

Menstrual Hygiene Education In Ranchi, India: Current Condition And Further Direction

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Abstract

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a crucial component of women's health, particularly in India, where menstruation is still shrouded in silence and stigma. Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand, reflects many of the national challenges in managing menstruation with dignity and safety. In recent years, awareness around menstrual health has increased, but education and resources remain limited, especially for women in rural and low-income communities. This article explores the current state of menstrual hygiene education in Ranchi, the barriers to progress, and strategies for future improvements.

Key Words: menstrual hygiene management, women's health, social stigma, menstruation.

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I. Literature Review

Current Conditions and further direction in Ranchi related to menstrual Hygiene:

1. Limited Awareness and Education

In Ranchi, and especially in its rural peripheries, knowledge about menstrual hygiene is sparse. Many adolescent girls face menstruation without proper education, leaving them ill-prepared to manage their periods hygienically. According to a study conducted by Kaur et al. (2018), 75% of adolescent girls in rural Jharkhand had no prior knowledge about menstruation before their menarche. This knowledge gap is primarily due to the cultural taboos that make discussions around menstruation taboo in family settings and schools.

2. Access to Sanitary Products

Sanitary products remain out of reach for many women in Ranchi, particularly those living in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. A 2020 survey conducted by Das et al. (2020) in Jharkhand revealed that **60% of rural women use cloth** instead of sanitary pads due to cost and lack of availability. This reliance on cloth, often without adequate drying or hygiene, increases the risk of infections and other reproductive health issues.

While government schemes, such as the **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK)**, distribute sanitary napkins at subsidized rates, the coverage is limited, and many women are still unaware of these initiatives. Additionally, the societal discomfort in purchasing menstrual products publicly exacerbates the issue.

3. Menstrual-Related School Absenteeism

School absenteeism during menstruation remains a significant issue in Ranchi. A study by Prasad et al. (2019) indicated that **27% of adolescent girls miss school during their periods due to inadequate facilities**, including lack of access to sanitary products, water, and private toilets. The absence of proper disposal mechanisms for used sanitary products in schools also discourages regular attendance during menstruation. This impacts the educational and social development of young girls, contributing to gender disparities in education.

Challenges in Menstrual Hygiene Management

1. Cultural and Social Taboos

In Ranchi, menstruation is often considered "impure," leading to social restrictions on girls and women during their periods. According to research by Sharma et al. (2018), **girls in Jharkhand face significant cultural restrictions**, including being prohibited from participating in religious activities, cooking, or even attending school during menstruation. These taboos not only limit women's freedom but also prevent open discussions about menstrual health, perpetuating misinformation and stigma.

2. Lack of Comprehensive Government and NGO Collaboration

While both government programs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have initiated efforts to improve menstrual hygiene, a lack of coordination hampers progress. A study by **Thakur et al. (2021)** found that **overlapping responsibilities and insufficient collaboration** between governmental and non-governmental

bodies lead to resource duplication and inefficiency. For example, both government-led programs and NGOs like **Goonj** and **Aakar Innovations** operate in Ranchi but often do not synchronize their efforts, limiting their reach and impact.

3. Inadequate Sanitation Infrastructure

Sanitation facilities in Ranchi's public schools and rural areas are often subpar, exacerbating challenges for menstrual hygiene management. In many rural schools, there are no separate toilets for girls, and water availability is inconsistent. Research by **Kumari et al. (2020)** highlighted that **nearly 40% of schools in rural Ranchi lack proper sanitation facilities**, forcing girls to miss school or use unhygienic facilities during menstruation.

Future Directions

1. Comprehensive Menstrual Hygiene Education

A critical step forward is the inclusion of menstrual hygiene education in school curriculums and community health programs. Schools in Ranchi should integrate menstrual health into their life skills education, ensuring both boys and girls understand menstruation as a natural biological process. A study by **Kaur et al. (2021)** showed that comprehensive menstrual education programs significantly increased awareness and reduced stigma among both boys and girls.

In addition, peer-led programs, where adolescent girls educate their peers, could be employed to foster a supportive learning environment. NGOs such as **Menstrupedia** have successfully used comic books and interactive workshops to raise awareness among adolescents in rural areas of India.

