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Attitude, Feeling & Perception about menstruation among boys

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ABSTRACT:

Menstruation and its hygiene management remains an issue of gender equality. Due to lack of proper knowledge, different kind of taboos, social and cultural restrictions menstruation and menstrual practices are still unhygienic which causes serious health problems like reproductive tract infection, urinary tract infection etc. As our society is a male dominated patriarchal society, many things depend on their views, acceptance and kindness. If they become soft, kind and accept the menstrual fact as a natural phenomenon and if they discuss freely about menstruation and its proper hygiene practices with their family, friends, and relatives then it will take a social acceptance which eventually help to increase the female awareness regarding menstruation and horrible effects of it.

KEYWORDS- Menstruation, Perception, attitude among boys

Objectives:

- (i) To find out the feelings, conception and source of information regarding menstruation among the boys of urban, transition and rural areas.
- (ii) To compare the perception, feeling and attitude regarding menstruation among the boys of rural, transition and urban areas.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS:

A descriptive, questionnaire-based study was conducted among 392 males from November 2018 to April 2019 in urban and rural and in between rural and urban area (transition) of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, with the help of a pre-designed questionnaire. Data were analyzed statistically by simple proportions.

Results:

A significant difference was found in the feeling regarding menstruation among boys. Maximum number of boys 37% urban 31% transition and 28% rural were curious when they first knew about menstruation which was quite natural. But 30% rural boys felt that it was a funny, dirty & disgusting thing when they first knew about it and this number is little less in transition and urban areas 15% and 8% respectively. They felt so, may be due to lack of proper knowledge. This study observed that 96% urban boys and 77% transition boys knew that menstruation is a physiological process while 52% rural boys believed that menstruation as a physiological process. 34% rural boys thought that menstruation was a curse of God whereas 15% transition and 4% urban boys had that idea. The attitude towards menstruation shows that 46% urban, 38% transition boys can discuss about menstruation publically while 28% rural boys can discuss about menstruation publically. 81% urban, 64% transition boys didn't support that the society's conservative attitude towards menstruation, whereas in rural area 34% boys didn't support it. There was also a significant difference found regarding support on religious taboos on menstruation. 41% rural, 28% transition boys supported the religious taboos on menstruation whereas only 8% urban boys supported it. This study found differences in perception, feeling and attitude towards menstruation among boys.

CONCLUSIONS:

Perception about menstruation was clearer in urban boys as compared to transition and rural areas. Significantly more number of boys in the urban and transition area knew that menstruation is a physiological process compared to the rural boys. Maximum numbers of boys were felt curious when they first knew about menstruation in almost all the three areas. But some of them also felt funny, dirty and disgusting more in rural areas compared to other areas due to lack of proper knowledge. Many boys were supported the social & religious taboos regarding menstruation. They were so conservative regarding this matter that they were not ready to discuss about menstruation publically. Some of them feel very embarrass and hesitate to talk and few of them even refuse to talk on this subject. They should be more open about this matter because it is a very normal physiological process. They have to understand this facts and it is only possible if we provide them proper knowledge and education.

INTRODUCTION:

Adolescence is a highly dynamic period because many physical and mental changes happen during this period in both girls and boys¹. In this period adolescent girls face very common and unique phenomena that are menstruation. Menstruation is a natural bodily function and vital sign of good reproductive function. There is nothing wrong in it or it's not a dirty or disgusting thing. Rather it is a very normal physiological process. But menstruation is still regarded as something unclean or dirty in Indian society. Hence, all aspects of menstruation need to be understood by both girls and boys. Large number of girls has scanty knowledge about menstruation until they first experience because menstruation is something that is not frequently talked off in home. Our society is still so conservative that they can't even talk about this menstrual fact freely.

Better understanding of good menstrual hygiene is crucial for health, education and dignity of girls and women. Due to lack of proper knowledge and poor personal sanitary practices during menstruation has been associated with serious ill-health ranging from reproductive tract infection, urinary tract infection, bad odour etc². Sometimes cancer is also developed from repeated infection. Today millions of women are suffering by this kind of infections and its complications and by different types of cancer as well.

So it is very much essential for all the girls to know properly about menstruation and its hygiene practices, so that they can understand the importance of maintaining proper menstrual hygiene by using sanitary pad, washing external genitalia properly etc. Not the female only should know about the fact of menstruation rather males also need to know about this fact as well³. As our society is a male dominated patriarchal society, many things depend on their views, acceptance and kindness⁴. If they become soft, kind and accept the menstrual fact as a natural phenomena and if they discuss freely about menstruation and its proper hygiene practices with their family, friends, relatives then it will take a social acceptance which eventually help to increase the female awareness regarding menstruation and from horrible effects of it. So in order to effect change and tackle these issues, particularly in patriarchal societies, male may need to become advocates for maintaining proper menstrual hygiene^{2, 5}. That's why it is very important to know about the boys perception, feeling and attitude towards menstruation, which may need addressing before they can acting as advocates for change. With the above background, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To find out the feeling and source of information regarding menstruation among the boys of urban, transition and rural areas
2. To find out the attitude towards menstruation among the boys of three different areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Type of study: Community-based cross-sectional observational study.

Place of study: The present study was undertaken among the boys at North 24 pgs, in West Bengal. Two secondary schools, one rural school “Haroa P.G. High School”, Haroa, North 24 pgs and one urban school “Modern School Barrackpore”, 37, Park Road, Cantonment Barrackpore, 24 pgs(N), one rural area at Kalikapur, Haroa, North 24 pgs and one transition area at Nandagarh, Barasat, 24 pgs (N). An urban college “Bhairab Ganguly College”, 2, Feeder Road, Belgharia, Kolkata, was also selected for study. Samples were taken mainly by online form.

Duration of study: Six months, November, 2018 - April, 2019.

Study population: Three hundred and ninety two boys from the above-mentioned areas were selected for study.

Study tool: A pre-designed, pre-tested questionnaire.

