

Assessment on the Menstrual Hygiene Management Practices and Societal Attitude Towards Menstruation and Menstruating Female Undergraduate Students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State

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Abstract:

This study examined the assessment on the menstrual hygiene management practices and societal attitude towards menstruation among female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri Imo State. The study adopted a cross-sectional study design involving Four hundred (400) female undergraduate between 16 and 35 years from Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri who were purposively selected. The instrument of study was a structured questionnaire administered to the study subjects. Data collected were presented using tables and bar charts and were presented as frequencies and percentages. The results of the study showed that 150 (37.5%) of the respondents strongly believe that societal attitude towards menstruation and menstruating female undergraduates students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede is low, and one hundred and fifty percent (37.5%) of the respondents agreed that menstrual hygiene management practices engaged by female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri is low. In conclusion, while there was a poor level of menstrual hygiene management practices among students.

Keywords: menstrual hygiene management practices; societal attitude towards; menstruation; menstruating female

Introduction

A crucial component of reproductive health is menstrual hygiene, which is the efficient control of menstrual bleeding by women and girls. Improper handling of this practice can result in vaginal thrust, pelvic inflammatory diseases, urinary tract infections, foul odour, soiled clothing, and ultimately embarrassment, which violates a girl's dignity [1]. The authorities in charge of the relevant sectors of water and sanitation, health, and education often overlook important conditions that are essential to comprehending the process. This includes being aware of menstrual hygiene, having the facilities needed, and having the right social and cultural setting to handle periods in a dignified and hygienic manner [2].

The relationship between menstrual hygiene and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is another crucial factor. Although it is a fact that actions that effectively address menstrual hygiene will directly contribute to MDG-7 on environmental sustainability, menstrual hygiene has received little recognition [3]. Menstrual hygiene also affects the environment since, in the absence of appropriate management techniques, it leads to a waste problem. Furthermore, poor menstrual hygiene may

significantly impede the achievement of MDG-2 on universal education and MDG-3 on gender equality and women's empowerment because of its indirect impact on gender disparity and school absenteeism [4]. But the problem is not being adequately addressed.

The physical infrastructure, socioeconomic circumstances, and traditional norms and beliefs all have an impact on menstruation behaviours. For instance, it is prohibited for women to cook or prepare food during their periods, so they must refrain from doing so in accordance with cultural customs. Rather, most women and girls utilise tissue of any kind, chitenges (traditional cotton shawls that African women wrap around their waists), or rags that are typically shredded from old blankets [5]. The cloths are used repeatedly and frequently washed without soap and with dangerous and insufficient water. Girls' right to privacy is fundamentally violated by gender-unfriendly general infrastructure, particularly in educational institutions, and the absence of suitable menstrual protection alternatives in the form of hygienic, secure, and private restrooms for girls in schools [6].

Adolescent females' and women's reproductive health, disease and infections, and a notably high proportion of school absences are all caused by some of the habits mentioned, particularly when combined with inadequate or ignorant understanding. [7]

Additionally, the process by which women and adolescent girls use a clean Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) material to absorb or collect blood that can be changed in private as often as necessary during the menstrual period, washing their bodies as needed with soap and water and having access to facilities to dispose of used MHM material is known as menstrual hygiene management. [8]

Nonetheless, schools have the potential to be significant locations for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). Girls may not be able to safely and hygienically manage their periods if they lack the necessary facilities, such as gender-segregated improved restrooms, a sufficient supply of safe water in schools for hand and clothing washing, a drying area, and sanitary menstrual supplies. [9]

These could lead to limited engagement in extracurricular activities like athletics and school cleanup, absenteeism, and a decreased ability to focus in class.

For females, the commencement of menstruation signifies sexual maturity; nonetheless, it did not encourage sexual behaviour prior to marriage. Mothers and teachers who were interviewed knew very little about the connection between the menstrual cycle and fertility. According to a number of girls, they were warned not to approach the lads while they were menstruating since they may become pregnant [10]. Young females who had sex were therefore more likely to be ignorant about the use of contraceptives, and this ignorance frequently led to unwanted pregnancies and STDs. This put both boys and girls at risk for unintended pregnancy and made them more likely to make poor sex-related decisions [11].

For girls who menstruate, rape or sexual harassment was highlighted as a potential danger. Men would occasionally treat girls as objects of sexual abuse after they began menstruation. Participants once more ascribed this to the cultural belief that girls who menstruate were considered adults who had acquired secondary sexual traits [12].

Menstruation was associated with the cessation of formal schooling in Kashna since it represented females' maturity and marital preparedness. This frequently resulted in the females leaving school to get married, although the other research locations did not show a correlation between early marriage and school dropout [13].

