

PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEENAGE GIRLS IN MENSTRUAL HYGIENE ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS: SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH STAKEHOLDERS

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ABSTRACT

Meaningful engagement of basic level school girls in discussion and dialogue conferences about the hygienic behaviour during menstruation period is one of the key factors to upgrade the academic achievement. Engagement of teenage girls in workshops and collaboration with the school's female teachers, mothers and friends help to maintain girls' daily presence at school and in reducing failure rates. In this study, three kinds of sharing have been done, that unite girls' meaningful engagement at school in the presence of mothers in relation to cognitive, affective and behavioural domains regarding the menstrual hygienic practices. Among a total of 80 girls, seventh and eighth-graders community basic schools in Nepal, the majority were between ages 13 (34.6%) and 14 (65.4%), responded to the questionnaire. The findings indicate that the cognitive and affective domains in menstruation obtained the lowest means. This result suggests that girls should meaningfully engage in activities that help them recognize their abilities and support their classroom participation. Each of the three identified dimensions is analyzed, and strategies are proposed for developing them appropriately.

Keywords: Community school, meaningful engagement, menstrual hygiene, mothers' participation

Introduction

Meaningful engagement of girls in discussion and dialogue conferences aimed at assuring girls' academic achievement and tasks foster such effort and dedication appropriately and also encourage social participation. This social participation is linked with the mothers' participation in terms of menstrual hygienic practices of the teenage school-girls during their 'periods'. According to Tiwari, Ekkaand Thakur (2018), poor menstrual hygiene practices result in adverse health outcomes in terms of increased vulnerability to reproductive tract infections (RTIs) and its consequences. Encouraging social participation involves precepts of cognitive constructivism, in that it addresses both mental activities performed by the girls and the collaboration with the mothers in the community. Furthermore menstruation and menstrual practices are still clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions resulting in adolescent girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes (Dasgupta, & Sarkar, 2008; Khan, Ahmad, Singh, & Dwivedi, 2019). Thus, engagement is not necessarily an individual task but one that depends to a large extent on collaboration with peers and community people. Generally, engaged girls are described as those who demonstrate an interest in learning and knowing more about hygienic behaviour. It is associated with myths and misconceptions and poor knowledge of normal physiology. Above all, poor menstrual hygiene is a precursor of various morbidities related to the reproductive tract (Dasgupta, Roy, Bandyopadhyay, & Paul, 2019; Jha, 2019. Rani, & Goyal, 2018; Sivakami, et al. 2019).

Similarly, Rani, & Goyal, (2018) further argues that Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period in their life cycle that requires specific and special attention. This period is marked with the onset of menarche. Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to all females. It is still considered as something unclean or dirty in Indian society. Menstruation is a major stage in a girl puberty. It is one of several physical signs that a girl is becoming a woman. Menstruation is generally considered as unclean leading to isolation of the menstruation girls and restrictions imposed on them in the family. These practices have reinforced negative

attitudes towards menstruation in girls. Women having better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe menstrual practices are less vulnerable to reproductive tract infections and its consequences. (p. 46).

This study was conducted to understand the problems faced by females during menstruation. In this context, Siabani & Charehjew (2018) said that it is a part of the monthly menstrual cycle (regular cycling of hormones) that occurs in the female reproductive system that makes pregnancy possible. Medically, menstruation (also termed period or bleeding) is the process in girls of discharging (through the vagina) blood and other materials from the lining of the uterus at about one monthly interval from puberty until menopause (ceasing of regular menstrual cycles), except during pregnancy. this discharging process lasts about 3-5 days (Siabani, & Charehjew, 2018). Every teen-age girl who is about to enter puberty (the process of the body changes that cause a child's body to become an adult body capable of reproduction) need to be taught or know the basic remedial definition of menstruation and that it is a normal process that females go through as their bodies prepare themselves for potential gestation.

Method

The present study reports findings from the quantitative phase of the study. This phase sought to establish a baseline for understanding the meaningful engagement of teen-age girls within a group of 80 girls-seventh and eighth-grade adolescents- from the community schools in the village and city areas in Nepal.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of 80 seventh and eighth-grade girls at both urban (41.5%) and rural (59.5%) community schools in Kathmandu and Arghakhanchi districts in Nepal. The majority of the studied girls were aged between 13 (34.6%) and 14 (65.4%).

