
Effects Of Menstruation On Academic Performance Of TeenageGirls In Rugombe Town Council, Kyenjojo District.

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Abstract

Many studies have been conducted on menstrual hygiene all over the world. However, Menstrual Hygiene Management remains the problem amongst the adolescents especially in the rural low- income countries like Uganda, particularly in its relation to school absenteeism. This study examined the effect of menstruation on academic performance among teenage girls within Rugombe Town council, Kyenjojo District. The study focused on three specific objectives namely, to assess the effects of menstrual cramps on the academic performance of the girls, to determine the hygiene management skills in relation to academic performance and lastly to explore the social and infrastructure support system about menstruation that affect their academic performance. A simple random sampling method was employed in which three purposively selected rural public primary schools namely: Rwentuuha primary school, Buhemba primary school and Buhemba primary school, both are mixed oriented schools. The sampled data consisted of 40 female students aged between 9-11 and 110 students aged between 11-15 using a structured questionnaire. The SPSS was used to analyze the data with the aid of descriptive analysis to analyze the qualitative data collected. The study found out that at menarche it was so challenging considering some did not understand the changes. Some experienced fear and embarrassment since they lacked early training, lack of support system, money to purchase sanitary towels and lack of accurate information about menstruation both at home and in school. The study recommends that there should be early education to inform the girls. The girls should be empowered to appreciate their natural girlhood because it is their human nature. It further recommends that there should be an urgent need of breaking the silence on menstruation.

Keywords: Menstruation, Academic Performance and TeenageGirls

Background of the study

Menstruation is a special phase that every girl goes through unless otherwise (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). It is the periodic discharge of menstruation: the flow of blood and cells from the endometrium in human women (Richard, 2022a). At best it is merely chaotic, but at worst it is a major limiting factor, with severe pain or heavy bleeding limiting teenagers' studies and social life (Edgar & Moses, 2023). Menstruation also has the most studied menstrual cycle known as the premenstrual phase; period just before menstruation (Anthony, Kazaara, Kazaara, et al., 2023).

Adolescence goes hand in hand with menstruation and is said to be a special period in the life cycle especially in the life of girls (Richard, 2022b). This period of adolescence is marked by the onset of menarche; the onset of menstruation, the beginning of the menstrual period (Joventa et al., 2023). So this beginning is coupled with other funny practices like using sand, leaves, dirty piece of clothing etc. which at some point lead to adverse health outcomes that also impact their academic performance?

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According to (Joventa et al., 2023), menstrual hygiene management is a globally recognized problem, especially in low-income rural countries. The United Nations International Children's Fund for Emergencies (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023) reports that one in 10 African adolescent girls miss school during menstruation or even decide to leave school at puberty due to the lack of private hygiene facilities in schools, (Victor et al., 2023). Knowing that menstruation is a normal and healthy phenomenon, as well as knowing how to manage it, can increase self-esteem and confidence in these teenagers. Teachers, parents, and peers should foster an environment that is more supportive of these adolescents (Frank et al., 2023).

The school environment should consist of school buildings with all indoor and outdoor facilities and services that are located in a given social and environmental context as stated by (Victoria et al., 2023). (Christopher et al., 2022) found that more than half of schools in low-income countries lack adequate latrines for menstruating girls, making it very difficult for girls to practice personal hygiene in private, which means ignoring their human dignity (Richard, 2022a) . It states that there are some structural factors in schools that affect the academic success of the adolescent girl (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023). These factors include: availability of sanitation systems, basic water, curriculum, dormitories, sewage, clothing, views on menstruation and school discipline and policies (Victor et al., 2023).

Therefore, adolescents around the world manage menstruation differently depending on the cultural, social, and economic context (Anthony, Kazaara, & Kazaara, 2023). In a Zimbabwean setting, culture was found to influence premenstrual and menstrual experiences, where their women reported accepting these menstrual changes (Alex et al., 2023). Adolescents usually hid the onset of their periods from other people and chose to skip school due to fear and embarrassment of menstrual leakage (Godfrey et al., 2023). (Winny, Kazaara, et al., 2023) reported that girls continue to face several challenges when trying to manage menstruation due to things like taboos, norms and practices that affect girls' education.