Moreover, hygiene is a collection of actions taken to maintain one's health. Many social, cultural, and religious constraints still surround menstruation and menstrual hygiene management, which creates significant obstacles. An individual between the ages of 10 and 19 is regarded as an adolescent. Adolescence is the time between childhood and maturity that is characterised by a child's growth and development. It has been said that the child's physical, psychological, and biological development takes place during this time. It is acknowledged as a unique stage of a girl's life that calls for extra care. A woman's menarche, which signifies the beginning of her reproductive period, is a significant biological milestone in her life [14].

Menarche is also a female adolescent's first menstrual event. The typical age at menarche, which is between 12 and 13 years old, is largely constant across the population. Unfortunately, the situation worsens for girls because of ignorance about menstruation preparation and management or because of shyness and shame [15].

Girls frequently felt constrained in their ability to perform everyday tasks, which led to their social isolation from their peers and their inability to engage in particular activities like running, jumping, and manual labour.

Typically talkative girls also become quieter in class and are unable to engage in the typical activities. Other times, the girls were said to exhibit mood swings and to be recalcitrant in their social interactions and in class [16].

To lower the risk of infections and body odour, women who are menstruation are suggested to replace their absorbent materials at least three times a day and take a bath at least twice a day. To increase their haemoglobin level, they should consume foods high in iron and other vitamins [17].

Lack of information, communication, and helpful advice before menarche and during menstruation are the main causes of the difficulties faced by schoolgirls. Parents, particularly mothers and siblings, should address these issues before they reach adulthood because informal education at home is the fundamental basis for learning [18].

To prevent odours, illnesses, and embarrassment, women who are menstruation should dispose of their used materials in a dustbin and cover it with a lid. Individual differences in menstrual parameters are significant. Menstruation typically happens every 23 days, give or take 5 to 10 days. The cycle interval can be changed by both physical and emotional reasons, including illness, extreme exhaustion, worry or anxiety, and strenuous activity. The cycle may also be impacted by certain environmental variables like height and temperature. The average blood loss during a menstrual cycle is between 30 and 80 millilitres, and the average iron loss is between 0.5 and 1 mg each day [19]. Menstruation lasts between 2 and 8 days. Gynaecological malignancies also cause changes in menstrual flow or length at menopause. Menstrual flows rise in circumstances of endometriosis, fibroids, and polyps, and anaemia can result from excessive blood loss during menstruation. Blood mixed with fluid, cervical and vaginal secretions, bacteria, mucus, leucocytes, and other cellular debris make up the monthly discharge, commonly known as the menses or menstrual flow. The menstrual discharge has a characteristic smell and is dark crimson in colour [20].

Every woman has a different menstrual flow, which can occur roughly at the start of her period or roughly throughout her cycle. Hormonal fluctuations, as well as a person's food, lifestyle, age, and surroundings, can all affect the colour of their menstrual fluid, which can range from crimson to brilliant red to dark brown to black. Period fluids may or may not be present. not have an offensive smell, particularly when exposed to air [21].

Access to feminine hygiene products that absorb or collect period blood, seclusion for changing the materials, and facilities for disposing of discarded menstrual management materials are all important aspects of managing menstrual hygiene. contributed to the idea that managing menstrual hygiene is a problem that affects all girls. must cope with from the time she enters puberty till menopause. Effective management of menstrual bleeding is crucial for women to lead healthy, productive, and respectable lives. This calls for availability to suitable water sanitation and hygiene services as well as absorbent material to soak menstrual blood. Girls must Throughout their menstrual cycle, they should change their sanitary napkins frequently, particularly during the first two to three days. Women's hygiene habits during their periods are very important since they have a significant impact on their health by making them more susceptible to infections of the reproductive system. Dasgupta and Sarka (2018). Most ladies are naturally anxious during their periods because they are ill-prepared [22]. Despite this, societal standards and some cultural demands from the community might be a strain. The girl youngster gets confused as a result, either at home or at school. The consequences of this misunderstanding could hinder the girl child's ability to learn, which would undermine her motivation for attending school [23].

Menstrual hygiene management is very important since it affects health and can result in vaginal disorders, reproductive tract infections, and toxic shock syndrome if ignored. Adolescent health is adversely affected by poor genital

hygiene. Because they are not well-informed about menstruation, the majority of girls are unprepared for menarche. In Nigeria, over 87% of schoolgirls have been reported to experience menstrual issues. Women are affected by menstruation in a variety of ways, including physiological, emotional, and physical. Girls' performance and attendance at school may be impacted by some of these issues. Menstrual issues can occasionally be the result of underlying issues that require medical attention. In many communities, menstruation problems receive less attention than other health services. As a result, even in our nation, females employ a variety of strategies to deal with their issues, including as using over-the-counter drugs, herbs, and concussions. Professionals in the fields of health, education, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) have all neglected menstrual hygiene management challenges. Uncertainty surrounds the exact diseases, the severity of the effects, and the mode of transmission, while poor management of menstrual hygiene may have an impact on reproduction [24].

