



MHMPA
NEPAL

2024

Media Report



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Introduction

In Nepal, menstruation remains shrouded in cultural taboos and traditional beliefs that have persisted for generations. These deeply rooted customs often characterize menstruation as polluting or impure, resulting in the systematic exclusion and restriction of menstruating individuals, from various aspects of daily life. The trajectory of menstrual health coverage in Nepali media reveals a striking evolution. Before the 2000s, there was a conspicuous absence of discourse surrounding menstrual health and hygiene in mainstream media outlets. The subject was largely confined to whispered conversations and private spaces, reflecting broader societal discomfort with the topic. The early 2000s marked the beginning of a subtle shift, as news outlets began incorporating stories about menstrual product accessibility and basic educational content about the menstrual cycle.

A pivotal moment came with the Supreme Court's landmark rulings in 2005 and 2008, which banned the practice of *chhaupadi*—a tradition that banishes menstruators to isolated huts. These judicial decisions catalyzed increased media attention and public discourse around menstrual rights and dignity. The 2010s witnessed another significant advancement as Nepali broadcast media, including radio and television programs, began featuring direct discussions about menstrual hygiene and health, helping to dismantle long-standing taboos. The most dramatic transformation has occurred in recent years, with contemporary media coverage expanding beyond basic health education/awareness to encompass a broader spectrum of issues. Contemporary media now covers diverse menstrual health topics, from medical conditions (menopause, PCOS, perimenopause) to broader issues affecting gender minorities, climate change impacts, health access inequalities, and government policy initiatives.

The Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Partners' Alliance (MHMPA) Nepal has emerged as a crucial organisation in this landscape, conducting systematic analysis of menstruation-related media coverage. MHMPA's comprehensive media monitoring serves multiple purposes: highlighting the significance of menstrual health coverage to national media outlets, offering constructive feedback to journalists, and fostering deeper exploration of menstruation-related topics across the country. This media monitoring initiative carries particular significance given that many Nepali communities continue to enforce menstrual restrictions based on cultural taboos and collective silence. By tracking and analyzing media coverage, MHMPA leverages the media's influential role in both public education, awareness, behavior change and policy formation. MHMPA aims to create a ripple effect, influencing policymakers and contributing to the development of more inclusive and effective menstrual policies. Through these concerted efforts, Nepali media has evolved from maintaining complete silence on menstruation to becoming an active catalyst for social change, challenging age-old taboos and promoting more open, informed discussions about menstrual health and rights.

Rationale

This marks the fourth edition of MHMPA's annual "Media Coverage on Menstruation" report. Publishing regular reviews aims to advocate for improved media prioritization of this sensitive, yet often neglected topic. The key rationale behind developing this yearly report is twofold:

- 1) To identify gaps in existing coverage in order to recommend adaptive strategies for the media sector, and
- 2) To produce evidence supporting policy changes regarding menstrual health and hygiene.

For this edition, MHMPA analysed from major news outlets across three categories: English print newspapers, Nepali print newspapers, and Online news portals (both English and Nepali). The English newspapers examined were The Kathmandu Post, The Himalayan Times, The Rising Nepal, and myRepublica. The Nepali Daily included Ekantipur, Nagarik, Gorkhapatra, and Naya Patrika. Finally, the online portals assessed were OnlineKhabar, Setopati, Nepal Live Today and Ratopati. By showcasing trends in how diverse news media cover menstruation-related topics, MHMPA strives to inspire improved reporting and editorial practices across the nation.

Objectives

The main objectives of developing this report are as follows:

- To provide a comprehensive outlook on media's overall coverage on menstruation for the year 2024
- To understand what kind of coverage (articles, editorials, op-eds) have been published and what kinds of details have been provided
- To understand what the Nepali media is missing while making coverage on menstruation
- To identify gaps in the media and to help media develop strategies

Methodology

This report is based on the analysis of news pieces covered by both print media and online news portals. A total of twelve newspapers have been selected and analysed.

- For English newspapers: The Kathmandu Post, The Himalayan Times, The Rising Nepal and myRepublica have been chosen.
- For Nepali newspapers: Ekantipur, Nagarik, Gorkhapatra and Naya Patrika have been chosen.

