



Factors Affecting Personal (Menstrual Hygiene) and Academic Well-Being of Secondary School Girls: An Analytical Study

Aqsa Farooq¹, Salma Nazar Khan²

¹ Ph.D. Scholar, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Email: aqsafarooq22@yahoo.com

² Assistant professor, Department of Education, Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

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ABSTRACT

The research was conducted to explore the factors affecting secondary school girls' personal and academic well-being. The study was descriptive. A quantitative approach was used to execute this research. The study population consisted of secondary school girls studying in grade 8th. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample of the study. 311 girls from four Govt. secondary schools were taken as the sample for quantitative data. The data were analyzed through SPSS statistics using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results depict that a teacher's attitude is a strong predictor of the personal well-being of secondary school girls. Teacher's support for safe menstrual hygiene helps adolescent girls maintain good personal health and hygiene. It was concluded that girls face challenges while managing menstruation in schools due to intense pain/discomfort and unfavorable school environments. The lack of sanitary products and facilities makes going to school during menstruation difficult. There is a need for well-informed continuous school education programs and effective strategies to be delivered to adolescent school girls to adopt healthy menstrual practices.

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Corresponding Author's Email: aqsafarooq22@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Menstruation is often stigmatized and deeply misunderstood in most parts of the world, but it is still an important issue regarding gender equality, human rights, and development. (Patel, Aidara & Faisal, 2016). Women need to be well-informed about menstruation. Some young girls and women have never been trained or educated about Reproductive Tract Infections caused during menstruation (Narayan, Srinivasa & Peltó, 2001).

Rural women do not know how to handle tampons or sanitary pads and cannot afford them because of the high cost of such products. They restock with reusable cloth pads, which they wash and reuse again. Even though there are significant improvements in water and sanitation, the needs and needs of adolescent girls and women are not considered here. That is a big problem in many rural areas. They also face problems at home, school, and in social settings (Commer, 2010; UNICEF, 2004).

Taras and Datema's (2005) studies show that menstrual cycle-related problems affect young girls' learning outcomes. They are incapable of doing many things, and there is a need for someone who is there for them to listen to and encourage them in life. However, it's critical to note that private schools and families have little to complain about in this regard (Dasgupta & Sarkar, 2008).

This study aimed to examine menstrual health and hygiene and its awareness among adolescent girls in secondary schools. More specifically, this research considers the factors that affect their personal and academic well-being and the role of schools. Identifying the factors affecting menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls that further affect their academic well-being may help to trace the patterns of health issues relating to menstruation, the usage of WASH facilities, and understanding the requirements for equitable WASH facilities in schools so that girls may feel safe and healthy to maintain their academic well-being. Improving menstrual hygiene might significantly affect girls' education, health, and well-being. The results will also help teachers to support adolescent girls regarding menstruation and its management that will assist adolescent girls in maintaining safe menstrual health and hygiene.

2. Methodology

This study uses a descriptive design in which a design does describe the subject thoroughly. The purpose of a descriptive study is to provide a picture of a situation, person, or event or show how things are related to each other and as it naturally occurs (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2005). However, descriptive studies could not explain why an event occurred and is suitable for a relatively new or unexplored research area (Punch, 2005). We recommend an alternative research design for situations with much descriptive information, such as an explanatory or exploratory approach.

The descriptive research study portrays the profiles of the people, events, people, or situations (Robson, 1993). Descriptive research sets out a question with an in-depth description of a group selected beforehand and a go for collecting data on the part of survey participants. Thus it already clarifies or premeditatedly "decides" on analysis. In other words, descriptive research includes describing the people doing the research, the study's subject, the background, the instruments, the procedures, and the analysis. Using the pre-test to collect data ensures no complex data goes into the testing phase. However, descriptive research is meant to be a tool to understand better what is going on, not to be done as it is (Yin, 1994).

In this proposed study, the research question aims to gather quantitative data about adolescent girls' health and hygiene that affects their academic well-being. The quantitative data helped the researcher generalize young girls' perceptions about their personal health and hygiene that affects their academic well-being.

2.1. Population and Sampling

The target population was adolescent girls studying in grade 8th and ages between 12 – 14 years. The accessible population was adolescent girls from four Secondary Girls Schools in Rawalpindi.

