

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CHHAUPADI PRACTICE AMONG ADOLESCENCE GIRLS OF MANGALSEN MUNICIPALITY, ACCHAM NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

Background: Chhaupadi practice, which is characterized by banishment of women during menstruation from their usual residence due to supposed impurity. The Chhaupadi custom is also known as 'chhue' or 'bahirhunu' in Dadeldhura, Baitadi and Darchula, as Chhaupadi in Acham, and as 'chhaukulla' or 'chhaukudi' in Bajhang district. The aim of the study was to find out socio-demographic factors associated with Chhaupadi practices among adolescence girls of Mangalsen Municipality, Acham Nepal.

Methods: The community based descriptive cross-sectional study using face to face interview was carried out in Mangalsen Municipality, Acham Nepal. 221 adolescence girls (10-19) years were selected by simple random sampling. The total duration of data collection was one month from 2074/01/07 to 2074/02/08. Data were collected using self-designed semi structured questionnaire. Collected data were manually checked then entered into IBM SPSS version 20.0 for Window. We used Pearson's chi-square test to investigate the effect of Socio-demographic variable on Chhaupadi practices during last menstruation period of adolescent.

Results: Among 221 adolescent girls, there were 84.2% (186) of the respondents were kept in Chhaupadi or slept at Chhau goth during entire last time menstrual period, Socio-demographic characteristics such as age ($\chi^2=8.997$, $p=0.001$), mother educational level ($\chi^2=6.80$, $p=0.033$), occupational status of respondent's mother ($\chi^2=4.20$, $p=0.04$), type of family ($\chi^2=5.20$, $p=0.022$) were found to be significantly associated with Chhaupadi practice.

Conclusions: Majority of the adolescent girls are still practicing Chhaupadi during menstrual period. Chhaupadi practice continues to exist in community because of illiteracy, traditional belief system. To abolish Chhaupadi practice awareness and education at community level is required.

INTRODUCTION

Chhaupadi practice, which is characterized by banishment of women during menstruation from their usual residence due to supposed impurity.¹ Girls are compelled to stay outside the house due to the core concept of 'purity' (suddha, Chokho), versus 'pollution' (asuddha, Jutho). Chhaupadi is one such traditional practice which has been in existence in the far- and mid-western regions that exiles women and girls from their house during menstrual bleeding.¹ The custom is also known as 'chhue' or 'bahirhunu' in Dadeldhura, Baitadi and Darchula, as 'Chhaupadi' in Acham, and as 'chhaukulla' or 'chhaukudi' in Bajhang district.² In the far and mid-western region, family and society do not treat menstruation as natural or normal process. In Chhaupadi custom girls and women are secluded from family and home for many days in their menstrual cycle.²

Chhaupadi imposes multiple socio-cultural restrictions which includes excluding women from their home during menstruation, impeding their access to proper sanitation facilities, menstrual hygiene, healthcare and even clean water.³

Generally, women stay in a separate hut or cattle shed for 5 days

during menstruation. However, those experiencing menstruation for the first time should, according to practice, remain in such shed for at least 14 days.² Many of the study conducted in Nepal are concentrated to find out menstrual hygiene management so, this study might give insight to find out socio-demographic factors associated with Chhaupadi practice. The study aimed to study socio-demographic factors associated with Chhaupadi practice.

METHODS

The community based descriptive cross-sectional study using face to face interview was carried out in Mangalsen municipality, Acham Nepal to describe the demographic characteristics of respondents. Sample size was calculated with prevalence 15.5% prevalence of previous study, (According to MICS government of Nepal and UNICEF (2014), this study stated that maximum women (15.5%) had practicing Chhaupadi in hill region of far western Nepal.⁴ 5% margin of error and using Cochran formula for infinite population z^2pq/e^2 . By adding non response rate, the sample size was 221. A self-designed semi structured questionnaire was used to obtain the socio-demographic characteristics of the study population. Data was obtained by face to face interview. Out of 14 wards, two wards (6 and 7) were selected by using