Problem Statement

The issue of menstruation is mostly ignored or unnecessarily misunderstood mainly due to taboos and misconceptions about socio-cultural factors that usually prevent women from articulating their needs (Micheal et al., 2023).

The issue of sanitary napkins needs to be taken into consideration as it is now a challenge. In India, according to (Yudaya & Aggrey, 2023), it was investigated that young adolescent girls used reusable cloths during menstruation if they were not provided with pads in schools (Godfrey et al., 2023). Some of them could not access them due to shyness to buy pads in stores, financial constraints and unavailability of pads indoors, which made teenagers feel uncomfortable in school and not focus on their teachers (Micheal et al. , 2023). Several studies have been conducted, ranging from providing free sanitary pads, menstrual awareness, to focusing on structural and environmental factors in relation to girls' academic achievement (Victoria et al., 2023). Some related to adolescent girls' health, disposal facilities, attitudes and perceptions of menstruation. Although some mothers try to educate their daughters about

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menstruation management. (Mark et al., 2023) reported that menstruation resulted in many problems such as socio-cultural and economic constraints that interfere with a girl's ability to attend school and actively participate in the classroom. Lack of sanitary products and problems related to menstruation according to (Nelson, 2024) were barriers for the girl in schooling that led to academic performance. In addition, popular media reported that menstruation reduces school attendance (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). For these reasons, the study sought to investigate the effects of menstruation on academic performance in primary school adolescent girls in Rugombe Municipal Council, Kyenjojo District (Winny, Ariyo et al., 2023).

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the hygiene management skills towards menstruation in relation to academic performance.
2. To assess the effects of menstrual cramps on their academic performance.
3. To explore the social and infrastructure support systems about menstruation towards academic performance.

Methodology

A cross-sectional study was conducted by the researcher to find out the amount of knowledge of these adolescent girls regarding menstruation, which was a problem, and the only participants were adolescent girls aged 9-15 years (Nafiu et al., 2012). Specifically, the researcher based the study in Rugombe Town Council, Kyenjojo District. Population refers to the larger group from which a population sample is derived (Anwar et al., 2022). The researcher focused on girls in the age group of 9-15 years who were regular primary school students in Rugombe Town Council, Kyenjojo District who were randomly selected (Olanrewaju & Abiodun, 2021). Rugombe Municipal Council has a total of 67 primary schools, both public and private (Julius, 2024). The researcher used purposive, simple random sampling. An expedient method as schools in interior Rugombe suffer from the highest percentage of menstrual related hygiene and sanitation (Olanrewaju et al., 2021a). Simple random selection because this particular method helped give an equal chance to everyone who was selected and became a subject. A sample size of 150 pupils participated in the study as respondents in total and selected proportionally (Jallow et al., 2021). These were mainly girls from the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades who started menstruating.

The researcher used semi-structured questionnaires that were given to the respondents to give them the freedom to express their opinion about menstruation. Respondents were allowed to express themselves freely to make the project successful (Jallow et al., 2022). Questionnaires (Appendix 2) administered by the researcher were used as data collection tools in the study. Both closed and open items were used in the questionnaire. According to (Aslam et al., 2022), Validity is the most critical criterion and indicates the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), validity is a measure of relevance and correctness. It is the accuracy and meaningfulness of the conclusions that are based on the research results. Validity was therefore ensured by including objective questions in the questionnaire (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). A measure of reliability is

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an indicator of the stability and consistency with which an instrument measures a concept. It has to do with the accuracy and precision of the measurement procedure.

The researcher measured the reliability of the questionnaire to determine its consistency in testing what they are supposed to measure (Olanrewaju et al., 2021b). A test-retest technique was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments. It involved administering the same test twice to the same group of respondents, who were identified for this purpose by the first administration of the test to the respondents, and applied the test a second time after 2 days. The researcher obtained the analysis by entering the collected data into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 (Nelson et al., 2022). SPSS was used to run statistics such as frequency and percentage to present quantitative data in the form of tables and pie charts on the main research questions and objectives (Nelson et al., 2023).

RESULTS

TABLE 1: HOW DO YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR UNDERWEAR?

