

Perceived Physical Weakness and Confidence During Menstruation among Adolescent Girls

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ABSTRACT

Menstruation is often associated with feelings of weakness, although perceptions of weakness may not always correspond with girls' confidence in performing daily physical activities. This study focuses on the gap difference between perceived and actual strength among girls at the time of menstruation, focusing on how inner feelings, emotions, internal beliefs and social messages shape self-perception. By analysing subjective experiences, emotional responses, and confidence towards physical activities during menstruation, the research explores how beliefs and perceptions may influence self-confidence more strongly than actual participation in daily activities.

Keywords: Menstruation, Perceived Strength, Confidence, Self-Perception, Adolescent Girls, Physical Ability, Perception-Reality Gap

HYPOTHESIS

“During menstruation, girls believe they are weaker than they actually are.”

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is often seen as a period when girls feel emotionally and physically different from usual. Many girls reported feeling tired, less confident, or weaker during this phase, even when their bodies are still able to perform daily activities. These feelings are not influenced by physical discomfort but also by emotions, personal beliefs, and long-standing ideas about menstruation. These beliefs can slowly influence how girls see their own strength. When someone keeps thinking she is weak during menstruation, she may start holding herself back without any clear physical reason. This study explores girls' perceptions of physical strength, confidence, and emotional experiences during menstruation. It pays attention to how emotions and personal thoughts affect this judgement. The purpose is not just to compare perception and performance but to understand why this difference exists. By doing so, the study tries to challenge the common idea that menstruation automatically means weakness and to support a more confident and realistic view of the female body.

PERCEIVED PHYSICAL WEAKNESS DURING MENSTRUATION

Perceived physical weakness during menstruation is the girl's perception of her strength at that time, not what her body really can do. Many girls have feelings of tiredness, lack of energy, or unwillingness to take part in physical activity during menstruation. They assume that their strength has decreased even though their real physical capacity does not always change in this way. Many girls start feeling weak during menstruation even before they actually try to do anything. Sometimes it is not about what the body can or cannot do, but about what the mind has already decided. The feeling of weakness can start because of cramps, low energy, or simply not feeling completely comfortable. But it doesn't come only from physical reasons. Many girls grow up hearing that periods mean rest, that it's not the time to be very active, and that they should take it easy. These ideas stay in the background of the mind.

After hearing such things for years, it becomes easy to accept them as true. A girl may begin to assume she won't be able to do much during that time, even before trying. Because of that assumption, she might step back from activities or not put in full effort, even when her body is actually capable of handling it.

They may not put in the same effort or may already assume that they will not perform well. Then with time, it becomes normal. Even if there is no strong physical reason behind it, the belief feels real.

Hence in many cases, the weakness is more about perception than actual inability. Still, that perception matters a lot because it directly affects confidence and participation. That is why understanding this mental aspect becomes very important.

CONFIDENCE IN PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE

Confidence in physical performance refers to a person's belief in her ability to carry out physical tasks successfully. In addition, during menstruation many girls might feel some discomfort, tiredness and/or emotional changes that can affect their confidence. Even if they are feeling weak, many girls still think that they can try and do physical activities. It becomes very important to understand the role of confidence and self-perception in how girls perceive their own physical abilities during their menstruation. The focus of this study is on these perceptions rather than on direct measurements of muscular strength or endurance.

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES DURING MENSTRUATION

For some girls, emotions can feel stronger during menstruation. Mood changes are quite common at this time. A girl might feel irritated more easily, feel a bit sad without a clear reason, or become more sensitive to small things. These emotional shifts are a normal part of the experience for many.

These emotions can quietly affect the way they look at themselves. When someone is already feeling low emotionally, she might start thinking that she is not strong enough physically either. The emotional state and physical judgement sometimes get mixed up, even if they are not actually the same thing.