Methodology: A six month quantitative online survey was conducted among 392 boys aged 16-34 across different areas of north 24 pgs. The samples were taken from some of the urban, transition and rural areas with the help of online questionnaire. This pre-designed, pre-tested and structured questionnaire included topics relating to perception, feeling about menstruation; source of information regarding menstruation and their attitude towards menstruation. After collecting the sample, the data were analysed by statistically.

Statistical analysis: Data obtained were collated and analyzed statistically by simple proportions.

RESULT:

Table 1: presents demographic characteristics of the study population. Among 392 respondents in the present study, 137(35%) belongs from urban area, 129(33%) belongs from transition area and 126(32%) belongs from rural area (Fig 1). Table1 shows that among total study population, 199(51%) were Hindus, 189(48%) boys were Muslims and 4(1%) were others (Fig.2). The present study shows through graphical representation the age when they 1st knew about menstruation ranged from 8 to 21 years with a maximum number of boys 1st knew about menstruation between the ages of 13 to 15 years observed commonly in three areas Fig (3). In the present study, the mean age when they 1st knew about menstruation of the respondents was 14.45 years.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the study population (n = 392)

Area	Urban	Transition	Rural
Number	137 (35%)	129 (33%)	126 (32%)
Religion	Hindu	Muslim	Other
Number	199 (51%)	189 (48%)	4 (1%)

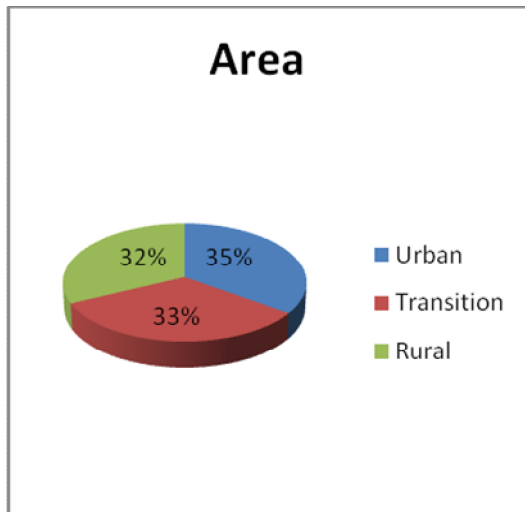


Fig1: person belongs to different area

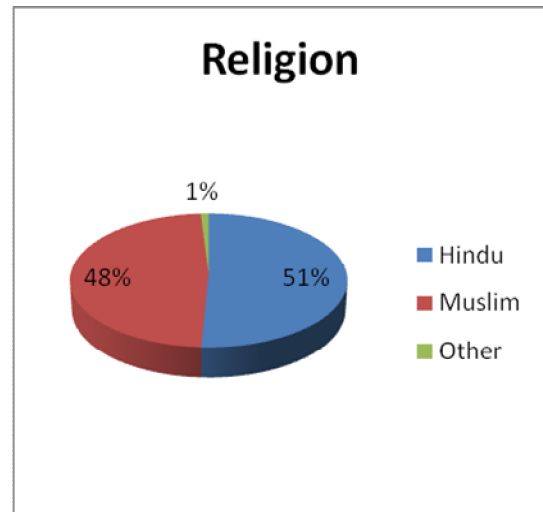


Fig 2: Person belongs to different religion

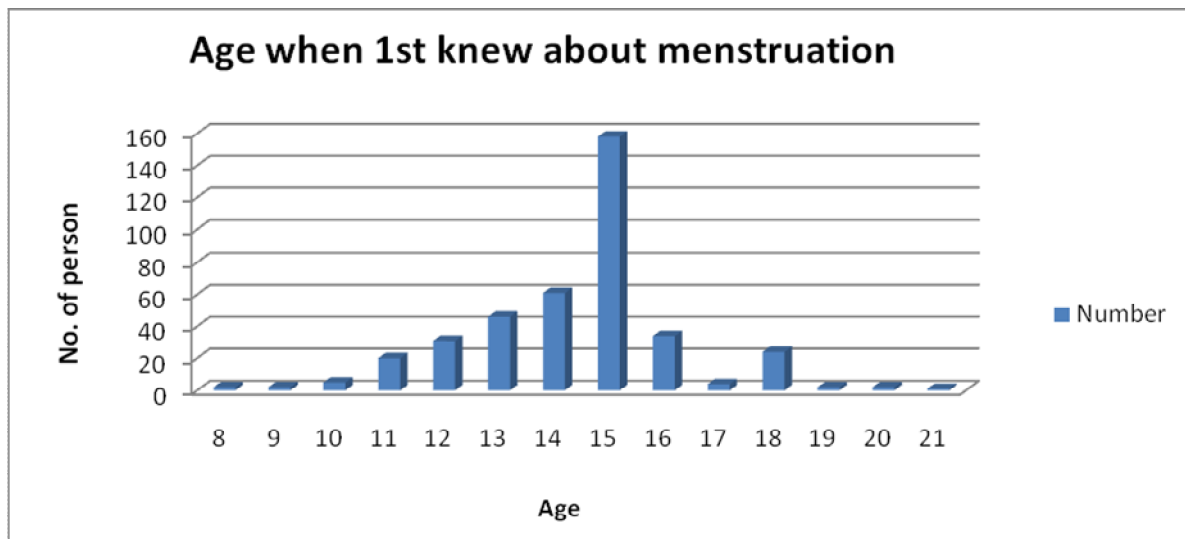


Fig 3: Age of the boys when they 1st knew about menstruation

Table 2: shows the first source of information about menstruation. It was observed that friend & school was the first source of information about menstruation which was common in all three urban, transition and rural areas, no significant difference found here. But it was also observed that 13% urban boys 5% transition boys and 2% rural boys first knew about menstruation from their family (Fig 4).

