



LET'S **DEBUNK**
THE MISCONCEPTIONS



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MISCONCEPTION

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AM I
MASCULINE
ENOUGH?



AM I
FEMININE
ENOUGH?



Misconception 1: **Boys are always masculine, girls are always feminine**

Masculinity and femininity can be understood as gender expressions—It is how society, culture, community, and family perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender (Brill, Kenney 2016). Boys are expected to be for instance: brave, outgoing, outspoken, good at sports, muscular or in other words: Masculine; And girls are expected to be coy, homebound, soft spoken, good at cooking, pretty (to name just a view) or in other words—Feminine.

These sets of attributes revolve mainly around three ideas: Gender presentation (how we present ourselves, and how we want others to perceive us), gender norms (the rules and expectation a society or culture thinks men and women should look and behave like) and gender roles (the behaviors the society thinks are appropriate for each gender).

Gender norms and roles are not necessarily innate. A boy is encouraged to be 'masculine' while a girl is encouraged to be 'feminine' from an early age—by family members, school teachers, friends, peers and even media! Think about it, boys are encouraged to play outside, while girls are demotivated to go out, and instead encouraged to stay at home and play with dolls. If a boy or a girl doesn't act according to the ascribed rules—they can be teased or bullied. If a boy acts in a way that is perceived as feminine, he is called a sissy, or hijra. If a girl acts in a way that is perceived as masculine, she is silenced and asked to

behave in a much more feminine way.

Breaking out from these fixed boxes of 'feminine' and 'masculine', will allow a broader range of possibilities in terms of self-image, ideals, capacity development and aspirations. Furthermore, the reality consists of much more diversity than implied in the simplistic male-versus-female model. For example, cooking is thought to be woman's job but many world famous chef including Gordon Ramsey and Tomy Mia are men. Likewise, sports or adventurous tasks are thought to be for men; however, women also are achieving success in these areas. Famous table tennis player Jobera Rahman Linu, Everest climber Nishat Mazumder and Wasfia Nazreen are excellent examples of popular Bangladeshi women who are achieving new heights.

Breaking out of the fixed gender boxes allows men and women also to share and respect each others worries, expectation and futures (like household taks or financial responsibilities), which can lead to more harmony in relations between and among men and women, boys and girls.

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Misconception 2: Porn movies are good source of learning how to have sex

Pornography-- also called porn, blue film, xxx or 'naked video', is a kind of movie or images where all kinds of sexual activities are shown in order to arouse sexual excitement. People watch these to be sexually aroused or feel sexual excitement. Watching porn with friends or alone is a common thing among adolescents boys and girls in Bangladesh (and other countries worldwide). Many use those videos for getting information on how to have sex, or derive sexual pleasure or just masturbate to it. Although porn movies can provide excitement and information about sex, they might not always depict reality. Moreover, porn can have many other negative effects.

Like many movies made in Bollywood and Hollywood that do not present realistic images of romantic life, porn does not also represent reality of sexual interactions. Performers are selected based on the performers' physical attributes. For example, male actors have to be muscular, have to have large sized sexual organ. Female actors have to be slim and should have large breasts.

Porn movies portray men and women having sex for a long time, which may seem normal. But like any other regular movie, it has a director who edits acted out sex scenes shot in different times, and often put them together to make it seem like the actors are having sex for a long time, and in one go. In real life, sex can vary in duration, and does not have any standard duration. Moreover, actors at times perform sexual acts that might be unhealthy and risky and people in real life might not enjoy doing that at all. Male performers are shown as much more dominant and aggressive compared to the female performers. Some porn movies are even showing female-unfriendly or violent behaviors as if this kind of behavior is enjoyed by the female partner. This might not be true in a real-life sex scene. In most real-life sexual relationships, some of these sexual acts are not at all pleasurable or can even be physically painful for especially females. Sexual behavior will become more pleasurable when both partners

engage in sexual behavior which is safe, pleasurable and painless for themselves and for the partner. This is what we call 'consent'.

Porn usually highlights physical relation. This is not the sole component of sexuality. Factors like love, affection, closeness, safe sex are not given any importance in most porn film, despite the important role they play in making sexual relationship safe, pleasant and satisfying.

