Vol. 6 No. 3, November (2023)
JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOURISM EDUCATION
ISSN: 2659-0794 (PRINT) ISSN:2659-0808(ONLINE)
Content Available at: **https://jeate.net/index.php/Jete/issue/archive**

Social Norms And Menstrual Hygiene Management Practice Among Female Students In Secondary School In Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

Felicia Agbor-Obun Dan, Phd Email:drmrsfeliciadan@gmail.com	A	Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education University of Calabar
Ukpata Christiana Email:christydelight@gmail.com	B	
Akpa Stephen Ushie Email:ushiestephen@yahoo.com	C	
Imam Moses E-mail: ushiestephen@yahoo.com	D	

Keywords

Social norms, menstrual hygiene, management, Female studentrs.

Correspondence

Received: 31/10/23
Revised: 1/11/23
Accepted: 1/11/23
Published: 24/11/23

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine social norms and menstrual hygiene management practice among female students in secondary school in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve this purpose, one null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Literature review was carried based on the variables of the study. Survey research design was considered as the most appropriate for the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting the four secondary schools while systematic random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the two hundred and eighty-three (283) respondents used for the study. Thirteen items four point modified scale questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was duly validated by relevant experts. To test the hypotheses formulated for the study, simple linear regression statistical tool was employed for data analysis. The result obtained from analysis of data ad testing of hypotheses in the study revealed that there was a significant influence of social norms on menstrual hygiene management practice among students in the study area. Based on these finding it was recommended among others that relevant authorities should ensure that social norms that do not promote effective menstrual hygiene management among students are eliminated in order to promote effective menstrual hygiene management.

Introduction

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is defined as women and adolescent girls using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect blood that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing all over the body as required and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials. Budhathoki and Sharma (2018) asserted that menstruation necessitates the availability of materials resources to absorb or collect menstrual blood, facilitate personal hygiene and dispose of waste, ideally with adequate privacy.

Menstruation starting as young as 8 years would still be considered normal, the average age of the first period is generally later in the developing world and earlier in the developed world. Typically the length of time between the first day of one's period and the first day of the next is 21 to 45 days in young women. In adults, the range is between 21 and 31 days with average being 28 days. Bleeding usually lasts around 2 to 7 days (Dan, Edet & Lale, 2021). Period stops during pregnancy and typically do not resume during the initial months of breast feeding (Rabiu, 2018).

In under developed countries, nevertheless, many girls cannot access or afford appropriate sanitary materials and often used inferior products such as new or old cloth, cotton wool, toilet paper, underwear alone sponge or nothing (Enzler, 2019). Women and girls in low income settings have low awareness on hygiene practices and lack culturally appropriate materials for menstrual hygiene management practices. Menstruation and associated activities are surrounded by silence, shame and social taboos that are further manifested in social practice that restrict mobility, freedom and access to normal activities all over the world (Budhathoki and Sharma, 2018).

Dan, Edet & Lale (2021) opined that raising the degree of knowledge requires raising awareness. Raising awareness through awareness campaigns is recognized as a crucial means of fostering health promotion and shaping health-related behaviors, especially those pertaining to hygiene. Adolescents form behaviors that are typically hard to break as adults because they are so ingrained. A person who doesn't take adequate care of and attention to his body in general may have psychological problems.These behaviours in any case may be social norms learned over time or those taboos and cultural beliefs of the people directly or indirectly affecting menstrual hygiene practices and management.

Statement of hypothesis

There is no significant influence of social norms on menstrual hygiene management practice among female students in secondary school in Central senatorial District of Cross River State.

Literature review

Social norms and menstrual hygiene management

Menstruation, rooted in complex value system, is accompanied by various myths, taboos and stigmatizing, negative and shameful sentiment (Barrington, Robinsen, Hensel & Wilson,

2021). Often, euphemisms such as “aunt flow” time of the month, and “on the rag” are used by both men and women to refer to menstruation, reflecting the taboo and discriminatory social norms sounding it (Newton, 2016).

Across different cultures, menstruation is stigmatized and conceptualized as something that is “dirty or impure and should be kept private (Dan, Edet & Lale, 2021). Society as a whole also believes that menstruating women are physically (during the menstrual phase) or mentally (during the pre-menstrual phase) disordered, perceiving them as out of control, ill, crazy and unfeminine (Johnston & Christer, 2020), these negative views towards menstruation and menstruating women are related to stigma and society’s views on women in general.

Castro and Czura (2021) asserted that inadequate hygiene during menstruation can have severe consequences, such as adverse health effects, lower educational attainment and higher work absenteeism. Cultural taboos and social norms surrounding menstruation may be responsible for misinformation on menstrual hygiene and may also prevent attempts to improve knowledge. The researchers using a lab-in-the-field experiments with women in rural Bangladesh, measured social norms in the form of empirical and normative expectations on menstrual health and hygiene explicitly and relate them to behaviour and knowledge. They provided an information intervention on menstrual health and hygiene and observe how this changes the perceived social norms. They found that the majority of women reported decreased physical and mental well-being, in particular stress and shame, during their menstruation. They further found knowledge gaps on the proper use of hygienic material for menstrual health management and that reported adverse health behaviour being reflected in empirical and normative expectations. The information intervention helped to correct harmful social norms, although results are more pronounced for women who have more autonomy and agency over their own decisions.

