

## **Effect of COVID – 19 in Menstrual Hygiene Management in North and Middle Andaman District of Andaman and Nicobar Islands**

**VARSA LAKRA\*<sup>1</sup> AND K. VENKATESAN<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Research Assistant, ICSSR Research Project,  
Department of Home Science, Jawaharlal Nehru Rajkeeya Mahavidyalaya (JNRM)  
Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor & Head Project Director, ICSSR Project,  
Department of Home Science, Jawaharlal Nehru Rajkeeya Mahavidyalaya (JNRM)  
Port Blair-744104, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

*“My plea is that don't wait for a girl to become a woman to empower them.  
Empower a girl's life by giving sanitary pads to them. With pads, we give them wings”.*

*-Arunachalam Muruganatham*

### **ABSTRACT**

Today, women are not dependent, able to work in any sector of their choices and capable to take their own decisions, for their betterment. But when it comes to menstruation, discussing about menstruation is still a taboo. Women in India does not open up much about menstruation and hygiene management during menstruation, they feel uncomfortable to discuss about this biological process in their body, due to lack of awareness its difficult for millions of women to break the taboo. During periods it is important to maintain the hygiene to avoid and decrease the risk of reproductive infections, urinary tract infections, vaginal infections and diseases. But for few women's maintaining the hygiene during menstruation is a challenge, due to non-availability of sanitary materials and lack of knowledge. This study is focused about the transition of choices from sanitary napkins to clothes during pandemic in COVID -19. The data has been collected from North and Middle Andaman district in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The information was regarding the inability of purchasing dignity kit to tackle with menstruation during the period of pandemic.

**Key Words :** Menstrual, Health, Sanitary, Insufficient, Hygiene, Awareness

### **INTRODUCTION**

Corona Virus is widely spread deadliest disease which was firstly, officially reported in Wuhan, City, China, in December 2019. It's a single-stranded RNA virus; the virus which have the ability to contaminate the infection in vast diversity not only in humans but in animals too. It was found that the virus has been familiar from many years and has been examine, and found that it is a respiratory disease, which was spreading rapidly; it was get noticed when a series of cases were admitted in hospitals, with respiratory tract infections and common

symptoms was reported in Wuhan, a broad area in the region of Hubei, China. The outburst was initially treated and handle as the difficulties of pneumonia with unspecified etiology, but then the base for disease control in China proclaim that the respiratory infection was precipitate by a novel Corona virus named as 2019-n CoV<sup>[1]</sup>. Pandemic indirectly influences menstrual hygiene, health and menstrual hygiene management between numerous approaches. Throughout the lockdown during Pandemic, there were various stigma and prohibitions and certain limitations for the women who menstruate from being able to manage their menstrual

hygiene, safely, in privacy and with dignity as they were uncomfortable, due to lack of insufficiency of sanitary pads during the pandemic. There were certain limitations implemented during the lockdown, which leads to panic situation, stock outs and it affected the supply chain of the market, and the price was not affordable by every family. Some lost the breadwinners in their families, and some people lost their work, due to pandemic. Moreover, for everyone the situation was not same during the pandemic. Pandemic COVID -19 has left its impact on low-income group and middle-income group.

### **Menstrual Hygiene Management:**

UNICEF and World Health Organization explains that Menstrual Hygiene Management that “using of clean sanitary material either clothes or sanitary pads or any other absorbent use to collect the menstrual blood should be change in specific interval of time to avoid infections”. For women a basic infrastructure is required, accessibility of water, toilet facilities, using antiseptic or soap to clean the body for washing the body in privacy, and secure suitable facilities to dispose the used sanitary material<sup>[2]</sup>. In India, people of different cultures celebrate menarche as an event. When a girl experience several changes in her body in puberty like-physiological changes, psychological changes, emotional changes, during the changes, a girl need proper guidance and knowledge for a correct prospective of menstruation. Hygiene management during menstruation is a topic of concern which has raised interest of people and ready to accept the challenges<sup>[3]</sup>. Menstruation is constant natural process in women’s body which goes through several stages in life. The serious problem among women and adolescence girls during menstruation; due to lack of menstrual awareness the hygiene management during menstruation that leads to unhealthy sanitation practices. Menstruation plays an essential role in women’s health and to avoid the risk of diseases<sup>[4]</sup>. The natural process of menstruation is associated with certain misbelieves and incorrect thoughts and ideas, which consequences into unhealthy results. Menstrual Hygiene Management is essential to avoid the reproductive tract infections; urinary tract infections and other complication which occurs due to inappropriate sanitation and lack of knowledge of maintaining the sanitation. Menstrual hygiene is an alarming issue which is inappropriate and unnoticed in reproductive health; the improper menstrual practices can face consequences towards pelvic inflammatory disease

and infertility<sup>[5]</sup>. Hesitation and false idea or belief about menstrual hygiene practices can develop unhygienic practices which might result to self-medication and self-develop unrealistic thoughts<sup>[6]</sup>.