For girls and women in developing nations, where access to clean water and sanitary facilities is frequently limited, managing menstrual hygiene can be especially difficult. Furthermore, it is challenging to have an open conversation about menstruation in traditional cultures. This restricts women's and adolescent girls' access to pertinent and significant information regarding the typical bodily processes. Their dignity and health education are directly impacted by this. One could argue that information access is a human right. Many teenage girls and women who are menstruation come from low-income families. During menstruation and childbirth, the absence of easily accessible, safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (Wash) is especially concerning [25].

Every woman of reproductive age has to deal with the problem of menstrual hygiene, and female undergraduate students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri Imo State lack adequate knowledge about reproductive health in general and the menstrual cycle in particular, as well as the physical and psychological changes that come with puberty.

Due to a lack of awareness regarding the management of menstrual hygiene, female undergraduate students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede continue to report cases of Pelvic Inflammatory Diseases (PID) [26].

Due to a lack of awareness and understanding, millions of women and adolescent girls in developing and less developed nations are battling issues

related to inadequate menstrual hygiene practices. Despite all of the health education and information they received at the Federal Polytechnic Nekede, female undergraduate students continue to report infections such as vaginal thrush/candidiasis, pelvic inflammatory disorders, and upper urinary tract infections as a result of inadequate management of their monthly hygiene.

Materials and Method

Research Design

An explorative study design was used to look into the perceptions, practices, and experiences of female undergraduate students associated with menstrual hygiene management.

Setting

The Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri is a federal government polytechnic located in Owerri West-local government area in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical approval was obtained from the ministry of Health, Imo State. The interview was conducted in a manner that felt comfortable for the respondents at their choice places and time to avoid discomfort. Business workers rather prefer their places of work time periods, which was strictly obeyed and followed. The same procedure was done among undergraduate female students in their institution. Also, confidentiality was a key priority to this study, so to ensure this, pseudo names were used and their consent were sought before tape recording them. All the transcribing was done by the researcher.

Population of the Study

The study participants were girl's undergraduate students from the Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State.

Inclusion Criteria: Respondents must be residents of the Owerri West L.G.A from Federal Polytechnic Nekede, between the ages of 16-35 years.

Exclusion Criteria: People who were excluded from the study were those who were not residents of Owerri West L.G.A from Federal Polytechnic Nekede male, pregnant mothers, and those above reproductive age.

Faculty	Population	Sample size
School of Engineering Technology (SET)	15,000	100
School of industrial and Applied Science (SIAS)	10,000	50
School of Business Management Technology (SBMT)	5,000	50
School of Environmental Design and Technology (SEDt)	5,000	50
School of General Studies (SGS)	5,000	50
School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology (SAAT)	5,000	50
School of information and communication Technology (SICT)	5,000	50
TOTAL	50,000	400

Distribution of female students in different faculties within Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri.

Calculation of sample size using Yamane's formular

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (N(e)^2)}$$

$$I + (N(e)^2)$$

n = Sample size

N = population

e = acceptable sampling error (0.05)

$$n = 50,000$$

$$I + 50,000 (0.05)^2$$

$$N = 400$$

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Out of 50,000 female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State, 400 students were selected for the study. the sampling criterion for this study was not about numbers, but about informants who could provide indept and rich information about experiences and meanings of the phenomenon of menstruation. Furthermore, a maximum variation sampling strategy was adopted meaning that the girls were divided into two

groups: one group comprising of 16 to 18 years old girl (without much experience), and the other one's from 19-35 years (with more experience).

The separation into age groups was meant to help especially the 16 to 18 years old girls to discuss more freely among themselves and with the researcher than it would have been possible if they had been merged with the older girls who might have dominated or even intimidated them.

Instruments for data collection:

Relevant information used for this study was collected through the use of structured questionnaire and interview of the students to find out the level of awareness of menstrual hygiene management practice among female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State.

Validity of the instrument

Validity in a research study deals with the truth of an interpretation, meaning the instrument's credibility. The questionnaire instrument was subjected to face to face validation by the supervisor and two experts from the department of measurement and evaluation in Imo State University Owerri, and this was done to make the questionnaire more effective and efficient in measuring what it is intended to measure. For the purpose of ensuring proper validation, the experts

from measurement and evaluation were given the questionnaire together with the "Objectives of the study" and "Research Questions".

Reliability of instrument

A test retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument and identify any problems that may be encountered during administration. Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were administered in a face – to – face basic to different people for the sample and the same administered to same individuals after 14 days. The two results remain consistent showing high positive correlation.

