



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### BRIDGING THE GAP: AWARENESS, KNOWLEDGE, AND USE OF MENSTRUAL CUPS AMONG WOMEN IN INDIA

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Menstrual cup use among Indian women is notably low despite their potential benefits on menstrual health and hygiene. The awareness, knowledge, and usage of menstrual cups among Indian women provide a complex landscape characterized by high awareness but low adoption rates. While many women recognize the menstrual cup as a viable alternative to traditional sanitary products, significant barriers hinder its widespread use. **Objective:** This study aims to understand the Awareness, Knowledge and use of Menstrual cup among women in India. **Method:** A review of literature was conducted using Google Scholar from 2015 to 2025. The total 15 studies that fall in the inclusion criteria are included in the narrative review. **Result:** Despite a growing awareness of menstrual cup among Indian women, its actual adoption is less due to misinformation, socio-cultural stigma, lack of accessibility, fear and lack of support. **Conclusion:** Targeted intervention, structured education and peer support is essential for normalising menstrual cup usage across different population.

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## INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a normal biological phenomenon that every woman and girls adolescent experiences every month (Sinha & Paul, 2018). Women and girls, worldwide, manage menstruation differently based on personal preferences, accessible resources, economic status, indigenous practices, cultural beliefs, and knowledge or education (Gharacheh *et al.*, 2021). Girls and Women require menstrual products that are safe, effective, and affordable. While single-use products are often chosen by organizations in low-resource settings, the menstrual cup remains a lesser-known alternative (Eijk *et al.*, 2019). Menstrual Cup is a reusable, flexible intravaginal device used to collect menstrual fluid, raising awareness and acceptance of this option can reduce waste, streamline menstrual care, and enhance accessibility in underserved populations (Mouhanna *et al.*, 2023). The growing popularity of Menstrual cups, particularly in younger demographics, is partly because they can be reused up to 10 years, making them an eco-friendly choice (Medina-Perucha *et al.*, 2022). The NFHS-5 survey reports that 77.3% of menstruating girls and women in India rely on sanitary pads for menstrual hygiene and sanitation (International Institute for Population Sciences, 2007). Menstrual cups, first introduced a century ago, showed the lowest adoption rates among all menstrual products

in India, particularly when compared to the widespread use of sanitary pads (George, 2020). Despite global studies supporting the advantages of menstrual cups over conventional sanitary pads, research on user experience and satisfaction remains limited in low and middle-income countries (Patel *et al.*, 2023). In many developing countries, Menstrual hygiene management presents significant challenges that extend beyond social taboos, often including limited access to affordable and practical menstrual products (Kakani & Bhatt, 2017). Although the first menstrual cup was patented in 1937, its adoption in India remains limited. Factors contributing to its low popularity include inadequate awareness, fears of leakage, perceived discomfort, limited availability, and minimal promotional efforts (Arumadi *et al.*, 2023). Access to reliable information on leakage, safety, and user acceptability of menstrual cups is crucial for enabling informed choices and enhancing the quality of menstrual health education for women and girls (Sudevan Devan *et al.*, 2022). Good Hygienic practices helps to prevent infections and odour during menstrual period (Ramanna, 2024). The use of menstrual cup is rare in India due to lack of awareness, knowledge and widespread use of sanitary pads despite the fact that it is environmental friendly, non-toxic and cost effective (Ramanna, 2024).

