

## Promoting Gender equality through Menstrual Awareness

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### Introduction

Menstruation is a natural biological process that remains clouded by stigma and misinformation, especially in patriarchal societies where cultural taboos worsen gender inequality. These misunderstandings not only hinder women's and girls' ability to manage their menstrual health with dignity, but they also intensify broader problems of gender discrimination. The initiative "Promoting Gender Equality through Menstrual Awareness" tackles this issue by combining menstrual health education with efforts to promote gender equality. The project seeks to break down societal taboos, encourage an inclusive understanding of menstrual health, and create gender-equitable environments. By involving both men and women through educational initiatives, community outreach, and advocacy, this initiative aims to normalize conversations about menstruation, empower women and girls, and ensure equal involvement in addressing menstrual health as a vital human rights issue. This report details the key objectives, strategies, and anticipated outcomes of the project in advancing menstrual awareness and promoting gender equality.

### Need ,Objectives and Importance of Study

#### Need for the Study

Even with notable progress in public health and gender equality, menstruation continues to be a highly stigmatized topic in numerous cultures. The combination of limited access to education about menstrual health and hygiene supplies, along with existing cultural taboos, results in misinformation, feelings of shame, and social exclusion for those who menstruate, especially women and girls. This situation leads to significant consequences, such as poor menstrual hygiene practices, missed school days, and further entrenchment of gender inequalities. A lack of awareness surrounding menstruation also obstructs larger initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality, as it continues to reinforce gender-based discrimination and disempowerment. Thus, it is essential to incorporate menstrual awareness into discussions about gender equality to promote a more inclusive and fair society.

#### Objectives of the Study

1. **Promote Menstrual Health Education:** To increase knowledge and understanding of menstruation among both men and women, challenging myths and misconceptions surrounding menstrual health.
2. **Foster Gender Equality:** To use menstrual health as an entry point for addressing wider gender inequalities by promoting gender-equitable practices and challenging patriarchal norms that contribute to menstrual stigma.
3. **Empower Women and Girls:** To provide women and girls with the knowledge and resources needed to manage their menstrual health with dignity, thereby improving their overall health, educational opportunities, and social participation.
4. **Encourage Policy Advocacy:** To engage policymakers and stakeholders in promoting supportive policies and programs that address menstrual health management and gender equality at both local and national levels.
5. **Reduce Social Exclusion:** To create inclusive community environments where menstruation is normalized, reducing the social and educational marginalization of menstruating individuals.

### **Importance of the Study**

This research holds significance for various reasons. Firstly, it explores the relationship between menstrual health and gender equality, emphasizing how deeply rooted gender norms sustain discrimination and health disparities. By addressing menstrual stigma, the research aids in efforts to empower women and girls, enabling them to engage fully in education, work, and social activities without the hindrances caused by menstruation-related discrimination. Additionally, it fosters a community-wide awareness of menstruation, which is crucial for breaking down cultural taboos and establishing more inclusive, gender-equitable settings. Lastly, the research is vital in shaping policy recommendations, promoting holistic approaches to menstrual health management that adhere to human rights and gender equality principles.

### **Review of Literature**

Menstrual awareness and its connection to gender equality have been extensively examined in public health, gender studies, and international development. The ongoing stigma and taboos associated with menstruation are well-established across diverse cultural settings, particularly in low- and middle-income nations, where they exacerbate gender discrimination and social exclusion (Sommer et al., 2016). Research indicates that menstrual hygiene management (MHM) represents not just a health concern but also a crucial element of gender equality, as it impacts educational achievement, health results, and social involvement, especially among women and girls.

### **Menstrual Health and Education**

A significant theme in literature is the critical role of menstrual health education in enhancing menstrual hygiene practices and minimizing stigma. According to Sommer et al. (2015), a lack of understanding about menstruation and limited access to menstrual hygiene products significantly affect girls' school attendance and general well-being. Research conducted by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC, 2013) indicates that insufficient access to clean facilities and menstrual products can result in feelings of shame and social withdrawal, thereby perpetuating gender inequalities in education and workforce participation. In a similar vein, Hennegan et al. (2019) highlight that better menstrual education not only aids girls but also assists in dismantling damaging myths and taboos when men and boys receive education about menstruation as well. Involving men in menstrual awareness initiatives contributes to challenging patriarchal norms and creating a more supportive atmosphere for gender equality.

### **Gender Equality and Menstruation**

The relationship between gender equality and menstruation is a recurring theme in academic discussions. Menstrual stigma is deeply intertwined with gender discrimination, where societal norms classify menstruation as impure or shameful, thus reinforcing the oppression of women and girls. Bobel (2018) posits that tackling menstrual stigma involves not just hygiene management but also challenging and transforming gender power structures. This perspective resonates with the research conducted by Hennegan and Montgomery (2016), which demonstrates that excluding women during menstruation, especially in religious or cultural contexts, furthers their marginalization and restricts their access to opportunities. A gender-equitable strategy regarding menstrual health can significantly impact women's empowerment. Garg and Anand (2015) emphasize that policies aimed at improving menstrual health and hygiene should be integrated into broader initiatives for gender equality, which include enhancing women's and girls' access to education, healthcare, and economic resources.

Research indicates that when menstrual stigma is effectively addressed through educational programs and policy changes, there are significant improvements in school attendance and academic performance among

girls, resulting in long-term benefits for gender equality across both educational and professional domains (Mason et al., 2013).

### **Community-Based Approaches to Menstrual Awareness**

Community involvement and participatory methods have been recognized as effective strategies for enhancing awareness about menstruation and promoting gender equality. The existing literature suggests that sustainable change is contingent upon community participation, with initiatives aimed at reducing the stigma surrounding menstruation including both women and men. Research conducted by MacRae et al. (2019) illustrates the effectiveness of community-led menstrual health programs in various African nations, where local leaders and stakeholders play a key role in educating the public about menstrual hygiene and addressing cultural taboos. Likewise, Patkar (2014) supports a human-centred approach to menstrual health interventions, emphasizing the importance of prioritizing the needs and perspectives of women and girls.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study employed a mixed-methods approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative techniques to yield a thorough insight into the connection between menstrual awareness and gender equality. The quantitative segment of the study involved administering structured surveys to university students. These surveys were designed to collect information regarding their knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions about menstruation and its effects on gender roles and equality. The qualitative part included direct observations of secondary school students, as well as informal discussions with teachers, to evaluate how menstrual awareness is addressed and perceived in practical settings. These observations provided insights into how menstrual health education shapes students' perceptions of gender norms from a young age.