Sometimes emotional discomfort and physical weakness get mixed together. The impression that the body is not capable of much activity is sensed when someone feels unmotivated, tired, or frustrated. Because of this, a girl may start assuming she cannot manage physical tasks, even when her actual strength may not have changed much. But emotional changes are temporary. They shift with time. Still, if they are not understood properly, they can influence self-confidence in a lasting way.

Emotional experiences during menstruation are not the same for everyone. It varies for girls, some girls may feel only slight changes, while others might feel them more strongly. From what I have noticed while looking into this topic, these emotions can affect the way girls judge themselves at that moment. If someone is already feeling low or irritated, she might start thinking that she is not capable of doing much physically either. Because of this, it becomes important to understand that emotions during this time are often temporary and do not always reflect actual physical ability.

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL NARRATIVES AND CULTURAL BELIEFS

Society also plays an important role in girl's views about menstruation. From early age only, many girls are taught that they need to avoid certain tasks or slow down in their periods. Then, these ideas also shape their thoughts on their ability, their strength during the time of menstruation. Sometimes it is said directly, and sometimes it is shown through behaviour — like being told to rest, not to run, or not to participate in certain activities.

Gradually, these messages become part of thinking. Many girls start hearing different ideas about menstruation even before they experience it themselves. I have noticed that because of this, some girls already expect that their abilities will reduce during that time. At the same time, periods are still a topic that people often hesitate to talk about openly. In many places, there is still hesitation or silence around the topic, which makes it harder to question these beliefs or talk about them freely.

If I talk about my learnings while working on this study, that will be majorly that if a girl considers herself weak on periods, it is not just only because of her personal experiences, it also comes from what they hear in their surrounding maybe there in school, home or elsewhere. The major influence on girls is seen when the repeated assumption of girls will less active or less capable is continuously heard by them. Then it comes the time, when it becomes inseparable about what girls' experiences and what has been heard. Hence, we can say that the belief of weakness is not formed in isolation; it is shaped by the surroundings and the messages that are repeatedly heard.

PERCEPTION–REALITY GAP IN MENSTRUAL EXPERIENCES

While studying this topic, one thing became noticeable — many girls reported feeling weak or less capable during menstruation, yet most participants still expressed confidence that they could attempt physical tasks. This difference between perceived weakness and willingness to engage in activity is referred to in this study as the perception–reality gap.

It seems that the feeling of weakness comes first, and performance is judged according to that feeling. The mind forms an assumption, and then everything is seen through that assumption. If someone already believes they will not perform well, they may not even notice when they actually do perform well. The belief quietly controls the judgement.

What makes this gap interesting is that it is not always based on physical change. This gap grows out of expectation, emotion, and past ideas about menstruation. Because of which girls may hold themselves back without clear physical evidence and rational thinking. Looking at both perception and actual performance side by side helps in understanding whether the belief of weakness is always accurate — and in many cases, it does not fully match reality.

COGNITIVE INTERPRETATION OF PAIN AND DISCOMFORT

Pain and discomfort during menstruation are real experiences. Cramps, fatigue, or heaviness can make the body feel different from usual. But what stood out during this study was not just the discomfort itself, it was how that discomfort was understood.

For some girls, pain immediately meant limitation. The moment the cramps started, the conclusion followed: “I won’t be able to do much today.” It is almost automatic. However, discomfort does not always reduce strength in a measurable way. The body may still function normally, but the mind may already decide that it cannot.

This analysis matters. When pain is seen as a signal of weakness, confidence drops. When it is seen as temporary and manageable, behaviour changes less. So, the difference is not only in the level of pain but in the meaning attached to it. That mental explanation can either increase self-doubt or keep it under control.

SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY AWARENESS DURING MENSTRUATION

During menstruation, many girls become more aware of their bodies. Small sensations feel bigger. Tiredness feels heavier. That time even the normal physical changes may feel very uncomfortable. This increases the awareness and also affects how girls perceive and feels about themselves.