Method of data collection

The data of this study were collected through the aid of structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, and this was done to ensure a speedy return of the questionnaires as well as the need to prevent a loss of it.

Statistical analysis

In this research, the data were analyzed through the use of percentage frequency method. The purpose of using percentage frequency method is to simplify the problems of comparison and helps to show qualitative characteristics in numerical forms.

Results

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid strongly agreed	150	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%
Agreed	100	25%	25%	25%
Undecided	30	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%
Disagreed	70	17.5%	17.5%	17.5%
Strongly disagreed	50	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Assessment on the societal attitude towards menstruation and menstruating female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State

Source: field survey, October 2022

Table 1 shows the responses of respondents on assessment on the societal attitude towards menstruation and menstruating female undergraduate student of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State is low. 150 of the respondents representing 37.5 percent strongly agreed that societal attitude towards menstruation and menstruating female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri is low. 100 of the respondents

representing 25 percent agreed that societal attitude towards menstruation and menstruating female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri is low. 30 respondents representing 7.5 percent of the population were undecided. 70 of the respondents representing 17.5 percent of the population disagreed while the remaining 50 of the respondents representing 12.5 percent of the population strongly disagreed.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid strongly agreed	100	25%	25%	25%
Agreed	150	37.5%	37.5%	37.5%
Undecided	30	7.5%	7.5%	7.5%
Disagreed	50	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
Strongly disagreed	70	17.5%	17.5%	17.5%
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Menstrual hygiene management practices engaged by female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State

Source: field survey, October 2022

Table 2 show the responses of respondents on menstrual hygiene management practices engaged by female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri is low. 100 of the respondents representing 25 percent strongly agreed that the menstrual hygiene management practices engaged by female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri is low. 150 of the respondents representing 37.5 percent agreed that the menstrual hygiene management practices engaged by female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri is low. 30 of

the respondents representing 7.5 percent were undecided. 50 of the respondents representing 12.5 percent disagreed, while the remaining 70 of the respondents 17.5 percent strongly disagreed.

Discussion

The societal attitudes towards menstruation and menstruating female undergraduate students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri Imo State were evaluated in this study. According to Table 1, 150 (37.5%) of the participants strongly agreed that society views had an impact on

menstruation and women who are menstrual, while 100 (25%), 70 (17.5%), 50 (12.5%), and 30 (7.5%) were indifferent. This is in line with [27], who showed that coming-of-age or puberty rituals based on a combination of myths, misconceptions, superstition, and taboos are prevalent. They also disclosed that ritual practices, cultural issues, and behavioural caution towards males were prevalent, but that little information was given regarding the physiological process of menstruation, let alone menstrual hygiene. Initiation was and is still the most common ceremony, whether it is due to traditional culture or a lack of sanitary facilities and services.

The 50 (12.5%) study participants who agreed that societal attitudes have no bearing on managing menstrual hygiene should educate and offer advice on the taboos and misconceptions that affect these practices, as they are at risk from a lack of practical knowledge and information on menstrual hygiene.

Additionally, 150 (37.5%) of the respondents agreed, 100 (25%), and 70 (17.5%) strongly disagreed with the menstrual hygiene management practices used by female undergraduate students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State, while 50 (12.5%) and 30 (7.5%) disagreed and were undecided, respectively.

This is consistent with the findings of [28], who stated that a large number of girls, particularly those living in rural regions, frequently used toilet paper and rags as absorbent materials. These could include infection-causing organisms, making them a potential source of pelvic and urinary tract infections. Additionally, it was confirmed that there is a higher chance of cervix infections due to vaginal infections, which opens the door for germs to enter the uterus and pelvic cavity [29, 30].

According to 70 (17.5%) of the participants, female undergraduate students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri were unaware of the phenomena, underscoring the significance of understanding menstruation and the menstrual process. These groups should be better informed about menstruation and menstrual hygiene, which should be practiced from an early age, because they are susceptible to infertility and reproductive tract infections [31].

Conclusion

The Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri in Imo State was the site of an exploratory qualitative investigation. The researcher also conducted a thorough literature study. Throughout the investigation, the study's results were contrasted with and evaluated against those of the literature, which focusses on other developing nations, namely in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. One of the study's key findings was that girls are not given equitable treatment when it comes to meeting their menstrual hygiene needs. Many homes were like this as well. According to the study, girls who menstruate have numerous difficulties. Adolescent females find it challenging to control their periods and uphold proper menstrual hygiene. According to this survey, menstruation hygiene was frequently seen negatively by female college students. Discrimination and taboos around menstruation shaped the views of female undergraduate students.

It was clear that a significant percentage of female undergraduate students engaged in risky behaviours during their periods, indicating that their attitudes regarding menstrual hygiene were typically negative.

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