2. Improving Sanitation and Infrastructure

A focus on improving sanitation infrastructure in schools and public places is essential. Schools need private toilets, water, and proper disposal mechanisms for menstrual waste. The **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** has made progress in building toilets, but according to a report by **Patel et al. (2022)**, the quality and maintenance of these facilities remain a concern. Programs should ensure sustainable sanitation systems that accommodate menstrual needs, and local governments must prioritize this in future infrastructure projects.

3. Affordable and Accessible Menstrual Products

Expanding access to affordable menstrual products is another key area for future improvement. Efforts should focus on promoting reusable products such as menstrual cups or cloth pads, which are more cost-effective in the long run and environmentally sustainable. According to **Pandey et al. (2019)**, reusable products, when combined with proper education on their use and maintenance, can significantly improve menstrual health outcomes.

Additionally, local production of sanitary products, supported by government and private partnerships, could reduce costs and increase access. Encouraging social entrepreneurs to manufacture and distribute low-cost products could be an innovative solution, as seen in successful initiatives in other states.

4. Breaking the Menstrual Taboo

Breaking the taboo around menstruation requires consistent, community-wide education campaigns. Such efforts should target not just women but also men and boys to create a more inclusive society. According to **Roy et al. (2020)**, involving male family members in menstrual health education leads to more open communication and support for women during menstruation. Media campaigns, workshops, and street plays could be used to challenge harmful cultural beliefs and create positive narratives around menstruation.

5. Strengthening NGO-Government Partnerships

Effective collaboration between NGOs and the government is crucial for long-term change. Aligning goals, sharing resources, and coordinating efforts would ensure more comprehensive coverage and efficient delivery of services. A study by **Srivastava et al. (2021)** recommends the establishment of local task forces to oversee menstrual health programs, ensuring that NGO efforts complement government initiatives and reach marginalized communities.

Sample collection

The study aimed to collect information from 266 participants through Google Forms regarding their experiences and views on menstrual health and hygiene in Ranchi, India. Google Forms was chosen as the data collection tool because it is accessible, easy to use, and effective in gathering responses. The form was divided into several sections:

Section A: Demographic Information

Section B: Awareness about the menstrual health and hygiene.
 Section C: Affordability and accessibility of menstrual product.
 Section D: Potential health risk associated with menstrual health and hygiene.
 Section E: Menstrual Awareness in Education institutions.
 Section F: Role of government campaign and scheme in Menstrual health and hygiene.
 Section G: Different types of Menstrual product and its disposal.

Section A collected data on participants’ age, education, socio-economic status. Section B assessed the level of knowledge among participants on menstrual health, hygienic practice, and common myths. Section C undergone to know about affordability and availability of Menstrual product in local market. Section D gauged participants knowledge of health hazards related to improper Menstrual hygiene. In Section E, the level of Menstrual awareness and education given in school is evaluated. In Section F, the effect of government campaigns and schemes to promote Menstrual health and delivery of Menstrual products is studies. Finally, Section G focused on the kinds of Menstrual product used and how they are disposed of and environment awareness.

II. Result And Discussion

Demographic characteristics

The demographic diversity of 266 participants, representing a broad spectrum of gender, ages, education level, income level and locality which allows for a sophisticated examination of how these variables influence menstrual health and hygiene among women.

GENDER

The majority of the participants (94%) were women, they tend to participate more in survey regarding Menstrual health and hygiene since it is mostly biological phenomenon, resulting in a natural tendency for female to participate in discussion related to it. Another reason behind this could be social norms, it can dissuade men from engaging in menstrual related surveys, regarding it as a “Female” matter.

AGE

There’s a really good and typical finding in menstrual health studies that most of the Female respondent (64.3%) were between the age of 15 – 25. The possible reason behind this could be that women in this age group are generally begin to experience the most severe menstrual symptoms. they might be more inclined to report their experiences and seek information or advice