- For Online portals: OnlineKhabar, Setopati, Nepal Live Today and Ratopati have been chosen.

The study strategically analyses newspapers and online portals in both Nepali and English languages to assess the depth of coverage and reach across different reader demographics. Through thorough examination of news articles, the research presents key findings and identifies distinct thematic patterns. This comprehensive analysis aims not only to categorize existing coverage but also to identify critical menstrual health themes that may be underreported in the media landscape.

The methodology employs thematic analysis, beginning with the identification of preliminary codes, followed by the generation of patterns and themes based on how articles prioritize various aspects of menstruation. The analysis revealed several prevalent themes across the examined articles:



Key Themes in Nepali Media Coverage of Menstruation 2024

1. Policy and Governance Initiatives

- Government procedures and guidelines
- Institutional reforms
- Implementation of menstrual leave policies
- Addressing corruption and procurement issues
- Budget allocation and distribution
- Local government initiatives
- Policy advocacy

2. Gender Justice and Rights

- Gender equality in menstrual policies
- SOGIESC inclusion and specific needs
- Dignity kits for transgender individuals
- Rights-based approaches
- Workplace equality
- Access to facilities
- Discrimination
- Violence during menstruation

3. Climate and Environmental Impacts

- Climate change effects on menstrual cycles
- Environmental considerations in product choices
- Sustainable menstrual products
- Climate adaptation strategies

4. Healthcare and Medical Aspects

- PCOS/PCOD awareness
- Menstrual pain management
- Sexual and reproductive health
- Perimenopause and menopause experiences
- Post-menopausal healthcare
- Skin health during menopause
- Mental health and psychological aspects

5. Education and Awareness

- School-based initiatives
- Student absenteeism
- One school one nurse program
- Religious leader involvement
- Community awareness programs
- Men's involvement in menstrual health
- Teacher training
- Pad-making skills training

6. Product Access and Innovation

- Local production initiatives
- Distribution systems
- Free pad programs
- Sustainable alternatives
- Product disposal solutions
- Innovation in product design
- Quality control measures

7. Stigma and Cultural Transformation

- Chhaupadi practices and elimination
- Religious restrictions
- Community resistance
- Success stories
- Behavior change initiatives
- Cultural beliefs and taboos
- Intergenerational attitudes
- Social norms

8. Intersectional Experiences

- Disability and menstruation
- Menstruation in prison
- Rural-urban disparities
- Economic barriers
- Age-specific challenges
- Professional impacts
- Indigenous perspectives

