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Research Article

Menstrual Hygiene Management - Awareness and Sustainable options with special reference to Kirti College, Mumbai

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Abstract:

Menstruation is the vaginal bleeding that occurs when the lining of uterus sheds. Adolescent girls and women face many physical and psychological and social issues in life with respect to menstruation. Inadequate Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) can lead to a range of health problems, including urinary tract infections, reproductive tract infections and menstrual-related disorders. Furthermore, societal stigma and taboos surrounding menstruation can perpetuate shame, embarrassment and low self-esteem among women and girls. This research explores the barriers, practices and perceptions surrounding MHM, focusing on the role of education, infrastructure and cultural norms. This study highlights the need for integrated interventions, including the provision of affordable menstrual products, such as sanitary pads, menstrual cup, awareness about dysmenorrhea and educational programs targeting both genders. Menstrual hygiene and Primary dysmenorrhea are interconnected issues that significantly affect the health, education and productivity of menstruating individuals. Dysmenorrhea characterised by crampy pain in abdomen, lower back along with other associated symptoms which differ widely. Earlier studies have clearly shown prevalence of Primary dysmenorrhea which varies widely from 16.8 to 81 % worldwide.

Keywords: Menstrual Hygiene Management, Awareness, Sustainable Options, Menstrual Health

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Introduction:

Menstruation is a natural biological process that occurs every month in women of reproductive age. It is characterised by shedding of uterine lining, resulting in vaginal bleeding. The Menstrual Cycle is regulated by various hormones and involves several phases. It is of 28 – 30 days. The first day of bleeding marks the start of the cycle and it is followed by ovulation, where an egg is released from the ovary. If fertilization does not occur, the uterine lining sheds, starting the next cycle. Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), a crucial aspect of women's health. In this project authors have explored complexities, environmental impact, common challenges and highlighted sustainable options for menstruation.

Objectives :

1. To educate girls and boys to understand and provide accurate information on Menstruation Hygiene Management (MHM) practices using sustainable sanitary products, washing hands, maintaining hygiene and use of incinerator for sanitary waste disposal
2. Encourage boys to be supportive to the girls in menstruation and help to create a positive and respectful environment.
3. To break the silence and stigma related to menstruation and create a safe and supportive environment where both girls and boys feel comfortable to discuss it.

Literature review :

Girls & women face many physical, social issues in life with respect to menstruation. Good Menstrual Hygiene Management [MHM] is basic human right. Out of various sanitary products, Sanitary napkins are easily available and are at low cost. These disposable pads have devastating effect on environment. In INDIA 1.2 billion pads are disposed monthly, leading to 1 lakh 13 thousand tones of menstrual waste annually. These used sanitary pads goes in sewage landfills and water bodies creating environmental problems. (1). National family health survey no.5 says 90.2 % urban women use sanitary pads during menstruation. (2) Dysmenorrhea (painful menses) is a common gynaecological problem whose prevalence varies widely from 16.8 to 81 percent %. Pain occurs mainly due to the prostaglandin production leading to abnormal myometrium contractions of uterus. Non steroidal anti inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) is commonly used for relieving pain by girls via self medication. Many girls also seek natural remedies. There is a need for overall improvement for social approach to menstruation along with inclusion of menstrual awareness in school, colleges. (3) Sustainable development goal (SDG) 6.2 acknowledges, Right to Menstrual Health and Hygiene. Unhygienic sanitation makes girls sustainable to urinary tract infection. Lack of understanding about menstruation may lead to early and unwanted pregnancy. Inadequate WASH facilities (WATER SANITATION AND HYGIENE) is a major obstacle in progress of girls and women. (4)

Material Methods :

