

## Short Research Article

# Practices of Menstrual Sanitary Care among Post Primary School Girls in Nigeria

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** *Adolescents at this tender age often may lack knowledge regarding standard menstrual care required to be free from the risk of genital tract infections. The study aimed to assess the menstrual sanitary care practices among adolescent girls in Nigeria to determine the unmet need.*

**Methods:** *The study was a cross-sectional survey conducted among adolescent girls in four secondary schools at Port Harcourt, from 1st March to 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2018. Ethical approval was obtained from Rivers State Management School Board and State Ministry of Health.*

*Consent was obtained from all the participants. Data obtained were recorded on questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS version 18 Statistical Software and descriptive statistics was used for the analysis.*

**Results:** *During the study period (from March to August, 2018), 648 adolescent secondary school girls participated in the survey. The mean age  $\pm$ SD at menarche was  $12.8 \pm 1.31$ ., and the mean age of the respondents was  $16.1 \pm 1.34$  years. Sanitary pads were the most used menstrual absorbent among the adolescents 455 (70%). Other menstrual absorbent used by the adolescents were Tissue paper, cotton wool and pieces of clothes (30%). Majority washed genital area twice daily with soap and water 474 (73%) and changed used sanitary absorbents twice daily. In disposing used sanitary material, 390 (60%) wrapped it and put in the dust bins.*

**Conclusion:** *There was good menstrual sanitary care among the adolescent school girls. Sanitary pads were the most used menstrual absorbent.*

## 1. Background

Menstruation is the regular physiological changes that occurs in the female reproductive system that makes pregnancy possible. The average length of menstrual cycle is about 28-35 days and menstrual bleeding usually lasts between 3-7days. The period of puberty occurs between 10-14 years and menarche is experienced. Adolescents at this tender age often lack knowledge regarding reproductive health including menstruation (Ramachandra, Gilyaru, Eregowda, & Yathiraja, 2016). Though reproductive system is taught in Nigerian schools, but the practical management of menstruation is usually not considered (Shivaleela et al., 2015). From puberty onwards, feminine hygiene is a big deal. Staying on top of the personal hygiene during menstruation is especially important. Apart from waiting to keep the genital area clean and fresh, women are more vulnerable to bacterial infection during menstruation due to the change in the vagina PH balance. So to keep good sanitary care means being comfortable and also aren't at risk of infection. Menstrual sanitary care is an essential aspect of hygiene for women and adolescent girls between menarche and menopause. Despite being an important issue for women and girls who are at menstrual population, menstrual sanitary care is often overlooked. This study aims to describe the practices of adolescent high school students' menstrual sanitary care.

## 2. Methods

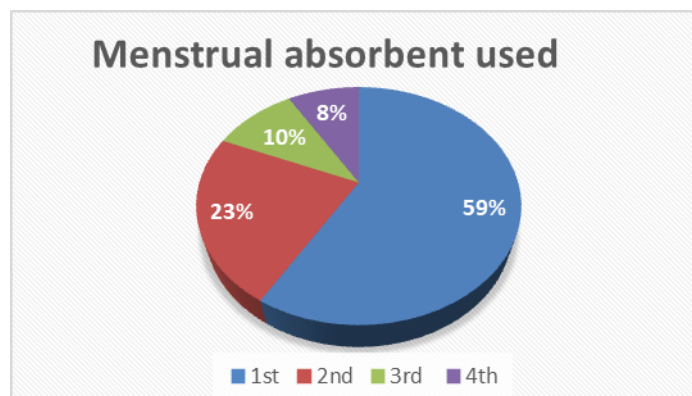
The study was a school-based cross-sectional study conducted from the month of March to August, 2018. The study was carried out in four secondary schools selected purposively in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Nigeria. Ethical approval was obtained from Rivers State School Management Board and State Ministry of Health. It was a voluntary survey. Consent was obtained from all the participants. All adolescent girls that have experienced menarche from the four selected secondary schools were recruited for the survey. Girls who had not attained menarche and those above 19 years were excluded. Self- developed structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics.

## 3. Results

The survey was in four girls secondary schools from March to August, 2018. Six hundred and forty eight female (N-648) adolescents participated in the study. The mean age  $\pm$ SD at menarche was  $12.8 \pm 1.31$ ., and the mean age of the respondents was  $16.1 \pm 1.34$  years. Among the 648 adolescent girls in the study, Table 1 shows their demographic data.