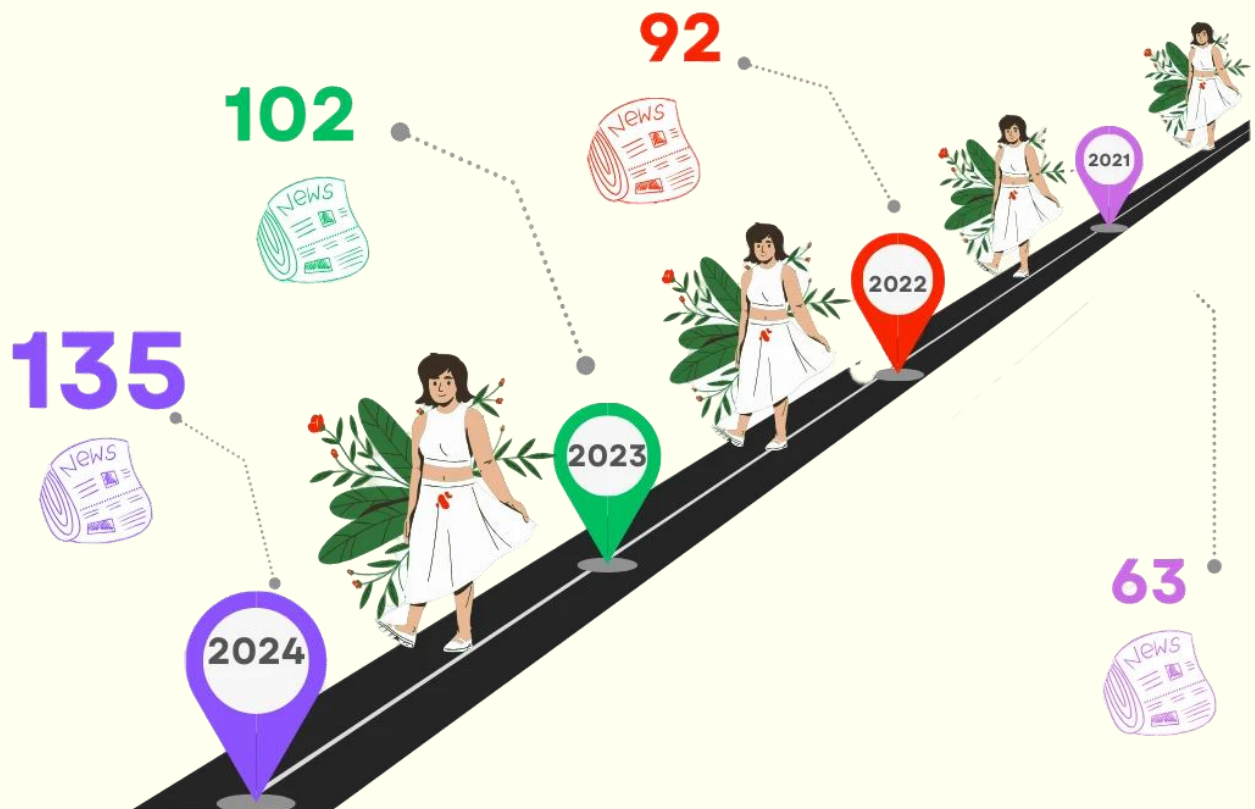
9. Emergency Response and Crisis Management

- Natural disaster preparedness
- COVID-19 impacts
- Relief distribution
- Healthcare access during crises
- Emergency supplies
- Coordination mechanisms

10. Arts and Media Representation

- Creative expressions
- Artistic initiatives
- Personal narratives
- Documentary coverage

Media Coverage on Menstruation



Media coverage on menstruation has witnessed remarkable growth from 2021 to 2024, with the number of articles increasing from 63 to 135 across print and online platforms. This surge reflects not only quantitative growth but also a profound expansion in thematic diversity and the depth of reporting. While earlier coverage predominantly revolved around traditional issues such as chhaupadi, school systems, and the availability and affordability of menstrual products, recent years have marked a paradigm shift. By 2024, the media has ventured into more sophisticated and nuanced topics that were previously underreported or overlooked. These include peri-menopause, PCOS/PCOD, the menstrual experiences of gender and sexual minorities, the intersection of menstruation and climate change, menstrual management in crisis situations, behavioral change initiatives, the role of religious leaders in challenging menstrual stigma, and investigations into procurement irregularities and corruption within menstrual health initiatives.

This evolution is not merely about diversifying topics but also signifies a transformation in the way menstruation is portrayed and discussed. Both Nepali and English-language media outlets have made significant strides in enriching their coverage through varied journalistic formats. These include not only basic news reporting but also in-depth feature stories, investigative reports, and analytical opinion pieces that aim to educate, challenge stereotypes, and foster public debate. This broader scope demonstrates the growing recognition of menstruation as a multidimensional issue that intersects with health, gender equality, cultural practices, education, and governance.

However, despite this progress, it is crucial to acknowledge that the journey toward comprehensive menstrual health reporting is far from complete. The current media narrative still falls short of fully representing the diverse and complex realities of menstruation across different communities, geographic regions, and socioeconomic contexts. Marginalized groups, including those in remote areas, individuals with disabilities, and members of minority groups, often remain underrepresented in media discussions. Addressing these gaps requires deliberate efforts to amplify diverse voices and ensure inclusivity in menstrual health storytelling.

To achieve meaningful societal change, sustained advocacy efforts targeting media stakeholders remain essential. The media holds a uniquely influential position in shaping public opinion and cultural norms, making it a critical agent for challenging and dismantling deeply entrenched menstrual taboos and stigmas. Through persistent, nuanced reporting and creative storytelling, media outlets can not only normalize menstruation as a natural biological process but also promote greater societal awareness, empathy, and action.

