

Practice Of Menstrual Hygiene Among Female Students In Kwara State School For Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study assessed the menstrual hygiene practices and sources of information among female students at Kwara State School for Special Needs in Ilorin, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed, with data collected from 50 female students using a structured questionnaire. The sample was selected through purposive stratified sampling to ensure representation across academic levels (SS1–SS3). Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics (one-sample t-test) at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that 60% of respondents used commercial sanitary pads, while 26% relied on reusable cloth pads, and 12% used tissue paper. Most students (44%) changed their menstrual absorbents three times daily, and 56% bathed twice during menstruation. Pain relief methods included painkillers (50%), hot water (20%), and exercise (18%). Disposal practices varied, with 46% wrapping used materials in dustbins, while 28% burned them. All respondents practised genital washing during menstruation. Sources of menstrual information included family members (28%), teachers (18%), health workers (12%), and personal research/internet (14%). Hypothesis testing confirmed a significant practice of menstrual hygiene ($p < 0.05$, $t = 54.21$) and significant sources of information ($p < 0.05$, $t = 26.90$), leading to the rejection of both null hypotheses. The study concluded that while menstrual hygiene practices exist, gaps remain in optimal product use and disposal methods. Recommendations include intensified health education by healthcare providers and awareness campaigns via mass media to promote proper menstrual hygiene management.

Keywords: Menstrual hygiene, special needs students, Nigeria, sanitary practices, health education.

Introduction

Menstruation is a natural physiological process experienced by women of reproductive age. Despite its biological normality, it remains shrouded in social taboos, cultural restrictions, and supernatural beliefs in many societies. Poor knowledge and misconceptions about menstruation often lead to unsafe hygiene practices, increasing the risk of reproductive and genitourinary tract infections, cervical cancer, reduced academic performance, and diminished quality of life. Despite these significant health and educational implications, menstrual knowledge and hygiene practices remain inadequately addressed in Nigeria, particularly among female undergraduates, who are often assumed to be well-informed due to their maturity and education.

Menstrual knowledge encompasses an understanding of female reproductive physiology, including the processes that lead to monthly menstruation. However, menstrual management varies widely depending on sociocultural norms (Ali & Rizvi, 2010). According to UNICEF and WHO (2014), Menstrual Hygiene (MH) refers to the practice of using clean materials to absorb or collect menstrual blood, changing them privately as needed, maintaining body cleanliness with soap and water, and having access to proper disposal facilities.

Schools play a crucial role in menstrual hygiene management. Inadequate facilities—such as lack of gender-segregated toilets, clean water for washing, spaces for drying clothes, and access to sanitary products—can hinder proper menstrual hygiene. These deficiencies contribute to school absenteeism, decreased concentration, and reduced participation in academic and extracurricular activities (Sommer & Sahin, 2013).

In Nigeria, diverse perceptions and practices surround menstruation, often influenced by deep-seated cultural and religious beliefs. Many communities regard menstruation as unclean and a topic that should not be openly discussed. Traditional restrictions may prohibit menstruating women from cooking for their husbands, fetching water from communal sources, or participating in religious rites (UNICEF & GHARF, 2008). Additionally, challenges such as the high cost of sanitary products, lack of proper disposal systems, insufficient water supply, and unclean restrooms force many women and girls to manage their periods in unhygienic and uncomfortable conditions (Olukanni, 2013).

Globally, the lack of proper guidance, facilities, and materials for menstrual management remains a neglected public health and educational issue, requiring urgent attention, coordination, and investment (Sommer, 2016). In Nigeria, cultural silence and stigma surrounding menstruation and sexuality further restrict access to accurate information, leaving many girls and women misinformed

(Onyegegbu, 2014). Studies indicate that mothers often fail to educate their daughters about menstruation, leaving them to seek information from peers, who may spread myths and misinformation, leading to anxiety and fear (Aniebue et al., 2009). Aluko et al. (2014) describes the societal consequences of these misconceptions as unjust and discriminatory.