Four secondary girls' schools were selected through a convenience sampling technique. For the survey questionnaire, the researcher selected the whole population of students studying in grade 8th through purposive sampling given the below selection criteria:

- The students of grade 8th, who were of the same age group (12 - 14).
- The girls were willing to participate and provided written consent.

The primary tool used in this study is the survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The survey questionnaire was adapted and contextualized before its administration.

2.2. Adaptation Steps of Survey Questionnaire

I consulted the existing literature, expert opinion, and a standardized questionnaire used in the research on '*To assess the Adolescent Girls' Menstrual Health and Hygiene in East Africa*' and '*Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of Menstruation among Young Girls in Swabi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.*' I adapted parts of the research questionnaire and contextualized it before the administration of the survey based on the context of Pakistan. From both of the questionnaires, some of the items were adapted because of their

relevance to my study. The researcher adapted the Urdu version of the questionnaire keeping in view the study participants, i.e., adolescent girls studying in the Govt. schools of grade 8th.

2.3. Validity of the Survey Questionnaire

In this study, construct validity was used. Construct validity is a statistical tool used to determine whether a particular construct is actually what it is intended to be and thus is both stable enough to measure and distinguishable enough from other constructs of the same measure. A way to assess the validity of this understanding test would be to have "experts" familiar with it understand its nature. The experts will then be able to examine the item and conclusively determine what the item was intended to measure (Phelan & Wren, 2006).

2.4. Reliability

Reliability is the consistency inherent within a measure. Psychologists have formed the test-retest reliability, internal consistency (also known as interrater reliability), and reliability across researchers into a triad definition of consistency (inter-rater reliability). In this study, the internal consistency was determined by calculating the raw value of the correlation coefficient. It measured reliability by calculating the average difference between correct and incorrect responses, called internal reliability.

The reliability of the survey questionnaire used in this study was checked through SPSS to determine its suitability in the context of Pakistan. The reliability coefficient is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Reliability of Survey Questionnaire

No. of Items	Reliability Coefficient
32	.821

3. Data Analysis

Quantitative data was collected using a survey questionnaire and analyzed through SPSS statistics software using descriptive and inferential analysis. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to assess secondary school girls' knowledge of menstrual health and hygiene. Using inferential statistics, multiple regression was applied to determine the association between personal and academic well-being. It enabled the researcher to observe two or more variables simultaneously and helped describe a relationship between two or more variables.

4. Results and Interpretation

4.1. Personal Well-being

Since it has already been discussed, Personal well-being refers to the practices related to a nutritional diet, regular exercise, sufficient sleep, menstrual health, and hygiene of adolescent girls that affect their academic performance. In this category, the questionnaire consisted of eleven sub-questions to determine the personal factors that affect the academic well-being of secondary school girls. The responses of young girls helped me to identify the phenomenon.