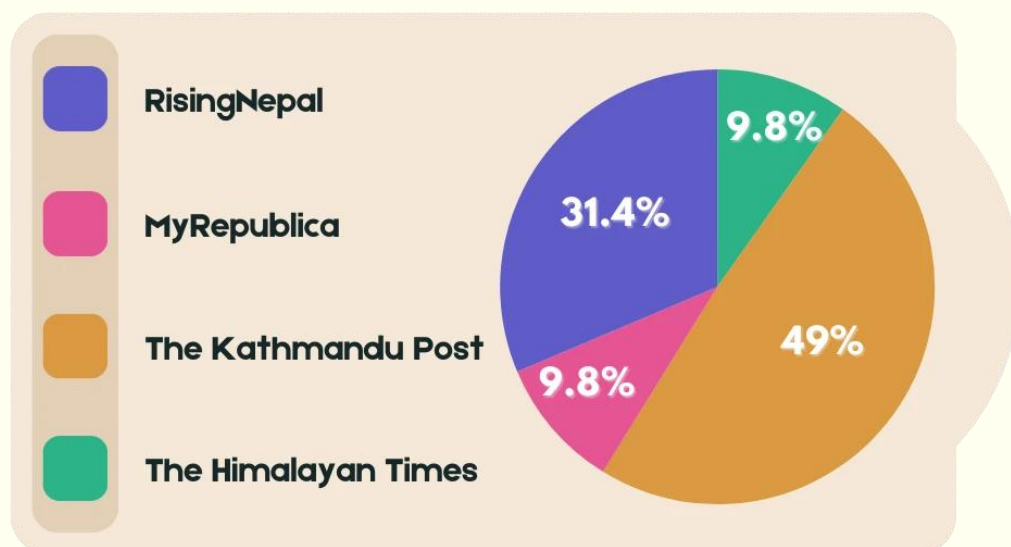
Moreover, continuous engagement with journalists, editors, and media houses is vital to build their capacity for responsible and sensitive reporting on menstruation. Providing training on gender-sensitive reporting, encouraging partnerships with menstrual health experts, and fostering collaborations with grassroots organizations can further enhance the quality and impact of media coverage. By consistently elevating the discourse, the

media can inspire a broader cultural shift toward embracing menstruation as an integral aspect of health and human rights.

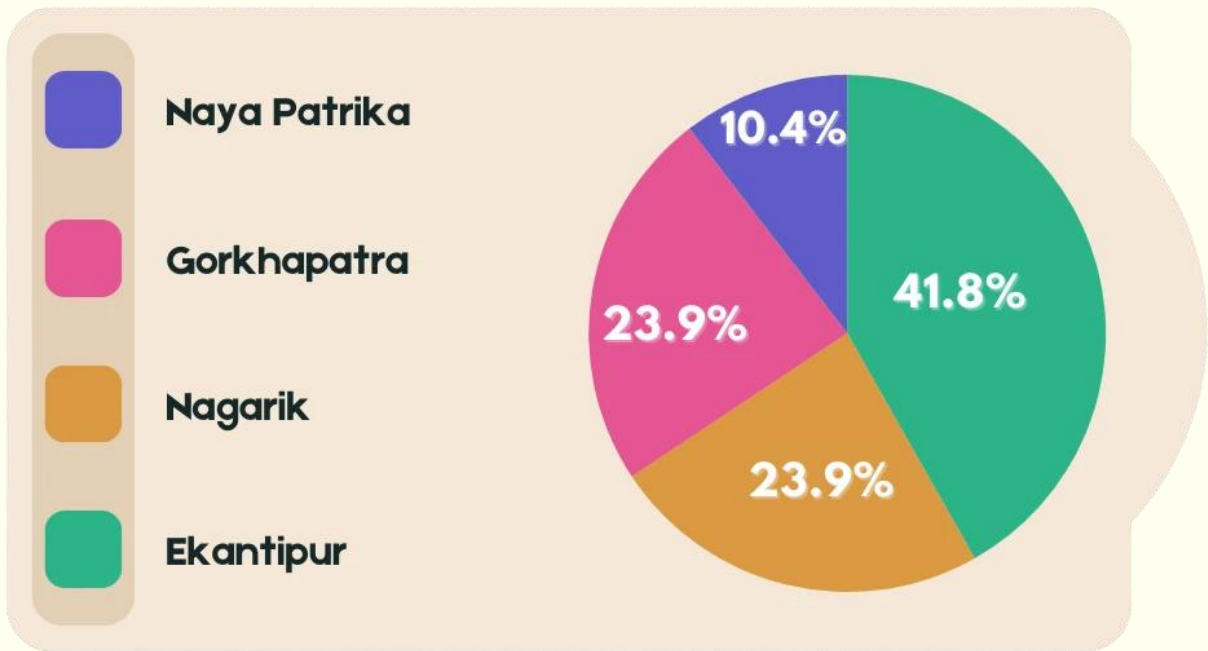
This sustained engagement and strategic storytelling are crucial for creating a ripple effect, influencing policymakers, educators, religious leaders, and the general public to view menstruation not as a taboo subject but as an important societal issue that deserves open discussion, investment, and action. The progress from 2021 to 2024 is commendable, but it represents only the beginning of a transformative journey—one where the media plays a pivotal role in reshaping narratives and fostering a more equitable, informed, and empathetic society.