Women have their own policies and perspective to handle their periods, the perspective and policies differ from women to women due to their personal preferences, accessibility, availability, awareness about menstruation, economical condition, cultural believes. Menstrual hygiene practices are the extensive trouble to health issues; if neglected, it leads to toxic shock syndrome, urinary infections, reproductive infections, vaginal infections. Poor genital hygiene affects the health<sup>[7]</sup>. In Indian context, the common view regarding menstruation is considered to be impure, and according to Indian societies there are certain restrictions during menstruation, misbelieves and self-made historical concepts during the periods; isolation of girls is common in some culture. Because of the negative thoughts and believes of the elders in the family, it has created a barrier for adult girls, to understand the correct concept, knowledge, and information about menstruation and menstrual hygiene management. In a study it was found that, there is a lack of awareness and knowledge among the girls of tribal communities and in rural areas girls; they suffer from infections due to improper hygiene management during their periods<sup>[8]</sup>. Menstrual hygiene management during menstruation is in change by incidental factors, like an accessibility of a place for women’s comfort; to manage the hygiene during menstruation. The elements are affected by having poor sanitation facilities, unhygienic conditions at the households and these are interlinked to poor menstrual hygiene practices. Poor hygiene management can raise women’s life at risk which is caused by infections<sup>[9]</sup>. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015, sets the objectives and targets for development for well-being, menstrual hygiene, hygiene management, proper sanitation practices is linked to the priorities of the goals such as Health (Sustainable Development Goals 3) motives to improve the health, Education (Sustainable development Goals 4) motives to spread correct information and knowledge among people. The (Sustainable Development Goals 6) motive is “to ensure the access to water, sanitation for all”, aims to improve the condition of sanitation and accessibility of water. During menstruation it is a need to understand the necessity of women’s sanitation facilities for the Management of appropriate hygiene<sup>[10]</sup>. Government of India took an initiative to

improve the condition of sanitation for women and to maintain the menstrual hygiene management it has introduced a programs and policies under “Swachh Bharat Mission” sanitary pads was distributed in schools, sanitary napkins vending machines were installed in schools, low-cost incinerators were introduced in girls toilet so that proper disposing take place without harming the environment. Government has also launched a Sanitary napkin called “Suvidha” for a price of Rs. 10 which is easily available on Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana Stores<sup>[11]</sup>. India has launched a campaign “Swachh Bharat: Swachh Vidyalaya” in every school to maintain the facilities and accessibility to water, proper disposing machines, privacy to changing. Menstrual Hygiene management, proper sanitation facilities, and awareness about menstrual hygiene are focused in the guidelines in “Swachh Bharat Mission” the motive is to improve the facilities for girls to improve the hygiene practices and for a better health<sup>[12]</sup>. After the initiative of Government of India, the important sector for improvement of menstrual hygiene management is awareness, among the adolescence girls, about the menstrual cycle, hygiene management, and also the consequences of poor hygiene management in their reproductive health, it is important to spread information about reproductive health, for the betterment of good health and well-being in future<sup>[13]</sup>. Menstrual hygiene management, sex education, and reproductive health guidance and related information providing in schools and colleges to girls, to prepare them to know about changes in their body and introducing them the actual facts of menstruation<sup>[14]</sup>. Periods and the hygiene are unnoticed issues; among young women it is a need of correct knowledge which is the only way for spreading awareness about the menstruation and menstrual hygiene, and motivates them to open-up and to feel free to talk about menstruation<sup>[15]</sup>.

Billions of women around the world are suffering from urinary tract infection, reproductive tract infection, post-natal infections and many more diseases, due to lack of menstrual hygiene. The conception of hygiene management during menstruation, consequently separate for backward, uneducated and adolescent girls. The female body menstruates and produces the next generation. To manage this biological phenomenon hygiene, sanitation facilities is required in order of honor and confidence managing the menstruation cycle menstrual hygiene management is a various elements

issues and requires collaboration, attention and resources in sequence to outstretch women. Also, due to insufficiency of awareness and assets, many women do not have basic necessities and facilities. In few cases, women have no other options except choosing unhygienic options. Better menstrual hygiene is a matter of good health and self-esteem of women and adolescent girls. It is also important to discuss about menstruation and menstrual hygiene management to clarify doubts and myths about periods. A precise knowledge about menstruation can decrease the probability of infections, due to improper menstrual hygiene practices.