In recognition of these challenges, May 28 is globally observed as Menstrual Hygiene Day (MHD), aiming to promote awareness and advocate for improved menstrual hygiene practices. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to assess the menstrual hygiene practices among female students at Kwara State School for Special Needs in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Menstrual hygiene (MH) is a critical yet often overlooked aspect of women's health, significantly influenced by a complex interplay of social, economic, and cultural factors. The high cost of commercial sanitary pads, inadequate access to clean water and latrine facilities, the absence of private spaces for changing sanitary materials, and limited education about menstruation collectively create substantial barriers to proper menstrual hygiene management. These challenges are particularly pronounced among female students in public settings, where the lack of appropriate facilities and support systems exacerbates difficulties during menstruation. As a result, many young women face significant disruptions to their daily lives, including increased absenteeism from classes, self-imposed isolation, and withdrawal from routine activities. Additionally, the psychological and emotional toll of managing menstruation in unsupportive environments often manifests in behavioural changes, such as heightened mood swings, uncooperativeness in academic and social settings, and a noticeable decline in participation among typically outgoing individuals. These issues not only hinder academic performance but also strain interpersonal relationships and overall well-being. Given these pressing concerns, this study seeks to explore the practices of menstrual hygiene among female students at Kwara State School for Special Needs in Ilorin, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to;

- I. Assess the practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria.
- II. Assess the sources of information on the practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i. What are the practices of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria?
- ii. What are the sources of Information on menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria.
- ii. There is no significant source of information on menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is particularly useful for exploring and describing the characteristics, behaviours, and practices of a specific group of individuals. According to Fredrick and Lori-Ann (2012), a descriptive survey design is ideal for research seeking to document and interpret conditions or practices as they currently exist without manipulating the study environment. In the context of this study, the design enabled the researchers to gather relevant data on the practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria. The choice of this design allowed for a focused, non-intrusive examination of personal hygiene practices during menstruation among a unique and often overlooked population—students with special needs—while also identifying the sources from which these students obtain menstrual hygiene information.

The population for this study comprised all female students enrolled at the Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin. From this population, a sample of fifty (50) students was selected using a purposive stratified sampling technique. The researchers categorised the entire female population into three distinct strata based on academic level SS1, SS2, and SS3. This stratification ensured that all educational levels within the senior secondary classes were adequately represented in the study. The sample was drawn in such a way as to provide a balanced perspective across these levels. The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers, which consisted of two sections: Section A focused on menstrual hygiene practices, while Section B explored the sources of menstrual hygiene information accessible to the students. The content of the questionnaire was tailored to align with the research objectives and questions.

In administering the instrument, the researcher provided clear explanations and guidance to ensure that respondents fully understood each item on the questionnaire. This step was particularly crucial due to the unique needs of the respondents. All fifty questionnaires were distributed and filled out in the presence of the researcher, who collected each copy immediately after completion to minimise data loss or misinterpretation. For data analysis, the responses were organised into frequency distribution tables and converted into percentages to allow for easier interpretation and comparison. The descriptive statistics provided an overview of prevailing trends, while inferential statistics specifically, a one-sample t-test were employed to test the study's hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. This combination of descriptive and inferential methods enabled the researchers to derive meaningful conclusions about menstrual hygiene practices and information access among the target population.

Results

Research Question One: What are the practices of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria?

Table 1: Practices of Menstrual Hygiene among Female Students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Which of the following materials do you use during Menstruation	Reusable and washable cloth pads	13	26.0
	Tissue paper	6	12.0
	Commercial Sanitary Pads	30	60.0
	Tampons	2	4.0
	Total	50	100.0
How often do you change your menstrual absorbent in a day?	Once	7	14.0
	Two times	17	34.0
	Three times	22	44.0
	Four times	2	4.0
	More than four times	2	4.0
	Total	50	100.0
How many times do you take your bath when Menstruating?	Once	12	24.0
	Two times	28	56.0
	Three times	8	16.0
	Four times	2	4.0
	Total	50	100.0
Which of the following activities do you engage in to reduce Menstrual pain?	Taking pain relievers	25	50.0
	Taking hot water	10	20.0
	Getting involved in regular exercise	9	18.0
	Taking cold water	2	4.0
	Placing hot water on the stomach	3	6.0
	Total	50	100.0
How do you dispose used menstrual material?	Burn	14	28.0
	Wash	5	10.0
	Flushing in the toilet	7	14.0
	Wrap and throw in a dustbin	23	46.0
	Others	1	2.0
	Total	50	100.0
How do you store menstrual materials?	Wash, dry, iron and wrap pieces in a clean cloth, then keep for use	10	20.0
	Dry and wrap for use	5	10.0
	I use sanitary pads, so I just keep them in their bag and make use of them when needed	35	70.0
	Total	50	100.0
Do you wash your genitals when menstruating?	No	0	0.0
	Yes	50	100.0
	Total	50	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fields Work, (2025)