Analysis of Different Newspaper (Printed and Online) 2024

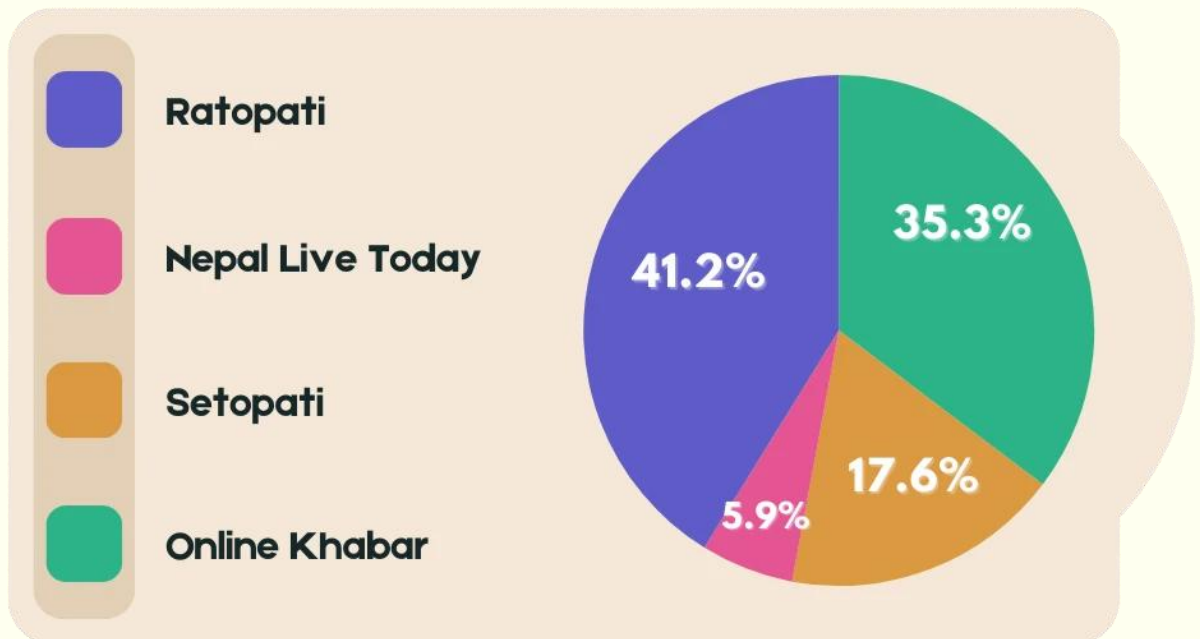
English Newspaper	Number of News Coverage
The Himalayan Times	5
myRepublica	5
The Kathmandu Post	25
The Rising Nepal	16
Total	51



Nepali Newspaper	Number of News Coverage
Ekantipur	28
Nagarik	16
Gorkhapatra	16
NayaPatrika	7
Total	67