## METHODOLOGY

The North and Middle Andaman district of Andaman and Nicobar Islands was selected for the present case study, North and Middle Andaman district is one of the three districts in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, area covered with 3251.85sq.km, there are three Tehsil in the district- Diglipur Tehsil, Mayabunder Tehsil, Rangat Tehsil according to (Census 2011) the population of the district is 105,597, and the sex-ratio in North and Middle Andaman district is 925 females of every 1000 males. People of North and Middle Andaman district depends on multiple skills like Agriculture farming, fishing, etc. The cases were selected from the district which is based on the menstrual hygiene management during COVID - 19. Five women were selected randomly, from the age (27-51 years). Two widow women having no financial support, one unmarried women taking care of her two sisters, two married women whose husband are working in private sector. For these method case study method is used, data has been collected through observation.

### Objective:

- The objective of the case study is to study the socio demographic profile of the respondent.
- To study the menstrual hygiene management during Covid 19.

### Study 1:

Mrs. Madhubala Roy, age 27 residing in Ramnagar village, Diglipur, North and Middle Andaman District in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, she recently lost her husband in pandemic, in the year 2020. Her husband was the only breadwinner in the family; she spent all her savings in treatment of her husband. She had borrowed money from relatives. When her husband was alive, she

was using disposal pads; she never felt shortage of sanitary napkins, and always maintained well hygiene practice during menstruation. Now hardly she can earn money to feed her five year old son and six months old daughter. Now she uses clothes which she uses to borrow from her neighborhood women.

She thinks that Pandemic is the only reason for her situation, if her husband would have not passed away, because of Covid-19, her life would have same alike before, now she feels shame to ask clothes from neighbors every month. Because of shortage of sanitary material, she is not able to maintain the hygiene like before Covid19; although there is no other options to maintain menstrual hygiene, she is getting urinary tract infections too.

### **Conclusion:**

The women changed her choice from sanitary pad to cloths, because of financial compulsion. She is not familiar to use of clothes, facing rapid rashes and infections. She never wanted to choose cloths for menstruation but her situation made her to choose. Her life totally changed after pandemic.

### **Study 2:**

Mrs. Aruna Sarkar, 38 years old and mother of three adult daughters, living in Kalighat of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and her husband is a farmer and she maintain her livelihood by selling vegetables and rice, but during pandemic there was no earning for their family. Before pandemic the financial condition was good to purchase pads for wife and daughters but during pandemic because of no earning, they were not able to afford sanitary pads. Her daughters were not comfortable of using clothes and felt unhygienic. Since, the clothes are not absorbent for them; they felt uncomfortable while using clothes. Her daughters always use to have complaint about constant itching and bad odor and usually blood is leaking onto the clothes. During their periods they sit in a particular place, because they feel if they move the blood stains will be all over in the home.

Aruna, being a mother she can feel the pain of her daughters, for herself she is managing and understand the situation, but she also, feels that her daughters don't deserve these situation; no girl should suffer in these world, because of non-availability of sanitary napkins, for a better hygiene management sanitary napkins are required.

### **Conclusion :**

A mother is trying her best for their daughters but they are so uncomfortable with clothes, in these pandemic it's hard for them to maintain menstrual hygiene after Pandemic.

### **Study 3:**

Mrs. Monisha Dey, residing of Jol-tikrey, age 32, her husband earns by selling vegetables and fishes, their monthly income in these pandemic is below Rs. 2000, hardly they are surviving, her husband had suggested her for cutting expenses, for reducing the expenses she use clothes as sanitary material, but she don't have enough clothes to use, she reuse the clothes again and again by washing the blood stains clothes, she use ash for cleaning her used sanitary material, just because she want to save money. Infection is common for her. She always faces urinary tract infections (*She also commented that-If she ever gives birth to girl, she shouldn't suffer like her*).

But Monisha's condition was not same, before pandemic her husband use to earn nearly Rs.10, 000. And she was using sanitary pads, when she was using disposal pads, she never experienced infections and she use to wash the sanitary pads with antiseptic, but today her situation is that she can't even afford a detergent or soap to wash her sanitary materials.

### **Conclusion:**

For few women Pre-menstrual syndrome is painful, but a woman likes her having real pain due to non-availability of material during her periods which is more painful.