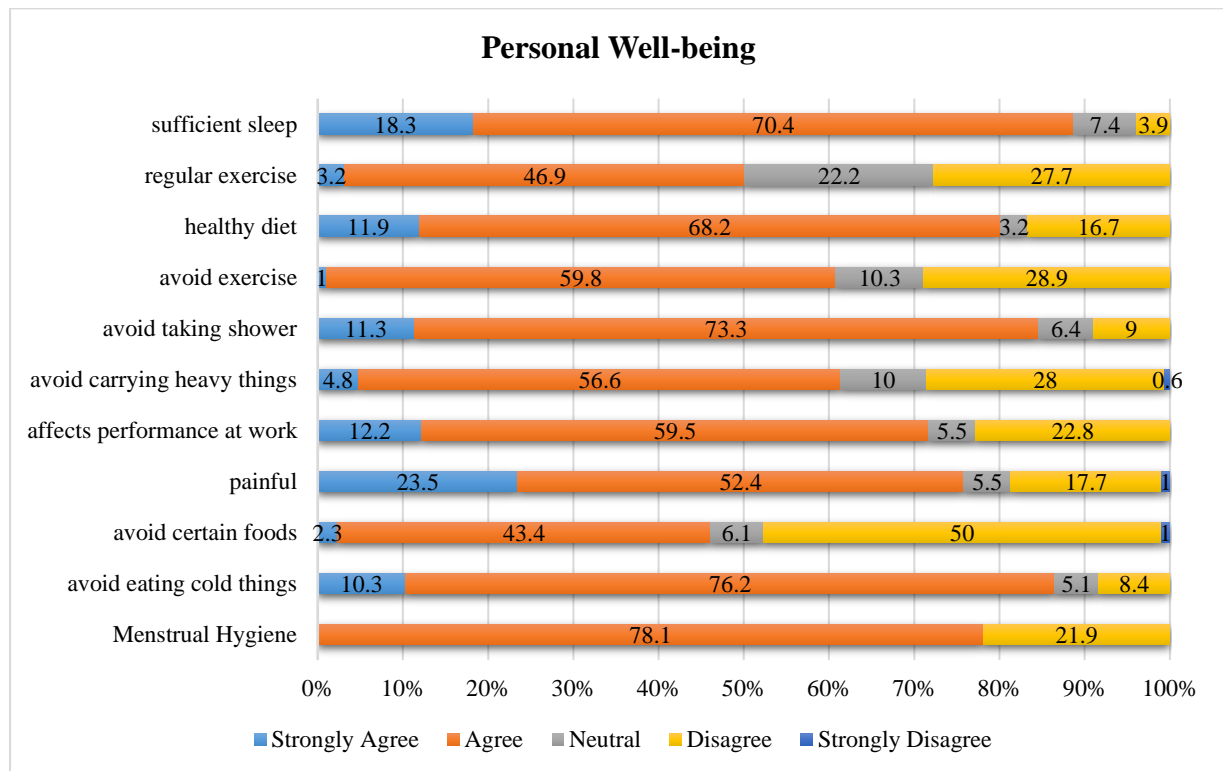


Figure 1: Graph of Personal Well-being

The above graph 1 shows that most (78.1%) of the girls knew about the menstrual hygiene, while less than half (21.9%) responded that they did not know about it. Most girls (76.2%) agreed that we should avoid eating cold things during menstruation, while a few girls (8.4%) disagreed with avoiding eating cold things during menstruation. Half of the girls (50%) disagreed with avoiding particular food during menstruation, while less than half (43.4%) of girls agreed that they should avoid particular food during menstruation. More than half of the girls (52.4) agreed that menstruation is painful, less than half (23.5%) of girls strongly agreed that menstruation is painful, while some of the girls (17.7%) disagreed. More than half of the girls (59.5%) agreed that menstruation affects the performance of women at work, while a few (12.2%) strongly agreed that menstruation affects the performance at work, while some of the girls (22.8%) disagreed that it does not affect the performance. More than half of the girls (56.6%) agreed that we should avoid carrying heavy things during menstruation, while some of the girls (28%) disagreed that we should not avoid carrying heavy things during menstruation. Most girls (73.3%) agreed that we should avoid taking showers during menstruation, while a few girls disagreed (9%). More than half of the girls (59.8%) agreed to avoid exercise during menstruation, some of the girls (28.9%) disagreed with avoiding exercise during menstruation, while a few (10.3%) girls responded neutrally. More than half of the girls (68.2%) agreed that a healthy diet helps them focus on their studies during menstruation, while a few (16.7) disagreed that a healthy diet does not affect their studies. Less than half of the girls (46.9%) agreed that regular exercise during menstruation affects their study habits, while (27.7%) said that it does not affect their study habits, and some of the girls (22.2%) responded neutrally. The majority of the girls (70.4%) agreed that sufficient sleep (6-8 hours) per day during menstruation helps them to concentrate on their studies, while a few girls (3.9%) disagreed that sufficient sleep (6-8 hours) per day during menstruation does not help them to concentrate on their studies.

The data confirms that the young girls knew about menstrual hygiene. Furthermore, the results depict intense pain and discomfort during menstruation affect girls' performance, especially at school. Moreover, the majority of the girls agreed that a healthy diet, regular exercise, and sufficient sleep help adolescent girls to concentrate on their studies during menstruation.