Table 1: Information of research participants

Stakeholders	Total
Girls of grade seven	80
EPH female teachers	4
Mothers	20
School head teacher (HT)	4
Total	108

Instrument

To assess the perception of the girls towards activities related to menstrual hygiene, a questionnaire on meaningful engagement was designed and piloted in two groups of girls to verify their comprehension. The socio-demographic data captured in the questionnaire included age, gender, sector (rural or urban), and mothers' opinions.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 Likert-type items with five response options. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they were involved in schoolwork and activities. The questions were grouped into three types of sharing consisting of the school female teachers, mothers, friends and the school head teachers, with 5 question items each. The sharing with the mother and friends in relation to the cognitive dimension focused on aspects supporting the learning process, the affective dimension centered on aspects concerning school pertinence and peer support and the behavioural dimension concentrated on behavioural aspects that support learning. The questionnaire achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.75.

Procedure

This quantitative study complied with all ethical standards appropriate to the field and studies of this kind, including obtaining an informed consent from institutional administrations and parents/guardians for working with minors. The questionnaire was administered during January and February of 2018. Written consent to administer the questionnaire was provided by the principal of each participating school. The researchers visited all the public schools in the municipalities of Arkhakhanchi and Kathmandu, and the questionnaire was administered during the school day.

Firstly, the basic level community school students were provided with the necessary elucidations which consisted of workshop time, period, and presentation which was at the Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) room in schools. Furthermore, all the necessary explanations were also given to the school's head teacher (HT), environment, health and population (EPH) teachers and female teachers. It should be noted that the safety measures and stress management during the mensuration periods had to be considered while

doing any kinds of programme of this study. Few techniques like sharing the problems during the ‘periods’ with the female teachers, mothers, friends and taking some methods of precautions during this time along with the awareness and relaxation including breath control techniques were carried out in everyday life activity at the school.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the SPSS 24 software program. First, frequency counts for all the socio-demographic questions and the Likert-scale items were established, in addition to the response percentages, means, and standard deviations for each option. Second, the relationship between the dimensions and the school sector was analyzed, from which the Pearson correlation was calculated. Additionally, means and standard deviations were calculated for each dimension to determine the menstrual hygienic practices which presented the lowest percentages.

Results

Background characteristics of research participants

Information of students as per the gender indicated that majority of the girls followed Hinduism (51.4%), 17.3% were Buddhists, 3.6% were Christian, 1.6% are Muslim and the rest 26.1% others. In addition, there was a diversity of ethnic composition. 35% were Brahmins, 12.5% were Chhetris, 11.2% were Gurungs/Magars, 9.9% were Newars, 5.7% were Tharus, and 25.7% were others. In the same way, 84.5% of the students spoke the Nepali language as the mother tongue; 4.5% were Newari, 3.1% used the Rai language, 2.1% spoke Tharu and 5.8% other languages as the mother tongue.

Table 2: Background characteristics of the respondents

Characteristics		%
Religion	Hindu	51.4
	Buddhist	17.3
	Christian	3.6
	Muslim	1.6
	Others	26.1
Caste (Ethnicity)	Brahmins	35.0
	Chhetris	12.5
	Gurungs/Magars	11.2
	Newars	9.9
	Tharus	5.7
	Others	25.7
	Language (Mother tongue)	Nepali
Newari		4.5
Rai		3.1
Tharu		2.1
Others		5.8

Based on the results of the questionnaire on meaningful engagement in discussion among the friends (girls) in seven and eight grades, the perceptive aspect was the weakest in the groups of the surveyed students. In this dimension, the percentage of girls (38.9%) occasionally, (15.5%) nearly never, 11.1% never and son on reported sharing the problem of stomach with the friends during ‘periods’ (Table 3). This percentage was expected to be higher, which would have indicated that the girls were aware of the hygienic aspects during their ‘periods’ in their learning process. About students’ abilities to relate what they learned in one discussion to other discussions, only 38.9% reported always or nearly always doing so (Table 1). With regard to whether students sought additional information on topics discussed in class, only 37.4% indicated that they spent time doing so (Table 2). The aspect that appeared with the greatest frequency was trying to understand what an author is stating in a text. A total of 14.1% of the students claimed that they always or nearly always di this (Table 5).