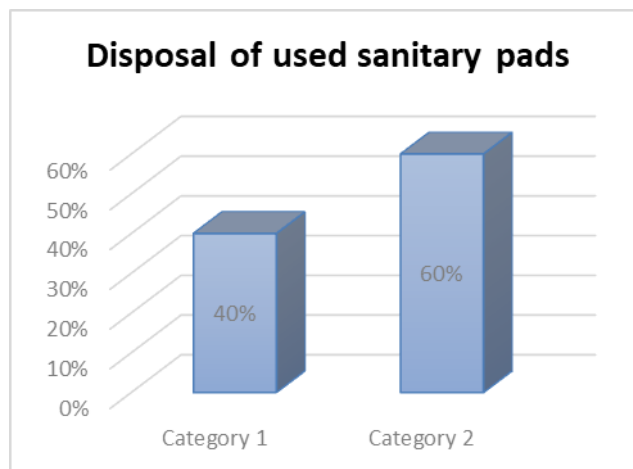
**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>		
9-14	222	34%
15-19	426	66%
<b>School Grade</b>		
JSS1-JSS3	182	28%
SS1-SS3	466	72%
<b>Age at Menarche</b>		
9-14	568	87%
15-19	84	13%



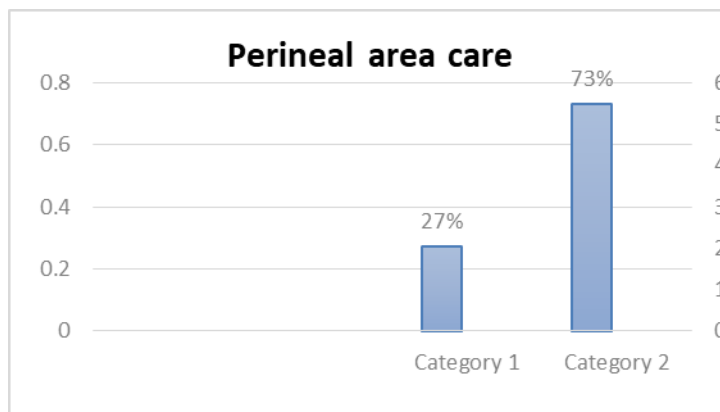
**Figure 1. Practice of Menstrual Sanitary Care**

*Note.* 1. Sanitary Pad; 2. Tissue Paper; 3. Cotton Wool; 4. Clothe



**Figure 2. Disposal of Used Sanitary Pads**

*Note.* 1. Wrapped and put in the dustbin; 2. Not Wrapped but put in the dustbin



**Figure 3. Perineal Area Care**

*Note.* 1. Changed twice daily and washed perineum with water only; 2. Changed twice daily and washed perineum with water and soap

The most menstrual absorbent used by the adolescent school girls was sanitary pad (70%), only 30% used other forms of sanitary absorbents: tissue papers, cotton wool and piece of cloth. For method of disposal of used sanitary material, many (60%) wrap the used sanitary wears before putting in the dust bin. Most of the girls 73% changed twice daily and washed their perineum with soap and water.

#### **4. Discussion**

Good menstrual sanitary care practice is the use of sanitary pads, adequate washing of the genital areas, frequent changing of sanitary wears and proper disposal of the used sanitary towel during the period of menstruation. It is essential that girls have access to sanitary towel and safe water supply to maintain adequate menstrual hygiene (Tegegne & Sisay, 2014). In this study more than half of the girls were ages between 14 years and above (66%) and senior secondary school (72%) and are attending an urban situated schools. This could reflect why the majority of the girls have good practice of menstrual sanitary care. There is access to menstrual sanitary material for use and adequate water supply. This result is higher than those in previous studies done in some other parts of African regions; in Ethiopia 51.36%, Nepal 40%, North Western Nigeria 40% (Lawan, Nafisa, & Musa, 2010; Adhikari, 2007; Garba, Rabi, & Abubakar, 2018). However, the current result agrees with, whose result noted good menstrual hygiene practices among school girls in Kano, Nigeria. The differences could possibly be due to the level of menstruation and menstrual sanitary care education provided in schools and families. The lower level of menstrual care reported was associated to low level of awareness through communication and education of the right practices which is capable of influencing the menstrual hygiene practices.

## 5. Conclusion

Majority of the participants had good menstrual hygiene practices. Awareness and right information regarding standard menstrual care practices is very important, therefore more Attention to good menstrual care is required.

## Acknowledgements

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