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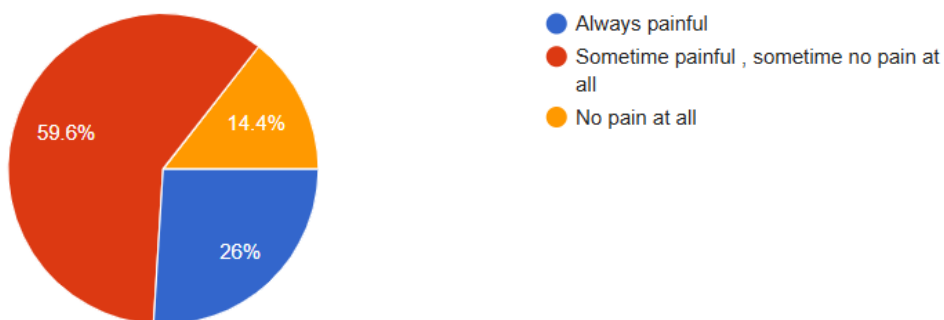
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The data was collected by sharing two different Gender base Google forms to degree College students (Age group of 18-23 years) and data was analysed. Participant's consent was taken and anonymity and confidentiality of Survey was maintained.

Results –

Girl's Observations :

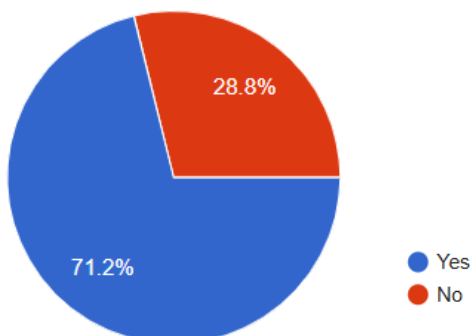
1) Do you suffer in painful menstruation (Dysmenorrhea)



2) Awareness about the Pre Menstrual Symptoms (PMS)



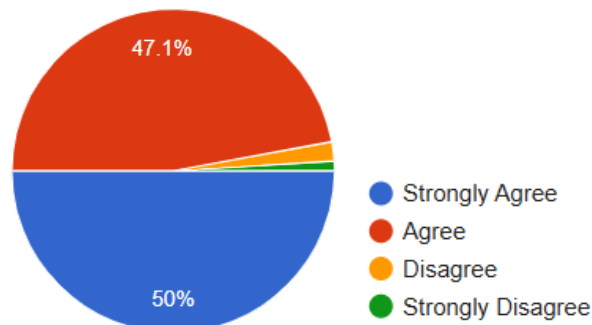
3) Awareness about Biodegradable pads and use of Incinerator



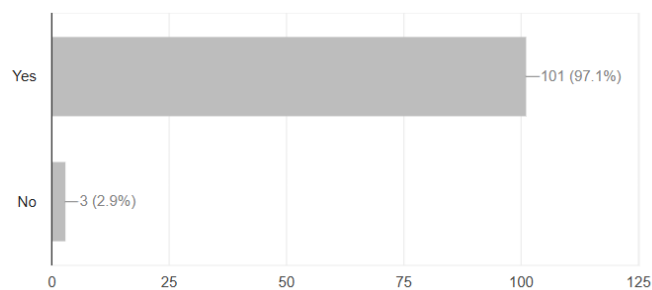
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4) We all throw the used wrapped pads in dustbins . Do you know incinerator - a type of furnace which burns the biomedical waste ? Do you think its needed to be used by municipal waste collectors and Schools, colleges , institutions, and work places to avoid pollution caused by dumping in land and water masses

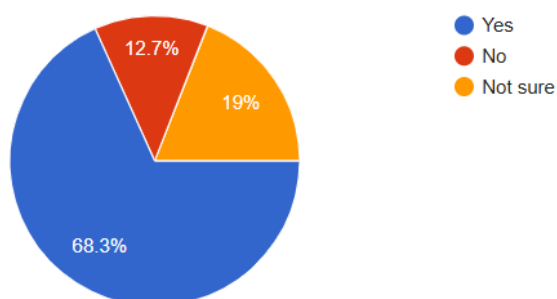


5) Comfortable to discuss about their menses



Boys

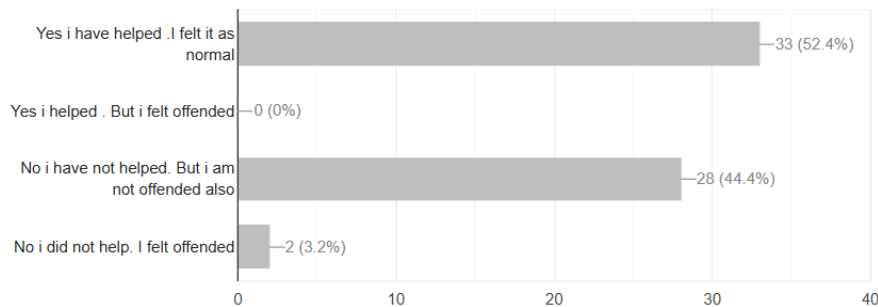
1) Do you understand what is menstruation (Biological Phenomenon)



