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A study the relationship between menstrual hygiene management and women empowerment in West Bengal

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Abstract

The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) sector had long ignored menstruation, treating it as a taboo subject, but the issue is currently the topic of concern. In 2014, 28 May was declared as the Menstrual Hygiene Day, in an attempt to 'break the silence and raise awareness about the importance of menstrual hygiene management. Many adolescent girls in low-income and middle-income countries lack appropriate facilities and support in school to manage menstruation. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) interventions, including the use of sanitary pads, education and awareness, and where possible separate, sanitary toilets, are identified to have far-reaching impacts on the education and empowerment of girls. This paper discusses the relationship between menstrual hygiene management and women empowerment in West Bengal. We conducted some awareness camp for this study in West Bengals some schools from March to July 2023 among girls 11 to 17 years old who reached menarche. We sampled 20 schools from 10 urban and 10 rural clusters using a stratified random sampling technique. We interviewed 300 school girls and conducted spot checks in each school for menstrual hygiene facilities. The result of this study shows there is a significant relationship $r=0.524$ between menstrual hygiene management and women empowerment in West Bengal.

Keywords: Menstrual hygiene, management, women empowerment

Introduction

The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene sector had long ignored menstruation treating it as a taboo subject, but the issue is currently the topic of concern. In 2014, 28 May was declared as the Menstrual Hygiene Day, in an attempt to 'break the silence and raise awareness about the importance of menstrual hygiene management. The slogan for 2014 is "Let's start the conversation about menstruation" (Snel and Da Silva Wells, 2014) [12]. The fact that menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is firmly written into sanitation policies and strategies is considered to be the ultimate indicator that the sector is truly fulfilling the pledge of placing women Hygiene sector. In this paper we discuss the ways in which Hygiene policymakers, funders, and practitioners focus on menstruation as a health and education 'problem', primarily of adolescent girls in developing countries. The shame, inconvenience, and ignorance linked to menstruation are identified as key reasons for keeping girls away from school, both intermittently as well as permanently. Menstruation, as the arguments go, forces young adolescent girls in developing countries to stay home from school for several days each month, causing them to miss as much as one full month of school days each year – thereby decreasing the quality of their education and ultimately their chances in life. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and donors work with local partners to enable MHM, which includes: distributing or promoting use of sanitary pads; providing MHM education and awareness; and occasionally the provision of girl-friendly toilets in schools. For these initiatives, INGOs receive financial and other support from donors as well as pharmaceutical and sanitation corporates who often engage young female celebrities to make the claim that providing sanitary towels and hygiene awareness serves to keep young girls in Africa, Asia, and Latin America in good health, in school, and out of a cycle of poverty (One Girl, 2014) [11]. The developmental notion of menstruation therefore is that it is a hygiene problem and also a health and empowerment barrier for poor young girls in the developing India.

We question the accuracy of these claims: the fact that a universal, medicalized concept of menstruation is uniformly experienced by adolescent girls in different regions of the world, among different peoples, cultures, religions, and nations; as well as the links drawn between

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menstruation, education, and empowerment. Our review of contemporary literature on the topic of MHM reveals the need to closely assess the claims that link MHM to girls' education and empowerment. In a Unicef (2006) [13] document is something quite different: that, 'girls sometimes do not attend school during menstruation or drop out at puberty because of a lack of sanitation facilities that are separate for girls and boys in schools', that a girl absent from school during menses for 4 days in 28 days. There are several documents that report 'a precipitous drop out in adolescent girl education between upper primary and high school, and many authors attribute this to the onset of menstruation.

Significance of the study

The current study investigated the relationship between Menstrual Hygiene Management and Women Empowerment in India. The poor knowledge and understanding of menstruation may lead to unsafe hygiene practice that intern increases the risk of reproductive and genital-urinary tract infections, cervical cancer, school drop-out, poor academic performance and over all poor quality of life. Good hygienic practices such as the use of sanitary pads and adequate washing of the genital area are essential during menstruation. So significant of this study to increase awareness among schedule tribe school girls on Menstrual Hygiene Management and awareness to use of high quality sanitary napkins in rural areas. Every schedule tribe school girl and woman must have easy access to sufficient, affordable and hygienic menstrual absorbents during menstruation.

Statement of the problem

The study will be conducted under the formal title: A Study the Relationship between Menstrual Hygiene Management and Women Empowerment in West Bengal.