Porn may impact negatively on people. Often adolescent boys compare themselves with the male actors in porn. The size of penis and long duration of sexual intercourse, showed in the video, may influence them into believing and idealizing that as standard of sexual prowess. Boys often think that they have to be like the male actor in the porn movie if they want to be a real man. Consequently, many suffer from disappointment and embarrassment about the size of their own sexual organ, and feel confused and insecure about their sexual performance (Nahar et al 2013, Bulon and Khan 2006). Girls can also be influenced by the fair skin, the slim physique and sometimes the passivity of the female actor in the movies and might feel insecure about their own body or confused about how to behave in sexual interactions.

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SOME DAYS, I ONLY SEE THE MAN
I WAS BORN AS. AND SO DO OTHERS.
IT FEELS UNCOMFORTABLE...



BUT OTHER DAYS,



I SEE MYSELF AS I TRULY AM.
AND I FEEL FREE.



Misconception 3: **Hijra** people do not have or have incomplete sexual organ

It is believed that sexual organs define the gender of a baby. Whenever a baby is born, his/her gender is determined according to the sex organ. However, this might not be true for all human beings. Some people might not identify with their pre-determined gender when they grow up. For instance, a child born with male sexual organ, might identify as a girl while growing up. This process of personal identification is an innate process which develops during early childhood. So sexual organ is not always the sole determinant of one's gender identity.

Majority of those who identify as hijras in Bangladesh are male bodied and born with (complete) male sexual organ. However, psychologically they think of themselves as women. Bangladeshi society has several mythical ideas about hijras. It is thought by some people that hijra people do not have sexual organ; or that they have a small hole instead of sexual organ; or that their organ is incomplete/disformed. Hijras are often harassed or tortured in family and society and forced to leave their home. They join the hijra community under a 'guru' according to the hijra culture. Some hijras choose to get rid of their male sex organ because of shame or guilty feelings.

Individuals who are intersex are also included in the hijra community.

Intersex people are born with an ambiguous genitalia or have both male and female sex organ. There can be born with a clitoris but without vaginal opening or have a small penis with divided scrotum ("What is Intersex", 2013). However, not all intersex people identify as hijra.

People feel uncomfortable and resistant if they hear the term 'hijra'. However, their human rights are increasingly recognized in Bangladesh.. In 2009, the Bangladesh Supreme Court held that hijras had the right to vote. In November 2013, the Bangladeshi government announced that it would officially recognize the "hijras" as a separate gender for the purposes of official government documents (passports, identity cards) (Jain & Rhoten, 2013).

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WE SAVE COUNTLESS LIVES.
WE KICK ASS. WE SOLVE PROBLEMS.
WHO'S THE KING OF THE WORLD NOW?



Misconception 4: **Homosexuality is a mental disorder**

Homosexuality refers to same-sex sexual relationships—which means that homosexual individuals are emotionally, physically and sexually attracted to individuals of their own sex. Homosexual men are called gay, while homosexual women are called lesbian.

You may find this information unusual, or uncommon. That is because in Bangladesh, homosexuality is not talked about openly. You don't see homosexual people on TV either. Homosexual people are not talked about positively as well. This is because homosexual people have been subjected to discrimination, prejudice, and injustice for centuries (Strong, Devault & Sayad 1999). As a result, certain shame and stigma attaches to the homosexual identity—such as they are dirty and perverted, or there is something wrong with them mentally. For these reasons, homosexual people, for fear of being judged, excluded and even killed, don't reveal their identity to society.

Homosexuality however is abundantly present in nature. Both Joan Roughgarden in her book *Evolution's Rainbow* (2004) and Avijit Roy in his book *Somokamita (Homosexuality)* (2010) wrote about animals including penguins, dolphins, monkeys, reptiles, and many more that exhibit homosexuality and homosexual behavior. In 1972, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders (Strong, Devault & Sayad 1999). The UN now recognizes sexuality as human right, and acknowledges protection of sexually diverse people from violence (UN Resolutions 2016).