Online News Portals	Number of News Coverage
Online Khabar	6
Setopati	3
Nepal Live Today	1
Ratopati	7
Total	17



Thematic Areas

A thematic analysis was conducted from all the articles from the above-mentioned newspapers and online news portals. The detailed description of the key themes identified during the analysis are explained below:

1) Policy and Governance Initiatives

The year 2024 marked significant progress in policy-level interventions and governance reforms aimed at promoting dignified menstruation. Government procedures and institutional reforms gained momentum, with an increased focus on implementing menstrual leave policies and ensuring the effective allocation of budgets. Media highlighted persistent challenges, including corruption in procurement and inefficiencies in budget distribution, while underscoring the critical role of local governments in driving change. Voices of advocates and experts calling for stronger policy frameworks and rigorous enforcement mechanisms were amplified, reflecting the growing recognition of menstrual health as a priority in governance.

2) Gender Justice and Rights

Nepali media brought to light the pressing need to view menstrual health through the lens of gender justice, focusing on equal access and inclusion for all. Coverage emphasized the importance of SOGIESC inclusion, addressing the unique needs of transgender and non-binary individuals with dignity kits and tailored interventions. Workplace equality, access to adequate facilities, and the intersection of menstruation with issues of violence and discrimination were explored in depth. These stories contextualized menstrual rights as integral to broader struggles for gender justice, underscoring the need for systemic change.

3) Climate and Environmental Impacts

The intersection of climate change and menstruation became an emerging theme in 2024. Articles delved into how climate stressors could affect menstrual health, advocating for sustainable menstrual product choices and climate adaptation strategies. Media discussions highlighted eco-friendly innovations, such as reusable pads and menstrual cups, while examining the environmental consequences of improper menstrual waste disposal. By emphasizing the ecological dimensions of menstruation, these discussions encouraged readers to adopt more sustainable practices and support systemic solutions to climate-related challenges.

4) Healthcare and Medical Aspects

Healthcare and medical aspects of menstruation received prominent media attention in 2024, covering a wide range of issues from PCOS/PCOD and perimenopause to menopause and post-menopausal care. Mental health challenges, pain management strategies, and gaps in healthcare services were frequently discussed. Special focus was

placed on raising awareness about related skin health issues, psychological well-being, and the need for a holistic approach to sexual and reproductive health. By highlighting these medical dimensions, the media contributed to reducing stigma and encouraging people to seek professional support.

5) Education and Awareness

Education emerged as a cornerstone of menstrual health advocacy in 2024, with targeted initiatives in schools and communities to promote awareness and reduce absenteeism among menstruating students. Campaigns like "One School One Nurse" and the involvement of religious leaders in spreading awareness gained significant traction. Media coverage celebrated community-based awareness programs, teacher training efforts, and initiatives to engage men and boys in menstrual health conversations. Additionally, vocational training programs, such as pad-making workshops, were highlighted as innovative ways to foster sustainable, local solutions to menstrual health challenges.

6) Product Access and Innovation

Advancements in product access and innovation were widely covered in 2024. Local production of menstrual products, free distribution programs, and the promotion of sustainable alternatives like reusable pads and menstrual cups gained significant attention. Discussions also addressed critical issues such as quality control, product design innovation, and challenges in waste disposal. These strides demonstrate growing efforts to ensure menstrual product accessibility while balancing sustainability and practicality.

7) Stigma and Cultural Transformation

Eliminating menstrual stigma and transforming cultural attitudes remained at the forefront of advocacy in 2024. Media highlighted the persistence of harmful practices like *Chhaupadi* and other religious restrictions, while also celebrating success stories of behavior change and cultural transformation. Efforts to shift intergenerational attitudes and challenge entrenched social norms were showcased, illustrating both the barriers to progress and the inspiring steps taken by communities to break taboos.

8) Intersectional Experiences

The diverse and intersectional experiences of menstruators received growing recognition in 2024. Media explored the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, incarcerated women, indigenous communities, and those in rural areas. Stories shed light on rural-urban disparities, economic barriers, and the professional impacts of menstruation, highlighting the systemic inequities that shape menstrual health outcomes. By amplifying these experiences, media coverage contributed to a deeper understanding of the varied realities of menstruators.