Table 1. Summary of Included Studies

Author and Year	Title of the study	Type of the study	Population	Major Findings
(Ramanna, 2024)	Knowledgeamong medical students about the usage of menstrual cup in a medical college in Central Karnataka	Quantitative	Medical Students(18-25)	The study examined the knowledge of medical students about menstrualcups, finding a significant lack of awareness and misconceptions despite their eco-friendly and cost-effective advantages, this underscores the need for education and sensitization to enhance menstrual health practices.
(Davile et al., 2024)	Exploring Menstrual Hygiene Practices and Awareness of Menstrual Cups Among Nursing Professionals: A Cross-Sectional Survey	Mixed Method	Nursing Officers(25 to 40)	This study explores the menstrual hygiene practices, awareness and usage pattern of menstrual cups among nursing professionals at AIIMS, Nagpur, highlighting their reliance on disposable sanitary pads and the need for education to fill the knowledge gaps and encourage the use of menstrual cups.
(Bano & Joyal Saji, 2024)	Study Examines Sanitary Pad Side Effects and Promotes Menstrual Cup Use among College Students	Qualitative	College Students	This study evaluated the knowledge of college girls about sanitary pad side effects and promoted menstrual cup use, finding a notable gap in awareness, with 90% having inadequate knowledge, and highlighted the need for educational interventions to enhance menstrual hygiene practices.
(Thumati et al., 2025)	Understanding Menstrual Hygiene Products and Policy Expectaons: A Na onwide Survey of Indian Menstruators	Mixed Method	Women(15 to 49)	This study examines awareness and usage patterns of menstrual hygiene products among Indian menstruators, identifying obstacles to eco-friendly alternatives and suggesting systemic efforts to promote sustainable practices through public awareness campaigns, subsidies, and improvements of infrastructure
(Sebastian, 2022)	Knowledge, acceptability, and use of menstrual cup among female police trainees, Kerala, South India	Quantitative	Women Trainee Police Officers(18-45)	The study evaluated the knowledge, acceptability, and use of menstrual cups among female police trainees in Kerala, South India, finding poor knowledge and little use, and recommending targeted education and counselling to increase awareness and acceptability.
(Dave et al., 2024)	Preference of Millenial Women Towards Eco-Friendly Menstrual Cups-A Study from Bengaluru Urban District	Quantitative	Female College Students(18-24)	The study examines the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of millennial women in Bengaluru towards menstruation and menstrual cups, finding a lack of knowledge about eco-friendly options and encouraging a switch to sustainable products for environmental and health benefits.
(Britto et al., 2023)	Nonconventional Menstrual Hygiene Products and its Usage among Reproductive age Group Women in India -A Cross-Sectional Study	Quantitative	Women(15 to 49)	The study assesses how Indian women in the reproductive age perceive and use nonconventional menstrual hygiene products (tampons and menstrual cups), finding high awareness but low usage due to fear of insertion of foreign body, despite their comfort and eco-friendly advantages.
(Am, 2020)	Experiences of the Women Using Menstrual Cup on Free Will -A Qualitative Inquiry	Qualitative	Women(>18 years)	This qualitative study examines the 22 women's experiences using menstrual cups independently, finding them comfortable and convenient but with initial difficulties, and highlights the need for awareness and further research on safety and long-term impacts.
(Patel et al., 2023)	Is menstrual cup a sustainable and safe alternative in menstrual hygiene management? A qualitative exploratory study based on user's experience in India	Qualitative	Women(25 to 37 years)	This qualitative exploratory study in India revealed that menstrual cups to be a sustainable and safe alternative for menstrual hygiene management, offering economic, safety, convenience, and environmental benefits, but highlighted challenges such as accessibility and awareness that require government support and promotion.
(Joseph et al., 2022)	Attitude of urban women towards sustainable sanitary products: A study in Bengaluru	Quantitative	Women(15 to 55 years)	This study highlights factors preventing urban Indian women from switching to sustainable sanitary products, highlighting awareness, environmental concern, pressure, and product features as significant factors affecting purchase intentions.
(Udapurkar et al., 2023)	Precluding Menstrual Cups from the Mainstream: A Prospective Interventional Analysis Among Urban Women in India	Quantitative	Women of Reproductive Age	This study highlights the socio-cultural challenges in India that prevent menstrual cups from becoming mainstream, despite their benefits, with familiarity with pads, discomfort with insertion, and privacy concerns being major deterrents, but notes that most women adapt quickly and are likely to continue using them.
(Satoiya et al., 2024)	Uptake and Adherence to Using a Menstrual Cup for Managing Menstruation Among Women in Rural Areas of India	Mixed Method	Women(18-54)	The study evaluates the uptake and adherence of menstrual cups among rural women in India, finding high acceptance and adherence among married women due to ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and environmental benefits, but lower acceptance among unmarried women.
(Arumadi et al., 2023)	Knowledge, Attitude and Experiences of Students Regarding Menstrual Cup Usage in a Medical College in North Kerala, India	Mixed	Female Medical Students	The study assessed the knowledge, attitude, and experiences of medical students regarding menstrual cup usage in a college in north Kerala, India, finding a positive attitude but low usage due to concerns such as difficulties with insertion and removal, underscoring the need for education and promotion to increase acceptance.
(Varghese et al., 2023)	Impact of imparting knowledge and awareness on the usage of menstrual cups: A study based on project 'Thinkal' at Alappuzha Municipality in Kerala	Quantitative	Women(>18 years )	The study found that educating and creating awareness about menstrual cups significantly increased their adoption, with a doubling of usage among women who received awareness sessions compared to those who did not. receive Awareness sessions were identified as the most crucial factor in motivating women to begin using menstrual cups.
(Parihar et al., 2025)	Menstrual freedom-Experiences of reproductive age group women after using a menstrual cup in selected areas in Rajasthan (India).	Qualitative	Women of Reproductive Age(15-49)	The study concluded that menstrual cups significantly enhance women's experiences during menstruation, leading to greater satisfaction and a better quality of life. The findings advocate for greater awareness and accessibility of menstrual cups to empower women and improve their menstrual health.

## Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to map the empirical landscape of knowledge, awareness, and usage of menstrual cups among Indian women by synthesizing both quantitative and qualitative studies.