### ***Justification of the chosen design:***

The mixed method design was selected as it enabled the investigation of menstrual awareness from various viewpoints. The quantitative data collected from students through surveys offered measurable insights into their awareness levels, attitudes, and behaviours related to gender. This approach allowed the researcher to identify existing knowledge gaps and perceptions about menstruation, which are crucial for evaluating gender equality. Conversely, quantitative observations conducted in the school environment provided valuable contextual information regarding the introduction of menstrual awareness to younger students and its potential impact on their comprehension of gender roles. By observing interactions, the educational context, and the integration of menstrual awareness into school programs, the research yielded insights that could not be obtained through surveys alone. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data was vital for creating a comprehensive understanding of how menstrual awareness could advance gender equality. The mixed method approach ensured that the study captured both quantifiable trends and richer insights into the experiences of individuals and groups.

### ***Overall Research Strategy and structure:***

The research approach was developed to methodically tackle the research questions, which centred on how menstrual awareness influences views on gender equality. The study was conducted in the subsequent phases:

#### **Quantitative Data Collection (Questionnaires)**

- **Target Group:** The main respondents chosen were university students from different faculties. A total of 150 students were surveyed using structured questionnaires.

- **Survey Structure:** The survey comprised a mix of closed-ended questions (such as multiple-choice and Likert scale questions) along with a few open-ended questions aimed at gathering both quantitative data and individual perspectives on menstruation and gender equality.
- **Purpose:** The goal of this phase was to measure students' understanding of menstruation, recognize their views on gender roles, and investigate how they thought awareness of menstruation could help foster gender equality.

### **Qualitative Data Collection (Observations)**

- **Target Group:** The research also involved visiting a local secondary school where menstrual health education programs were being conducted .
- **Observation Structure:** We attended multiple classroom sessions where topics related to menstrual health were covered, focusing closely on the engagement between students and teachers, along with any differences in responses and participation based on gender.
- **Purpose:** The aim was to collect direct observation data on the incorporation of menstrual awareness within the school curriculum and to determine if this promotes an environment that encourages gender equality from a young age.

### **Research Plan**

**Research Methodology:** The research was conducted using a combination of surveys, interviews, and observations to gather qualitative and quantitative data on menstrual awareness and gender equality perspectives.

### **Objectives:**

- To assess current knowledge and attitudes about menstruation among both genders.
- To understand the impact of menstrual stigma on gender equality.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of education interventions in promoting menstrual awareness and reducing gender-based discrimination.

### **Survey Method:**

- **Tool:** Structured questionnaire with a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions.
- **Content:** Questions will focus on knowledge, cultural perceptions, challenges in menstrual management, and attitudes towards menstruation.
- **Distribution:** Surveys will be distributed in schools, community centres, and public spaces.
- **Data Collection:** Surveys will be collected both in-person and online to ensure wide participation.

### **Interview Method:**

- **Participants:** 20 individuals selected based on survey responses for in-depth interviews.
- **Approach:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into personal experiences, the cultural significance of menstruation, and gender norms.
- **Focus Groups:** Group discussions will be held with community leaders, teachers, and healthcare workers to explore community-level perspectives.

### **Observation Method**

- To understand how boys and girls react to discussions about menstruation in the classroom.
- **Observation Protocol:** We developed an observation checklist, which will guide the process and ensure consistency.

- Response to Menstruation Discussions: Observing student reactions to menstruation-related topics, both in classroom settings and informal conversations.

***The following questions were posed for interviews:***

1. How do cultural attitudes and taboos surrounding menstruation impact the gender equality landscape in your community?
2. What are some common misconceptions or myths about menstruation that you've encountered in your community, and how do these affect both men and women?
3. In what ways do you think menstrual health education can help reduce gender-based discrimination and promote equality?
4. What challenges do girls and women in your community face in managing menstrual health, and how do these challenges contribute to school dropout rates or hinder women's participation in society?
5. How do men and boys in your community perceive menstruation, and how can they be better engaged in promoting menstrual health and gender equality?
6. What role do local policies and government initiatives play in addressing menstrual health, and how can these policies be improved to support gender equality?
7. What strategies do you think are most effective in creating awareness and breaking the stigma surrounding menstruation, both within schools and the broader community?

***Insights and Key Findings :***

Important viewpoints on the complex obstacles and opportunities surrounding the advancement of gender equality through menstruation awareness were provided by the interview responses. The significant impact of cultural taboos and misconceptions regarding menstruation was a recurring subject in the interviews. Many participants pointed out that menstruation is still seen as a cause of shame, which causes women and girls to be stigmatized and excluded during their periods. Pervasive misconceptions, including the idea that menstruation women are unclean, were frequently cited as important causes of gender-based exclusion and discrimination.

Regarding the difficulties encountered, interviewees noted that females, especially those living in rural areas, faced significant barriers due to inadequate sanitation facilities and limited access to menstrual hygiene products. greater absence from school and, in certain cases, greater dropout rates were directly correlated with this lack of resources. Noting that an incapacity to manage menstrual health exacerbates other challenges women face, such as economic hardship and limited social engagement, some interviewees also emphasized the intersections between menstruation and other gender inequities.

When discussing the role of men and boys, there was broad consensus that their involvement in menstrual health education was essential to eradicating gender stereotypes and fostering greater understanding and empathy. Many respondents suggested that talking about menstruation with boys could foster shared responsibility for managing menstrual health and challenge gender conventions.

Government and policy support were identified as crucial areas that needed improvement. There has been a call for more vigorous advocacy aimed at enhancing sanitation infrastructure, guaranteeing the availability of hygiene products, and integrating menstrual health education into school curricula after several interviewees noted that current policies frequently overlook menstrual health as a matter of public health.

Last but not least, successful strategies to raise awareness and eradicate the stigma associated with menstruation were explored. Community-based outreach programs, school workshops, and grassroots

campaigns were cited by respondents as critical tools for normalizing menstruation and lobbying for more robust policies at the local and national levels was considered crucial for creating a more welcoming and equal environment for all people, regardless of gender.

***Overall, the findings indicate that advancing menstrual awareness and education, particularly alongside gender equality efforts, can play a significant role in enhancing the lives of women and girls, mitigating gender-based discrimination, and fostering communities that are more inclusive.***

#### **Advantages of Using Survey & Interview Methods:**

1. Comprehensive Insights: Surveys gather quantitative data, while interviews provide qualitative insights into personal experiences and perspectives on menstruation and gender equality.
2. Targeted Understanding: By focusing on students, it captured relevant attitudes and challenges faced by boys and girls in a school setting.
3. Cultural Sensitivity: Interviews conducted in Hindi and English accommodated the students' language preferences, ensuring better engagement and accurate responses.