9) Emergency Response and Crisis Management

The importance of menstrual health in emergency response systems was underscored in the wake of natural disasters and ongoing crisis. Media reports addressed the impact of COVID-19 on healthcare access, the distribution of menstrual supplies during disasters, and the need for robust coordination mechanisms in relief efforts. These discussions highlighted how effective planning can mitigate the additional burdens menstruators face during emergencies, ensuring menstrual health is not neglected in times of crisis.

10) Arts and Media Representation

Creative representation of menstruation in arts and media gained significant momentum in 2024. Personal narratives, documentaries, exhibitions, and murals were celebrated for their role in normalizing menstruation and fostering open dialogue. These initiatives bridged the gap between rural and urban audiences, encouraging acceptance and helping to dismantle long-standing taboos. By portraying menstruation as a natural and shared human experience, the arts played a pivotal role in advancing the menstrual health movement.

What new Nepali Media has included in 2024 compared to past?

In 2024, the Nepali media demonstrated remarkable advancements in covering menstruation-related topics, marking significant progress compared to 2023. The scope of reporting expanded notably, delving into themes that had previously been overlooked or minimally addressed. Emerging topics, such as the intersection of menstruation with climate change, emergency response strategies, and crisis management, gained prominence in media discussions. Additionally, there was an increased focus on previously underrepresented issues, including menopause, and the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in menstrual health conversations.

Efforts to challenge menstrual stigma also took a creative turn, utilizing platforms like art exhibitions, short documentaries, podcasts, and personal narratives to foster awareness and normalize the topic. Media coverage extended to policy and governance, shedding light on critical matters such as menstrual leave policies, inefficiencies in budget allocations for menstrual health programs, and the need for comprehensive policy reforms. It also highlighted local initiatives promoting the production of menstrual products, sustainable alternatives, and waste management solutions, with a particular emphasis on innovations like reusable pads, menstrual cups, and biodegradable options. Moreover, healthcare discussions broadened significantly, including psychological aspects of menstruation, skin health during menopause, and a more holistic approach to sexual and reproductive health. In addition, Nepali media began addressing diverse lived experiences of menstruators, including challenges faced by disabled individuals, incarcerated women, and indigenous communities, ensuring a more inclusive and representative narrative. Notably, there was a concerted effort to engage men and boys

in menstrual health conversations through targeted educational campaigns and programs, fostering a sense of shared responsibility. Quantitatively, the number of menstruation-related news pieces increased to 135 in 2024, up from 102 in 2023. This growth also brought greater thematic diversity, reflecting an evolving understanding of the multifaceted nature of menstruation. However, despite these advancements, there remain areas for further development, such as deeper exploration of intersectionality, in-depth policy analysis, and sustained advocacy efforts.

The progress in 2024 highlights Nepali media's growing commitment to breaking taboos and promoting dignity and inclusivity in menstruation-related discourse. The quantity of coverage increased, with 135 news pieces compared to 102 in 2023, and more thematic diversity was evident. While significant progress was made, areas like intersectionality, in-depth policy analysis, and consistent advocacy remain areas for further development

What Nepali Media is still missing?

Nepali media has made notable strides in addressing menstruation-related topics, but several critical areas remain underreported or inadequately explored. By addressing these gaps, media can foster a more inclusive and impactful discourse, driving societal change and improving menstrual health outcomes across the country. Below are the key areas that require greater attention and comprehensive coverage:

1. Policy Gaps and Advocacy

Nepali media often overlooks the critical analysis of existing policies and plans related to menstrual health. While policies exist, their implementation, effectiveness, and shortcomings remain inadequately reported. This lack of scrutiny leaves significant gaps in accountability and advocacy for improved interventions. Media coverage should delve more into the nuances of policy frameworks, shedding light on areas needing reform and encouraging decision-makers to adopt robust strategies for addressing menstrual health challenges.

2. Representation of PMS and PMDD

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) and Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) are conditions that affect a significant portion of menstruators. However, their physical, emotional, and psychological impacts receive minimal attention in the media. Coverage rarely explores these issues in-depth, leaving a lack of understanding among the public. Increased reporting on PMS and PMDD can normalize conversations around these conditions and encourage menstruators to seek medical and emotional support.