		Frequency	Percent
	wash and expose to sun	20	10.0
Valid	wash and hide	100	80.0
	hide and discard	30	10.0
	Total	150	150.0

The researcher found out that 100% wash their inner wears and hide them since they are afraid to expose out for people might see in which the stains do remain on them. Some decide to hide them because they feel shy when people get to know that they have started menstruating. 30% prefer to hide and discard later since they cannot afford to wash them and the remaining 20% know how to handle the situation by washing and exposing the pants under the sun for the bacteria to die.

TABLE 2: IS IT IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN MENSTRUAL HYGIENE?

		Frequency	Percent
	yes	100	90.0
Valid	no	50	10.0
	Total	150	150.0

Many of them know and understand the importance of maintaining menstrual hygiene hence they do observe it appropriately. 50% of them need to be taught because they do not take hygiene as a serious act. This is because the

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area they come from one is not supposed to talk about menstruation in public, you are not supposed to share the items used by others like soap, basin, cans etc. hence there is no one to teach them what directions to take.

TABLE 3: WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DIFFICULTIES FACED DURING MENSTRUATION?

		Frequency	Percent
	lack of pads	70	70.0
	mood swing	20	20.0
Valid	lack of moral		
	support	60	50.0
	Total	150	150.0

The researcher found out that 60% of the respondents needed the moral support during the menstruation period. They stated that lack of moral support makes them feel isolated and lonely, they need to have somebody to turn to and explain how they feel about it (Suzan & Gracious Kazaara, 2023). 70% of them are unable to access the sanitary towel due to many reasons like the pads are inadequate, there is lack of money to buy the pads and also some parents do not advise them to use the pads since they believe that they have some chemicals which can affect them, seems like a taboo. 20% of them complained about the change of moods at one point or another in which one feels like not talking to anyone, another feels angry the whole day and therefore these are some of the difficulties they undergo.

TABLE 4: WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT PREVENT YOU FROM MAINTAINING MENSTRUAL HYGIENE?

		Frequency	Percent
	improper toilet		
	facilities	70	70.0
Valid	Cost	50	50.0
	Elaborate	30	30.0
	Total	150	150.0

The researcher found out that 70% of the respondents were complaining of the poor conditions of the toilets which are one of the main factors contributing to the poor hygiene acts. The toilets do not have the bins for the proper disposal of the used pads hence giving the young girls a hard time. The toilets do not have proper doors for privacy, they do not have clean water for the girls to clean up and change their pads. 50% of the respondent's talk of the cost factors in which the sanitary towels are sold on a high price which they cannot afford hence they prefer using other

ways like using the piece of clothing. The remaining 30% elaborated further on what hinders them to observe proper menstrual hygiene.

Table 5: What Are The Effects Of Menstruation On School Experiences?

		Frequency	Percent
	Absenteeism	100	50.0
	painful body	30	30.0
Valid	parts		
	fear and worries	20	20.0
	Total	150	150.0

The table presents data on the effects of menstruation on school experiences. It shows that out of the total responses of 150, 50% or 100 responses indicated that absenteeism from school due to menstruation is an effect. Additionally, 30% or 30 responses specified that experiencing painful body parts during menstruation affects school experiences. Finally, 20 responses constituting 20% of the total mentioned that feeling fear and worries related to menstruation impacts school experiences (Oromo et al., 2023). Therefore, the table reveals that absenteeism from school is the most commonly reported effect of menstruation on school experiences as per 50% of the responses, while painful body parts and feeling of fear and worries are other effects according to 30% and 20% of the responses respectively.

Discussion

For this particular analysis, the research sought out only the girls who reported to have started menstruating. The researcher tabulated the results for the regular schools by state regarding the following themes; awareness about menarche, the source of information about menarche, menstruation- related restrictions, effects of menstruation on the school experience, menstrual absorbent, ways of discarding the used sanitary towels and finally the barriers or those that hinders and the facilitators of menstrual management at the school level. The following factors were explored using the univariate analysis: age, class, gender, menstrual items used, life skill education or a program on menstrual hygiene in school.