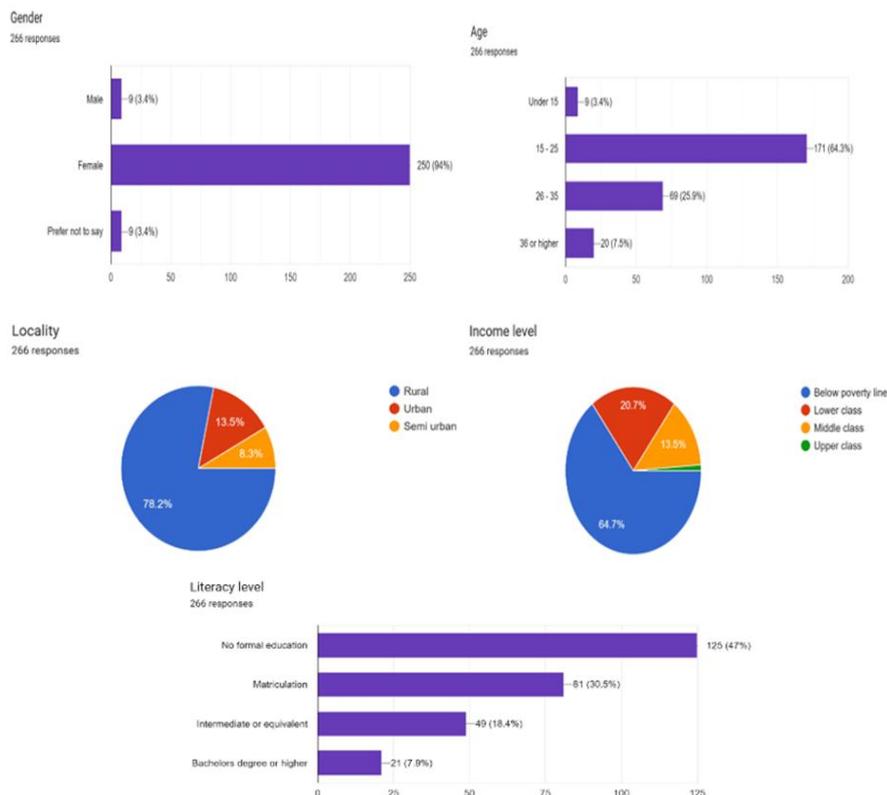


Figure 1: Demography (Gender, Age Locality, Literacy Level & Income level)

Locality

Most of the participants in this survey lived in rural or slum areas that is 78.2% which indicates that the focus of the study on learning about menstrual health and hygiene practices among such communities.

literacy level

The education level among the respondent was such that almost half (47%) had no formal education, followed by (30.5%) with matriculation and 22.5% with intermediate or Bachelor’s degree. lacking formal education raise concern regarding health literacy and access to accurate information on menstrual health.

Income level

The demographic survey showed that a very high percentage (64.7%) of respondents were living under the below poverty line, with a further 20% describing themselves as lower class. This result indicates that financial constraints can severely hinder access to necessary menstrual supplies and services.

Awareness about menstrual health and hygiene

According to the survey, the majority of participants (55.3%) reported being aware of menstrual health and cleanliness, while a sizeable portion (36.7%) claimed not to be. According to 59% of respondents, family was the most common source of knowledge. Significant contributions were also made by friends, who were cited as a source of knowledge by 35.3% of respondents. It's interesting to note that social media (4%) and formal educational institutions (3%) contributed very little to raising knowledge of menstrual health and cleanliness.

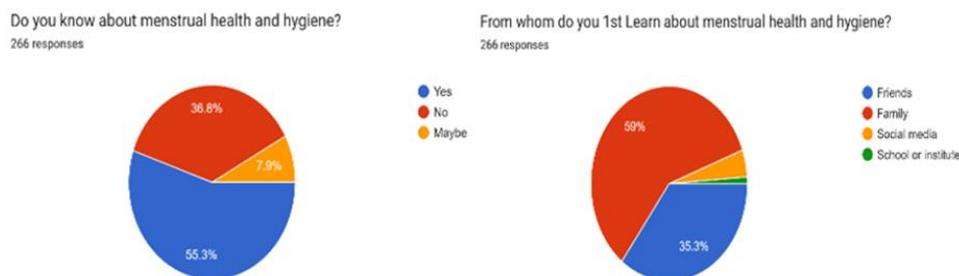


Figure 2: Awareness about menstrual health and hygiene

Affordability and Accessibility of menstrual product

Survey findings showed high level of barriers to menstrual hygiene management

- Affordability; 54.9% of the participants reported menstrual product as unaffordable, with another 23.7% reporting them “little expensive”, showing high financial burdens.
- Accessibility; 53% reported products not being easily accessible, pointing to lack of stores that stock menstrual products and cultural stigma surrounding menstruation, which leads to embarrassment to purchase menstrual products.