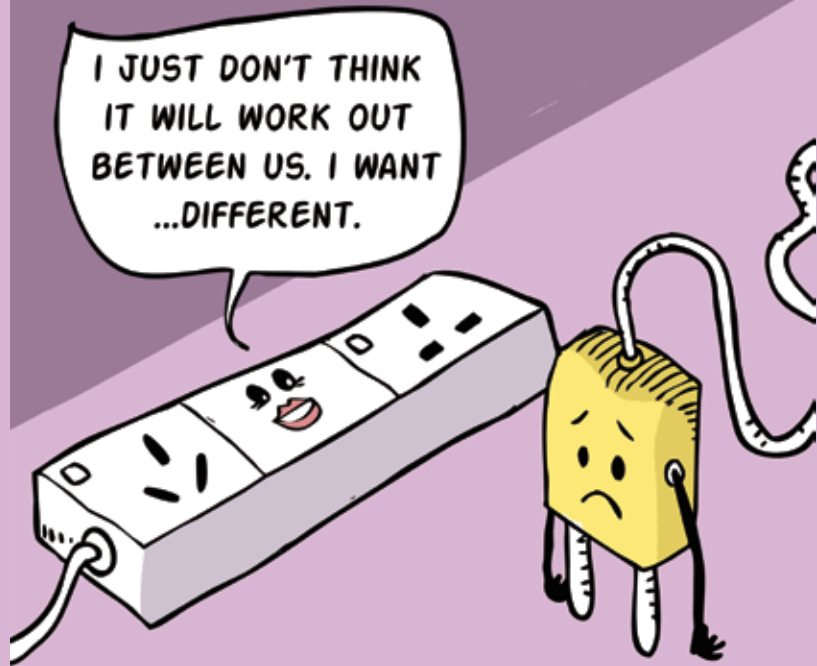
Homosexuality is result of one's biological and psychological

make-up, and there is no predetermined reason behind homosexuality. Some people think that you can (and should) change or fix your homosexual identity, and become heterosexual. That is an unfair expectation from someone who cannot help his or her sexual desires and thoughts and wants to have sex and fall in love with person of the same sex. People feel and understand who they are emotionally and sexually attracted to, early in life, or later. They can be attracted to opposite sex, or same sex, or to both. For some people sexual identity is more fluid, that is they can feel attracted to all of the above in different phases in life, and do not want to box their sexual identity as either heterosexual or homosexual. But this is not the same as wanting to change or fix one's homosexual identity to fit a standard in society, which is to be heterosexual. That is unjust and goes against that person's human rights. The important message is that sexual diversity is part of nature, and we do not have to feel ashamed of how we feel sexually, and when we engage in consensual and happy sexual relationships with same sex.

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UN OHCHR. 1996-2007. United Nations Resolutions - Sexual orientation and gender identity at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBTUNResolutions.aspx> (accessed 2 September 2017).

Strong, Bryan, DeVault, Christine, Sayad, Barbara Werner. 1999. *Human Sexuality: Diversity in Contemporary America* (Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publication Company)



Misconception 5: **Women should not expose their sexual desire**

Sexual desire comprises of sexual thoughts, fantasies and needs and wishes to engage in sexual relationship. Many think that it is too shameful to ask and talk openly about woman's sexuality and sexual needs. It is commonly believed that even if women have sexual desire, they do not, or should not say it directly. Sexual urge varies from person to person. It has no relation with being a man or woman. A woman can have more sexual urge than a man, or less, or the same. Generally, a woman is not encouraged to express her sexual desire in Bangladesh. If she does, she might be subjected to humiliation and insults regarding her character and morality. Which is why women are not seen to talk about their own sexual urges and society often doesn't recognize those urges. However, this does not mean that sexual desire is less or absent among women compared to men. Due to the existence of such taboo, women themselves are not aware of their sexual feelings and

do not embrace their sexuality in a positive and empowering way. Women's sexuality is often ignored by men; or men think that they know what a woman wants sexually, without asking her. Hence, myths like 'larger penis satisfies women' persist among men. By ignoring and denying female sexuality, women and also men still believe women are not able to enjoy sexuality or a sexual relationship and enjoying sex is only a privilege for men. Moreover, this misconception also leads to the idea that it is a woman's duty to satisfy the sexual desires of a man, ignoring her own feelings. A sexual relationship will become more pleasurable when both partners recognize and are able to express their sexual feelings in a respectful way in which both partners feel pleasure and enjoyment.

Hite, Shere. 2004. The Hite report, A nationwide study of female sexuality

A RECENT STUDY REVEALED
MOST MEN CAN ONLY RECOGNISE
AND RESPOND TO LOUD,
FLASHING SIGNS.