### **Study 4:**

In a family, three sisters Miss. Radhika Tigga, age 38, Miss. Jaya Tigga age 35, Miss. Vidya Tigga age 32, living without parents in lamiya bay, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, working as maid. Her job is to take care of their children, the owner families use to provide them meals twice a day, and also paid for her service. But during pandemic, there were several lockdown restriction, in which they have to stay at home, as they were daily wages workers, with no savings in their banks, they faced lot of crisis, they even suffered for food, and due to lack of money they switched their choice from disposal sanitary pads to clothes, since there were three girls in a family it's very difficult for them to get enough clothes every month, so they were reusing and sharing the clothes among

each other. The sisters also use to dry their clothes in hidden places. Miss. Jaya faced the Urinary tract infection frequently, because of the unhygienic menstrual practices.

### Conclusion :

It's not always a choice sometimes, its helplessness, the three sisters want to maintain the hygiene in their daily lives, but they are in a situation where they can only afford food hardly.

### Study 5:

Mrs. Magrita Soreng, a widow woman, age 51, mother of five adult girls, living in Laxminallah (Billiground) of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the only earning member for her family, with her widow pension of amount Rs. 2500 per month. She belong to Low-income group, as Mrs. Magrita is financially not stable to purchase pads for all her daughters, her elder daughters was using clothes during her first menarche, but the younger daughter use to get pads from her schools before pandemic, but during pandemic they didn't have choice rather than using clothes. Mother introduced clothes to the younger daughters, and she feels itchy and uncomfortable to use clothes; as the bleeding is more she has to change the clothes in every one hour, Mrs. Magrita is aware about the Menstrual hygiene management; she taught her daughters, about the ways and techniques of using clothes and cleaning habits to her daughters, and to do some additional care during their periods, but still her daughters were not comfortable, they are eagerly waiting for the schools to reopen so that they can get the free pads and they don't have to suffer much during their periods.

### Conclusion:

Mother is using clothes from the beginning, so she never felt difficulty. But her daughter's were newly introduced to clothes as sanitary absorbent, for them it's very difficult to adjust with clothes, and to maintain the menstrual hygiene management.

### Conclusion:

Period destitution is a raising issue inordinate concern to the reproductive health, and rights of every girls and women, broadly after the pandemic, inappropriate for low-income and middle-income families. Due to financial crisis during the pandemic many women changed their choices from pads to clothes. Clothes were historically used to

soak menstrual blood, they are affordable and less pollute the environment, but it is moderately replaced by the disposal sanitary napkins in urban areas, but in rural areas women still use clothes as absorbent, few use the clothes by choice and few women use clothes because of financial compulsion. Period does not wait in epidemic and the result is the crisis of period destitution and poor menstrual hygiene, health and menstrual hygiene management ingeminate the need to improve the condition of hygiene management. A basic part of our human rights is a right to health, which is inclusive. The right also includes the basic infrastructure for women, availability of water, awareness on hygiene. The insufficiency to sanitary material, impact the menstrual hygiene management negatively of their physical health as well as mental health. It is also important to have menstruation, hygiene; health in initial phase of reproductive life to reduce the difficulties and diseases. There is a serious need to understand the importance and difficulties to manage the menstrual hygiene practices of women in low-income groups.

### Acknowledgement:

The researchers thank ICSSR, New Delhi for providing financial assistance to carry out this research work under the project of "Health, Sanitation and Hygiene Practices of Women in Andaman and Nicobar Islands"

## REFERENCES

1. Muhammad Fayyaz ur Rehman, Chaudhary Fariha, Aqsa Anwar, Naveed Shahzad, Munir Ahmad, Salma Mukhtar, Muhammad Farhan U, Haque (2020). Novel Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic: A recent mini review, Computational and Structural Biotechnology Journal 19, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csbj.2020.12.033>
2. Shamsudeen Mohammed, Roderick Emil Larsen-Reindorf and Issahaku Awal (2020). Menstrual Hygiene Management and School Absenteeism among Adolescents in Ghana: Results from a School-Based Cross Sectional Study in a Rural Community, International Journal of Reproductive Medicine, Volume 2020, Article ID 6872491, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/6872491>
3. Rajasri G. Yaliwal, Aruna M. Biradar, Shreedevi S. Kori, Subhashchandra R. Mudanur, Shivakumar U. Pujeri and Mohd Shannawaz (2020). Menstrual Morbidities, Menstrual Hygiene, Cultural Practices during Menstruation, and WASH Practices at Schools in Adolescent Girls of North Karnataka, India: A Cross-