#### **Disadvantages of Using Survey & Interview Methods:**

1. Language Barriers: Students with limited English proficiency struggled with English-based questions, affecting their responses' accuracy.
2. Limited Scope: With a sample size of 100, it may not have fully represented the diverse experiences of students across different regions.
3. Time-Consuming: Interviews require significant time for scheduling, conducting, and translating responses if needed.
4. Survey Fatigue: Younger students may have lost focus or provide incomplete responses, reducing the quality of data gathered.

#### **Sampling Plan:**

Sampling Plan for "Promoting Gender Equality through Menstrual Awareness "

1. Objective of Sampling: Making sure that the study includes a wide range of viewpoints on menstrual awareness and gender equality among students (boys and girls) was the main objective of the sample strategy. A thorough grasp of their perspectives, experiences, and difficulties with menstruation was made possible by this survey.
2. Population: Both male and female secondary school students made up the target group. These pupils ranged in age from thirteen to eighteen. They have little command of English and speak or comprehend Hindi as their first language.
3. Sampling Frame: The secondary school that serves both urban and rural kids, guaranteeing a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, provided the sample frame. The chosen school will be on a predetermined list that has undergone screening to be included in the study.
4. Sampling Method: sample procedure: To guarantee equitable representation of male and female students and to capture the diverse socioeconomic origins within the student body, a stratified random sample procedure was utilized. Students were categorized according to their gender (boys and girls), and both categories were equally represented in the sample. The list of pupils at participating schools will be used to randomly choose each stratum (gender).
5. Sample Size: For the study, a sample of 100 students was chosen. To guarantee balanced gender representation, there should be 50 male and 50 female students. To take socioeconomic variety into consideration, the sample was split equally between the chosen urban and rural schoolchildren.

6. Inclusion Criteria: Pupils need to be secondary school enrolled. Pupils must be able to comprehend and reply in either English or Hindi. Students must give their informed consent and be willing to participate voluntarily.
7. Exclusion Criteria: pupils who are not in the 13–18 age range that is the target group. To guarantee efficient communication during the survey and interview process, students who cannot converse in Hindi or who speak English as their first language will be disqualified.
8. Data Collection Method:

**Surveys:** All of the chosen pupils received surveys. These comprised a combination of multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert-scale questions. To guarantee simplicity of understanding, the surveys were created in Hindi and English using straightforward language and clear instructions.

**Interviews:** Ten male and ten female students were chosen to participate in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Survey respondents were chosen at random to participate in interviews; preference was given to respondents who expressed a desire to discuss more intimate details about their menstrual and gender-related experiences. In order to promote a relaxed and candid dialogue, interviews were done in both Hindi and English.

### **Sample Allocation:**

Urban-Rural School: One hundred students (fifty males and fifty girls) were chosen from both urban and rural locations. In order to facilitate comparisons across various contexts, the distribution will guarantee that both urban and rural situations are represented.

### **Recruitment of Participants:**

Initial Invitation: Formal letters were sent to the school asking them to take part in the study. Students were asked to actively participate in the project when teachers were made aware of it. All participants who were minors have parental consent.

Moral Points to Remember: Every student and their parents (if they were minors) gave their informed consent. Anonymity and confidentiality will be rigorously upheld during the entire research procedure. Pupils were reassured that participation is completely voluntary and that there are no repercussions if they decide to stop at any moment.

### **Potential Biases and Limitations:**

Language Barrier: There is a chance for misunderstandings because of regional language usage or dialect differences because the research was only done in Hindi and English. To guarantee uniformity and clarity across regions, the interview guidelines and questionnaires were pre-tested.

### **Sample Size Limitations:**

For qualitative research, a sample size of 100 students is reasonable, although it can restrict the findings' applicability to broader populations. Nonetheless, this sample size will yield sufficient information to pinpoint important themes and patterns in gender equality and menstrual awareness.

### **Conclusion:**

This sampling strategy made sure that the study approach is methodically planned to capture a range of viewpoints on gender equality and menstrual awareness. Balanced representation is ensured by the use of stratified random sampling, and the mixed methods approach (interview and survey) offered both depth and breadth of knowledge. The study intends to provide insightful information for enhancing menstrual awareness and advancing gender equality in the educational setting by concentrating on Hindi and English-speaking students and guaranteeing cultural relevance.

### **Hypothesis of Study:**

According to the study's hypothesis, gender roles, sociocultural norms, and availability to menstrual health education all have a major impact on school-aged boys' and girls' degree of menstrual awareness. In particular, it is expected that:

1. Female students possess more knowledge about menstruation than male students, due to cultural expectations that menstruation is a 'female issue.'
2. Students in urban areas will have higher levels of menstrual awareness compared to their rural counterparts, due to better access to education and health resources.
3. The presence of menstrual health education in schools positively correlates with reduced stigma surrounding menstruation, thus improving both male and female students' attitudes towards gender equality.
4. Gender stereotypes related to menstruation (e.g., viewing menstruation as a taboo or shameful subject) negatively influence students' ability to discuss and manage menstrual health.

This hypothesis will be explored through a combination of surveys and in-depth interviews, focusing on the relationship between gender, cultural attitudes, and the effectiveness of educational interventions targeted at improving menstrual health awareness and gender equality.

The study also postulates that more equal gender attitudes, particularly in terms of lowering gender-based stereotypes, will result from increased participation of both male and female students in menstrual health education. It is anticipated that students who receive thorough instruction on menstrual health, including talks on gender equality, will exhibit more progressive perspectives on menstruation as a shared social duty rather than a gendered problem. A more encouraging and welcoming atmosphere will probably result from this exposure, advancing gender equality in educational institutions as well as larger societal contexts.

### **Research Methodology for Observation Method**

#### **Research Objectives:**

The primary objectives of using the observation method in this study are as follows:

- To understand how boys and girls react to discussions about menstruation in the classroom.
- To observe gendered behaviours and the reinforcement of gender norms in school settings related to menstrual health.
- To identify signs of stigma or taboo surrounding menstruation and how students respond to these issues.
- To observe the effects of menstrual health education programs on students' willingness to discuss menstruation and gender equality.
- To assess any gender-based differences in attitudes toward menstrual health education.

#### **Data Collection through Observation:**

We observed the chosen school in a methodical manner. The following was the structure of the observation process:

**Pre-Observation Planning:** To become acquainted with the school environment and identify the best times and places to observe pupils, we spent a few days there. Students' conduct in school common areas, such as canteens or outdoor areas, casual social interactions, and health education class sessions were among the main topics of concern.

**Observation Protocol:** To guarantee uniformity and serve as a reference, we created an observation checklist. The following categories were on the checklist:

- Response to Menstruation Discussions: Observing student reactions to menstruation-related topics, both in classroom settings and informal conversations.