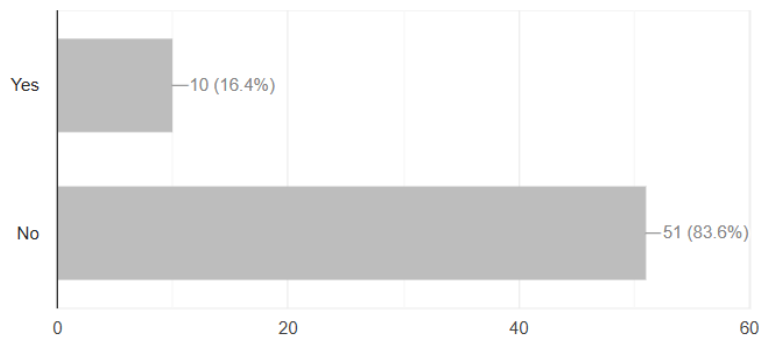
2) Ever helped anyone procure sanitary pads

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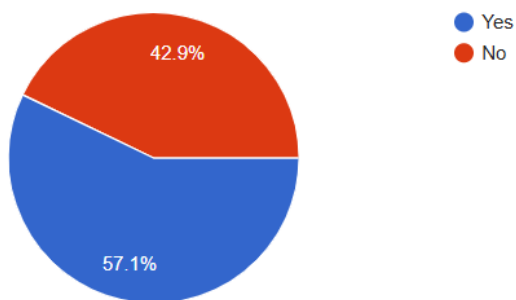
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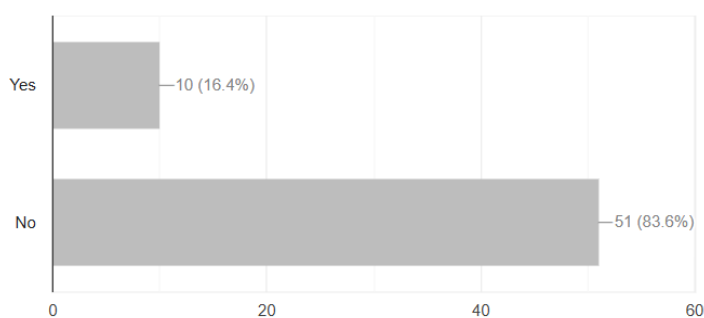
3)What do you feel about menstruating women/ girls are they impure or unholy and should they not be allowed for pujas or cooking



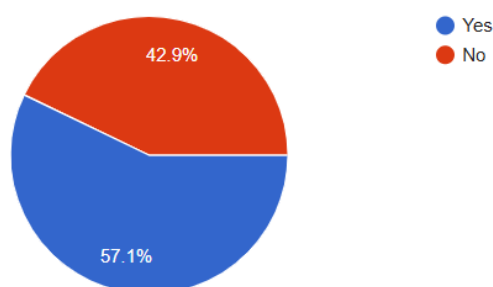
4)Do you talk about menstruation in your household or with your friends ?



5)What do you feel about menstruating women/ girls are they impure or unholy and should they not be allowed for pujas or cooking



6)Do you talk about menstruation in your household or with your friends ?

**Girl's Questionnaire Response Summary :****1. How do you maintain hygiene during menstruation ?**

During menstruation, women prioritize hygiene by regularly changing pads, bathing, and keeping the private areas clean. These practices are essential for ensuring proper hygiene and preventing infections during the menstrual period.