The data presented in Table 1 reveals the menstrual hygiene practices among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria. The findings reveal that the majority of the students (60%) use commercial sanitary pads during menstruation, indicating a preference for disposable and hygienic materials. However, a significant proportion (26%) still relies on reusable and

washable cloth pads, while 12% use tissue paper, and a minority (4%) use tampons. This suggests varying levels of access to menstrual hygiene products, possibly influenced by economic factors or awareness. Regarding the frequency of changing menstrual absorbents, 44% of the respondents reported changing their absorbents three times a day, which aligns with recommended hygiene practices. Additionally, 34% change theirs twice daily, while 14% do so only once, which may pose health risks if prolonged. A small proportion change their absorbents four or more times daily (8% combined), indicating a higher level of menstrual hygiene consciousness among these individuals.

When it comes to bathing habits during menstruation, over half of the respondents (56%) take their bath twice daily, demonstrating an awareness of the need for personal cleanliness. Another 24% bathe once daily, while smaller percentages bathe three (16%) or four times (4%) a day. These findings confirmed that most students maintain a reasonable level of personal hygiene during menstruation. In terms of managing menstrual pain, half of the respondents (50%) resort to taking pain relievers, which is a common and accessible method. Others employ traditional or natural remedies such as taking hot water (20%), engaging in regular exercise (18%), placing hot water on the stomach (6%), or taking cold water (4%). These variations in pain relief methods reflect diverse coping mechanisms based on personal preferences or available resources.

The disposal methods of used menstrual materials also vary. The most common method is wrapping and disposing in a dustbin (46%), which is considered a relatively hygienic and socially accepted practice. Some students (28%) burn the used materials, while others either flush them down the toilet (14%) or wash them (10%). A small number (2%) use other unspecified methods. This indicates that while many students follow acceptable disposal methods, there is still a need for proper menstrual waste management education.

In terms of storage of menstrual materials, 70% of respondents who use sanitary pads keep them in their original bags until needed, ensuring cleanliness and readiness for use. Meanwhile, 20% of respondents wash, dry, iron, and wrap reusable materials in a clean cloth, reflecting good hygiene practices among users of non-disposable materials. Another 10% dry and wrap their materials for future use. All respondents (100%) affirmed that they wash their genitals while menstruating, which is a positive and encouraging indicator of basic menstrual hygiene knowledge and practice among the female students. Overall, the findings demonstrate that while many students have adopted appropriate menstrual hygiene practices, there remain areas for improvement, particularly in access to hygienic products, frequency of absorbent changes, and safe disposal methods.

Research Question Two: What are the sources of Information on Menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria?

Table 2: Sources of Information on Menstruation among Female Students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria

Source	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Personal research/Internet	7	14.0
Family member	14	28.0
Teachers (school)	9	18.0
Friends	4	8.0
Radio	2	4.0
Health workers	6	12.0
Handbills and leaflets	1	2.0
Church/Mosque	1	2.0
Television	3	6.0
Banners and Posters	1	2.0
Print media (books, magazines)	2	4.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Researcher's Fields Work (2025)

Table 2 indicates the sources of Information on Menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria. 7 (14.0%) of the respondents get their information through personal research/internet, 14 (28.0%) of the respondents picked family members, 9 (18.0%) of the respondents picked school teachers, 4 (8.0%) picked friends, 2 (4.0%) of the respondents picked radio, 6 (12.0%) of the respondents picked health workers, 1 (2.0%) picked handbills and leaflet, 1 (2.0%) of the respondents picked church/mosque, 3 (6.0%) of the respondents picked television, 1 (2.0%) picked banners and posters and 2 (4.0%) of the respondents picked print media (books, magazine).