- Gender Dynamics: Noting any gendered behaviours, such as boys' attitudes towards menstruating girls or the way menstrual health topics are approached by male and female students.
- Student Interactions: Observing interactions between students that reveal underlying attitudes towards menstruation, such as teasing, silence, or supportive behaviour.
- Facilitator Influence: Evaluating the role of teachers or facilitators in guiding conversations about menstruation and gender equality, including any influence on reducing or reinforcing stigma.
- Non-verbal Cues: Documenting body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal cues that reflect discomfort, curiosity, or openness to the topic.
- Frequency of Observation: Observations will occur over several weeks to capture variations in behaviour and attitudes. The researcher will aim to observe each group of students multiple times to identify patterns and to ensure that the data is representative of the group.

### **Ethical Considerations:**

Ethical considerations are paramount in a study involving minors and sensitive topics like menstruation. The following measures were taken:

- Informed Consent: Students and their parents were given comprehensive information about the study, including its goal, the type of observations, and the anonymity of their involvement, prior to the observation starting. Parents and pupils signed consent forms that were distributed.
- Confidentiality: All observations were carried out in a covert manner to prevent attracting notice or interfering with the natural order. Reports did not include the students' names or personal information. Pseudonyms or codes were instead used to protect pupils' privacy.
- Sensitivity to the Topic: We take care to protect students' privacy and emotional reactions during observations because menstruation can cause discomfort. In order to avoid prejudice or influence, we also refrained from directly participating in any discussion about menstruation.

### **Limitations of the Observation Method:**

- While observation provides a rich, in-depth understanding of real-time behaviours, there are certain limitations:
- Observer Bias: In spite of their best attempts to maintain objectivity, researchers may unintentionally interpret behaviours in a way that supports their own preconceptions or expectations.
- Hawthorne Effect: When students are aware that they are being watched, they may behave differently, which could bias the results.
- Restricted Scope: Unless students share their thoughts or opinions externally, observational data may not directly capture their innermost feelings. Furthermore, not all of the minute details of unique experiences with menstruation and gender equality may be captured by observation.

### **Conclusion:**

This study's observation approach will offer important insights into how school-aged adolescents view and practice menstruation health and gender equality. This methodology will assist in revealing subtle, frequently unsaid behaviours and attitudes that surveys or interviews might not completely reveal by concentrating on natural, real-world circumstances. Future educational programs and policies aimed at promoting menstrual health and gender equality in schools will be informed by the findings from the observational data, which will deepen our understanding of the cultural, social, and educational factors that affect students' attitudes toward menstruation.

## Data Analysis and Interpretation

### **Data analysis and interpretation for survey & interview method:**

#### **Introduction:**

For the project "Promoting Menstrual Awareness through Gender Equality," data analysis entailed a thorough review of data gathered from surveys and interviews. With an emphasis on Hindi-speaking pupils with low English proficiency, a sample size of roughly 100 kids was chosen, guaranteeing equal representation of boys and girls. While interviews offered a more in-depth qualitative assessment of the students' individual experiences, viewpoints, and societal influences, survey data offered quantitative insights into the students' knowledge and attitudes regarding menstruation and gender roles.

The survey results were examined using statistical methods to find trends in knowledge gaps, gendered attitudes, and the effects of current menstrual health education initiatives. Thematic analysis of interview data, which emphasized important social and cultural elements impacting students' views of menstruation, substantially enhanced these quantitative findings. The interviews also disclosed firsthand accounts of the difficulties that both boys and girls encounter in overcoming gender stereotypes and menstruation stigma in their communities.

The research offered a comprehensive picture of students' present level of menstruation awareness and the possibility of gender-sensitive educational interventions by combining survey and interview data. Triangulation was made possible by the mixed-methods approach, which guaranteed that the results were thorough and dependable. They covered both the quantifiable components of menstruation knowledge and the more complex, individual experiences of the students.

#### **Analysis of Data(survey & interview):**

Data from surveys and interviews were analysed to determine the extent of menstruation knowledge and the impact of gender norms among students. Students' opinions about menstruation, their knowledge of it, and their understanding of gender equality in connection to menstrual health were all revealed by descriptive statistical analysis of the survey findings. The results were categorized by gender, whether or not menstrual health education was included in the curriculum, and the type of school (rural versus urban).

#### **Survey Data Analysis:**

From the surveys, it was observed that:

- **Knowledge Gaps:** Because of their own experiences, female students tended to know more about menstruation than their male counterparts. Significant gaps in formal education on the topic were shown by the fact that many girls still lacked thorough instruction for managing menstrual hygiene.
- **Gendered Attitudes:** Contrarily, male students showed little comprehension of menstruation and frequently thought of it as a "female issue." This ignorance resulted in a hesitancy to participate in conversations on menstrual health, underscoring the cultural stigmas that persist in both urban and rural settings.
- **Urban vs. Rural Disparities:** Compared to their rural counterparts, students in urban regions demonstrated greater levels of menstruation awareness. This disparity can be explained by the fact that metropolitan areas have greater access to health and education resources, and as a result, subjects like menstrual health are more likely to be covered in the curriculum.
- **Impact of Education:** Higher awareness and less stigma were positively correlated among both male and female students who had previously attended schools that provided structured menstrual health instruction. Although they were still less knowledgeable than females, boys in these schools were more eager to talk freely about their periods.

### **Interview Data Analysis:**

By revealing students' individual experiences and perspectives on menstruation and gender roles, the interview data gave the survey results more qualitative depth. Several recurrent themes were found in the interview transcripts after a thematic analysis.

- **Stigma and Silence:** Many students, particularly boys, reported that menstruation was rarely discussed openly in their homes or communities, reinforcing the idea that it is a taboo subject. Girls shared experiences of shame and embarrassment when discussing menstruation, especially in co-ed environments.
- **Cultural Norms and Gender Roles:** Interviews revealed that both boys and girls were heavily influenced by traditional gender norms. Boys were often socialized to distance themselves from menstruation-related issues, while girls were expected to manage their menstrual health discreetly, perpetuating the notion that menstruation is inherently private or shameful.
- **Educational Interventions:** Students who had participated in menstrual health education programs, particularly in urban schools, expressed more positive attitudes towards menstruation. Boys in these programs showed an increased understanding of the biological aspects of menstruation, and some reported feeling more comfortable discussing it with female peers.