E RAZA
ROMAY

Misconception 6: **Girls are responsible for their own sexual harassment**

Many people think that girls are responsible for being sexually harassed. It is assumed by many that the way they dress up and walk, attracts boys and encourage boys to commit crime like sexual harassment and rape. To prevent these crimes, girls are expected to maintain decency, for example by wearing loose dress, covering their chest, avoid wearing jeans and T-shirts and salwar kamij. There are some other norms that girls are expected to follow- such as they should not talk loudly and hang out with friends outside unaccompanied or after evening. If a girl doesn't follow these norms, then it is thought that it was normal and expected for her to be sexually harassed and raped.

Sexual harassment is a severe punishable crime and people who commit this crime are sex offenders and criminals. Like any other criminals, people who commit sexual harassment have to take the responsibility of the crime. And like any other crimes, sexual harassment should not be tolerated at all because the psychological and social consequence of sexual harassment is serious. Victims of sexual harassment can suffer significant psychological effects including, but not limited to- anxiety, depression, lowered self-esteem, sexual dysfunction and even suicide. Moreover, sexual harassment is also one of the major reasons behind dropping out from school and early marriage (Jabbar, Sultana and Hossain 2010, Jahan, Jabbar and Hossain 2010).

The myth implies two aspects here: one, boys or men cannot control their sexual urges which is why they commit sexual harassment, and two, girls' dress up and behavior invite boys or men to harass them sexually.

If the first myth were true, all men in the world would engage in sexual violence all the time. However, we know that it doesn't apply to all men. Men and boys are able to learn how to manage their sexual urges and desires. People have to take the responsibility of their action. It is only humane to get sexually attracted to other people. Boys cannot feel entitled to a woman's body, and should take consent before engaging in sexual activity.

Women who confirm to modest dress code and behavior are also often victims of sexual violence, hence delegitimizing the second myth. In Bangladesh, 19-year-old Sohag Jahan Tonu was raped and subsequently killed even though she wore the Islamic head cover hijab, which is considered modest dress code in Bangladesh (Amin 2016). On the other hand, girls who do not confirm modest dress code would have harassed always, if the myth is true. We don't see that either always. Therefore, woman's dress and behavior can't be seen as the reasons behind sexual harassment because these excuses minimize the intensity of crimes like sexual harassment and rape. Every woman has the right and freedom to wear any dress they want. She can wear a dress which suits her, she feels comfortable and looks good in in at a time.

The punishment of sexual harassment and violence is very severe in Bangladesh. The punishment is determined by the degree of the crime. If a girl is touched by someone inappropriately and without taking her consent, the offender may suffer imprisonment of maximum 3 to 10 years and penalty of a considerable amount of money. In rape cases, a criminal can be sentenced to life time imprisonment (Women's Right to Law 200). .

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Woman's Right to Law (2000), Ministry of woman and Children.

SEXUALITY IS IN...



Misconception 7: **Sexuality is sex**

Sexuality is an integral part of one's identity. It has to do with developing sexual feelings, sense of who we feel attracted to and what do we enjoy doing when it comes to sexual activities. It includes developing desire, physical and emotional attraction, romance, love, fantasy, sex and reproduction.

Developing sexual feelings or crushes is a regular part of adolescence. You might even have crushes on more than one person in a single day! You may develop attraction for the opposite sex, same sex or even both sexes!

Sexuality also comprises of sexual acts, ranging from kissing, to holding hands, to cuddling, to non-penetrative sex (such as masturbation) and penetrative sex (intercourse)—anything that turns you on and you think will give you sexual pleasure!

Preferences vary from person to person. It's important to explore what you enjoy and feel comfortable doing while engaging in sexual activities.

In short, sexuality is a broad spectrum of feelings, emotions, behaviors and relations which have a personal meaning and can differ from person to person. Sexuality is enormous issue and has a broad meaning, sex is a small part of it only. Sexuality does not mean only sex.

Work cited:

WHO. 2017. Sexual and Reproductive Health at: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/sexual_health/sh_definitions/en/ (accessed 10 September 2017)

EASY TO GET THINGS WITH A PRICE.
USE IT WHENEVER I WANT.
HOWEVER I WANT.



TURN IT ON.
TURN IT OFF.



PUT IT ON. USE IT.
NO NEED TO ASK IF IT'S
READY AND WILLING.



BUT
A WIFE DOESN'T
COME WITH A
PRICE TAG.

SHE COMES OUT OF RESPECT. AND LOVE.
YOU WAIT FOR HER TO SAY YES.
YOU WAIT WHEN SHE SAYS NO.