2. How do you manage the pain associated with the periods ?

Every woman experiences different levels of pain during menstruation. According to our data, some girls distract themselves by indulging in some activities, use of hot water bags, painkillers and doing butterfly exercises, following home remedies. Additionally, some women ensure they get sufficient sleep and rest.

3. Do you use pain killer or over the counter medicine to reduce or relieve pain experienced during the periods ?

We found 82% of participants do not take painkiller, while 18% use painkiller during their periods. Based on our observations, paracetamol and Dolo tablets are the most commonly used.

4. What you think about the Taboo and Stigma of discussing menstruation in public ?

According to our observation 45% girls can discuss about menstruation openly in public. While 28% girls responded that they are not able to openly discuss about menstruation in public, while the remaining 27% girls were not sure about discussing menstruation in public.

5. Do you face discrimination during periods. If yes then what kind of discrimination? If it's faith based do you oppose or support such notion?

According to our observations nearly 30% girls face discrimination while 70% did not face any.

6. Do you know how does menstruation occurs ?

35.5% girls knew the biological reason for the occurrence of menstruation and 29% girls didn't know. Around 35.55% girls were not sure about it.

Boy's Questionnaire Response Summary :**1. Why is it important for boys to understand about menstruation?**

Many responds feel It is very important for boys to understand menstruation, in order to breakdown the stereotypes of patriarchy. This will promote Gender equality, empathy and awareness about menstrual hygiene management

2. How would you support your friend or family member during their period?

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Almost all the boys were willing to help, but most of them weren't clear how to. Some good suggestions were lessening physical strain of menstruating individual by sharing the workload, giving them space for mental well-being, providing small reliefs such as dark chocolate, carom seeds and hot bags for cramps, abdomen and lower back pain.

Discussion :

While only 35.5% girls understood the biological basis of menstruation, about 64.5 % lack proper knowledge. Many in this group believe it is simply normal vaginal bleeding without understanding its biological significance. Raising awareness about menstruation is crucial to ensure better understanding and to promote health and well-being.

The experience of menstrual pain varies greatly among women. While some feel little to no pain, others experience significant discomfort. Many women manage the pain with home remedies, like using a hot water bag, while others may rely on painkillers for severe pain. In addition to physical discomfort, some women also face emotional challenges during menstruation, including mood swings, cravings, and irritability. Understanding these variations highlights the importance of addressing individual needs and promoting awareness about effective management strategies for menstrual health.

We found in this survey almost 32% boys were not familiar about menstruation and 43 % boys were not open to talk about menstruation. Thus educating them about the basics of menstruation is crucial for building a society where women feel respected. By understanding menstruation in their early learning stage boys can become supportive and advocates for menstrual health.

Conclusion :

Menstruation may be inconvenient for some women. But for million other this natural reproductive function can be abusive, leading to missed opportunities and loss of dignity and hygiene. Good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) improves health, gives confidence and self esteem to women. From this survey we conclude following

1. 35.% Girls knew the biological phenomenon of Menstruation while almost 65 % were not aware or sure about it
2. Almost 26 % girls suffer dysmenorrhea , about 60 % are aware of premenstrual symptoms.
3. Most girls use plastic sanitary napkins, but 71 % of them they were aware about biodegradable pads .
4. Many girls prioritize about their menstrual hygiene and engage in various ways to manage pain.
5. Only 18 percent girls use painkillers .
6. Only 45 % girls can discuss openly in public while remaining 55% were not sure and or never open about menstruation.
7. Almost 32 % boys were not aware or sure about menstruation.
8. 52 % boys have helped someone in procurement of sanitary pads .
9. 84% boys do not consider menstruating women as impure / unholy as practised earlier.
10. 43% boys are not open to talk about menstruation.

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11. Almost all boys were willing to help but most of them were not clear how to.

Future Plan:

Based on the collected data, we are introducing some future plans to enhance our research

- We can cover a wider range of age groups for MHM awareness like higher secondary schools and junior college students.
- Gather data from rural population to ensure broader representation.
- Collect additional data to strengthen our findings

Acknowledgement: We are grateful to Dr. Subhash Donde for guiding us for Statistical Analysis of Data

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