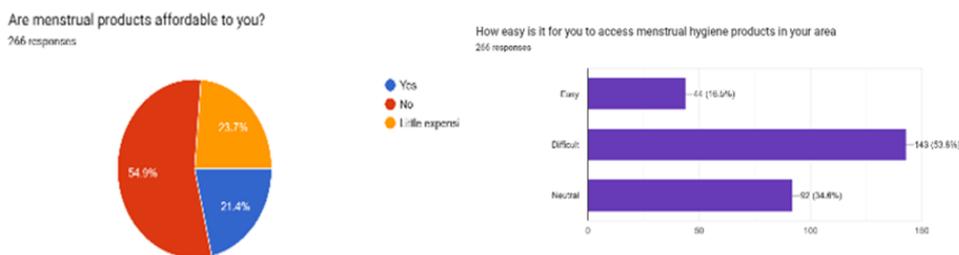


Figure 3: Affordability and Accessibility of menstrual Product

Potential health risk associated with menstrual health and hygiene

According to the survey, many people are unaware of the perceived risks to menstrual health and cleanliness. A staggering 68.8% of those surveyed said they were unaware of these risks. Furthermore, 18% of participants acknowledged knowing very little about health risks, while the remaining participants said they knew nothing. It is really concerning that 82.7% of people never seek medical advice for menstruation problems. There might be a variety of causes for this hesitancy. The opinion that medical intervention is not a common practice for menstrual-related concerns in this demographic is supported by the low percentage of people who seek medical guidance always and occasionally (12.8%).

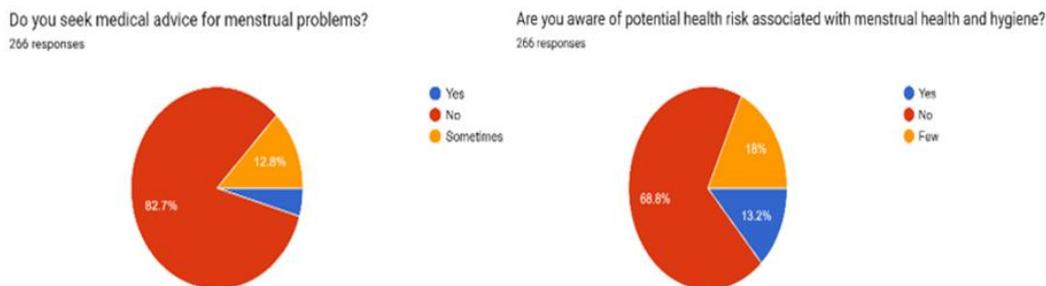


Figure 3: Potential Health Risk

Menstrual Awareness in Educational Institutions

The survey also indicated a wide gap in menstrual health and hygiene education in schools and educational institutions. A large majority, 84.6%, of the respondents said that their schools were not giving them enough education on this issue, Other 9.4% were unsure. On whether menstrual health and hygiene should be made a compulsory part of school curriculum, a huge majority, 95.9% of the respondentMs were strongly in favour. On the other hand, a negligible percentage of the respondent were against it.



Figure 5: Menstrual Awareness in Educational Institution

Role of government campaign and schemes in menstrual health and hygiene

According to the survey showed that the respondents' understanding of government-initiated menstrual hygiene initiatives was severely lacking. Just 4.1% of respondents reported a slight increase in availability to menstrual hygiene products, compared to 93.6% who reported no improvement at all. This data clearly shows that current government initiatives are either failing to reach the target population or failing to result in tangible improvements in access to essential menstrual hygiene facilities.

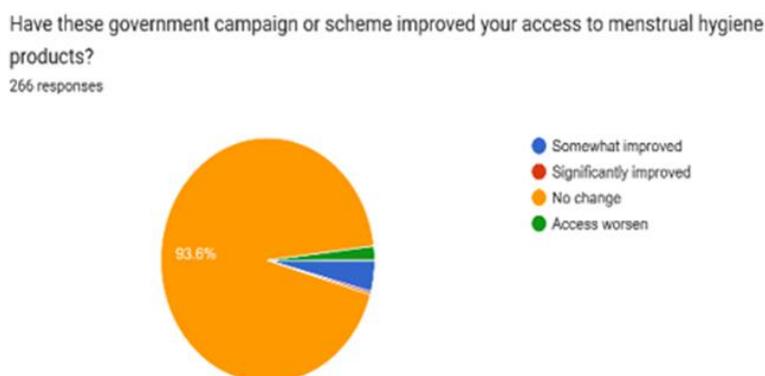


Figure 6: Government Role

Different types of menstrual product and its disposal

Our survey also showed that most of the respondents used cloth as a menstrual product. In fact, 70.2% used cloth and 27.1% used sanitary pads, this shows that despite the accessibility of modern menstrual hygiene products, traditional practices remain dominant among this group.