## METHODS

**Study Design:** Narrative Review

**Selection of Study:** Identified through Title and Abstract Screening

**Date:** Literature from 2015 to 2025

**Database Searched:** Google Scholar

**Google Scholar Key words:** ("menstrual cup" OR "menstrual hygiene cup") AND ("awareness" OR "knowledge" OR "perception") AND ("usage" OR "practice" OR "adoption") AND ("Indian women" OR "women in rural India" OR "urban Indian women") AND ("qualitative study" OR "quantitative study" OR "cross-sectional" OR "interview" OR "survey")

### Inclusion criteria

- Original studies examining on knowledge, awareness, attitudes, acceptability, or usage of menstrual cups among women in India.
- Articles involving female participants (adolescent girls or women) across urban or rural Indian settings.
- Research that employs qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodologies.
- Studies that have been published in peer-reviewed journals from the year 2015 onwards.
- Research published in the English language.
- Articles freely available online with full-text access.

### Exclusion Criteria

- Review articles, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, editorials, commentaries, letters to the editor, or opinion pieces are excluded.
- Studies that do not focus on menstrual cups or only mention them incidentally without core data.
- Research conducted outside India, or focusing on non-Indian populations.
- Studies not available in full-text online or requiring paid access.
- Research papers published in languages other than English.
- Articles published before 2015.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Menstrual cup has been popular in India as a sustainable and hygienic menstrual product yet their mainstream adoption is still constrained by multiple socio-cultural, informational and accessibility barriers. A significant theme across multiple studies is the knowledge gap regarding menstrual cups. While some populations, such as medical and nursing students, show moderate awareness, misconceptions about safety and usability

persist. Only 9.2% of the participants were aware that menstrual cups could be made from materials like silicone, rubber, or latex, there is a gap in knowledge that exists regarding postpartum use and IUD compatibility (Arumadi *et al.*, 2023). Similarly another study among medical students emphasized the gap in practical knowledge despite working in the medical sector, the students in Central Karnataka are uncomfortable using menstrual cups and unaware of their advantages (Ramanna, 2024). The menstrual cup was described as a better and more appropriate approach, which is consistent with findings from other studies, since all of the women who used it said it was far better than their prior method (Parihar *et al.*, 2023). Qualitative insights from Am (2020) revealed that women experienced fear, discomfort and leaking when using menstrual cup, but this problems resolved with practice and peer support (Am, 2020). Joseph *et al.* (2022) observed that urban women showed a favourable attitude towards eco-friendly method by recognizing the harm disposable products bring in to the environment. Sebastian (2022) mirrored this finding in a cohort of female police trainees in Kerala, where low suitability heavy workload and fear of discomfort were the leading barriers despite adequate knowledge. Social marketing efforts and health campaigns seem to influence uptake positively. In Kerala's "Project Thinkal," Varghese *et al.* (2023) demonstrated that structured awareness programs significantly increased acceptability and correct usage of menstrual cups among women in Alappuzha in studies assessing adoption among health professionals, Davile *et al.* (2024) found that even among nursing staff, usage remained low despite high levels of education and exposure, they face challenges in menstrual product use at the workplace due to limited privacy and lack of awareness, especially regarding menstrual cups. Economic and environmental motivations also contribute to preference shifts. Dave *et al.* (2024) highlighted that millennial women in Bengaluru said they were unsure about recommending menstrual cups to others viewing it as a personal choice that should not be imposed. In terms of health implications, Bano *et al.* (2024) conducted a comparative examination of side effects from sanitary pads versus menstrual cups, revealing lower incidence of rashes, infections, and waste with cup usage, further supporting their promotion. Britto *et al.* (2023) explored the overall use of nonconventional menstrual hygiene products is less among the study population, due to misconceptions or incorrect instructions. Several studies also revealed promising outcomes from pilot and intervention models. Patel *et al.* (2023) conducted a qualitative inquiry and found women stated even though menstrual cup is cost effective and inexpensive, its initial cost might prevent women from lower socioeconomic groups from affording to buy it. Similarly, Udupurkar *et al.* (2023) documented the biggest impediment was the thought of vaginal insertion, followed by concerns about cup size, the necessity for seclusion to clean the cup, the danger of leaks and infections, and the disapproval of family members. On a broader scale, Thumati *et al.* (2025) found the main source of information for menstrual hygiene products are social media platforms, family networks, and online resources. Finally, Satoiya *et al.* (2024) in a repeated entry provided a rigorous analysis of menstrual cup uptake in rural India, however cup was less acceptable among unmarried women.

## CONCLUSION

The collective body of evidence underscores an expanded yet fragmented landscape of menstrual cup awareness, knowledge, and adoption among Indian women. While educational background, urban exposure, and sustainability consciousness positively influence awareness, actual usage remains hindered by cultural stigmas, misinformation, and lack of institutional support. Encouragingly, targeted interventions, peer-led initiatives, and structured educational campaigns have shown quantifiable increase in uptake and adherence. Bridging this critical gap necessitates a multifaceted approach involving health educators, policymakers, and grassroots influencers to normalize menstrual cup use, dispel myths, and embed menstrual hygiene education into mainstream discourse. With consistent advocacy and evidence-based interventions, menstrual cups have the potential to become a commonly used, longlasting, and sustainable choice for menstrual health management in India.

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