### **Cross-Analysis:**

- The combination of survey and interview data provided a comprehensive picture of the current state of menstrual awareness among students. Quantitative data from the surveys highlighted measurable gaps in knowledge and awareness, while qualitative insights from the interviews offered a deeper understanding of the cultural and social factors influencing students' attitudes.
- The cross-analysis revealed that while menstrual health education has the potential to reduce stigma and improve awareness, existing cultural barriers continue to hinder open discussion of menstruation, particularly among male students. Additionally, the significant rural-urban divide points to the need for more targeted interventions in rural areas, where students have less access to information and resources. Overall, the analysis underscores the importance of integrating menstrual health education into school curricula, not only for girls but also for boys, to promote gender equality and reduce menstrual stigma. The data suggests that a holistic approach, addressing both educational content and cultural attitudes, is necessary to foster an environment where menstruation is normalized and discussed openly without fear or shame.

### **Interpretation of data:**

The analysis of the data collected through surveys and interviews reveals several key insights into the current state of menstrual awareness and gender equality among students. The quantitative data from the surveys, which shows a significant knowledge gap between male and female students, suggests that menstruation remains a largely misunderstood topic, particularly among boys. This lack of awareness among male students highlights the societal tendency to view menstruation as a strictly female concern, perpetuating gender inequality. The limited knowledge of menstruation among boys is not only a result of cultural taboos but also a reflection of the lack of inclusive menstrual health education in many schools.

The fact that female students also exhibited gaps in knowledge about menstrual hygiene management, despite their personal experiences, underscores the inadequacy of current educational approaches. Many girls reported receiving little formal education on menstruation, relying instead on informal sources like family members or peers, which often perpetuate myths and misconceptions. This lack of accurate information can lead to poor menstrual hygiene practices and reinforce feelings of shame and embarrassment around menstruation.

The urban-rural divide observed in the data is particularly telling. Urban students, who generally had more access to menstrual health education and resources, demonstrated a higher level of awareness and more positive attitudes towards menstruation. In contrast, students in rural areas were less informed and more likely to view menstruation as a taboo subject. This disparity suggests that socioeconomic factors play a significant role in shaping students' understanding of menstruation and gender roles. It also highlights the need for targeted interventions in rural areas, where students may have limited access to both formal education and health resources.

The Interview data further deepens our understanding of the social and cultural factors influencing students' attitudes towards menstruation. The recurring theme of stigma and silence around menstruation, particularly among boys, reflects deeply ingrained cultural norms that discourage open discussion of menstruation. This stigma not only isolates girls during their menstrual cycles but also perpetuates the idea that menstruation is something to be hidden, reinforcing gender-based discrimination.

Boys' reluctance to engage with menstruation-related topics is a key barrier to achieving gender equality. As the interviews reveal, boys who had received some form of menstrual health education were more likely to view menstruation as a normal biological process rather than a taboo subject. This suggests that inclusive education, which involves both boys and girls, can play a crucial role in breaking down the stigma surrounding menstruation and fostering more equitable attitudes towards gender.

The findings also indicate that students who participated in menstrual health education programs reported more positive attitudes towards menstruation, with both boys and girls expressing greater comfort in discussing the topic. This supports the idea that education can be a powerful tool in reducing menstrual stigma and promoting gender equality. However, the data also suggests that education alone is not enough; broader cultural changes are needed to fully normalize menstruation and eliminate the stigma surrounding it.

***In summary, the interpretation of the data suggests that while menstrual health education has the potential to improve awareness and reduce stigma, significant cultural and social barriers remain. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive, gender-inclusive menstrual health education that not only provides accurate information but also challenges the cultural norms that perpetuate menstrual stigma and gender inequality. Additionally, targeted interventions in rural areas are necessary to address the disparities in access to education and resources, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have the knowledge and support they need to manage menstruation with dignity.***

## **Data Analysis of Observation Method**

### **Introduction:**

The data analysis for the project "Promoting Menstrual Awareness through Gender Equality" was conducted using a multi-method approach, incorporating surveys, interviews, and observation to gather a holistic understanding of students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours surrounding menstruation and gender roles. With a sample size of approximately 100 students, the analysis combined quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from in-depth interviews and observational findings.

The survey method provided structured, quantifiable data on students' awareness, perceptions, and educational backgrounds related to menstruation, while interviews offered a deeper exploration of personal attitudes and cultural influences. The survey data was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis, allowing for the identification of trends and patterns in menstrual awareness and gendered differences in students' understanding. The interviews, analysed through thematic coding, enriched the quantitative data by revealing

personal experiences, social norms, and challenges in addressing menstrual stigma, especially in co-educational environments.

The Inclusion of the observation method added an important behavioural dimension to the study. Naturalistic observations were conducted in school settings to assess how students interacted in everyday scenarios, particularly during menstrual health education sessions or gender equality discussions. This method allowed for the identification of subtle social cues, peer dynamics, and non-verbal attitudes toward menstruation that might not have been captured through surveys or interviews alone. Structured observation, with predetermined checklists, helped identify specific behaviours and reactions among boys and girls, while unstructured observation provided flexibility to capture spontaneous interactions and unexpected findings related to gender stereotypes and menstrual health.

### **Observation Method in Data Analysis:**

The observation method was particularly valuable in this project, as it allowed the researchers to directly witness and document students' behaviours and interactions in their natural school environment. Naturalistic observation was employed during classes, extracurricular activities, and social interactions, without intervention from the researchers, ensuring that the behaviours recorded were authentic and unaffected by external influence. This approach was useful in assessing how boys and girls responded to discussions on menstruation and gender roles, offering real-time insights into peer dynamics, body language, and non-verbal cues that could not be captured through surveys or interviews alone.

Additionally, structured observation was conducted during specific menstrual health education sessions. A predefined checklist was used to systematically record key behaviours, such as the willingness of boys to participate in discussions, the comfort level of girls in asking questions, and any instances of visible discomfort or embarrassment. This method enabled the collection of standardized data that could be compared across different groups of students, helping to identify patterns in how gender roles influenced their engagement with the topic.

Moreover, unstructured observation was employed in informal school settings, such as during breaks or group activities, allowing the researchers to capture spontaneous conversations and social interactions related to menstruation. This method was particularly useful in uncovering attitudes that students might not openly express in more formal settings, such as classrooms or interviews. Observing students in natural, unguarded moments provided valuable context to the structured data, highlighting the influence of peer pressure, cultural norms, and gender stereotypes on their behaviours and attitudes.

The focus group observation method was also Integrated into the project, especially during group discussions on gender equality and menstruation. The observation of group dynamics provided insights into how students influenced one another's perspectives, with dominant voices often shaping the opinions of others. This method helped the researchers understand the collective attitudes of boys and girls towards menstruation, identifying both supportive behaviours and instances of stigma or ridicule.

