

40th WEDC International Conference, Loughborough, UK, 2017

LOCAL ACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE AND
SUSTAIN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES

**Menstrual hygiene management compliance in primary
schools in Uganda: a case of Lira Municipality**

Martin Mujjabi Mukasa & Alex Ojuka Jalameso (Uganda)

PAPER 2761

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of Menstrual Hygiene Management on school absenteeism of adolescent girls in 10 primary schools in Lira municipality. Our findings highlighted that; majority of the respondents' onset of the menstruation was at 13 years of age, 60% of the participants used disposable pads. Most respondents changed their pads at least twice a day. Two-fifth of the primary girls reported missing school for about 3 days during menstrual periods pointing to the lack of menstrual hygiene products. However, presence of senior women teachers was found to increase the number of girls attending school during their menstruation periods.

Background

The continued silence around menstruation, limited access to information both at home and in schools results in millions of women and girls having very little knowledge about the events happening to their bodies when they menstruate and how to deal with it (UNICEF, 2013). Proper menstrual hygiene management (MHM) involves use of clean material by women and adolescent girls to absorb or collect menstrual blood, and such a material can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of menstruation. It also includes using soap and clean water for washing the body as necessary, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management material or hand the reusable pads (UNICEF, 2012).

Report of UNICEF, 2012 shows that 46% of all schools world wide, can guarantee girls access to water and sanitation services. Inadequacy of access to water, sanitation and hygiene services as well as menstrual products is leading to girls losing five days of school in Sub Saharan Africa or even dropping out of school. (WASH United, 2015).

Silence on menstruation coupled with limited access to information both at home and school resulted in millions of girls and women having very little knowledge and skills about their bodies including a natural phenomenon like menstruation and how to deal with it (UNICEF, 2013). In Uganda, 3 out of every 5 girls know nothing about menstruation until they start their menses which affects their ability to enjoy the learning process and sometimes contributing to their absence from school (UNICEF, 2014).

A study conducted by International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) from July – August in 2012 in 9 districts of Uganda reported that girls were missing 1-3 learning days per month which sums to 8-24 school days per year. The experiences of Ugandan girls during menstruation include; shame, teasing, menstrual pain combined with the lack of an affordable sanitary product and the lack of sustainable MHM support systems ranging from basic facilities to psychological support in schools make menstruation an unpleasant experience, (UNICEF, 2012).

Methodology

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Inclusion criteria was; being an adolescent girls, experiencing monthly menstrual periods and attending a primary school within Lira Municipality. Ten schools were included in the study with five (5) of the schools being both day and boarding and the others only day schools. The survey tools were pretested to control and obtain right data. The simple random

sampling method was applied to come up with primary schools to be reached and adopted the Keish Liaslie formula of sample size determination adopted; proportionate sampling was used to determine the number of respondents per school.

Results of the findings

This study aimed at assess the influence of menstrual hygiene management practices on class attendance of 387 menstruating adolescent girls in Lira Municipality and make recommendations where necessary.

Majority of respondents (60.7%) were in the age group of 14 years and above followed distantly by those from 12-13 Years of age (38.8%) while only 0.5% of the respondents were in the range of 10-11 years of age. Most of the respondents (42.3%) were Protestants followed closely by Catholics (39.2%), then Pentecostals (11.2%), Muslims (6.3%) and others (1%) Seventh Day Adventists.

The biggest proportion of respondents (48%) stay with both parents followed by 23.6% who stay with Mother alone, 18.6% with Aunties while the rest (9.8%) of the respondents reported to be staying with Siblings, Uncles, father alone and themselves.

The biggest proportion of respondents (48%) stay with both parents followed by 23.6% who stay with mother alone, 18.6% with Aunties while the rest (9.8%) of the respondents reported to be staying with siblings, uncles, father alone and themselves.