simple random sampling (Lottery) method. Adolescents girls are considered as a study population, at first stage list all adolescent girls of ward 6 and 7 of Mangalsen Municipality before the one week of the data collection, List of this adolescents was obtained from District Women and child Welfare Office and DPHO there were study population from the selected wards (6 and 7). Final respondents were selected by using systematic random sampling from the sampling frame. In case any participants who failed to participate in data collection during the first 2 attempts because her absenteeism, adjacent number of participants was picked from the sampling frame. The total duration of data collection was one month starting from (2074/01/07 to 2074/02/08). Ethical clearance was obtained from CMC IRC. Being a male researcher, it was not feasible to acquire correct information from direct approach so researcher have taken help from the local female community health volunteer for the data collection to minimize non response rate. The enumerator was trained by researcher himself regarding the process of data collection i.e., use of tools, techniques, time devotion per participants and ways of avoiding biases. Verbal and informed written consent was obtained from the participants before data collection. Privacy and confidentiality was assured and insured throughout the study. Pre-testing was done in a similar study area. The reliability of this research was tested by using pilot test of taking 10% sample and necessary modification were done in the tool. Data collection tools were validated by expert faculties from the School of public health. The questionnaires were translated into Nepali language.

Collected data were manually checked then entered into IBM SPSS version 20.0 for Window. Magnitude of Chhaupadi practices among adolescents was assessed by the descriptive analysis of the collected information. The socio demographic significant factors of Chhaupadi practices were identified using Pearson chi-square test.

RESULTS

Out of 221 respondents most of the respondents (85.5%) stayed in Chhau goth during menarche. The practice of Chhaupadi continued with 84.2% in their last menstruation period and rest 15.8% stayed at home during last menstruation. Out of 35 who stayed at home in last menstruation, 80% were sleeping in the separate room inside home and other 20% were sleeping in the same bed (Table 1).

Table 1: Chhaupadi practices among adolescent girls during last mensuration in Mangalsen municipality Acham (n=221)

Variables	Frequency (%)
During menarche period Any time	
Chhau Goth	189(85.5%)
Home	32(14.5%)
During last time menstruate period	
Chhau Goth	186(84.2%)
Home	35(15.8%)
Place Slept home when last menstruate(n=35)	
In the same bed	7(20%)
In separate room inside home	28(80%)

In the present study the mean age of menarche was 13.413.4± 0.86 years.

There were association between Chhaupadi practices and few socio-demographic variables. Type of family (p=0.022), age group (0.001), mothers education level (0.033), mothers' occupation (0.04) was found to be significantly associated with socio demographic factors (Table 2).

DISCUSSION

In the present study, 85.5 % of the respondents were kept in Chhaupadi or slept at Chhau goth during entire onset of menarche period which means Chhaupadi Pratha began from the initial from the onset of menarche. The practice of Chhaupadi was seen in the last time menstrual period where 84.2% of the respondents were kept in Chhaupadi or slept at goth. The finding is similar to the study conducted by Action Works Nepal (AWON) where 95% of girls and women in Nepal's mid- and far-reaching western regions practice Chhaupadi, with the great majority of them banished to cowsheds.⁵

Another study conducted among adolescents girls in far western Nepal where 3.9% were living in Chhau shed, 81.8% were living in livestock shed and 14.3% were living in Courtyard.⁶ Nineteen percent of them have slept in a hut or Chhaupadi.⁷ The survey conducted by Action work Nepal December (2012) in Jumla and Humla revealed that 14% girls reported that they were kept in separate room inside home and 9% said that they were kept at neighbor house.⁵

Another study conducted in Kathmandu district among secondary school's girl's students revealed 47.5% girls used to sleep in temporary bed during the time of menstruation period.⁸

This finding was present in the study conducted by A MICS 2014, government of Nepal and UNICEF revealed that Menstruation-related discrimination in its severest forms was most prevalent in the Mid-Western Mountains, where 71 percent of women experienced chhaupadi and 29 % of women did not experienced chhaupadi.⁹

In the present study, 99.5% of respondents are Hindus and 0.5% are Buddhism. These findings is supported by the study done by PSI on Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management in Nepal. The practice is more deeply rooted in and widely practiced among certain Hindu communities living in Far and Mid-Western regions of Nepal.¹⁰