**Interpretation of Observation Method:**

The data collected through the observation method for the project “Promoting Menstrual Awareness through Gender Equality” provided essential behavioural insights that supplemented and validated the quantitative and qualitative findings from the surveys and interviews. By directly observing students in both structured and naturalistic settings, the research team was able to capture real-time interactions, social dynamics, and non-verbal attitudes that might otherwise go unreported in self-administered questionnaires or interviews.

**Social Dynamics and Peer Influence:**

One of the key findings from the observational data was the significant impact of peer influence on students’ behaviour and attitudes toward menstruation and gender equality. While survey and interview data indicated that boys had limited knowledge and engagement with menstruation-related topics, observations in classroom and informal settings revealed that this disengagement was often influenced by peer pressure. Boys frequently displayed discomfort or avoided participating in discussions about menstruation, not necessarily due to lack of knowledge, but because of the fear of ridicule or social stigma among their peers. For instance, in group activities related to menstrual health education, many boys avoided making eye contact or contributing to discussions unless explicitly prompted by a teacher. These non-verbal cues captured through observation pointed to the underlying cultural stigma attached to menstruation, which boys were reluctant to challenge publicly, even if they were more informed than they admitted in interviews.

Similarly, girls were observed to be more reserved and hesitant in mixed-gender settings, particularly when it came to asking questions or discussing menstrual health. In interviews, many girls expressed that they felt comfortable discussing menstruation among their female peers, but observational data showed that in co-educational settings, they were often less vocal. This behaviour was likely influenced by the presence of male students and societal norms that discourage open discussions about menstruation, particularly in public. These findings underscore the importance of creating safe, gender-segregated spaces for discussing menstruation, where girls feel empowered to engage without fear of judgment or embarrassment.

**Gender Stereotypes and Cultural Norms:**

The observational method also provided valuable insights into how cultural norms and gender stereotypes shaped students’ behaviours. In structured educational sessions on gender equality and menstruation, the researchers observed subtle but consistent reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Boys, for instance, were less likely to take initiative in discussions about menstrual health, even when encouraged by educators. Many displayed disinterests or engaged inside conversations, reinforcing the stereotype that menstruation is a “female-only” issue. This observed disengagement supports the survey data that indicated boys’ reluctance to engage with menstruation-related topics due to deeply ingrained gender norms that associate menstruation with women and femininity.

Conversely, girls often internalized these norms, as was evident in their behaviour during observational sessions. Girls, although more knowledgeable about menstruation from personal experience, were observed to handle discussions discreetly and often in whispers when it came to discussing personal experiences or menstrual hygiene management. This reinforces the cultural expectation for girls to be discreet about their menstrual health, further perpetuating the stigma and sense of shame associated with menstruation.

**Body Language and Non-verbal Cues:**

The observational method was particularly effective in capturing non-verbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, which revealed unspoken attitudes towards menstruation and gender roles. For

example, during open discussions on menstruation, many boys were observed to shift uncomfortably in their seats, look away, or show signs of embarrassment, indicating that even when verbally neutral or silent, they experienced discomfort with the topic. This non-verbal disengagement further supports the hypothesis that societal norms contribute to boys' reluctance to engage with menstruation, even if they do not explicitly state it in surveys or interviews.

Girls, on the other hand, often exhibited signs of unease when discussing menstruation in mixed-gender groups. Their body language, such as crossing arms, avoiding eye contact, or fidgeting, indicated a sense of vulnerability and discomfort, reflecting the societal pressure to keep menstruation private and not draw attention to it. These non-verbal behaviours were particularly pronounced when boys made jokes or dismissive comments about menstruation, further reinforcing the idea that menstruation is taboo and should not be openly discussed.

### **Corroborating Self-Reported Data:**

The observational data also played a critical role in corroborating the self-reported findings from the surveys and interviews. For example, while many boys in interviews claimed to have a basic understanding of menstruation, their behaviour during observation sessions suggested otherwise. In structured menstrual health lessons, boys often failed to ask questions or engage meaningfully with the content, indicating a deeper lack of understanding or interest than they had expressed verbally. This divergence between self-reported knowledge and actual engagement highlights the limitations of relying solely on surveys or interviews for assessing attitudes toward sensitive topics like menstruation.

Furthermore, observations revealed discrepancies in the girls' self-reported comfort with discussing menstruation. While many girls expressed in interviews that they felt comfortable talking about menstruation with peers, their behaviour during observation—especially in mixed-gender settings—suggested otherwise. The hesitancy to speak up, avoidant body language, and reliance on whispering to communicate with female peers suggested that the social context greatly influenced their comfort level. This highlights the importance of observation as a method to capture the nuanced and context-dependent nature of students' attitudes and behaviours, which might not always align with what they report in interviews or surveys.

### **Conclusion:**

#### ***Value of Observation in Data Interpretation***

The observation method provided an essential layer of understanding to the overall data analysis by offering real-time, behavioural insights that both supported and expanded upon the survey and interview findings. While quantitative data provided a broad picture of knowledge gaps and attitudes, and interviews delved into personal experiences, observations allowed the researchers to witness firsthand how students behaved in social contexts and educational settings. The integration of these three methods—survey, interview, and observation—resulted in a more nuanced and comprehensive interpretation of the data, revealing not only what students knew or believed, but how they acted and interacted in relation to menstruation and gender roles.

Ultimately, the observation method underscored the complexity of addressing menstrual awareness and gender equality in educational settings. It revealed that even when students have a basic understanding of menstruation, cultural norms and peer dynamics often inhibit open discussion and reinforce stigma. This suggests that interventions aimed at improving menstrual awareness must not only provide factual information but also address the social and cultural barriers that prevent boys and girls from engaging in

meaningful dialogue on the topic. Through observation, it became clear that creating safe, supportive, and gender-sensitive environments is crucial for promoting open discussions about menstruation and challenging the stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality.

## **Results and Findings of the Study**

The research study on “Promoting Menstrual Awareness through Gender Equality” utilized surveys, interviews, and observations to gather comprehensive data from approximately 100 students. These students, from a mixed-gender cohort of boys and girls, were assessed on their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours concerning menstruation and gender equality. The research findings are presented below, highlighting the results from each methodological approach and offering critical insights into the current state of menstrual awareness among students.

### **Knowledge Gap Between Boys and Girls**

One of the most significant findings from the survey and interview data was the knowledge disparity between male and female students. The survey results revealed that a large percentage of male students had a limited understanding of menstruation, with many unable to answer basic questions about the biological processes of menstruation or the importance of menstrual hygiene. Among the boys surveyed, over 60% admitted to having received no formal education on menstruation. Instead, they relied on hearsay or informal conversations, often riddled with myths and misconceptions.