As far as the disposal practice, the survey shed light on a grave concern. a staggering 92.9 % of the respondents reported disposing of menstrual products in their general household waste. This is a phenomenally high percentage of inappropriate disposal. Only 2% reported following local guidelines of disposal. The outcome of this result shows that education and proper waste management systems about menstrual waste, is very much required.



Figure 7: menstrual Product Disposal

The collected data highlights several critical challenges related to menstrual hygiene management, particularly among women and girls in different social and economic settings. One of the primary concerns is the lack of education and awareness regarding menstrual health. Many women, especially in underprivileged and rural areas, do not have accurate information about proper menstrual hygiene practices. They may not know how to use sanitary products correctly, how often to change them, or how to maintain cleanliness during their menstrual cycle. This lack of knowledge can have severe consequences, including increased risks of infections, discomfort, and overall poor menstrual health.

Cultural Stigmas and Taboos

Another significant issue discussed in the collected data is the social and cultural taboos surrounding menstruation. Many societies discourage open discussions about menstrual health, which results in a lack of education and awareness. Because menstruation is often seen as something “dirty” or shameful, women and girls may hesitate to seek information, support, or even medical help when necessary. These cultural barriers contribute to misinformation and reinforce myths about menstruation, further limiting access to proper hygiene management.

Affordability and Accessibility of Sanitary Products

The collected data also highlights the high cost of menstrual products, making them inaccessible to many women, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds. Sanitary pads and other menstrual hygiene products are considered basic necessities, yet their cost is often too high compared to other essential goods. Due to financial constraints, many women resort to using unhygienic alternatives, such as old cloth, newspapers, or even leaves, which can lead to serious health issues, including infections.

Apart from affordability, the lack of access to sanitary products is another critical concern. In rural and remote areas, sanitary products are either unavailable or too expensive, forcing women to rely on unsafe methods. Limited access to clean and private facilities, including toilets and washing areas, further complicates menstrual hygiene management, making it even more challenging for women to maintain proper cleanliness during their periods.

The Need for Institutional Support and Infrastructure

To improve menstrual hygiene, institutions such as schools, colleges, and workplaces need to provide better facilities, including easy and emergency access to sanitary products and proper sanitation facilities. Many workplaces and educational institutions do not have dedicated spaces for menstrual hygiene management, making it difficult for women to manage their periods comfortably. Schools, in particular, play a crucial role in shaping young girls’ awareness and understanding of menstrual health. Providing educational programs, free sanitary pads, and proper sanitation infrastructure can help address these challenges and ensure a more supportive environment.

The Importance of Awareness Campaigns

One of the key solutions proposed in the collected data is the need for large-scale awareness campaigns to educate women and the broader community about menstrual health. Normalizing menstruation as a natural biological process rather than something shameful is essential for breaking down cultural stigmas. Public health initiatives, educational workshops, and community-based programs can help disseminate accurate information and encourage better menstrual hygiene practices.

Room for Improvement

Although there have been significant improvements in menstrual health awareness and accessibility over the years, there is still room for improvement in several areas. More efforts are needed to ensure affordable and accessible menstrual products, comprehensive education on menstrual hygiene, and a supportive environment in schools and workplaces. By addressing these issues, societies can empower women and girls to manage their menstrual health effectively, leading to better overall health, increased confidence, and improved quality of life.

III. Conclusion

Menstrual hygiene is a fundamental issue that affects millions of women worldwide. The document underscores the need to tackle the challenges of awareness, affordability, accessibility, and social stigma to improve menstrual health. Through education, policy changes, and institutional support, societies can work towards a future where menstrual hygiene management is no longer a barrier to women's health and well-being.

Menstrual hygiene management in Ranchi, India, presents a complex set of challenges, but with coordinated efforts, these barriers can be overcome. The integration of menstrual hygiene education in schools, improved access to affordable products, better sanitation infrastructure, and the removal of social taboos can help ensure that all women and girls in Ranchi can manage their menstruation with dignity. Collaborative efforts between the government, NGOs, and local communities will be key to driving progress in this critical area of public health.

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