Misconception 8: **Husband can have sex with his wife whenever he wants**

Rape is having sexual intercourse against one's will, without consent or by physically intimidating someone. Many people think that in marriage, whenever husband wants, he can have sexual intercourse with his wife, regardless of the wife's desire and consent. The wife is assumed to be an object, available for the husband's sexual gratification whenever he wants. Before sexual intercourse, there should be consent, understanding and comfort between a husband and wife. If needed, a husband and wife should talk before they have sex.

Sexual intercourse, is an act of two people and the pleasure of sexual intercourse significantly depends on the preference of one's partner. Thus, it is important to take into account the consent and comfort of the partner. Sometimes the wife might not want to have intercourse, but simply cuddle or kiss. Same goes for the husband. Sometimes, either of them might not be in the mood to do anything at all. If husband or wife forces his/her partner to participate in any sexual behavior or without taking consent, it violates the right of partner. If someone does this, it is called marital rape, notwithstanding the person's

status as a spouse. However, many don't know about marital rape, or don't take it seriously, but its consequence could be dreadful. Partner can suffer severe depression and may commit suicide.

Marital rape is in some cases based on the myth that sexual behavior in marriage is only a pleasure or a right for the husband and that the wife only has a duty to obey her husband ignoring and denying the fact that women can have sexual desires as well.

In many countries, marital rape is punishable act (Bali, 2017). There are few organizations in Bangladesh who have been working on issues related to marital rape- such as BLAST, AIN O SHALIS KENDRO, Bangladesh National Woman lawyer's Association (BNWLA).

Work cited:

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THE 4 WORST THINGS

THAT COULD HAPPEN BECAUSE OF MASTURBATION



Misconception 9: **Masturbation is bad for health.**

Masturbation is getting pleasure by touching one's sexual organ. Boys/men masturbate by touching their sexual organ or stroking the penis up and down. Girl/women masturbate by touching or gently massaging their clitoris or vaginal area. Many think that masturbation is only done by boys or men but girls/women also do that or have a wish to do that. People of all age can do that and masturbation is usually first experience of sexual pleasure for all. During adolescence, when boys and girls experience their physical and emotional changes, they also come to know about masturbation. Even in marriage, partners sometimes have a desire for whatever reason to masturbate.

Masturbation is not harmful and it is very safe and can be enjoyable. Many people also find it relaxing. It is a good way of providing sexual pleasure to oneself and it can be done throughout one's life. In fact it is the safest way of getting sexual pleasure because there is no risk of getting pregnant or STDs. The frequency of doing masturbation varies from person to person. Some do that every day, some once in a week and some may never do that in their entire life and this is perfectly alright. One of the most common myths surrounds masturbation is that masturbation is unhealthy and harmful for health. Researchers have not found a conclusive link between masturbation and any long-term and lasting health problems. (Consumer Health Digest 2017). Moreover, many people also believe that losing one drop of semen is equal to losing 70 drops of blood. For that reason they believe that masturbation weakens body or it is harmful for health (Khan and Aeron 2014). However, this is just a myth and no relation between the loss of semen and blood has ever been proven. It is not true that masturbation decreases the stamina of sexual intercourse and person who masturbates will not be able to please his wife sexually in the future. The causes of low sexual stamina can range from biological to social conditioning but masturbation is not found to a reason behind that. Alcohol consumption, smoking and less physical activity, are associated with low sexual stamina (Harte and Meston 2012, Arackal and Benegal 2007). Also nutrition (and lack of nutrition) can influence the sexual libido as well as

