

Abstract 31:

Awareness of menstrual hygiene among female students studying in schools in the Jaffna Municipal Council area

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Background and objectives: Menstrual hygiene is critical to girls' health, well-being, and academic success. Obstacles to good menstruation management include limited availability of sanitary products, and poor facilities, all of which have a negative impact on attendance and academic performance. Improving menstrual hygiene helps women manage their health with dignity, reduces school absenteeism due to lack of resources, and ensures girls can participate fully in education. The primary goal of this study was to assess the knowledge and practices related to menstrual hygiene of schoolgirls in the Jaffna Municipal Council Area and analyse the relationship between their knowledge of menstrual health and hygiene practices.

Methods: A school-based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 427 students from Holy Family Convent, Vaitheeswara College, Chundikkuli Girls' college and Vembadi Girls' High School. Proportionate stratified random sampling was done among female students from Grade 10 and 11. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather the data. A Likert scale was used to evaluate knowledge and practices related to menstruation. One-way ANOVA test was applied to evaluate the link between their knowledge and practices, and the impact of sociodemographic variables.

Results: This study showed that 96% of the students had good knowledge whereas 92% were following good practice indicating a small gap between knowledge and practice. Menstrual health awareness was high, with more than 75% understanding hormonal changes, but only 43% recognized the influence of menstruation on daily activities. While 65% reported effective menstruation management, 11% struggled. Notably, 38.9% reported poor school attendance during menstruation. Students' menstrual hygiene practices were positively associated with mother's higher education ($p=0.013$) and maternal profession ($p=0.045$).

Conclusions and recommendations: This study highlights the need for targeted interventions to bridge gaps between knowledge and practice, improve school attendance during menstruation, and address socio-economic factors influencing menstrual hygiene management.

Keywords: Menstruation, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Jaffna schools