Objectives

The relationship between menstrual hygiene management and women empowerment in West Bengal.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no significant relationship exist between Menstrual Hygiene Management and Women Empowerment of Adolescents Girls.

Operational Definition

Menstrual hygiene management

Menstruation is a natural, normal biological process experienced by adolescent girls and women. Menstrual health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being India has been a global leader for action on menstrual hygiene since 2014, with strong Government leadership, and diverse actions by civil society, the private sector, manufacturers, and entrepreneurs. To launch of Swatch Bharat Mission (SBM) in October 2014 was a turning point for the sanitation and hygiene landscape in India, including for menstrual hygiene management. State Governments showcased innovative and promising models to improve MHM; sharing of simple and effective solutions that were instrumental to build and sustain improvements for girls and women in India. MHM = 1. Menstrual hygiene education and awareness, 2. Safe disposal facilities, 3. Safe

menstrual hygiene products.

Women Empowerment

Women's empowerment refers to the process of enabling women to have greater control over their lives and to be able to make their own decisions. This can include empowering women to participate fully in the economy and in the political process, as well as empowering them to make decisions about their own health and well-being. Women's empowerment is important because it can lead to a range of positive outcomes, including increased economic growth and development, improved health and well-being, and greater gender equality. In India, women's empowerment has been a key issue for many years. Despite some progress in recent decades, women in India continue to face significant challenges when it comes to gender equality. These challenges include discrimination, lack of access to education and employment, and gender-based violence.

Delimitation

The following delimitations are there:

1. The sample is limited 300 adolescent girl students in Purulia district in West Bengal.
2. The present study is restricted to 20 school in Manbazar Block-I, Manbazar Block-II, Purulia-I, Purulia-II, Raghunathpur-I, Raghunathpur-II, Jaldha-I in Purulia district.

Research Methods

Variables

A variable is any characteristics, number, or quantity that can be measured or counted. A variable may also be called a data item. It is called a variable because the value may vary between data units in a population, and may change in value over time. The variables in the present study are Menstrual Hygiene Management and Women Empowerment of Adolescent Girls.

Population and Sample

Population

In statistics a population is the entire pool from which a statistical sample is drawn. A population may refer to an entire group of people, objects, events, or measurements. A population can thus be said to be an aggregate observation of subjects grouped together by a common feature. The population of the present study covers all School going adolescent girls of Purulia district in West Bengal.

Sample

A sample refers to a smaller, manageable version of a larger group. It is a subset containing the characteristics of a larger population. Sample are used in statistical testing when population sizes are too large for the test to include all possible members or observations. A sample should represent the population as a whole and not reflect any bias toward a specific attribute. In the present study "Stratified Random Sampling Technique" will be adopted. This is a method of sampling that involves the division of a population into smaller groups known as strata. In stratified random sampling, the strata are formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics. A random sample from each stratum will be taken in a number proportional to the stratum's size when compared to the population.

Table 1: Distribution of sample list in Purulia district

Rural School in Purulia District		
Sl. No.	Name of School	No. of Students
1.	Bisri Anchalik P.D.G.M. High School (H.S)	12
2.	Swapan Subrata High School (H.S)	13
3.	Manbazar Radha Madhab Institution	14
4.	Kumari High School (H.S)	11
5.	Manbazar Girls High School (H.S)	12
6.	Godibero Sri Jaganath Girls High School	9
7.	Raghunathpur Girls High School (H.S)	17
8.	Raghunathpur High School (H.S)	12
9.	Jhalda Satya Bhama High School	11
10.	Kalma Bandular High School	12
Total		123
Urban School in Purulia District		
Sl. No.	Name of School	No. of Students
1.	Santamayee Girls High School	18
2.	Nazrul Balika Vidyapith	17
3.	Govt. Girls School, Purulia	16
4.	Kasturba Hindi Balika Vidyalaya	12
5.	Purulia Zila School	13
6.	S.E.R Girls High School Adra	17
7.	Adra Public School	22
8.	Chittaranjan Girls High School	21
9.	Bangabari Girls High School	24
10.	Belguma High School	17
Total		177
Grand Total		300