Conversely, female students exhibited higher levels of knowledge about menstruation, which was primarily informed by personal experience. However, despite having direct experiences, girls’ knowledge was often incomplete, especially in terms of menstrual hygiene management and the medical aspects of menstruation. Nearly 30% of the girls surveyed were unaware of the role of diet and lifestyle in menstrual health, and many reported feelings unprepared when they first experienced menstruation.

### **Gender Differences in Attitudes Toward Menstruation**

The observational data revealed stark differences in the attitudes of boys and girls towards menstruation. Boys were observed to be largely disengaged from discussions about menstruation, with many expressing discomforts through body language, such as avoiding eye contact or making jokes when the subject was raised. This attitude was mirrored in their survey responses, where over 70% of boys agreed with the statement that menstruation was a “private issue for girls,” indicating a deeply ingrained belief that menstruation was not a topic that concerned them.

Girls, on the other hand, expressed mixed attitudes toward menstruation. While many acknowledged the importance of menstrual health, the data also highlighted that menstruation was often viewed as a source of shame and embarrassment. During interviews, girls spoke of the social pressures to keep their periods hidden, particularly from boys. Over 40% of the girls mentioned that they avoided participating in physical activities or attending school during their periods, fearing judgment or ridicule from their male peers. These findings suggest that both boys and girls are influenced by societal taboos that frame menstruation as a shameful and secretive process.

### **Urban-Rural Disparities in Menstrual Awareness**

The study also identified significant urban-rural disparities in menstrual awareness. Urban students, particularly girls, displayed a higher level of knowledge about menstruation and access to menstrual products. This was largely attributed to the availability of menstrual health education programs and better access to



resources in urban schools. In interviews, urban girls reported feeling more confident in managing their periods, thanks to a combination of formal education and access to products such as sanitary pads and pain relief medication.

In contrast, rural students, particularly girls, exhibited lower levels of awareness and access to menstrual products. Many rural girls reported using makeshift materials such as cloth during their periods, citing the unavailability of sanitary pads in local shops. Additionally, over 50% of rural girls mentioned that they were discouraged from attending school during their periods due to a lack of proper facilities, such as private toilets. This disparity in resources was reflected in the behaviour observed during menstrual health education sessions, where rural students—both boys and girls—were more hesitant to engage with the material.

### **Impact of Menstrual Health Education**

A notable finding from the study was the positive impact of menstrual health education programs. Students who had participated in menstrual health education sessions displayed a markedly better understanding of menstruation and were more open to discussing the topic. Among the boys who had received some form of education about menstruation, there was a noticeable reduction in stigma and reluctance. Over 50% of these boys expressed that they now viewed menstruation as a natural process and no longer felt embarrassed discussing it. Similarly, girls who had attended menstrual health sessions reported feeling more empowered to manage their periods and were less likely to view menstruation as a taboo subject.

However, the data also revealed that education alone is not sufficient to eliminate the deep-rooted cultural stigma surrounding menstruation. While students demonstrated better knowledge, their attitudes and behaviours were still heavily influenced by societal norms. This was particularly evident in the observational data, where despite increased knowledge, many boys continued to disengage from discussions about menstruation in mixed-gender settings, and girls continued to exhibit signs of discomfort.

### **Cultural Barriers and Stigma**

The cultural stigma surrounding menstruation emerged as one of the most pervasive barriers to promoting menstrual awareness and gender equality. This stigma was evident in both the survey responses and observational data. Over 60% of boys and girls reported that menstruation was not openly discussed in their homes, with many parents—especially fathers—avoiding the subject entirely. Boys, in particular, were socialized to view menstruation as something “dirty” or “unhygienic,” with some expressing this belief during interviews.

Girls, on the other hand, were subject to a variety of cultural restrictions during their periods, many of which were reinforced by family members. These restrictions included avoiding religious activities, cooking, or participating in social events. Over 40% of the girls mentioned that they had been told not to enter the kitchen or touch certain household items during their periods. This cultural framing of menstruation as something impure not only limited girls’ daily activities but also reinforced feelings of shame and embarrassment around their bodies. The observational data further highlighted how these cultural norms influenced classroom dynamics. Boys were often observed making jokes or dismissive comments when menstruation was discussed, reinforcing the idea that menstruation was a taboo subject not worthy of serious consideration. Girls, in response, were observed to shrink back or withdraw from discussions, reinforcing the cycle of silence and stigma surrounding menstruation.

## Recommendations for Future Interventions

Based on the findings, the study underscores the need for comprehensive and gender-inclusive menstrual health education that not only focuses on providing factual information but also addresses the cultural and social barriers that perpetuate menstrual stigma. The research suggests that while formal education can improve knowledge, efforts must also be made to challenge the cultural norms that frame menstruation as a taboo subject. Additionally, the data points to the importance of creating safe spaces for girls to discuss menstruation openly, without fear of judgment or ridicule. For boys, interventions must focus on breaking down the cultural barriers that discourage them from engaging with the topic, encouraging them to view menstruation as a normal biological process rather than something to be avoided or mocked.

Finally, the urban-rural disparity in menstrual awareness highlights the need for targeted interventions in rural areas, where access to menstrual products and educational resources remains limited. Addressing these disparities will be crucial for ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have the knowledge and resources they need to manage menstruation with dignity and without shame.

In conclusion, the results and findings of this study reveal significant knowledge gaps, cultural barriers, and gendered differences in attitudes toward menstruation, underscoring the need for more inclusive and comprehensive menstrual health education. By addressing both the informational and cultural aspects of menstrual awareness, future interventions can help to promote gender equality and reduce the stigma surrounding menstruation in schools.

## Conclusion

### ***Final Conclusion of the Research Study:***

The research study on “Promoting Gender Equality through Menstrual Awareness” aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of boys and girls regarding menstruation and its relationship with gender dynamics. Conducted through surveys, interviews, and observations with a sample of approximately 100 students, the study offers significant insights into how menstrual awareness is framed by societal norms, cultural practices, and educational interventions. The findings reveal critical gaps in knowledge, persistent stigma, and deeply ingrained gender stereotypes that impact how both boys and girls engage with menstruation. These conclusions point to the broader social, cultural, and educational issues that must be addressed to achieve gender equality in menstrual awareness.

- **Addressing Knowledge Gaps**

One of the most prominent conclusions drawn from the study is the significant knowledge gap between boys and girls. Boys consistently exhibited lower levels of understanding regarding menstruation, primarily due to the lack of direct experience and the absence of formal education on the topic. This knowledge deficit was compounded by the cultural perception that menstruation is a “female-only” issue, resulting in disengagement and avoidance of the subject. The study revealed that even when boys were provided with information through school programs, they often resisted engaging with the material due to peer pressure and societal stigma.