Out of the hundred (150) girls who participated in the activity reported to have started menstruating and therefore they were all included in this analysis. These particular girls attended the regular schools randomly selected by the researcher. 50% of the girls were from standard five (5), 80% were from standard six (6) and eight (8) then the remaining 20% were from standard seven (7) as shown in **table 1**. The girls' average age was 15 years of age.

Girls' awareness and knowledge about menstruation

100% of the girls reported that they had not heard about menstruation until their first period begun and they had to deal with it themselves. 50% of these menstruating girls had at least received information about the menstruation as shown in **table 3**. Teachers and others (parents, guardians, books, pastors etc.) **table 4**, were the major sources with

the sibling's mostly older sisters being the next reported source. These girls should also be directed on the need to clean their inner wears, 80% of the girls do wash and hide their panties for the fear of other people seeing them **table 5**, most of them find a hard time to clean them nicely hence the panties get stained. They should be told on the need to observe hygiene by thoroughly cleaning the pants

and exposing them under the sun. Some of them prefer to hide the inner wears and discard them later since they know they cannot be cleaned.

These young girls should be given moral support and be directed through what should be done. Most of them lack a shoulder to lean on or somebody to talk to.

Overall 60% used disposable sanitary towels. 60% used piece of cloths and 30% used the re- usable pads. A lesser number of 50% girls reported that they usually go to school during menstruation, 100% reported missing school during the menstruation period. They went ahead and explained that concentration problems in class were common. They frequently mentioned that they have pain (stomach, head, hips, and limbs), fear of staining, smell or even losing the pad or cloth in the view of others making them a laughing stalk. Most of the schools in Funyula constituency Rugombe county are mixed schools so they fear the boys seeing them. Others feel dizzy and weak, only the girls who were using the disposable pads were able to attend classes during menstruation.

This study explored the current developmental programs put in place by World Health Organization (WHO), the government and the external agencies to reduce the barriers menstruation causes for the young schooling girls in Rugombe hence identified where the actions should be taken to improve this further.

Menstruation was not only seen to impact the absenteeism characteristics but also it affected the performance and the quality of the school results. Close a three-quarter complaining of the inability to attend school while in the menstruation period and about 20% complaining of pins and others complaining about fears and worries of staining, smell or feeling unwell. Mostly all of these complains were due to the type or the kind of the menstrual items used.

Status of the sanitary facilities were reported to be in poor conditions and inadequate hence compromising the young girls' ability to manage themselves. At a point these young girls not

only need the supply of the sanitary towels. Simply what the researcher is insinuating is providing sanitary pads would clearly resolve or rather give a solution to these girls' menstrual issues, there is a need to come up with interventions so as to address the different cultural and geographical challenges for example; in the areas where cloths are used routinely, the girls only need some information on how to hygienically clean and dry them.

Most of the girls were not aware of menarche and the restrictions to be observed while menstruating. However other sources like (parents, books, pastors) were the main sources of information about menarche and therefore there should be an effort to equip families with the appropriate information to prepare their girl on menarche and menstrual hygiene.

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Conclusions

In conclusion, my study further strengthens the need for the Government of Uganda to put emphasis on the investments in menstrual hygiene management by schools. Budget support for menstrual hygiene and focused government policies would facilitate schools to improve this in a sustainable way. Sufficient gender specific private toilets facilities with running water for washing and changing would help reduce the girls' absenteeism behaviors in schools during menstruation period. Also the provision of pain relief pills may further help to facilitate care in schools.

Recommendations

For Practice

Early training should be done to empower young girls for them to appreciate their natural girlhood because it is their human nature.

Identification of abnormal menstrual patterns in adolescents may improve early identification of potential health concerns for adulthood and immediate actions to be put in place.

Once girls begin menstruating, clinicians should ask at every preventive care of comprehensive visit for the patient's first day of her last menstruation period and the pattern of her menses. Hospitals should also come up with consultation facilities for the young teenage girls experiencing menarche to easily access them and learn more about effects of menstruation and how to observe proper hygiene.

It is important for clinicians to understand menstrual patterns of adolescent girls, the ability to differentiate between normal and abnormal menstruation and the skills to know how to evaluate the adolescent girl patient.

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