The discriminatory social norms associated with menstruation are communicated to us every day from a young age through a variety of socio-cultural routes (Johnston, 2020). Many girls and boys grow up believing that menstruation is dirty, embarrassing, and something that need to be camouflaged or kept hidden for women to function in their everyday life (Bentley, 2017). The stigma surrounding menstruation can lead to negative consequences for women’s physical and mental health, sexuality, social status, and quality of life (Johnston & Christer, 2020). Women who internalize negative attitudes toward menstruation often seek to regulate their behaviour accordingly to avoid discrimination by making active efforts to conceal their menstrual status (e.g. avoiding activities, wearing baggy clothes) and avoiding discovery e.g. visible pads, menstrual blood (Barrington, Robinsen, Hensel & Wilson, 2021).

This constant determination to conceal their menstrual status is associated with heightened self-consciousness, hyper vigilance, and menstrual shame, failure to conceal is associated with feelings of personal failure to maintain social feminine standards or correct menstrual etiquette (Barrington, Robinsen, Hensel & Wilson, 2021). Gumbaketi, Larkin and Maclaren (2022) asserted that globally, experiences of menarche and subsequent menstruation are embedded in social and cultural beliefs, norms and practices. Menarche is an important developmental

milestone in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) for females. Menarche is intertwined with socio-cultural norms, beliefs and practices, which can impact on women's ability to manage menstruation with dignity.

A study carried out by Gumbaketi, Larkin and Maclaren (2022) reviewed the socio-cultural implications for women's menstrual health in the pacific Island countries and Territories (PICTs). Review was conducted following PRISMA scoping review guidelines and inclusion/exclusion criteria. A total of 11 studies were included; 10 qualitative and one mixed methods study. Studies were conducted in Melanesian (n=9), Polynesian (n=1) and Micronesian (n=1) Pacific Island countries and Territories (PICTs). Managing menstrual health with dignity is challenging for many women and girls because menstruation is associated with menstrual taboos and shame. The findings of the study reviewed that the menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) experiences of women in pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) are affected by social and cultural beliefs, norms and practices. Beliefs, norms and practices about menarche need to be incorporated in Sexual Reproductive Health planning, programs and education in order to be relevant to diverse village and urban settings.

Moreover, discriminatory social norms can also negatively impact women's sexual activity because sexual activity during menstruation is often considered taboo (Allen & Goldberg, 2021). Across diverse social contexts, the topic of menstruation has often been relegated to the shadows. Although the anthropological literature documents numerous societies around the world that have traditionally celebrated menarche (the onset of menstruation) as an important rite of passage, menstrual blood itself and its management has frequently been perceived as polluting and taboo. In some cultures, girls don't attend social gathering during menses, due to stigma and harassment, and they don't attend religious gathering during menstruation. The challenges that menstruating girls, women, and other menstruates face encompass more than a basic lack of supplies or infrastructure. While menstruation is a normal and healthy part of life for most women and girls, in many societies, the experience of menstruation, continues to be constrained by discrimination, social norms. The resulting lack of information about menstruation leads to unhygienic and unhealthy menstrual practices and creates misconception and negative attitudes, which motivated, among others, shaming and even gender-based violence, for generations of girls and women, poor menstrual health and hygiene is exacerbating social and economic inequalities, negatively impacting their education, health, safety, and human development.

Methodology

This study considered survey research designed. This design is to investigate the phenomena as it exists as at the time of investigation.

The population of this study comprised of 566 female students in Girl's Secondary Schools in Central senatorial District of Cross River State. The reason this design was selected is that it helps describe the features of a big population, offering a more precise and representative

sample to collect focused results from which significant decisions may be made and conclusions derived.

A sample of two hundred and eighty-three (283) respondents (female students) was randomly selected from four Girl's Secondary Schools in the study area using systematic random sampling technique.

The instrument used for data collection in the study was a questionnaire titled "Social Norms and Menstrual Hygiene Management Practice Questionnaire (SNMHMPQ)". The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A was designed to collect the respondent personal data such as name of school, age and class. Section B was design using four point modified scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). It contained thirteen items measuring the variable of the study. Items 1-5 social norms, items 6-13 measured menstrual hygiene management practice.

Result and discussion

Ho:1

There is no significant influence of social norms on menstrual hygiene management practice among female students in secondary school. The independent is social norms while the dependent variable is menstrual hygiene management practice among students. Simple linear regression statistical tool was employed for data analysis. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Simple linear regression analysis of the influence of social norms on menstrual hygiene management practice among female students in secondary schools in central senatorial district of Cross River State (283)

Model	R	R^2	Adj.R^2	Std error of estimate	
1	.213*	.164	.160	2.83042	
Model	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig
Regression	331.362	1	131.354	14.274	.000
Residual	1853.164	281	12.462		
Total	2184.526	282			

The result of analysis of data presented in Table 1 showed that the independent or predictor variable (social norms) have a significant influence on the dependent or predicted variable (menstrual hygiene management practice) among female students in secondary school in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. This implied that social norms accounted for 16.4% of menstrual hygiene management practice among students.