A drop in confidence can slowly turn into self-doubt. If someone already feels emotionally low, she may start questioning her abilities too. It is not always dramatic. Sometimes it is subtle — just a small thought like, “Maybe I’m not at my best today.” But repeated thoughts like this can influence how strength is perceived.

Self-esteem plays a significant role over here; well, not clearly seen but sensed. When your confidence boosts, your ability of physical judgement increases. When confidence drops, abilities may seem smaller than they actually are. So, in many cases, the belief of weakness may be connected more to how a girl feels about herself in that moment rather than to actual physical limitation.

EMOTIONAL OVERGENERALISATION AND COGNITIVE BIAS

Another pattern that appeared is something that can be described as emotional overgeneralisation. This happens when a temporary feeling becomes a general conclusion. For example, feeling tired for a few hours turns into thinking, “I am weak.” Feeling irritated becomes, “I can’t handle anything today.”

The emotion may be temporary, but the judgement becomes broad. Instead of separating the feeling from ability, both get mixed together. Even if a girl performs well in a task, she may still hold on to the belief that she is weak simply because she does not feel energetic.

With time, this way of typical thinking may become habitual. The mind starts thinking about the experiences that support the idea of weakness and ignores the ones that conflict with it. That makes the belief stronger, even when actual performance says otherwise.

Understanding this pattern helps explain why the idea of weakness during menstruation can continue, even when physical evidence does not always support it. Sometimes it is not the body that limits performance, but the conclusion drawn from a passing emotion.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey-based research design to explore the perception–reality gap in physical strength during menstruation among adolescent girls.

2. Participants

This study was conducted with 22 adolescent girls studying in secondary and higher secondary classes. The participants were selected based on availability and willingness to take part in the survey. Their participation was completely voluntary.

3. Data Collection

Information for the study was gathered using a questionnaire. The questions focused on how girls felt about their physical strength during menstruation, their emotional experiences, and their confidence in taking part in physical activities. To help participants answer honestly and comfortably, their identities were kept anonymous.

4. Operational Definition of Strength

In this study, strength refers to how strong or weak the participants felt during menstruation. The research focused on their personal opinions and confidence levels rather than their actual physical strength. No physical fitness tests or measurements were carried out as part of the study.

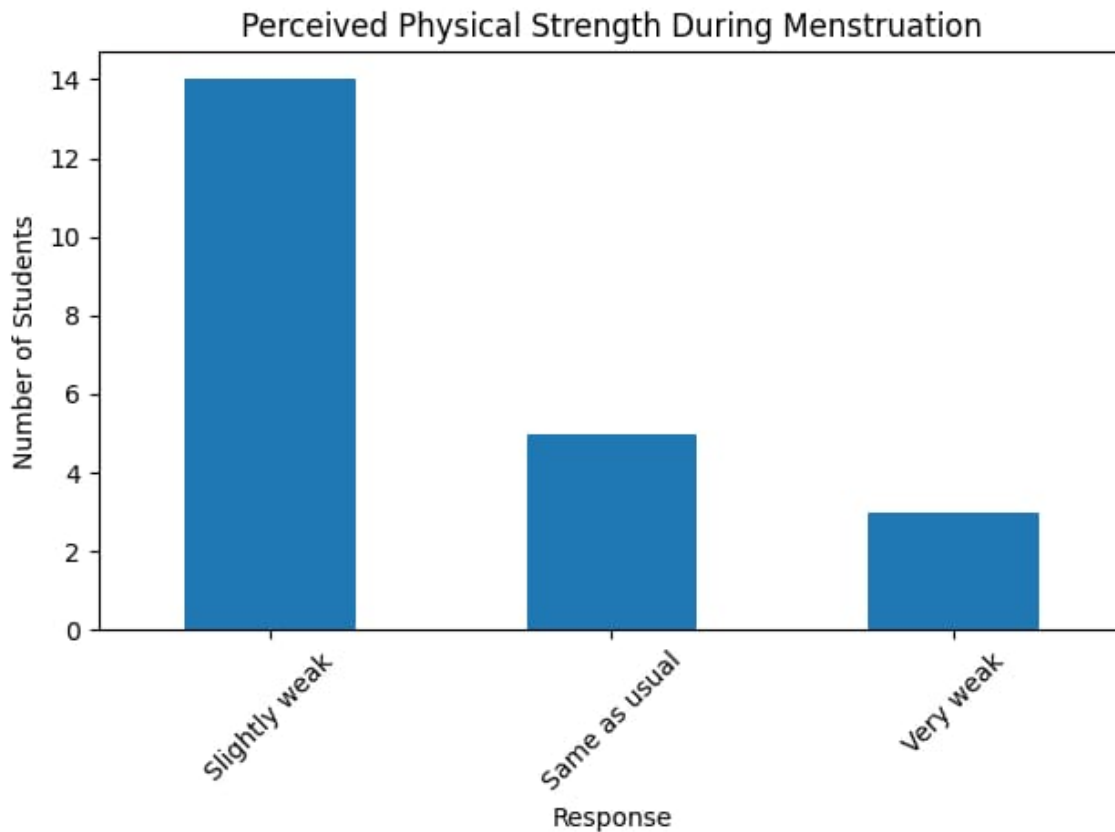
5. Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and confidentiality of responses was maintained throughout the study.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