- Sectional Prospective Study, Obstetrics and Gynaecology International, Volume 2020, Article ID 6238193, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/6238193>
4. S. Deepa, L. Saranya, Lt. Sridhar and S. Saravana kumar (2018). A Survey on Menstrual Health and Hygienic Sanitation, International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics, Volume 118 No. 20 2018, 365-369 ISSN: 1311-8080 (printed version); ISSN: 1314-3395, : <http://www.ijpam.eu> Special Issue
  5. Debadeep Kalita and Giridhar Pathak (2019). Study on Hygiene Practice among Adolescent Girls with Special reference to Menstrual Hygiene in Barpeta, Assam, International Journal of Medical Science and Public Health, Vol 8 .Issue 9, DOI: 10.5455/ijmsph.2019.0513327062019
  6. Palani Vel Rajan, Jeevithan Shanmugam, Naveen Prabhu Jayaraj and Archana Arumugam (2020), A Cross-sectional Study on Awareness and Knowledge of Menstrual Hygiene Practices among College going Girls in Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health, Vol 8 .Issue 1, ISSN 2394-6032, ISSN 2394-6040, DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.18203/2394-6040.ijcmph20205418>
  7. Rajanbir Kaur, Kanwaljit Kaur and Rajinder Kaur (2018). Menstrual Hygiene, Management, and Waste Disposal: Practices and Challenges Faced by Girls/Women of Developing Countries, Journal of Environmental and Public Health, Volume 2018, DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/1730964>
  8. Augustus Osborne, Bashiru Mohamed Koroma, Camilla M Bangura, Alusine H Koroma, Saffa Lansana and Yahaya Kawa (2020). Menstrual Hygiene Management-A Study among Adolescent Girls in Five Schools in Bo District, Sierra Leone, Journal of Clinical Case Studies, Reviews & Report, Volume 2(4): 1-6, DOI:10.47363/JCCSR/2020(2)134
  9. Padma Das, Kelly K. Baker, Ambarish Dutta, Tapoja Swain, Sunita Sahoo, Bhabani Sankar Das, Bijay Panda, Arati Nayak, Mary Bara, Bibiana Bilung, Pravas Ranjan Mishra, Pinaki Panigrahi, Sandy Cairncross and Belen Torondel (2015). Menstrual Hygiene Practices, WASH Access and the Risk of Urogenital Infection in Women from Odisha, India, PLOS ONE, DOI:10.1371/journal.pone.0130777
  10. Julie Hennegan, Linnea Zimmerman, Alexandra K. Shannon, Natalie G. Exum, Funmilola OlaOlorun, Elizabeth Omoluabi and Kellogg J. Schwab (2018). The Relationship between Household Sanitation and Women's Experience of Menstrual Hygiene: Findings from a Cross-Sectional Survey in Kaduna State, Nigeria, International Journal of Environmental Research Public Health, 15, 905; doi:10.3390/ijerph15050905
  11. Ankita Singh Rao and Krishna Somani (2020). A Study Based on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Indian Society, International Journal of Applied and Natural Sciences (IJANS), ISSN(P): 2319-4014; ISSN (E): 2319-4022 Vol. 9, Issue 3, Apr-May 2020; 27-32 © IASET.
  12. Rabindra Nath Sinha and Bobby Paul (2021). Menstrual Hygiene Management in India: The Concerns, 2018 Indian Journal of Public Health, Published by Wolters Kluwer Medknow, DOI:10.4103/ijph.IJPH\_135\_18
  13. Hema Priya S., Partha Nandi, Seetharaman N, Ramya M. R., Nishanthini N. and Lokeshmaran Anandaraj (2017). A Study of Menstrual Hygiene and related Personal Hygiene Practices among Adolescent Girls in Rural Puducherry, International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health, ISSN 2394-6032,ISSN 2394-6040,DOI:10.18203/2394-6040.ijcmph20172822
  14. Anne Mutunda Lahme, Ruth Stern and Diane Cooper (2018), Lahme, A.M. et al. (2018). Factors Impacting on Menstrual Hygiene and their Implications for Health Promotion, Global Health promotion, 25(1): 54-62 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1757975916648301>
  15. Bhawna Kathuria and Sherin Raj T.P. (2018). Effects of Socio-Economic Conditions on Usage of Hygienic Method of Menstrual Protection among Young Women in EAG States of India, Amity Journal of Healthcare Management, Volume 3 Issue 1 2018, ©2018 ADMAA.

\*\*\*\*\*