Table 3: When I have stomach pain before menstruation, I share with friends

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Occasionally	156	38.9	38.9	38.9
Nearly never	62	15.5	15.5	54.4
Nearly always	82	20.4	20.4	74.8
Never	44	11.1	11.1	85.9
Always	57	14.1	14.1	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: When stomach pain starts before menstruation, I apply the home-made pad

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Occasionally	150	37.4	37.4	37.8
Nearly never	60	15.0	15.0	52.7
Nearly always	106	26.2	26.2	78.9
Never	35	8.5	8.5	87.4
Always	50	12.6	12.6	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: I share with my friends when I have menstruation

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Occasionally	156	38.9	38.9	38.9
Nearly never	62	15.5	15.5	54.4
Nearly always	82	20.4	20.4	74.8
Never	44	11.1	11.1	85.9
Always	57	14.1	14.1	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: When stomach pain starts before menstruation, I share with female teacher

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Occasionally	150	37.4	37.4	37.8
Nearly never	60	15.0	15.0	52.7
Nearly always	106	26.2	26.2	78.9
Never	35	8.5	8.5	87.4
Always	50	12.6	12.6	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

Students' engagement and sharing their problems

The results demonstrated that the dimensions with the lowest percentages were the collaboration with the friends (6.28%) and the sharing with the mothers (87.2%) and more (Table 7). These outcomes indicate that sharing the problems require reinforcement and motivation in the study population.

Table 7: Means and standard deviations of sharing habit

Sharing with	Mean	Standard Deviation
Friends	3.136	1.174
Mothers	4.20	1.062
Female teachers	4.56	0.656
Head teachers	2.87	1.230

Relationship between the type of sharing in urban and rural schools

The data demonstrate that sharing the problems during the 'period' does not affect school engagement among the girls. The Pearson correlations obtained values were far from 1 (Table 8).

Table 8: Correlations between friends sharing and the students engagement (N=100)

Sharing types and girls engagement	Correlations	Standard Errors
Sharing with the friends (girls of similar age)		
I share problem of the stomach pain during my period with my friends	0.002	0.035
I bring sanitary pad (homemade) during my period and show to my friends	0.042	0.035
My friends suggest me not to be absent during my period	0.069	0.036
My friends share their problems with me	0.104	0.035
We actively participate in workshop and dialogue conference about the menstruation and its sanitary habits	-0.017	0.036

Table 9: Correlations between female teachers' sharing and the students engagement (N=100)

Sharing types and girls' engagement	Correlations	Standard Errors
Sharing with the female teachers		
I am happy to share my problems during my 'period' with my teachers	-0.1076	0.031
I got shy to share menstruation complications with the female teachers	-0.021	0.032
My teacher provides me sanitary pads during my menstruation periods	-0.120	0.036
I feel uneasy in the class during my 'period'	-0.081	0.032
All the female teachers are friendly and I can share all the problems with them	-0.107	0.039

Table 10: Correlations between sharing with mothers and the students' engagement (N=100)

Sharing types and girls engagement	Correlations	Standard Errors
Sharing with the mothers		
My mother is the best in this regard	0.154	0.035
I am happy in the 'period' when I am with my mother	0.155	0.035
I and my friends share with my mother when they are in 'periods'	0.038	0.035
My mother provides us with homemade sanitary pads	0.039	0.036
My mother shares her experiences of hygienic behaviour during menstruation	0.121	0.035

Conclusions

The purpose of the present study was to identify the dimensions that affect school engagement among seventh and eighth-grade teenage girls during their 'periods' in the basic level community schools in Nepal. The results showed that the engagement was good in terms of taking part in the workshop and in all sorts of dialogue conferences. The findings showed that the girls who had 'periods' in the school hours felt uneasy and shy and thus it hampered the study hours as well as their overall academic performance. The girls' engagement either at school or home with the mothers was found good in terms of menstrual hygienic practices. This study believes that conducting such studies will shed more light on the application of homemade sanitary pads in school to lessen their burden. It helps to cultivate enthusiasm among the girls for learning through the provision of meaningful engagement of students in school and at home. A proposed professional development training programme for the public school teachers on menstrual hygienic and stress management needs to be launched. To sum up, there is a strong correlation between the types of sharing among the friends of the same grade, female teachers as well as with the mothers.

Authors' contributions

MA conducted data collection, data analysis, interpretation of the data and drafted the manuscript. PA and PB provided comments, read and approved the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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