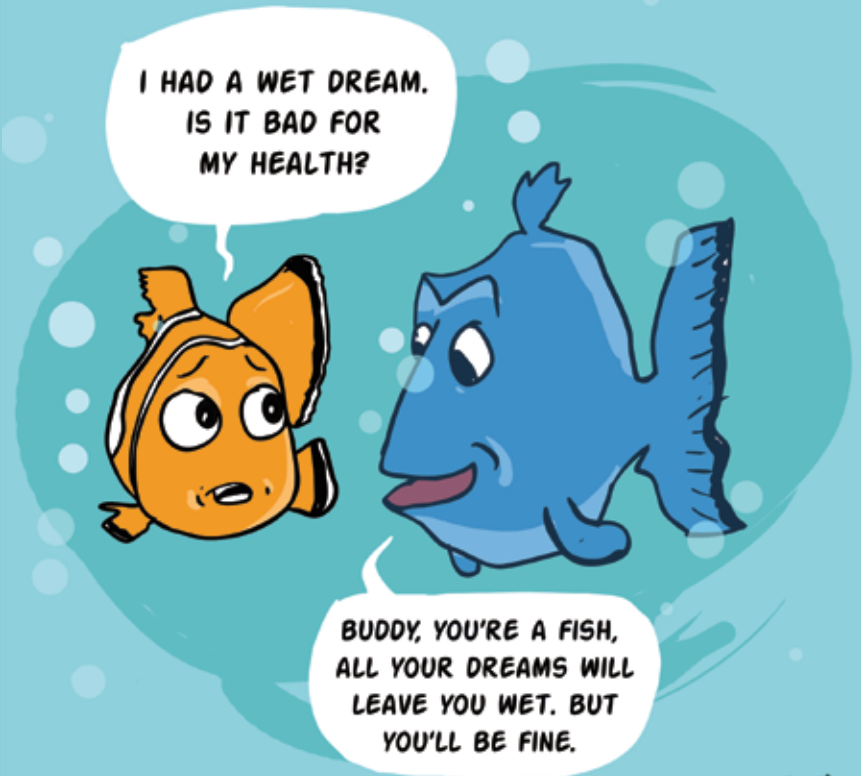
psychological aspects like low self-esteem or feelings of non-attraction towards the partner.

Masturbation can be a problem only when it is done openly to harass someone sexually or if it impacts the sexual relationship with the partner. Sometimes it may lead men to become more introverted and less interested in actual relationships, both physically and emotionally (Consumer Health Digest 2017). Many also feel guilt after masturbation as there are religious and social taboo against masturbation in many cultures. If masturbation interferes and negatively impacts social and daily life and responsibility, it can be harmful. For example, if someone is so addicted and obsessed with masturbation that he becomes less interested in social interaction, study and job. In addition to that, stroking the sexual organ too roughly may cause burning sensation on the skin. To avoid this sensation, it is recommended to use spit or water based lubricant which are available in the market. For girls it is recommended to be very careful with penetrating objects into the vagina during masturbation. Most girls and women have satisfying masturbation only by stroking the clitoris which is the most sensitive organ of the female vulva.

Finally, masturbation is a personal choice. Some people choose or decide for personal or religious reasons not to masturbate and that is their full right. Other people choose to masturbate because it brings them sexual pleasure or makes them relaxed. When you choose to do it, do it with care and no shame or guilt.

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I HAD A WET DREAM.
IS IT BAD FOR
MY HEALTH?

BUDDY, YOU'RE A FISH,
ALL YOUR DREAMS WILL
LEAVE YOU WET. BUT
YOU'LL BE FINE.

ERAZA
KOHAY

White discharge is a natural physical process. It is related to mental condition, pregnancy, sexual excitement etc. Amount of discharging fluid can vary depending on physical and mental condition and fertility cycle of women. As long as it does not show symptoms like itching or bad smell, doctor's consultancy is not needed. This has no relation with physical weakness since it is a normal biological process.

During menstruation, a little amount of blood is lost, which can be restored through having healthy diet and iron food. Proper diet contains red meat, beans, yogurt, spinach, egg yolk, fish etc (Graaf, 2016). These food intake will reduce the risk of physical weakness. If body lacks necessary nutrition or healthy diet, one may feel physical weakness.

Wet dreaming is a regular biological phenomenon for boys. When a boy has sexual feelings, fantasizes about a person or involves in discussion about sexual relation and romantic attraction, then he can dream of sexually arousing and exciting situations, and ejaculate during his sleep, which is called wet dream (Janssen 2007). This is normal and not something to be afraid of or embarrassed about. Many people believe that a drop of semen equals to 70 drops of blood (Khan and Aeron 2014). Hence, wet dream may weaken the body but it is not scientifically proved and considered a myth. However, if one experiences wet dream then getting cleaned is necessary for physical hygiene.

Work cited:

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Weblink:<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3725865/Why-sync-food-period-Study-shows-tactical-nutrition-help-women-stay-shape-s-meal-plan.html>

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Comment: we could not find any information about masturbating results in less wet dreams so did not add here

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LET'S **DEBUNK**
THE **MISCONCEPTIONS**

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