Information	Urban (n=137) %	Transition (n=129)%	Rural (n=126)%
Source of Information			
Friend	59 (43%)	66 (52%)	67 (54%)
School	36 (25%)	33 (24%)	34 (214%)
Family	17 (13%)	7 (5%)	3 (2%)
Advertisement	8 (6%)	8 (6%)	8 (6%)
Relative	7 (6%)	4 (3%)	3 (2%)
Internet	10 (7%)	10 (7%)	8 (6%)
Other	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	3 (2%)

Table 2: Information about menstruation (n = 392)

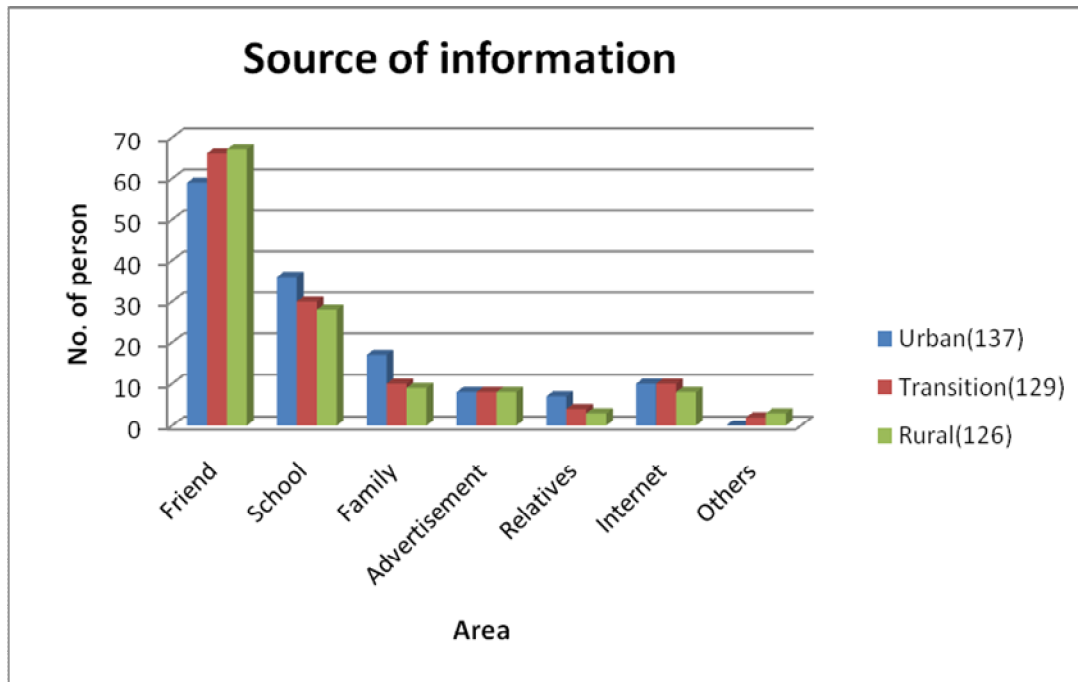


Fig 4: comparative figure of source of information

Table 3: shows the reaction when they first knew about menstruation and their further discussion about menstruation. Maximum boys were curious when they first knew about menstruation. 16% urban, 10% transition and 8% rural boys felt sympathetic whereas 8% urban, 15% transition and 38% rural boys felt that it is a funny, dirty & disgusting thing when they first knew about it (Fig 5). It was observed that maximum boys further discussed about menstruation with their male friend. 36% urban, 34% transition and 20% rural boys discussed about menstruation with their female friends whereas only 21% urban, 10% transition and 5% rural boys discussed with their family about it (Fig 6). Further discussion about menstruation was done by 83% urban, 81% transition and 99% rural boys (Fig 7). Fact related discussion was done by 45% urban 36% transition and 27% rural boys and funny discussion occurred by 7% urban 18% transition and 37% rural boys (Fig 8).

Table3: Feeling about menstruation (n=392)

Information	Urban (n=137) %	Transition (n=129) %	Rural (n=126) %
Reaction about menstruation			
Normal	39 (29%)	36 (28%)	29 (23%)
Curious	51 (37%)	40 (31%)	35 (28%)
Sympathetic	22 (16%)	14 (10%)	8 (6%)
Feared	9 (7%)	11 (9%)	12 (10%)
Funny	6 (4%)	8 (6%)	18 (14%)
Dirty	6 (4%)	10 (8%)	20 (16%)
Nil	3 (2%)	6 (5%)	4 (3%)
Other	1 (1%)	4 (3%)	0 (0%)
Further discussion about menstruation			
Yes	113 (83%)	104 (81%)	99 (79%)
No	24 (17%)	25 (19%)	27 (21%)
Discussion occurs with			
	(n=113)	(n= 104)	(n=99)
Male friend	52 (40%)	55 (48%)	59 (55%)
Female friend	36 (36%)	30 (34%)	15 (20%)
Family	24 (21%)	11 (10%)	5 (5%)
Other	1 (3%)	8 (8%)	20 (20%)
Type of discussion			
Fact related	51 (45%)	37 (36%)	27 (27%)
Sympathetic	25 (22%)	22 (21%)	15 (15%)
Funny	8 (7%)	19 (18%)	37 (37%)
Caring	29 (26%)	25 (24%)	13 (13%)
Other	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	7 (7%)

