

Menstrual hygiene management knowledge, facilities, and practices associated with school absence among Bangladeshi adolescent girls

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Introduction

- Schools in low-income countries often do not provide appropriate facilities for menstrual hygiene management
- Lack of facilities at schools may impact attendance among menstruating girls
- Globally there is limited evidence that school menstrual hygiene management facilities impact attendance among menstruating girls

Objectives

- To examine the association of menstrual hygiene management knowledge, facilities, and practices with school absence during menstruation among Bangladeshi school girls

Methods

- **Study type:** A cross-sectional, nationally representative school survey in Bangladesh
- **Sampling:** 700 schools from 50 urban and 50 rural clusters using probability proportional to size sampling
- **Interviewed:** 2,332 school girls (11 to 17 years old) who had reached menarche were interviewed from March to June 2013
- Asked to report whether they usually miss class during menstruation
- Asked to estimate the average duration (in days) of absence during each menstruation cycle
- **Spot check at schools:**
 - toilet access and condition
 - gender-specific improved toilet for girls with soap, water, and trash bin

Methods

- **Statistical analysis:** Determined association between school absence and 1) menstrual hygiene management facilities at schools, 2) practices among students and 3) knowledge
- Adjusted for possible confounders: education and age
- Used generalized estimating equations to control for school level clustering

Results

- **School absence:** 40% (931) reported missing school during menstruation for an average of three school days each menstrual cycle
- **School facilities:** 82% (1,906) thought that school facilities were not appropriate for managing menstrual hygiene
- 12% (291) of school girls had access to gender-specific toilets with water and soap available
- Only 3% (70) of school girls had a trash bin inside toilets

Table 1: Factors associated with absence among school girls during menstruation in Bangladesh, 2013

Indicators	School absence n/N (%)	APD* (CI) %
Feel uncomfortable at school during menstruation		
Yes	778/1343 (60)	
No	153/989 (15)	43 (35, 50)
Feel uncomfortable sitting beside boys during menstruation		
Yes	765/1363 (56)	
No	166/969 (17)	41 (33, 48)
Believe menstrual hygiene interferes with school performance		
Yes	480/756 (63)	
No	451/1576 (29)	36 (29, 44)
Believe menstruation is an illness		
Yes	115/229 (50)	
No	816/2103 (39)	10 (4, 17)

* Adjusted prevalence difference for age and education

Results

- **Student's knowledge and practice:** 64% of the 2,332 school girls did not know about menstruation before menarche
- Only 10% school girls used disposable pad as absorbent during menstruation
- Urban school girls were more likely to use disposable pad than rural school girls (21% vs. 9%, $p < 0.001$)

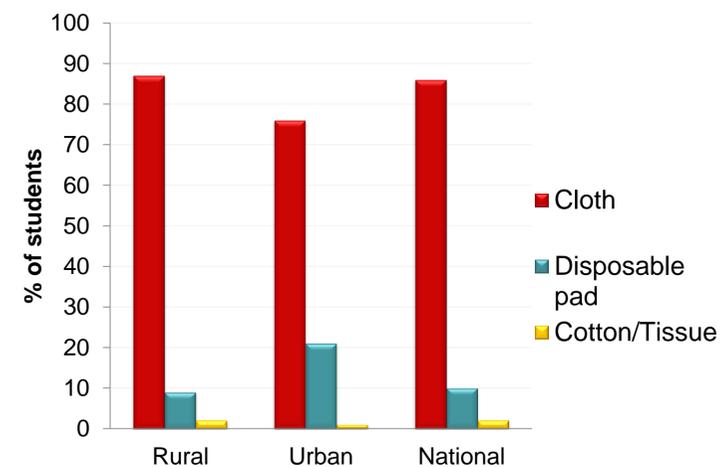


Figure 1: Materials used during menstruation by school girls in Bangladesh.



Figure 2: Typical girls' toilet at school. Note lack of trash bin

Conclusion

- School absence during menstruation is a significant problem
- School absence was associated with beliefs about menstruation, discomfort during menstruation and lack of school menstrual hygiene management facilities

Recommendation

- Schools should provide toilet for girls that are hygienic, ensure privacy, water, soap and trash bins
- Conduct studies to better understand beliefs and norms about menstruation, and issues related to discomfort at school

References

References

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