4.2. Multiple Regression Analysis

With the help of multiple linear regression, the relationship between the independent variables and personal well-being was analyzed in more depth. Regression analysis will determine the linear regression equation, with the beta found to confirm a causal relationship among the dependent variable personal well-being (PW), and the independent variables: Teacher's Attitude (TA), School Administration (SA), and School Environment (SE) to determine the degree of influence of each sub-factor on the personal well-being of secondary school girls. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression in SPSS 22.0 software. Assumptions and factors affecting personal well-being with linear correlation and multiple regression are as follows:

Table 2
Regression Analysis of Personal Well-being

Model	Standardized Coefficients t	Sig.
	Beta	
(Constant)	18.904	.000
Teachers attitude	.071	.000
Administration	.053	.009
School environment	.52	.001
Dependent Variable: Personal Wellbeing		
N: 311	R Square: .685	Adjusted R Square: .575
F: 50.55	Significance: .000	Dependent Variable: Personal wellbeing

The above Table 2 enumerates that all of the variables have direct relation, which confirms significance according to the significance criteria (i.e., $p < .01$). The result of personal well-being with teacher's attitude was highly significant (standardized coefficient (beta) = .071, $t=1.210$, $p<0.05$). The result of personal well-being with school administration was significant (standardized coefficient (beta) = .053, $t=.928$, $p<0.05$). The result of personal well-being with school environment was also significant (standardized coefficient (beta) = .052, $t=3.701$, $p<0.05$). The R square value is .685, which depicts that 68.5% variance in the dependent variable, i.e., personal well-being, can be explained by the above independent variables (teacher's attitude, school administration, and school environment).

The regression analysis confirms that teachers' attitudes significantly predict personal well-being (standardized coefficient (beta) = .071, $t=1.210$, $P\text{-value}=.000$) of secondary school girls.

Teachers' Attitude is a strong predictor of the personal well-being of secondary school girls. Teacher's support for safe menstrual hygiene helps adolescent girls maintain good personal health and hygiene.

4.3. Discussion

The study aimed to explore menstrual health and hygiene and its awareness among adolescent girls in secondary schools.

The results show that intense pain, discomfort, and fear of staining the clothes contribute to girls skipping school during menstruation. Adolescent girls struggle to walk correctly in school during menstruation, which diverts their attention from their studies. Furthermore, they cannot do their homework due to headaches, back pain, and discomfort during menstruation. Raju and Suguna (2017) support the quantitative findings in which the impact of menstruation symptoms are seen to be highly interdisciplinary such as lack of attention on the part of students in the menstruation cycle and go to schools, poor concentration throughout learning time and complexity in memorizing the studied material among many others that would sum up to affect the academic performance of female students in school subjects negatively. The qualitative results confirm the quantitative findings as the teachers think studies are affected due to menstruation. The students feel intense pain and discomfort, so they cannot concentrate on their studies. This is a compassionate time for them as their bodies undergo significant physical and mental

changes. Omu and Delles (2011) support the finding of this study after they found adolescent girls go through an intensely painful and distasteful experience for several days. If the menstruating school days are near, it may be worth asking the teacher if the girl may be struggling during the teaching-learning process, and if the educational process is indeed also good, the girl may find it more manageable. In one study, studies of the performance of well-academically qualified women in the same position were shown that they were less likely to be negatively affected by menses (Suman, Mrunalini, and Jyoti, 2013).

The results depict that teachers' attitude positively affects the personal well-being of secondary school girls. The results show that teacher's support for safe menstrual hygiene helps adolescent girls maintain good personal health and hygiene. Interestingly, adolescent girls do not want to be taught about menstruation in school as the qualitative results show that girls feel shy talking about menstruation and its related problems with their teachers. Horner (2019) states that many countries are not including menstrual health management in their sexual and reproductive health curricula for adolescent girls, which means that young people are not getting adequate training. Although menstrual health training is not presently universally accepted as a priority, it should be a primary focus in health education for adolescent girls. The teachers' ability to freely teach about menstruation is beneficial to destroying taboos concerning menstruation.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that many girls have knowledge gaps and misconceptions about menstruation. This leaves them unprepared when they reach menarche and causes fear and anxiety. Teachers' attitude is positively associated with personal well-being. Their support and encouragement help adolescent girls concentrate on their studies during menstruation. The study concludes that increasing one's level of education is an integral part of menstrual health. Pre-menstrual education given to students in school is a way to provide students with information about changes occurring in their bodies.

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