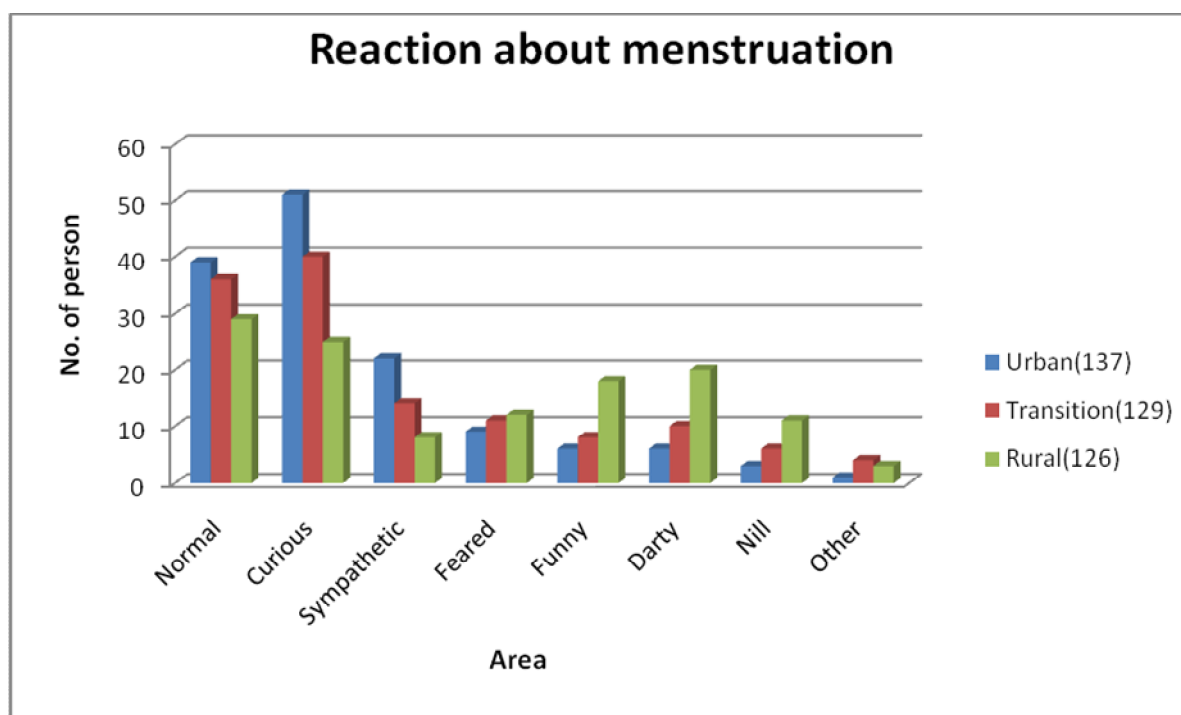


Fig 5: comparative figure of reaction about menstruation

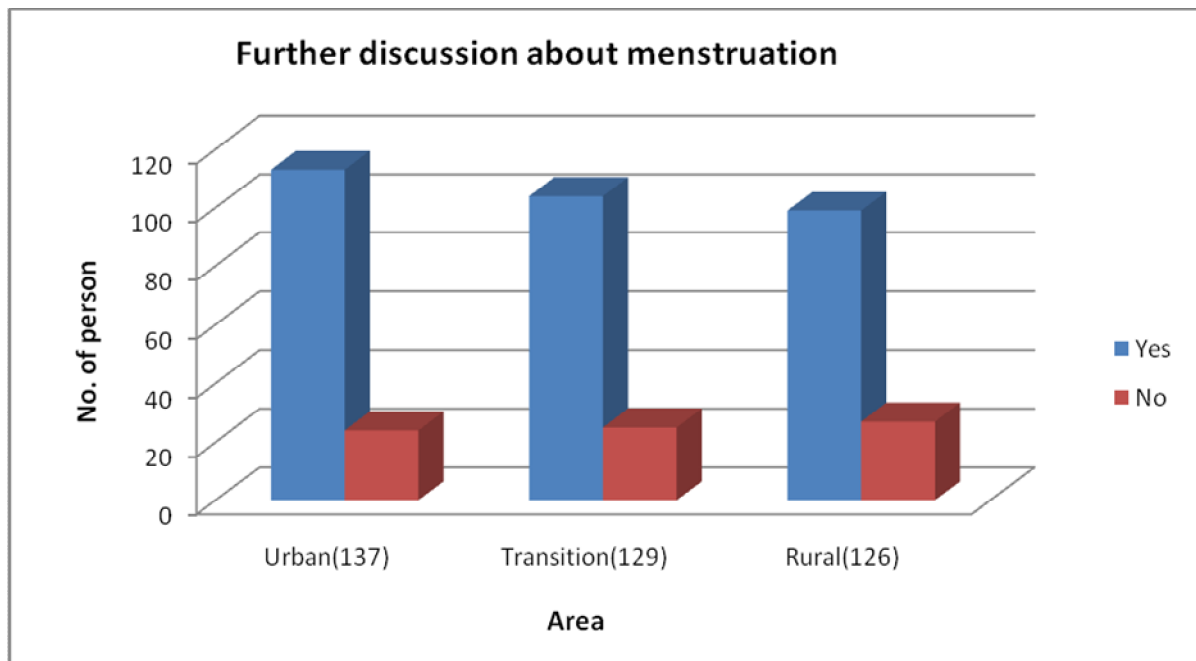


Fig 6: comparative figure of further discussion about menstruation

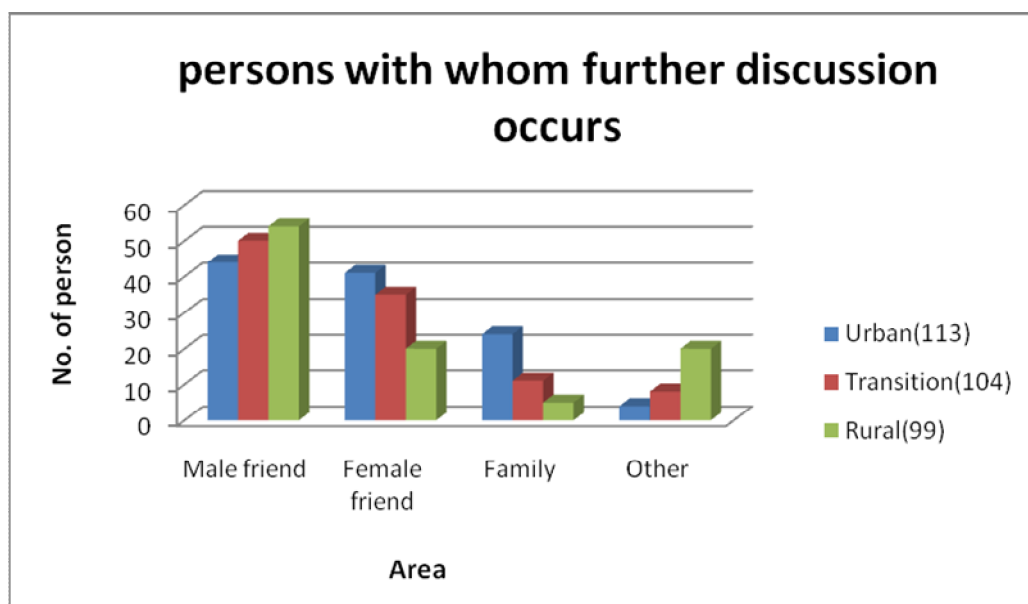


Fig 7: comparative figure of persons with whom further discussion occurs

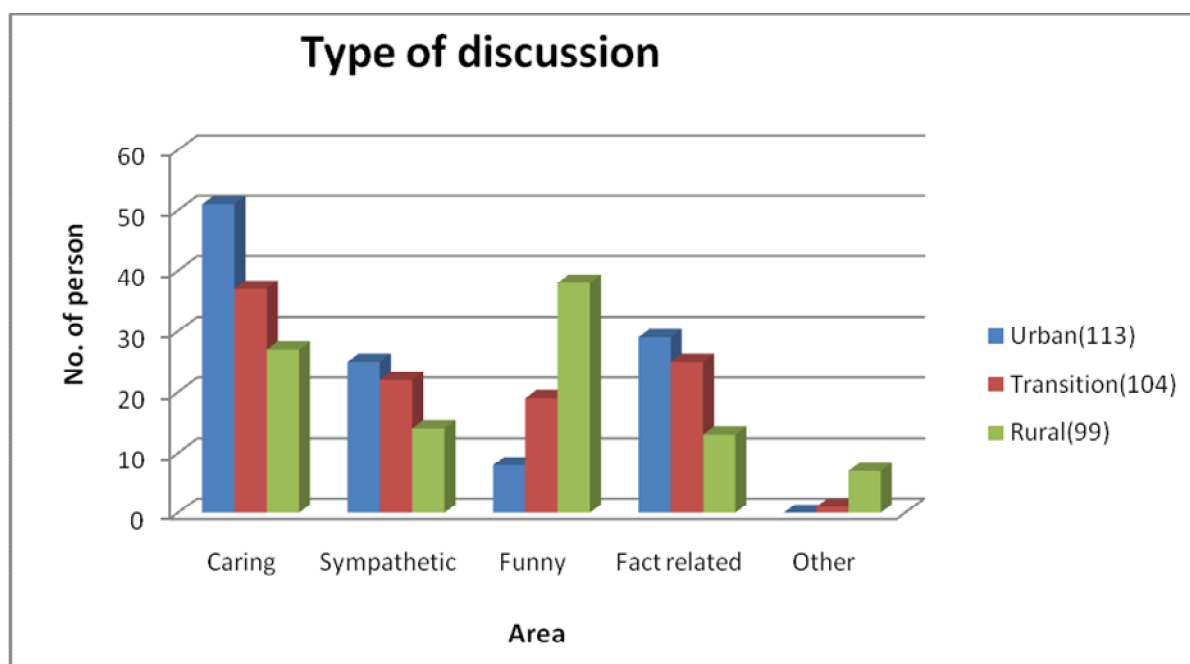


Fig 8: comparative figure of type of discussion

Table 4: shows different beliefs and conception about menstruation among the respondent. A significant difference was observed here. 96% urban boys and 77% boys in transition area knew that menstruation is a physiological process but while in rural area 52% had an idea about menstruation is a physiological process. 34% rural boys thought that the menstruation was a curse of god while 15% boys in transition area and only 4% urban boys had that idea. None of the urban boys thought that it was neither caused by a sin nor a disease but 5% in transition and 12% in rural boys had that thought it was caused by a sin and 3% transition and 2% rural boys thought that it was a disease (Fig: 9). 81% urban, 59% transition boys knew that the blood comes from the uterus while only 39% rural boys had that idea about where from blood comes. Whereas 61% rural boys had no idea where from the blood came while percentage was low in case of transition and urban boys, 41% and 19% respectively (Fig: 10).

Table 4: Perception about menstruation (n = 341)

Beliefs/conception	Urban (n=137) %	Transition (n=129) %	Rural (n=126) %
What is the cause of menstruation?			
It is a physiological process	131 (96%)	99 (77%)	65 (52%)
It is a curse of God	6 (4%)	19 (15%)	43 (34%)
It is caused by a sin	0 (0%)	6 (5%)	15 (12%)
It is caused by a disease	0 (0%)	5 (3%)	3 (2%)
From which organ does the menstrual blood come?			
Uterus	110 (81%)	76 (59%)	50 (39%)
Ovary	8 (6%)	21 (16%)	31 (25%)
Don't know	19 (13%)	32 (25%)	45 (36%)