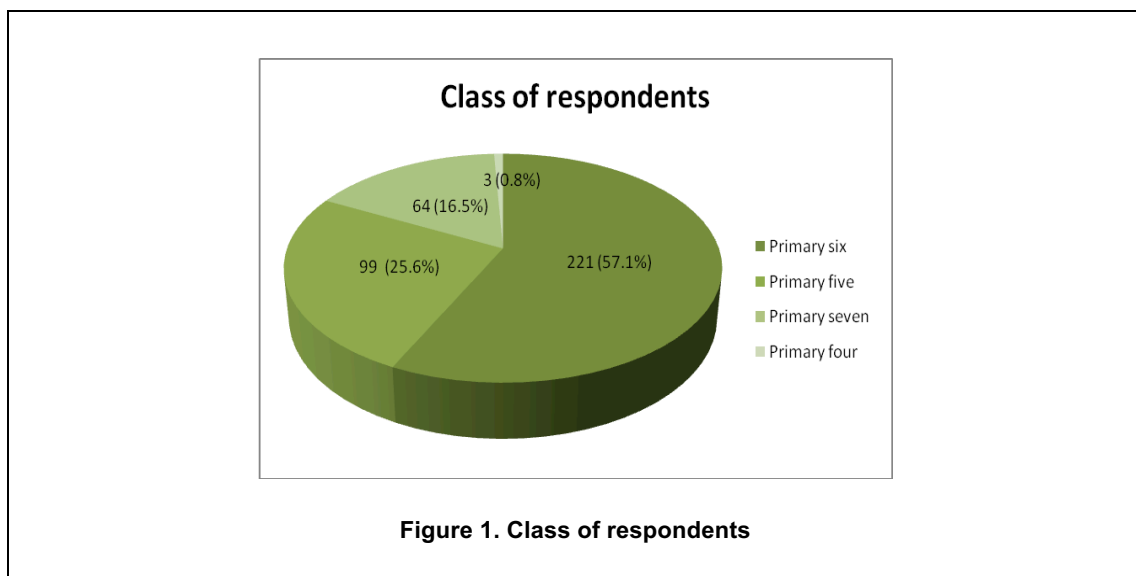


Figure 1. Class of respondents

More than half of respondents (57.1%) were from Primary Six followed by Primary Five and Seven as illustrated in the *figure 2* above. Only 0.8% of respondents were from Primary Four.

Menstrual hygiene management practices

Most of the respondents reported to have started menstruation at 13 years of age (N=385, Mean=12.94, Median=13 and Mode=13).

Frequency of changing menstrual hygiene material while at school

Most (139 out of 385) of the respondents reported to change their sanitary materials twice a day while at school followed closely by 133 who reported thrice while 21 reported changing once as shown in the Figure 2 below. However, it is important to note that seven of respondents did not change at all.

Using Pearson Chi-Square, there is statistically significant difference between health education on menstrual hygiene and change of menstrual materials [$\chi^2 (4, N=320) = 22.900^{a}, p=0.000$]. Adolescent girls who receive health education change menstrual materials more often than those who do not receive health education. Furthermore, there is statistically significant difference between presence of soap at wash room and change of menstrual materials [$\chi^2 (4, N=320) = 10.163^{a}, p=0.038$]. Girls that reported presence of soap in wash rooms were more likely to change menstrual materials more than those that reported absence of soap at washroom during menstrual periods.

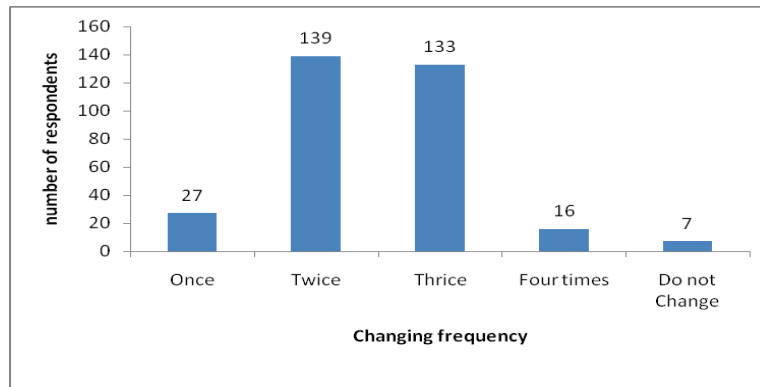


Figure 2. Frequency of changing menstrual hygiene material

School facility factors

More than three quarters (86.2%) of respondents reported to have facilities at school for disposal of menstrual products after use. Majority of respondents (79.7%) reported their schools to be having clean and well managed sanitary facilities for girls to use during menstruation.