Hypothesis One

There is no significant practice of Menstrual Hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Table 3: One-Sample t-test Showing the Practice of Menstrual Hygiene among Female Students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Practice of Menstrual Hygiene	50	2.17	0.79	0.04	49	54.21	2.009	0.00

Calculated $p < 0.05$, calculated t-value > 2.009 at df 49

The result of the one-sample t-test statistics in table 4.4 revealed that there is a significant practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria because the calculated p-value is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance and the calculated t-value of 54.21 is greater than the 2.009 critical t-value at 49 degrees of freedom (df). The overall mean computed was 2.17 with the standard deviation of 0.79 and the standard error of 0.04. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria, was rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant source of Information on menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Table 4: One-Sample t-test on the Source of Information on Menstruation among Female Students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Source of Information on Menstruation	50	3.69	2.69	0.14	49	26.90	2.009	0.00

Calculated $p < 0.05$, calculated t-value > 2.009 at df 49

The result of the one-sample t-test statistics in table 4 revealed that there is a significant source of information on menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria because the calculated p-value is lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance and the calculated t-value of 26.90 is greater than the 2.009 t critical t-value at 49 degrees of freedom (df). The mean computed was 3.69 with the standard deviation of 2.69 and the standard error of 0.14. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant source of information on menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria, was rejected.

Discussion

This study assessed the practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria. In assessing the practice of menstrual hygiene, the source of information on menstruation was also investigated. Two null hypotheses were tested to affirm the significant practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Hypothesis one revealed that the practice of menstrual hygiene among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria is significant. This finding supports the view of Upashe, Tekelab and Mekonnen (2015), who posited that 330 (39.9%) of the respondents had a good practice on menstrual hygiene. The majority 678 (82.2%) of girls were using absorbent material during menstruation and two-thirds 548 (66.2%) of girls were using commercially made sanitary pads as absorbent material during menstruation. Concerning the practice of menstrual hygiene, Oche, Umar, Gana and Ango (2012) also reported that the majority (87% or 106) of the girls used sanitary pads. North-western Nigeria reported that 88.7% of girls in basic schools were engaged in good menstrual hygiene practices (Lawan, Yusuf & Musa, 2010).

Belayneh and Mekuriaw (2019) affirmed that knowledge about menstruation helps girls maintain good menstrual hygiene. Individuals with a good level of knowledge regarding menstruation and menstrual hygiene practised safer menstrual hygiene than their counterparts. Lawan, Yusuf and Musa (2010) also found that knowledge about menstruation was significantly associated with good menstrual hygiene practices. Thus, girls should have sufficient knowledge surrounding menstruation, the menstrual cycle, and menstrual hygiene, even before menarche. Better knowledge about menses and menstrual hygiene helps girls accept the natural phenomenon as a normal physiological process and follow proper hygienic practices (Malhotra, Goli, Coates & Mosquera-Vasquez, 2016).

Hypothesis two revealed that the source of information on menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria is significant. This finding corroborated Akinwaare, Akindele and Oluwatosin (2016), who affirmed that most (93.7%) of the respondents had information about menstruation before they started, and mothers were the source of information for most (87.0%). Also, a study conducted in Ethiopia showed that most girls learnt about menstruation and related hygiene demands

from friends (Zegeye, Megabiaw & Mulu, 2014). This finding, however, is against Aniebue et al. (2009), who reported that mothers do not educate their daughters about the onset of menstruation, its duration, or healthy practices. Girls often seek information from their peers, friends, or siblings who relay superstitions and incorrect information, which leads to fear and anxiety among the girls. Also, the sources of information regarding menstruation were found not to be statistically significant with respect to the knowledge of menstruation (Oche, Umar, Gana & Ango, 2012).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria, practice menstrual hygiene.
2. The source of information on menstruation among female students in Kwara State School for Special Needs, Ilorin, Nigeria revolve around personal research/internet, family member, teachers (school), friends, radio, health workers, handbills and leaflet, church/mosque, television, banners and posters, and print media (books, magazine).

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Health care givers should be actively involved in promoting female menstrual hygiene to reduce the disease burden associated with poor menstrual hygiene and enlighten the females on proper disposal of pads/tissue paper/other materials by organising health talks and seminars in schools.
2. Health educators should sensitise females through health talks on radio and television on how to maintain hygienic practices during menstruation.

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