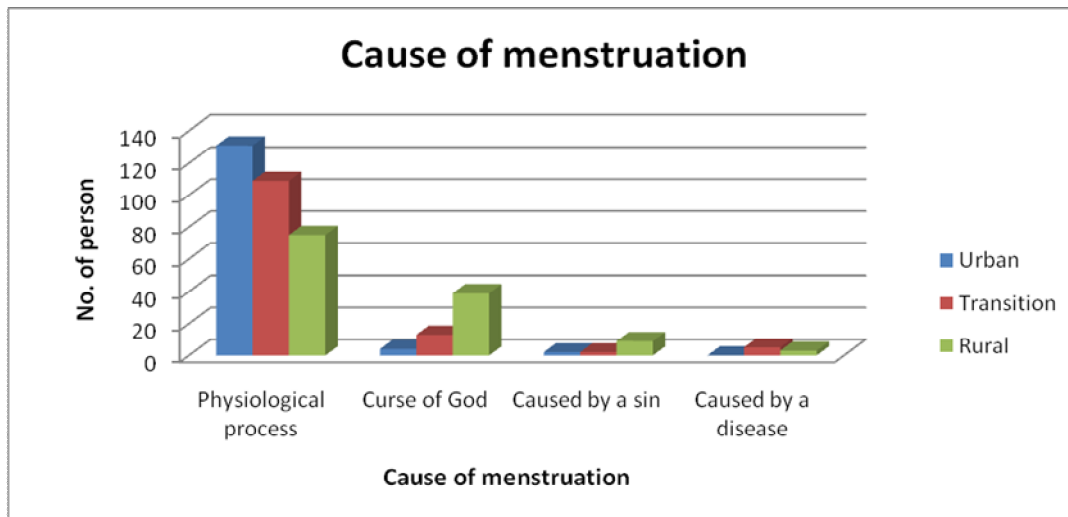


Fig 9: Comparative figure of cause of menstruation of different area

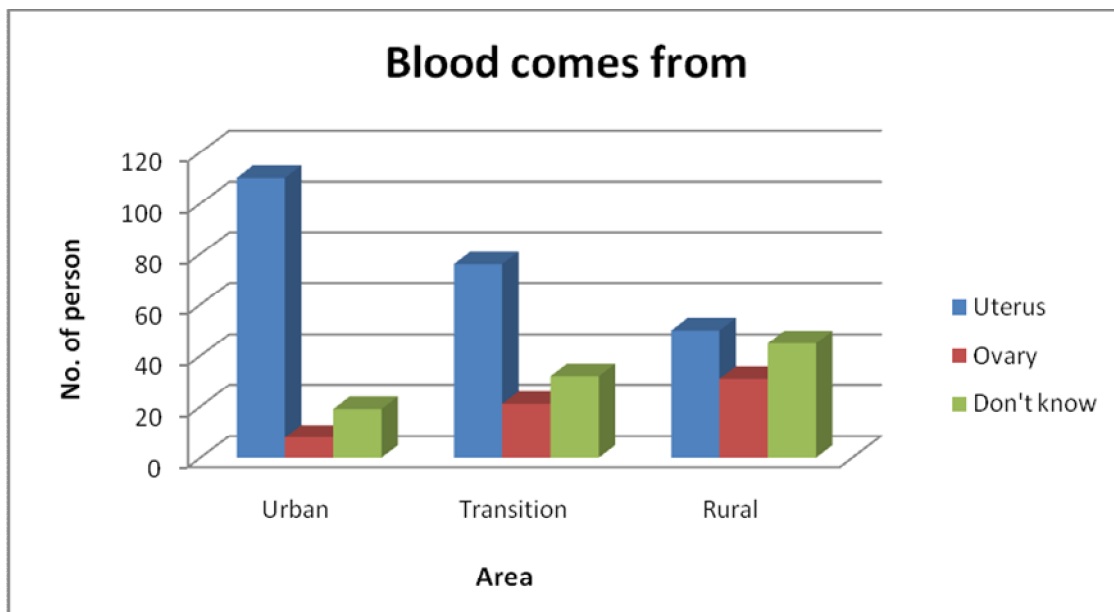


Fig 10: Comparative figure of knowledge about menstruation

Table 5: depicting the attitude towards menstruation shows that 46% urban, 38% transition boys can discuss about menstruation publically while 28% rural boys can discuss about menstruation. 33% rural boys can't discuss about menstruation whereas this number was fairly low in transition and urban girls comparative to rural area, percentage was 18% and 7% respectively (Fig: 11). Regarding the support on society's conservativeness about menstruation significant differences was found. 81% urban, 64% transition boys didn't support that the society's conservative attitude towards menstruation, whereas in rural area 34% boys didn't support it. While 19% urban boys support it, in case of transition and rural area the percentage was 36% and 66% respectively (Fig: 12). There was also a significant difference found regarding support on religious taboos on menstruation. 41% rural,

28% transition boys support the religious taboos on menstruation whereas only 41% urban boys support it (Fig: 13).

Table 5: Attitude towards menstruation (n = 392)

Attitude	Urban (n=137) %	Transition (n=129) %	Rural (n=126) %
Discussion about menstruation publically			
Yes	63 (46%)	49 (38%)	35 (28%)
No	9 (7%)	23 (18%)	42 (33%)
If required I can	65 (47%)	57 (44%)	49 (39%)
Support on society's conservativeness regarding menstruation			
Yes	26 (19%)	47 (36%)	83 (66%)
No	111 (81%)	82 (64%)	43 (34%)
Support on religious taboos regarding menstruation			
Yes	126 (92%)	93 (72%)	75 (59%)
No	11 (8%)	36 (28%)	51 (41%)