This can be attributed to the fact that eight in ten of the primary schools monitor menstrual hygiene as part of their standard monitoring regimes according to the school sanitation inspection forms seen. We found a statistically significant difference between clean and well managed facilities and school absenteeism during menstruation.

School attendance during menstruation

Nearly all respondents 354 (92%) reported to attend classes during menstrual periods. However, 160 (43.6%) of respondents revealed to have ever missed school during menstruation periods. Furthermore, (50.3%) of those that ever missed school it was mainly because of lack of menstrual hygiene products.

Days lost during menstruation

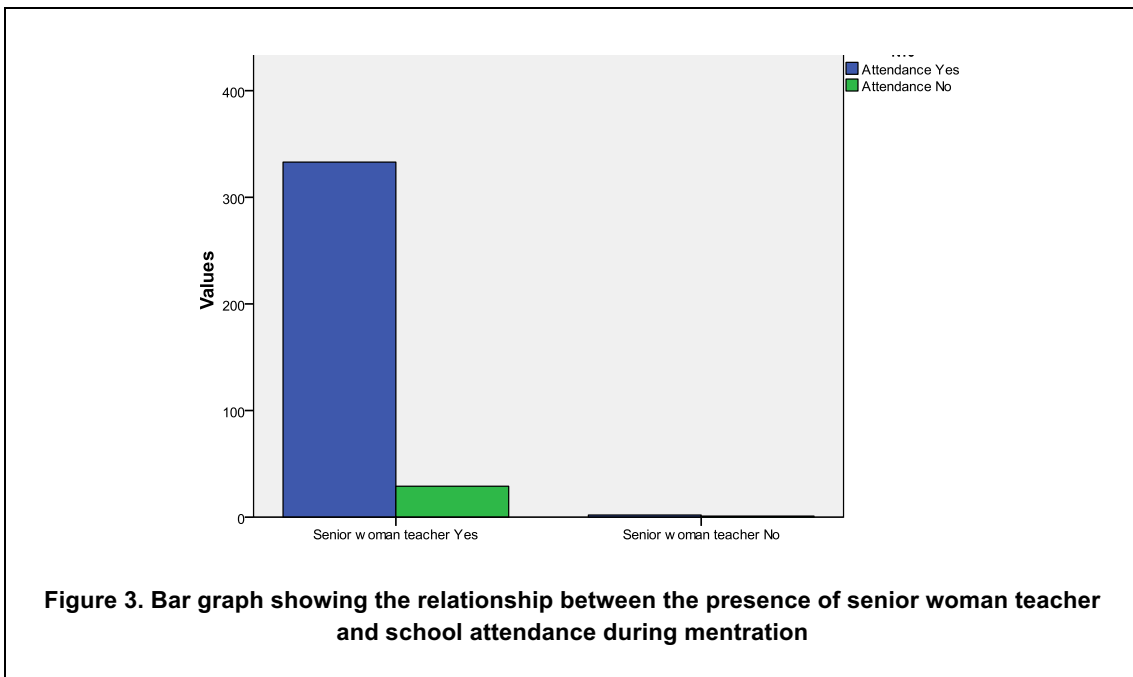
The average days missed by girls during menstrual period weres 3.24 days (mode = 1 day, median= 3 days, n=160).

A Chi-Square test using Pearson was applied and found statistically significant difference between availability of facilities for disposal of menstrual products after use and school absenteeism [$\chi^2 (1, N=348) = 3.933^a$, $p=0.047$]. Adolescent girls who reported lack of disposal facilities for menstrual products after use at school were found to have ever missed school more than those that reported presence of menstrual product disposal facilities during menstrual periods.

Importantly, there is statistical significance between presence of a female teacher who support pupils on how to manage menstrual periods and school absenteeism during menstruation [$\chi^2 (1, N=363) = 3.881^a$, $p=0.049$]. Adolescent girls in schools where senior women teachers were reported absent miss school more than adolescent girls who reported presence of senior women teacher during menstrual periods.

