

**It Begins at Home: Perception and Practices of Menstrual Taboos among Adolescent Girls  
from Selected Schools in Lalitpur Metropolitan City**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Central  
Department of Sociology, University Campus, Kirtipur, Kathmandu in Partial Fulfilment  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology**

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February 2023

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**  
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**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

This M.A. dissertation entitled “**IT BEGINS AT HOME: PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF MENSTRUAL TABOOS AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS FROM SELECTED SCHOOLS IN LALITPUR METROPOLITAN CITY**” has been prepared by Ms. Dikshya Karki under my supervision and guidance. This dissertation has been prepared in fulfilment of the requirements for the **Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology** at **Tribhuvan University**. I believe this is her original work and she has made a decent effort to complete it.

I hereby recommend this dissertation to the Dissertation Committee for its final acceptance and approval.

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**LETTER OF APPROVAL**

This dissertation entitled “**IT BEGINS AT HOME: PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF MENSTRUAL TABOOS AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS FROM SELECTED SCHOOLS IN LALITPUR METROPOLITAN CITY**” has been submitted by **Ms. Dikshya Karki** for final examination to the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfilment of the requirements for the **Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology**. I hereby certify that the Research Committee of the faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and has therefore, accepted it for this degree.

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**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this M.A. dissertation entitled **“IT BEGINS AT HOME: PERCEPTION AND PRACTICES OF MENSTRUAL TABOOS AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS FROM SELECTED SCHOOLS IN LALITPUR METROPOLITAN CITY”** submitted by me to the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Nepal is an entirely original work prepared under the supervision and guidance of **Prof. Madhusudan Subedi**. The results presented in this dissertation have never been presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other purposes. No part of the contents of this dissertation have been published in the form or a part of any book. I am solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

.....

Dikshya Karki

## Acknowledgements

This research study owes a lot of gratitude to a number of individuals who selflessly contributed their ideas and time to bring it to its birth and fruition.

I am deeply indebted to the Central Department of Sociology for allowing me to pursue this study. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Youba Raj Luintel, Head of Department, for his support and inspiration.

This endeavor would not have been possible without Professor Madhusudan Subedi and his valuable guidance as my supervisor. Thank you seeing my vision as your own.

I am deeply grateful to Fr. Samuel Simick, S.J. and Mr. Niraj Thapa at St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel as well as Mr. Hari Prasad Khanal, Mrs. Kadam Baba Pradhan, Ms. Lila Maharjan and Ms. Samiksha Tamang at Tri-Padma Vidhyashram Secondary School from whom I received all the necessary help during the data collection process. I also extend my thanks to the students at both these schools for their enthusiasm and participation in this study.

I am very thankful to my friends. Now that we have survived a pandemic and graduate school together, I am sure that we will shoulder each other through everything that lies ahead of us.

Most importantly, thank you to my brother, my most constant companion in this lifetime.

This research is dedicated to my parents. When I learned my first alphabet, they got me a slate and a box of chalk and watched me line up my stuffed toys and “teach them” for hours on end.

Two decades later as I write this thesis, I am reminded of how they fostered my love of learning and writing. That slate was the best gift I have ever received. Thank you.

## Abstract

Menstruation is a natural, biological phenomenon that is experienced by more than half of the world's population. For many, it is a lived experience that comes alive socially in the form of restrictions and taboos. In Nepal, menstruation equates to ritual impurity. Although menstrual rituals are present throughout the country in many forms, academic research on the issue has mostly focused on the *Chhaupadi Pratha* of the Far-West. This research aimed to identify the menstrual taboos prevalent among adolescent school-going girls in a metropolitan area and trace the possible reasons for their existence. A mixed method study was conducted at two schools - a private school and a public school - in Lalitpur Metropolitan City. Data was collected among 400 girls aged 11-21 regarding the knowledge and experience of menstrual restrictions and the role of Comprehensive Sexuality Education on influencing their perceptions of the same. The quantitative phase was carried out through a questionnaire. The data collected from this phase was analyzed using IBM SPSS 20. After this, the qualitative phase was conducted using a focus group discussion and the responses have been presented in verbatim. The data gathered from both the phases were used to form the results of the study. It was concluded that the narrative of menstruation as a female problem, generational reinforcement of menstrual stigma, lack of female solidarity and self-objectification render to the longevity of such discriminatory practices. Family members, especially mothers have been found to play an important role in both helping young women manage menstruation and developing their understanding of the issue. Although formal education plays a large role in changing the perception of menstruation as taboo, the elimination of menstrual restrictions require multi-layered interventions that should start at home.

*Key words:* menstrual taboo, ritual impurity, Comprehensive Sexuality Education

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## **Acronyms and abbreviations**

CRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

CSE: Comprehensive Sexuality Education

EHP: Environment Health and Population

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

ICPD: International Conference for Population and Development

LMC: Lalitpur Metropolitan City

MoHP: Ministry of Health and Population

MoWCSW: Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare

MMR: Mixed Method Research

NHRC: National Human Rights Commission

PCOS: Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

PHCs: Primary Health Centers

SC: Supreme Court

SEE: Secondary Education Examination

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

SXJ: St. Xavier's School, Jawalakhel

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

VAT: Value-Added Tax

VAW: Violence Against Women

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WHO: World Health Organization