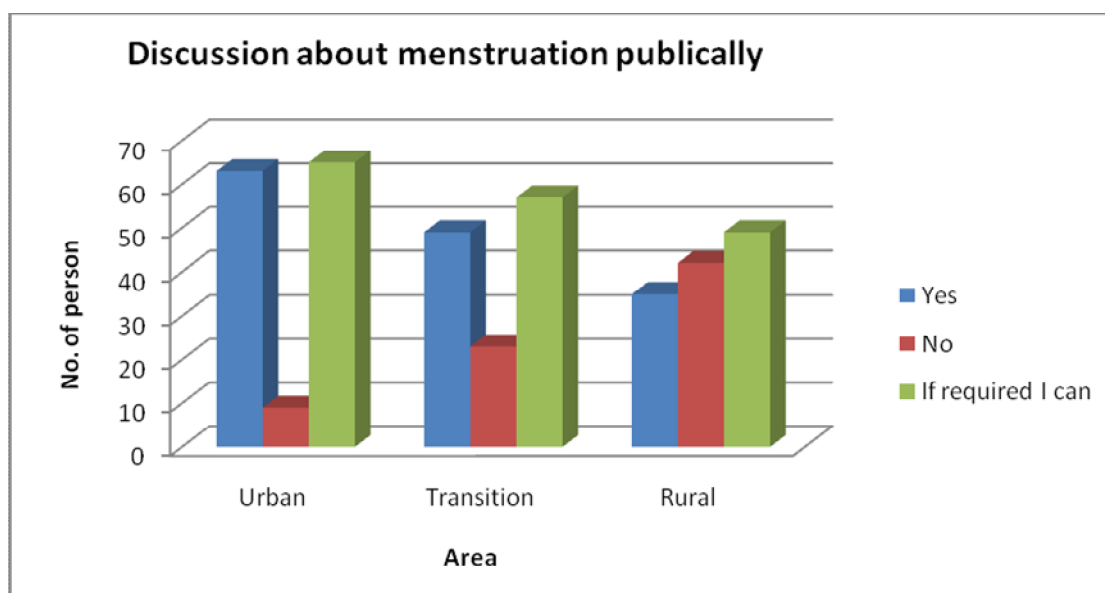


Fig 11: Comparative figure of discussion about menstruation publically

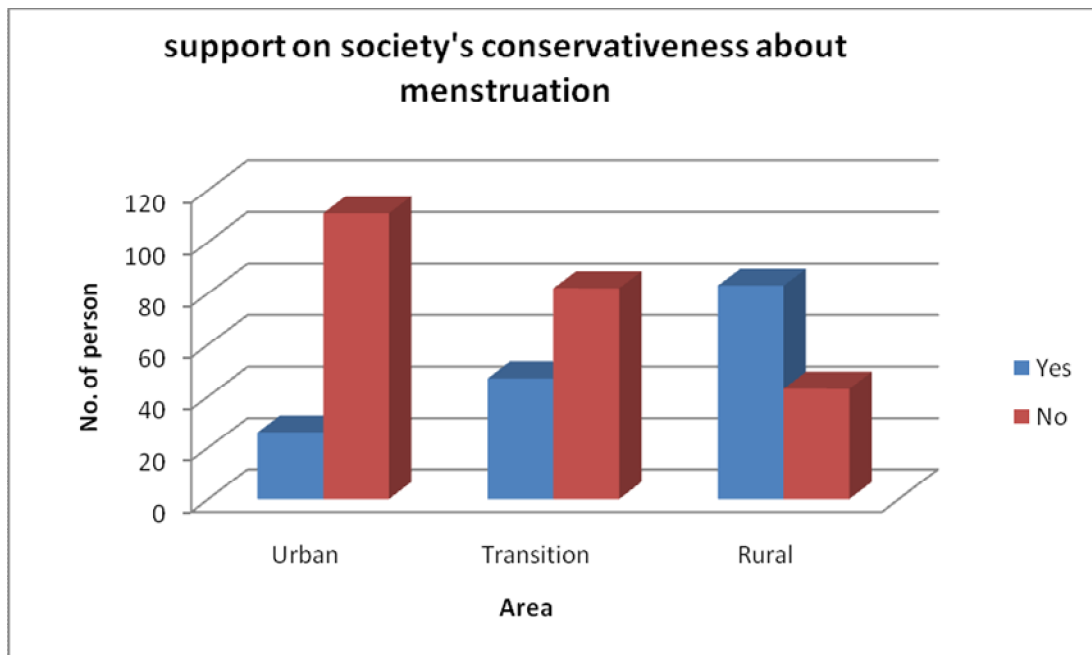


Fig 12: Comparative figure of support on society's conservativeness About menstruation

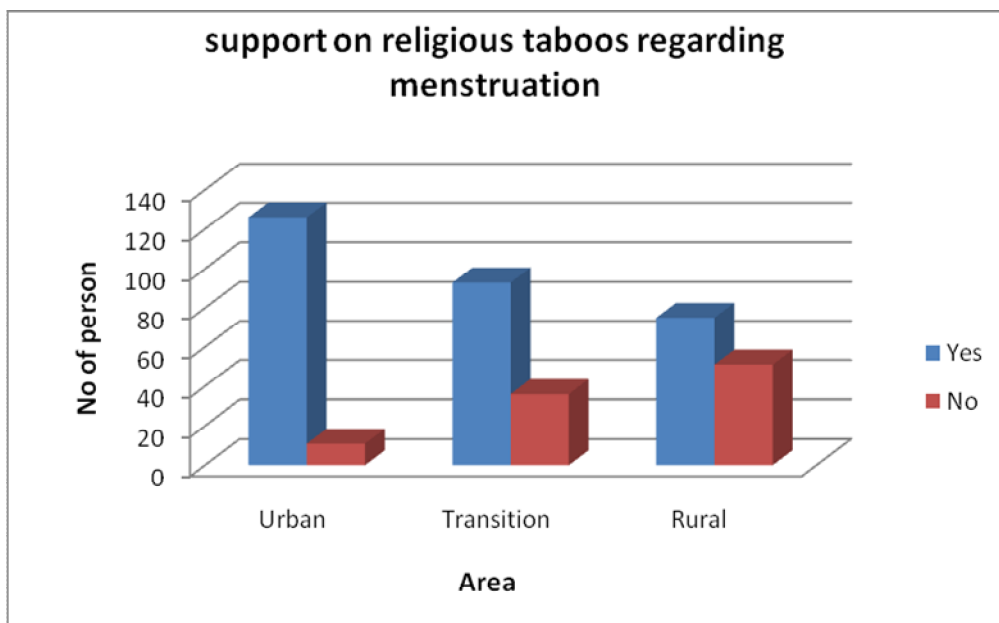


Fig 13: Comparative figure of support on religious taboos regarding menstruation

DISCUSSION:

This study shows that of total 392 respondents 137 (35%) boys belongs from urban area, 129 (33%) boys belongs from transition area and 126 (32%) boys belongs from rural area.

This study shows that the age when they first knew about menstruation ranged from 8 to 21 years with a maximum number of boys first knew about menstruation between the ages of 13 to 15 years observed commonly in three areas. In the present study, the mean age when they first knew about menstruation of the respondents was 14.45 years.