About 58.4% of respondents were studying in secondary level while 41.2% of respondents were studying in basic schooling level but only 9% respondents had university level education. The findings are contradictory to the study done in Khaptad Rural Municipality Bajhang where majority of participant were illiterate.⁷ The difference in the findings is due to the different study population setting where the study was done in community level. In other study most participants were in high school.⁶

Table 2: Association between Chhaupadi practices during last menstruation and socio demographic factors (n=221)

Variables	Number (%)	Chhaupadi Practices		χ^2	p-value
		Yes (%)	NO (%)		
Ethnicity					
Brahmin/chhetri	167(75.6)	137(82)	30(18)	2.320	0.128
Non Brahmin/chhetri	54(24.4)	49(90.7)	5(9.3)		
Types of family					
Nuclear	133(60.2)	118(88.7)	15(11.3)	5.20	0.022**
Joint.	88(39.8)	68(77.3)	20(22.7)		
Participant education					
Basis primary	91(41.2)	72(79.1)	19(20.9)	2.95	0.086
Secondary and above	130(58.8)	114(87.7)	16(12.3)		
Age group					
Early adolescence	76(34.3)	54(71.1)	22(28.9)	8.997	<0.001**
Middle adolescence	124(56.1)	116(93.5)	8(6.5)		
Late adolescence	21(9.5)	16(76.2)	5(23.8)		
Father education					
Illiterate	45(20.3)	42(93.3)	3(6.7)	5.01	0.081
Basic primary level	65(29.4)	56(86.2)	9 (13.8)		
Secondary and above	111(50.2)	88(79.3)	23(20.7)		
Mother education level					
Illiterate	126(57)	113(89.7)	13(10.3)	6.80	0.033**
Basic primary (1-5)	58(26.2)	44(75.9)	14(24.1)		
Above primary	37(16.7%)	29(78.4)	8(21.6)		
Fathers' occupation					
Agriculture	127(57.5)	110(86.6)	17(13.4)	1.34	0.24
Other than agriculture	94(42.5)	76(80.9)	18(19.1)		
Mothers' occupation					
Agriculture/House wife	179(81)	152(84.9)	27(15.1)	4.20	0.04**
Others	42(19)	34(81)	8(19)		
Total	221	186	35		

**** denotes significant association (applying Pearson chi-square test for association at 5 % level of significant).**

About 57 % of the respondents mother were illiterate which means they did not received any formal education from school followed by 32.1 % of the respondents' mother had completed basic level whereas 9.5% of the respondents completed secondary level schooling but only 1.4 % of the respondents' mothers had received university level education. Similar findings were shown by the study conducted in Bangalore, India.¹¹

In the present study, 65.2% respondent's parent were doing agriculture which is supported by the study conducted in far Western Nepal (80.5%).⁵ Majority of participant were from the family involved in agriculture.⁷

There were no statistically significant differences in demographic characteristics (age, family income, education, marital status, family's primary occupation) of participants who practice menstrual exile and those who did not with.⁶ A qualitative study conducted in rural communities of far western, Nepal revealed that women who were practicing Chhaupadi agreed that they learned Chhaupadi from their mother who also used to practice it.¹² A study conducted in Dang district two thirds (67.0%) of respondent had nuclear family which is almost similar to the present study which is (60.18%).¹³

A study conducted in urban slum area of India also shows maximum of the respondent adolescents girls belong to nuclear family as in present study.¹⁴ Study conducted in Tanahun district revealed that 55% of participants were living in single family.¹⁵

As this study was conducted in selected wards of Mangalsen Municipality so this may not be generalized to whole district, which may be major limitation of study.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the adolescent girls are still practicing Chhaupadi during menstrual period. The age group mother's education level, mother's occupation, type of family is significantly associated with chhaupadi practice. Surprisingly high prevalence of Chhaupadi practice in Acham district which represent a deeply rooted superstitious practices of rural communities of Nepal. Present study highlighted need of adolescent girl's education.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST: None

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE: None

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