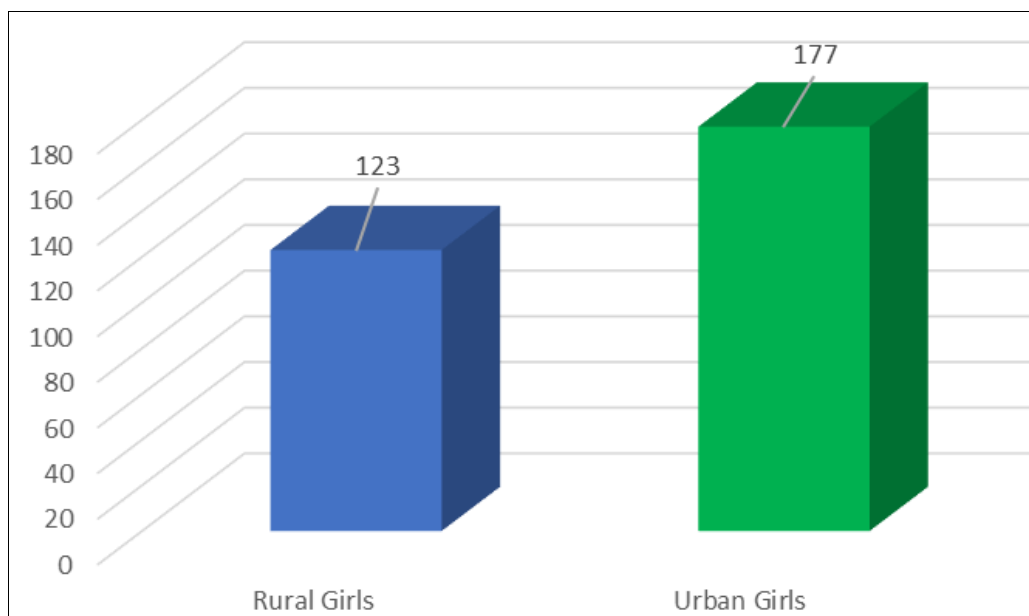


Fig 1: Distribution of Sample in terms of Locality of school

Design and Procedure

Descriptive survey method has been opted to collect data for achieving the objectives of this study. It is one of the important methods in Psychological and health science. The primary data were collected from Scheduled Tribe School going adolescent of Purulia district. For this study an “Awareness Camp” was conducted, a man made questionnaire was provided each scheduled tribe girls in this camp and therefore they participated. Then I have collected data from each camp. Total sample is 300. Two female social worker and two female teacher were present to facilitate to Awareness Camp. All participants are assure that the information provided by them will be kept confidential. The data procured from rating scale were

analyzed quantitatively.

Researcher used Descriptive statistics to calculate sample statistics like Mean, Standard Deviation, percentage, Pearson product moment correlation. To interpret data the researcher used Microsoft Excel 2007 and Website calculate.

Analysis and Interpretation

From the above Table No 2 it was found that the Correlation Co-efficient between Menstrual Hygiene Management and Women Empowerment of Adolescent Girls was 0.1328. For df= 298 table value ‘r’ at 0.05 and 0.01 levels are 0.1128 and 0.1480 respectively.

Table 2: Correlation between menstrual hygiene management and women empowerment in terms of adolescent girls.

Variable	Sample Size (N)	df	Mean	r-Value	Remarks
Menstrual Hygiene Management	300	298	127.46	0.1328*	Significant
Women Empowerment			107.63		

As the obtained 'r' value is larger than the table value of 0.05, so, 'r' value is significant at 0.05 levels. Hence, corresponding Null Hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. So, it can be interpreted that there exists significant positive relationship between Menstrual Hygiene Management and Women Empowerment of Adolescent Girls in Purulia District.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This study has highlighted the need of adolescent girls to have accurate and adequate information about menstruation and its appropriate management. In view of the vital role of the mothers, it is very important that the mother be armed with the correct and appropriate information on reproductive health, so that she can give this knowledge to her growing girl child. It is also essential for the teachers, who may not have the necessary skills to impart reproductive health education, including menstrual hygiene to their students. They have to be given requisite skills – usually through training or workshops. Much more efforts are needed to curb the misbeliefs and taboos among the adolescent school girls. There is a strong need to address issues like the restrictions which are imposed on or practiced by the scheduled tribe adolescent school girls in the rural and urban areas. Considering the lesser use of sanitary pads by the scheduled tribe adolescent girls, there is a need to mobilize adolescent girls to use sanitary pads. The reproductive health implications of menstruation and its management, and its effect on the quality of life which permeates school and other social activities are many for the adolescent school girls. These invariably call for an urgent address by all the stakeholders-family, school community, civil society, and service providers to entrench correct menstrual perceptions and to enable proper hygiene practices amongst this segment of the population.

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