3. Inclusivity and Diverse Experiences

Media coverage remains inadequate in capturing the diverse experiences of individuals with varied sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions, as well as menstruators with disabilities, each of whom faces unique challenges during menstruation. While there has been some progress in increasing media attention, significant gaps persist. The specific struggles of transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming individuals are often overlooked. To ensure menstrual health initiatives are truly inclusive and equitable, it is crucial to prioritise empathetic and inclusive reporting. This approach should amplify voices, foster understanding, and advocate for the needs of all groups.

4. In-depth and Comprehensive Coverage

While topics like menopause, PCOS, and menstrual stigma are increasingly highlighted, the coverage often remains superficial. Articles and reports frequently fail to explore the systemic, cultural, and societal implications of these issues. Comprehensive storytelling can help audiences grasp the complexity of menstrual health challenges and inspire sustained public interest and policy action.

5. Sustained and Consistent Coverage

Media attention to menstruation-related issues tends to spike during specific events or campaigns, such as Menstrual Hygiene Day. However, consistent, year-round reporting remains lacking. Sustained coverage is essential to challenge deeply rooted cultural taboos, keep the conversation alive, and maintain momentum for social change.

6. Monitoring and Critique of Government and Private Sector Efforts

Media scrutiny of government initiatives and private sector involvement in menstrual health remains limited. Issues such as corruption, inefficiencies in program implementation, and gaps in product quality are often overlooked, with only minimal coverage seen this year. Strengthened media accountability can play a pivotal role in ensuring resources are utilized effectively and that both public and private efforts genuinely benefit those in need. Transparent and investigative reporting can drive improved practices and lead to better outcomes for menstruators.

By addressing these gaps, Nepali media can help create a more inclusive, informed, and impactful conversation about menstruation. In doing so, they can contribute significantly to breaking taboos, fostering societal understanding, and improving the overall well-being of menstruators across the country.

Conclusion

The 2024 Media Coverage on Menstruation report highlights a transformative shift in Nepal's public discourse, moving from decades of silence and stigma to a dynamic and inclusive dialogue on menstrual experiences and rights. What was once considered a taboo topic has emerged as a critical focus of media engagement, reflecting societal progress driven by advocacy and activism. This year's analysis uncovers a rich and evolving media coverage that transcends traditional boundaries. Journalists have moved beyond discussing menstruation in purely biological terms to addressing broader themes such as gender justice, policy reforms, and the intersectional experiences of diverse menstruators.

Topics like the impact of climate change on menstrual health, inclusive healthcare, and the rights of individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions have gained well-deserved attention, signaling a deeper understanding and commitment from the media. Innovative storytelling formats have played a pivotal role in this transformation. Thoughtful feature articles, investigative pieces, and multimedia content have dismantled entrenched taboos, bringing critical issues into the spotlight. Discussions on menstrual leave policies, the fight against harmful practices like *chhaupadi*, and the inclusion of marginalized groups have become central to media narratives. Moreover, healthcare topics once overshadowed—such as Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), perimenopause, and the psychological dimensions of menstruation—now receive empathetic and informed coverage.

Despite these advancements, persistent gaps and challenges remain. For instance, media representation remains uneven, with intersectional experiences often underrepresented. The voices of marginalized groups—including menstruators with disabilities, rural populations, and indigenous communities—are still overlooked. This selective coverage highlights the need for more equitable and consistent reporting throughout the year to ensure that all experiences are represented. This report serves as a strategic roadmap for media practitioners, urging them to amplify underrepresented voices, embrace intersectional approaches, and maintain a critical lens on government policies. By highlighting more grassroots success stories and emphasizing the significance of behavioral change, the media can become a powerful force for societal transformation. Beyond mere coverage, this report seeks to reshape societal perceptions, dismantle systemic barriers, and create spaces for dignified, inclusive dialogue on menstruation. Through its evolving lens, the media holds a pivotal role in driving meaningful change and uplifting the voices that matter most.

Annex

The Himalayan Times

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- <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2024/07/25/impacts-of-emergency-contraceptives>
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