenteeism	Percentage of Students (%)
Never	25%
Rarely	35%
Sometimes	30%
Frequently	10%

The table shows the frequency of college absenteeism among students due to menstrual-related issues. A majority of students (35%) reported missing college rarely, indicating that menstrual problems affect attendance occasionally but not regularly for most respondents. However, a significant proportion (30%) reported sometimes missing college every three to four months, suggesting periodic disruption to academic participation.

Notably, 10% of students reported frequent absenteeism, missing college almost every month due to menstrual issues, reflecting severe or poorly managed menstrual health problems. While 25% of students reported no absenteeism, the overall data indicate that menstrual-related challenges continue to impact attendance for a considerable number of degree college girls. These findings highlight the need for improved menstrual health support, pain management, and institutional facilities to reduce absenteeism and promote uninterrupted academic engagement.

**Table 3: prevalence of Menstrual Symptoms among college Girls (%)**

Symptom	Prevalence (%)
Dysmenorrhea	78%
PMS Symptoms	62%
Fatigue/Weakness	55%
Irregular Cycles	24%
Heavy Bleeding	18%

The data presented in Table 3 illustrate the prevalence of various menstrual-related symptoms among college-going girls. Dysmenorrhea, or painful menstruation, was the most commonly reported symptom, affecting 78% of participants. Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms, such as mood swings, irritability, and bloating, were reported by 62% of the respondents. Fatigue and weakness were experienced by 55%, indicating the impact of menstruation on daily functioning and energy levels. Irregular menstrual cycles were reported by 24%, while 18% of the participants experienced heavy menstrual bleeding. These findings suggest that menstrual discomfort and associated health issues are prevalent among young women, highlighting the need for targeted awareness, health education, and medical support in college settings.

### **Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) In Colleges**

Effective menstrual hygiene management in college settings rests on four essential pillars: physical infrastructure, access to products, knowledge and awareness, and the socio-

emotional environment. Physical infrastructure ensures dignity and hygiene, requiring restrooms with functional locks and adequate lighting for privacy and safety, consistent access to running water and soap to prevent infections, and proper disposal systems such as covered dustbins or incinerators to avoid unhygienic practices and environmental hazards. Access to products is critical, as colleges function as a “second home” for students; emergency supplies like sanitary napkins or tampons should be available via vending machines or campus clinics, and modern sustainable options, such as menstrual cups or reusable pads, offer cost-effective alternatives. Knowledge and awareness address the gaps in menstrual literacy, educating students on the biological phases of the cycle, distinguishing normal from abnormal bleeding or pain, proper hygiene practices including changing products every 4–6 hours to prevent complications like Toxic Shock Syndrome, and the importance of iron-rich diets to counter anemia associated with heavy menstrual loss. Finally, the socio-emotional environment seeks to dismantle stigma, encouraging open discussion about menstruation, supporting peer-led networks, and promoting “Period Positive” campaigns that include all genders, creating a campus culture where students can manage menstruation without shame or discrimination.

## Conclusion

The intersection of menstrual health and the sociological landscape of degree colleges highlights a significant, yet often overlooked, barrier to gender equity in higher education. This study demonstrates that menstrual issues extend beyond private biological concerns and represent a systemic challenge affecting academic performance, psychological well-being, and social participation. The high prevalence of dysmenorrhea and PMS among college girls, combined with a pervasive “culture of silence” and inadequate institutional infrastructure, creates an environment in which female students must navigate their education under added physical and emotional stress.

Addressing these challenges requires a shift from perceiving menstruation through a lens of stigma and concealment to one grounded in health, dignity, and rights. Colleges that fail to provide essential Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) facilities—including private restrooms, proper disposal systems, and emergency menstrual products—indirectly contribute to academic absenteeism and the marginalization of female students. Promoting comprehensive MHM in higher education is therefore not only a matter of hygiene but a crucial step toward fostering equity, inclusion, and student well-being.

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