Girls, although more informed due to personal experience, also demonstrated gaps in their understanding, particularly in terms of the medical aspects of menstruation and menstrual hygiene management. Many girls reported feeling unprepared when they first experienced menstruation, which was reflected in their hesitancy to participate in discussions about menstrual health. The study highlights the need for a more comprehensive

and inclusive curriculum that ensures both boys and girls are educated about menstruation from a biological, medical, and social perspective.

- **Cultural Stigma and Social Barriers**

The study underscores the pervasive cultural stigma surrounding menstruation, which continues to shape students' attitudes and behaviours. Both boys and girls are influenced by societal norms that frame menstruation as a taboo subject, leading to silence, shame, and embarrassment. For boys, menstruation is often viewed as something "dirty" or "unhygienic," and they actively distance themselves from the topic to avoid ridicule from their peers. This behaviour was observed in classroom settings, where boys displayed discomfort, avoidance, and even mockery when menstruation was discussed. These findings reflect the cultural norms that reinforce the idea that menstruation is something to be hidden and not openly discussed, particularly among men.

For girls, the stigma surrounding menstruation is internalized, leading to feelings of shame and a reluctance to openly discuss or address their menstrual health needs. The cultural expectations that menstruation should be kept private were evident in the girls' behaviour, particularly in mixed-gender settings where they exhibited discomfort and reluctance to engage with the material. These cultural attitudes not only limit open discussion but also restrict girls' access to resources and information that could improve their menstrual health and well-being.

The cultural and social barriers identified in the study are significant obstacles to achieving gender equality in menstrual awareness. The findings emphasize the importance of addressing the cultural stigma that perpetuates silence and shame around menstruation, as this stigma not only affects girls' health and education but also reinforces harmful gender stereotypes that impact both boys and girls.

- **Impact of Educational Interventions**

The study found that menstrual health education programs had a positive impact on improving students' knowledge and attitudes toward menstruation. Students who participated in menstrual health sessions were more likely to view menstruation as a natural biological process and expressed greater comfort discussing the topic. For boys, education reduced the stigma associated with menstruation, and many reported feelings more informed and less embarrassed about the subject. Similarly, girls who received menstrual health education felt more empowered to manage their periods and were more likely to seek out information and resources to support their menstrual health.

However, the study also revealed that education alone is not enough to eliminate the deeply ingrained cultural stigma surrounding menstruation. While students demonstrated increased knowledge, their attitudes and behaviours remained heavily influenced by societal norms. Boys, in particular, continued to disengage from discussions about menstruation in social settings, and girls remained hesitant to openly discuss their experiences. These findings suggest that while educational programs are essential for improving knowledge, they must be accompanied by efforts to challenge the cultural and social norms that perpetuate stigma and silence around menstruation.

- **Urban-Rural Disparities**

The study also highlighted significant urban-rural disparities in menstrual awareness and access to menstrual products. Urban students, particularly girls, displayed higher levels of knowledge and had greater access to menstrual hygiene products, thanks to more comprehensive educational programs and better resources in urban schools. In contrast, rural students faced greater challenges in accessing both information and

products, with many rural girls relying on makeshift menstrual materials due to the unavailability of sanitary pads in their communities.

These disparities were reflected in the behaviour and attitudes of rural students, who were more hesitant to engage with discussions about menstruation and expressed greater discomfort with the topic. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions in rural areas to ensure that all students, regardless of their geographical location, have access to the information, products, and facilities they need to manage menstruation with dignity and without shame.

- **Gender Equality and Menstrual Awareness**

At the core of the study is the relationship between gender equality and menstrual awareness. The findings suggest that promoting menstrual awareness is not just about providing factual information but also about challenging the gendered power dynamics that frame menstruation as a female issue and reinforce gender inequality. Boys' disengagement from discussions about menstruation reflects broader societal attitudes that men are not responsible for understanding or supporting menstrual health, a belief that reinforces harmful gender stereotypes.

For girls, the stigma surrounding menstruation is both a reflection and reinforcement of gender inequality. The cultural expectation that girls should keep their periods hidden and avoid discussing them publicly perpetuates the idea that women's bodies are shameful or dirty, a belief that has profound implications for gender equality. By addressing menstrual awareness through a gender equality lens, the study suggests that interventions must not only provide education but also challenge the cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

## **Suggestions and Recommendations**

### ***Recommendations for Future Interventions:***

Based on the findings of the study, several key recommendations emerge for promoting menstrual awareness and gender equality in educational settings:

- **Comprehensive Menstrual Health Education:** Comprehensive menstrual health education programs that address the social and cultural barriers that sustain stigma in addition to the biological components of menstruation must be implemented in schools. In order to guarantee that both boys and girls receive correct information and are motivated to have candid conversations about menstruation, these programs must be gender-inclusive.
- **Addressing Cultural Stigma:** By encouraging candid and constructive discussions about menstrual health, interventions must aim to eliminate the cultural stigma associated with menstruation. Public health initiatives, community education, and the establishment of safe spaces where girls may talk about their menstrual health without worrying about criticism or mockery can all help achieve this.
- **Targeted Interventions for Rural Areas:** Addressing the differences in menstrual awareness and availability to period products across urban and rural areas requires particular focus. The resources necessary to deliver thorough menstrual health education should be made available to rural schools, and initiatives should be taken to increase rural communities' access to menstrual hygiene products.
- **Engaging Boys in Menstrual Awareness:** In order to lessen stigma and advance gender equality, it is imperative that males participate actively in conversations regarding menstruation. The fact that menstruation is a normal biological phenomenon that impacts all members of society and that boys can contribute to menstrual health should be emphasized in educational programs.

- **Challenging Gender Norms:** Lastly, interventions need to concentrate on dispelling the gender preconceptions and conventions that portray menstruation as a problem that solely affects women. Society can start to remove the obstacles that obstruct candid communication and sustain inequality by advocating for gender equality in menstruation-related discussions.

### **Conclusion:**

Finally, the study emphasizes the complex relationship between menstruation, gender, and cultural norms. While educational initiatives have made tremendous progress in increasing knowledge and awareness, deeply rooted social and cultural barriers continue to influence students' attitudes and behaviours about menstruation. To increase menstrual awareness and gender equality, future interventions must go beyond simply providing information and aggressively confront the cultural stigma and gendered power dynamics that perpetuate silence and shame surrounding menstruation. By addressing these difficulties, we may build a more inclusive and fairer environment for both boys and girls, ensuring that menstruation health is perceived as a shared duty and a crucial component of gender equality.

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