Adolescent girls undergoing menstruation attend classes during menstruation when there is a senior woman teacher in the school as shown in the Figure 3.

Table 1. Presence of school factors influencing absenteeism during menstruation							
School factors		School absenteeism		X ²	df	P-value	
Woman teacher counselor	Yes	Count	156	204	3.881 ^a	1	0.049*
		%	98.1%	100.0%			
	No	Count	3	0			
		%	1.9%	.0%			
Accessible wash rooms	Yes	Count	108	159	4.121 ^a	1	0.029*
		%	70.1%	79.5%			
	No	Count	46	41			
		%	29.9%	20.5%			
Availability of disposal facilities	Yes	Count	126	174	3.933 ^a	1	0.047*
		%	82.4%	89.7%			
	No	Count	27	20			
		%	17.6%	10.3%			
Attitude of school boys/girls	Supportive	Count	106	151	3.032 ^a	1	0.082
		%	67.9%	76.3%			
	Not supportive	Count	50	47			
		%	32.1%	23.7%			



Conclusion and recommendations

Nearly half of the girl pupils in this study reported ever missing school between 1-4 days per month which translates into a loss of 12- 48 school days per year. This means per term a girl pupil may miss up to 12 days of study. In addition, schools that did where senior women teachers were reported present at school compared to adolescent girls who were in schools where there were no senior women teacher.

The study came up with the recommendations at different levels such as district, municipality, school, parents and pupils. Some of these include:

- The municipality through educational office should incorporate menstrual management indicators in monitoring and evaluation systems for primary schools to track attendance of women teachers and girls during menstruation.
- According to our study, adequate and well maintained menstrual hygiene management facilities showed reduction in absenteeism of girls during menstruation. This can be achieved through allocation of certain percentage budget from the UPE grant to meet the menstruating adolescent primary girl's need.
- Peer support should be encouraged for better understanding of menstrual health and hygiene management.
- All sanitation facilities used by girls should be provided with adequate privacy as this proved to reduce on missing school by girls during menstrual periods.

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our gratitude to the staff of WSDF-north and the Supervisor, Prof. David Ndugutse Director Institute of Health Policy and management, International Health Sciences University Kampala who worked tirelessly to ensure that this research work was a success.

Mr. Anguzu Geoffrey for the support given for data management and analysis; research assistants Denis emeu, Charlotte Akello, Aloyo Mary, Eluku Martin and above all the school girls that participated in the study.

References

- UNICEF, Columbia University (2012). WASH in schools- Empowers Girls' Education Proceeding of Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools Virtual Conferences.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2014). Puberty Education & Menstrual Hygiene Management- Good policy and practice in health education. Paris, France.
- Marni Sommer, Emily Vasquez and Nancy Worthington, Columbia University, and Murat Sahin, UNICEF, 2012. WASH in Schools Empowers Girls' Education: Proceedings of the Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools. New York, USASNV -The Hague, NL & IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre , 2013. Study on menstrual management in Uganda: main report on the study results, The Hague, The Netherlands , Hague, NL.

Contact details

Mujjabi Martin Mukasa is a public health specialist working as an environment and sanitation officer with Ministry of Water and Environment. He has a specific interest in sanitation economics focusing on sanitation service chain. He is the principal investigator for this research and was inspired to take this study to justify construction of better sanitation facilities at schools despite of the fact that many girls come from households with equally poor toilet facilities. Mr Alex Ojuka Jalameso is a Sociologist with Ministry of water with particular interests in social and sanitation marketing and town sanitation planning. With additional concern on challenges of girl child education specifically when it comes to poor performance resulting from absenteeism due to poor management of girls' menstruation.

Alex Ojuka Jalameso
Ministry of Water and Environment
Tel: +256782988157
Email: alexojuka@gmail.com
Skype: alex.ojuka

Mujjabi Mukasa Martin
Ministry of Water and Environment
Tel: +256 772998975
Email: mujjabimukasa@gmail.com
Skype: mujjabimartinmukasa@skype.com