Discussion of findings

The finding obtained from analysis of data and testing of hypothesis two in this study revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there was a significant influence of social norms on menstrual hygiene management practices among students in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State. The reason for this finding could be that there are various social norms that usually discourage young girls from taking very good care of

themselves during their period of menstruation. These norms prevent girls from engaging in certain activities that would expose them to members of the public. This often leads to emotionally instability and a sense of marginalization among affected girls in the study area.

The finding of this study agrees with that of Castro and Czura (2021) who asserted that inadequate hygiene during menstruation can have severe consequences, such as adverse health effects, lower educational attainment and higher work absenteeism. Cultural taboos and social norms surrounding menstruation may be responsible for misinformation on menstrual hygiene and may also prevent attempts to improve knowledge. The researchers using a lab-in-the-field experiments with women in rural Bangladesh, measured social norms in the form of empirical and normative expectations on menstrual health and hygiene explicitly and relate them to behaviour and knowledge. They provided an information intervention on menstrual health and hygiene and observe how this changes the perceived social norms. They found that the majority of women reported decreased physical and mental well-being, in particular stress and shame, during their menstruation. They further found knowledge gaps on the proper use of hygienic material for menstrual health management and that reported adverse health behaviour being reflected in empirical and normative expectations. The information intervention helped to correct harmful social norms, although results are more pronounced for women who have more autonomy and agency over their own decisions. The finding of the further supported that of Barrington, Robinsen, Hensel & Wilson (2021) who reported that The discriminatory social norms associated with menstruation are communicated to us every day from a young age through a variety of socio-cultural routes.

Conclusion

This study was to investigate and present findings on social norms and menstrual hygiene management practice among female students in secondary school in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The findings obtained from analysis of data and testing of hypotheses in the study revealed that there was a significant influence of social norms on menstrual hygiene management practice among female students in secondary school in Calabar South Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the finding obtained from analysis of data and testing of hypothesis in the study, it was recommended that:

1. Relevant authorities should ensure that social norms that do not promote effective menstrual hygiene management among students are eliminated in order to promote effective menstrual hygiene management.
2. There should be aggressive awareness campaigns by government related health agencies, health educators and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on young girls to disabuse their minds on the negative social norms about menstrual hygiene

References

Allen, K. B. & Goldberg, A. C. (2021). Sexual activity during menstruation: A qualitative study. *Journal of Sex Research*, 46(6), 535-545.

Barrington, D. J., Robinsen, H. J., Hensel, D. & Wilson, E. (2021). Experiences of menstruation in high income countries: A systematic review, qualitative evidence synthesis and comparison to low and middle income countries. *Plos One*, 16(7), e0255001.

Bentley B. (2017). Men and menstruation: A qualitative exploration of beliefs attitudes and experiences. *Sex Roles,* 77(1-2), 113-124.

Budhathoki, S. S. & Sharma, G. (2018). Menstrual hygiene management among women and adolescent girls in the aftermath of the earthquake in Nepal BMC. *Women's Health*, 18, 20-38.

Castro, S. & Czura, K. (2021). Social norms and information in menstrual health management. *Women & Health*, 46(1), 72-85.

Dan, F. A., Edet, I. B. & Lale, P. (2021). Menarche awareness among female students in Junior Secondary School in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. *Inter-Disciplinary Journal of Science Education (IJ-SED)*, 3(1), 1-8.

Dan, F. A., Edet, I. B. & Lale, P.O (2021). Knowledge and practice of personal hygiene among rural dwellers in central Cross River State, Nigeria. *Inter-Disciplinary Journal of Science Education (IJ-SED)*, 3(1), 68 -77.

Enzler, D. M. (2019). Knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning menstrual hygiene management (MHM) of adolescents in rural secondary schools in Nigeria. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 42(5), 436-445.

Gumbaketi, E. M., Larkins, S. Maclaren, M. B. (2022). Socio-cultural implications for women's menstrual health in the Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs): A scoping review. *Reproductive Health*, 128, 33-41.

Johnston, R. I. & Christer, J. C. (2020). The menstrual mark: Menstruation as social stigma. In I. T. Winkler, B. Fahs, & K. A. Hasson (Eds.), *Critical Menstruation Studies*, Palgrave: Macmillan.

Johnston, R. I. (2020). Reproductive shame: Self-objectification and young women's attitudes towards their reproductive functioning. *Women & Health*, 46(1), 25-29.

Newton, V. L. (2016). Auntie's come to tea: Menstrual euphemism. In V. L. Newton (ed), *Everyday discourse of menstruation: Cultural social perspectives* (133-145), Palgrave: Macmillan.

Rabiu, A. (2018). "Menstrual hygiene among adolescent school girls in Kano". *Tropical Journal of Obstetric and Gynecology,* 35(2), 153-161.