I have conducted a survey with 22 participants in it. From which I get the following results.

Perceived Physical Strength



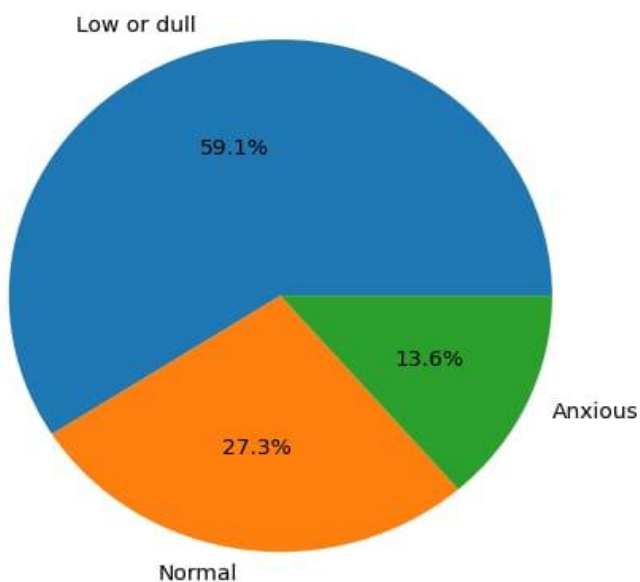
The majority of the students, i.e., 14 out of 22, are shown by the bar graph as feeling slightly weak during their menstruation, whereas 5 students only felt the same as usual, and 3 students felt very weak.

We can see a mild reduction in perceived strength from the above, showing most of the girl's experience, but not extreme weaknesses.

Resulting in that, menstruation affects perceived strength moderately rather than severely.

Emotional Experience During Menstruation

Emotional Experience During Menstruation



The above given pie chart reveals:

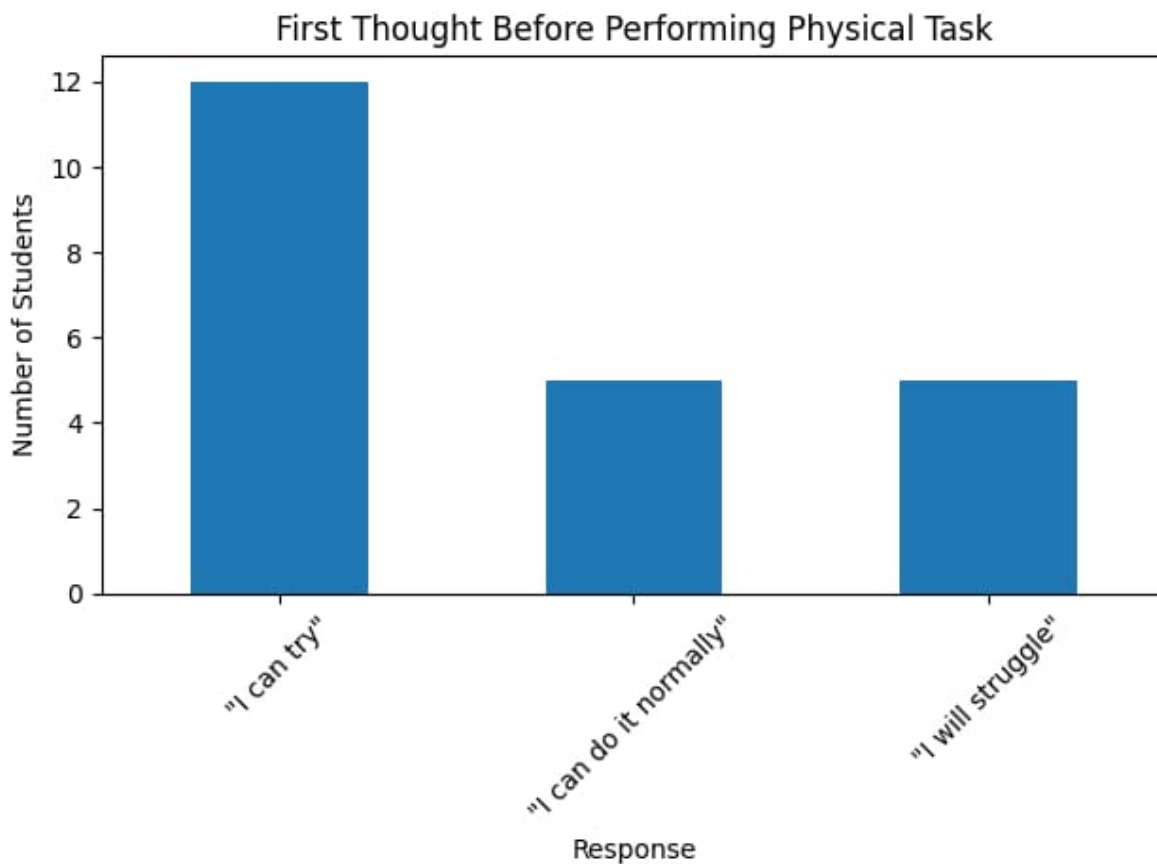
59.1% feel low or dull.

27.3% feel normal.

13.6% feel anxious.

This clearly shows that emotional fluctuations are more significant than the extreme weakness among respondents.

First Thought Before Performing a Physical Task



From the above-given bar graph, we can see that:

12 students said, "I can try."

5 said: "I can do it normally."

5 said: "I will struggle."

None selected: "I cannot do this."

Even when they felt slightly weak or emotionally affected, most girls were willing to try the task, showing confidence in their abilities.

Overall Pattern Observed

When we connect all three results

The majority feel slightly weak.

The majority feel emotionally low.

But the majority still believe, "I can try."

This reveals that physical weakness may not be the strongest factor. Emotional perceptions play a vital role in shaping performance expectations.

CONCLUSION

After analysing the responses, the study reveals that most of the girls experience only slight physical weakness during their menstruation rather than weakness. A large number of respondents reported changes in their feelings, such as low or dull. The respondents said that they feel weakness, but many of them still believed that they could try and do physical tasks, which showed the important role of perception and mindset.

Therefore, the findings support the hypothesis that many girls perceive themselves as weaker during menstruation while still expressing confidence in attempting physical activities. These findings suggest that feelings, confidence, and personal beliefs can influence how girls view their physical abilities during menstruation.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out with only 22 girls, so the findings may not apply to everyone. The information was collected through their personal responses and experiences. No tests were done to measure actual physical strength. Therefore, the results show how the participants felt about their strength during menstruation rather than their real physical ability. A larger study with more participants may give a clearer understanding of the topic.

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