Ideally school should be the main source of information about menstruation agenda. It was observed that friend & school was the first source of information about menstruation which was common in all three urban, transition and rural areas, no significant difference found here^{2, 6}. But it was also observed that 17(13%) urban boys 7(5%) transition boys and 3(2%) rural boys first knew about menstruation from their family. A significant difference found here from where we can say that in urban area people are more liberal so that they can discuss about this fact with their family though the percentage is very less, 13% but still it is more than transition & rural areas where the percentage is only 5% and 2% respectively. People should more concern and open regarding this matter so that they can talk freely with their family friends relatives especially with their children so that they can get proper knowledge and idea and don't get any wrong concept regarding this matter. Different advertisement and internet was another source of information regarding menstruation⁷. The study also shows the reaction when they first knew about menstruation and their further discussion about menstruation. Maximum number of boys 51 (37%) urban 40 (31%) transition and 35 (28%) rural were curious when they first knew about menstruation which is quite natural. 39 (29%) urban, 36 (28%) transition and 29 (23%) rural boys shown normal reaction and 22 (16%) urban, 14 (10%) transition and 8 (8%) rural boys shown sympathetic reaction. May be this was possible because of their knowledge about the actual fact of menstruation known from school, family, relatives or friends. Whereas 12 (8%) urban, 18 (15%) transition and 38 (30%) rural boys felt that it is a funny, dirty & disgusting thing when they first knew about it and they felt so, may be due to lack of proper knowledge.

It was observed that maximum boys further discussed about menstruation with their male friend. 36 (36%) urban, 30 (34%) transition and 15 (20%) rural boys discussed about menstruation with their female friends. So we can see here boys are not enough comfortable to talk about this matter with their female friend especially in rural areas. 24 (21%) urban boys discussed about menstruation with their family whereas only 11 (10%) transition and 5 (5%) rural boys discussed with their family about it. From this study we understand about our society's conservativeness regarding this issue. And the number is high in almost all three areas but little less in urban area.

Through this study we also wanted to see what kind of discussion was done by them further and we saw that sympathetic type of discussion was done by 25 (22%) urban 22 (21%) transition and 15 (15%) rural boys. 51 (45%) urban and 37 (36%) transition boys did the fact related discussion whereas only 27 (27%) rural boys did this. And funny discussion occurred by 8 (7%) urban, 19 (18%) transition and 37 (37%) rural boys. From this data we can understand their thinking about this fact. Menstruation is a very natural physiological process, there is nothing funny about it but still

they are making fun of it. Due lack of knowledge they probably misunderstand the fact and did this mistake. And the number is more in rural areas comparative to the urban and transition areas.

This study observed that 131 out of 137 (96%) urban boys and 99 out of 129 (77%) transition boys knew that menstruation is a physiological process while 65 out of 126 (52%) rural boys believed that menstruation as a physiological process⁷.

It was also observed in this study that 61 (48%) boys in rural areas don't know the actual cause of menstruation. Out of 61 (48%) rural boys 43 (34%) thought that menstruation was a course of God whereas 19 (15%) transition and 6 (4%) urban boys had that idea. 6 (5%) transition and 15 (12%) rural boys had that thought it was caused by a sin. 5 (3%) and 3 (2%) boys of transition and rural areas thought that it was a disease. This study's observations might be due to poor educational status or the absence of health education and awareness programmes in school mainly in rural and transition areas comparative to the urban area². It was also observed that 110 (81%) urban boys and 76 (59%) transition boys knew that blood comes from uterus but in rural area only 50 (39%) have that idea. The number of knowing this fact was not bad at all though many of them had wrong concept regarding this menstrual fact⁸. Many boys think that blood comes from ovary and the number was maximum in rural area 31 (25%), moderate in transition area 21 (16%) and less in urban area 8 (6%).

The study also showed mixed kind of attitude towards menstruation among the boys of all three areas⁹. Some of them shown benevolent attitude mainly found in urban area but many of them shown exactly the opposite attitude towards menstruation and about its open approaches. The attitude towards menstruation shows that 46% urban, 38% transition boys can discuss about menstruation publically while 28% rural boys can discuss about menstruation. 33% rural boys can't discuss about menstruation whereas this number was fairly low in transition and urban girls comparative to rural area, percentage was 18% and 7% respectively⁷. A significant difference was found regarding the support on society's conservativeness about menstruation. 111 (81%) urban, 82 (64%) transition boys didn't support that the society's conservative attitude towards menstruation, whereas in rural area 43 (34%) boys didn't support it. While 26 (19%) urban boys support this conservative attitude, but in case of transition and rural area the percentage was 47 (36%) and 83 (66%) respectively. There was also a significant difference found regarding support on religious taboos on menstruation. 51 (41%) rural, 36 (28%) transition boys supported the religious taboos on menstruation whereas only 11 (8%) urban boys supported it. From the above observations we can see that menstruation is still seems to be a social stigma for women might be due to poor literacy level or absence of proper education programmes in school¹⁰.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION:

Perception about menstruation was clearer in urban boys as compared to transition and rural areas. Significantly more number of boys in the urban and transition area knew that menstruation is a physiological process compared to the rural boys. Though we found that male have more idea about the actual fact of menstruation comparative to female. The reasons for this are twofold: boys were keen for knowledge about menstruation, searching information out despite societal norms being for them to remain ignorant; they were also largely sympathetic to their menstruating sisters and fellow classmates and understanding of the issues surrounding the need for good menstrual hygiene management.

Maximum number of boys was felt curious when they first knew about menstruation in almost all the three areas. Some of them also felt funny, dirty and disgusting more in rural areas compared to other areas due to lack of proper knowledge.

Many boys were supported the social & religious taboos regarding menstruation. They were so conservative regarding this matter that they were not ready to discuss about menstruation publically. Some of them feel very embarrass and hesitate to talk and few of them even refuse to talk on this subject.

They should be more open about this fact because it is a very normal physiological process. There is nothing to shame on it so that u can't talk about it publically. They have to understand this facts and it is only possible if we provide them proper knowledge & education. This can be achieved with the help of media, family, sex education in school curriculum, and focused group discussions

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