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ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS OF MENSTRAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT AND PERIOD POVERTY ON SECONDARY SCHOOL GIRL'S ATTENDANCE TO SCHOOL IN MAKURDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This Study assessed Effects of Menstral Hygiene Management and period poverty on secondary school girls attendance to school in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. Data for the study were collected from primary sources using structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis. The result showed the mean of extended family ties (4.32) family welfare community (3.92) religion and spiritual belief (3.52) culture and menstruation were deeply intertwined, influencing how individual perceived and managed menstruation. The result further showed school attendance (57%) missed classes (91%), given assistance (81%), receiving training or hygiene and wellbeing (5.66%), this means menstrual etiquette is a factor that influences period management among school attendance. The study concludes that cultural taboo on menstrual management affected girls' school attendance. The study recommends school management aspect as relates to menstrual hygiene management negatively affecting school attendance among girls should be a thing of the past, especially on very basic issues of lack of adequate toilets and water. This must be addressed urgently by building more toilets in schools and provision of water by the Government, NGOs to prevent girls staying away from school because of menstruation periods.

Keywords: Assessment, Effects, Period, Poverty, Secondary, Attendance.

1.0 Introduction

A fundamental part of our human rights is a right to health including menstrual health. However, with an increase in the number of girls and women menstruating, a

fundamental right to health with an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health is less exercised (UNICEF, 2015a). This right includes; availability of water and awareness on health information regarding menstrual health, and most especially right to access clean, soft absorbent sanitary products. Menstrual Hygiene Management refers to when "Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of a menstrual period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose used menstrual management materials" (UNICEF, 2015b).

There has been considerable attention placed on increasing schooling of girls in developing countries. This may be attributed to the fact that studies suggest female schooling on health, wealth, empowerment, and the health and schooling outcomes of girls' own children later (Behrman and Rosenzweig, 2002; Rachael, 2023). However, education of girls is affected by a number of factors, especially those related to puberty. In particular, the onset of menstruation, and the need for bodily self-management around menstrual blood flow in the private (household) and public (market, school) spheres, requires a natural but new set of behaviors from girls.

Globally, women who menstruate often rely on euphemisms to discuss menstruation. For example, the use of these phrases such as "'strawberry week' in Austria, 'I'm with Chico' in Brazil, and 'Granny's stuck in traffic' in South Africa can contribute to the taboo surrounding menstruation (IPPF, 2021a). In some cultures, around the world, menstrual blood itself is seen as unholy and women are encouraged to hide signs of menstrual bleeding from their male counterparts. These beliefs can be traced far back to the early stages of civilization. For example, in AD 70, Pliny the Elder wrote that menstruation was "productive of the most monstrous effects" and that crops would "wither and die" and bees would "forsake their hives if touched by a menstruous woman" (Gillibrand and Rachael 2023a).

Poverty is defined as not having enough money to meet basic needs such as food, water, clothing and shelter. According to the World Bank (2021), poverty is hunger, lack of shelter, being sick and not being able to see a doctor, not having access to school, not having a job, fear for the future, and living one day at a time. Poverty isolates by restricting access to recreational activities. Poverty is a complex societal issue that

requires everyone's attention. (Government of New Brunswick, 2021).

Period poverty is a term used to describe a lack of access to proper menstrual products, education, hygiene facilities, waste management, or a combination of these which are needed to use them effectively (Lindsay and Capozzi, 2021). In total, there are around 500 million women and girls that cannot manage their periods safely due to lack of menstrual products and for fear of shame (Gillibrand and Rachael, 2023c). The American Medical Women's Association defines period poverty as "the inadequate access to menstrual hygiene tools and education, including but not limited to sanitary products, washing facilities, and waste management" (Alvarez and Alexandra, 2019).

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to assess the effects of period poverty on secondary school girls' attendance and its implications on poverty status among households in the study area. The specific objectives were to:

i. identify effects of culture on school attendance among secondary school girls in the study area.
ii. analyze effects of school menstrual etiquette on school attendance among secondary school girls in the study area.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research adopted survey research design, because it determined and reported the way the phenomena were and answered questions concerning the subject matter of the study. It also ensured that the data collected were relevant to the questions raised.

3.2 The Study Area.

Makurdi Local Government Area is the capital of Benue State, located in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The area has a rich history, dating back to the early 1920s, and gained prominence in 1927 when it became the headquarters of the then Benue Province. Makurdi is situated in the valley of River Benue, experiencing warm temperatures most of the year, with the exception of the harmattan period from November to January, which is relatively cool. The area is predominantly agricultural, specializing in cash crops and subsistence crops. Major agricultural companies, such as Oracle farms and feed mills, and MIVA rice, are located in Makurdi. The area is also rich in mineral deposits, including limestone, laterite, baryte and sharp sand.

Makurdi is home to several educational institutions, including Benue State University, Joseph Sawuan Tarka University, Makurdi, and Nigeria Army School of Military Engineering (NASME). The area also has several healthcare facilities, including the Federal Medical Centre, Benue State University Teaching Hospital. Makurdi can be reached by air, rail, road, and water. The area has a major railway station and is connected to other parts of the country through major roads. The major ethnic groups in Makurdi are the Tiv, Idoma, Hausa, Igede, Jukun, Agatu, Etulo, Alago and Igbo.

3.3 Population of the Study.

The population consists of all female teachers and students of the four schools selected in the three council wards under consideration. The accessible population was 2,488.

3.4 Sample size and Sampling Techniques.

According to Orodha (2009), sampling is the process of selecting a sub – set of a case in order to draw conclusion about the entire set. Kathuri and pals (1993) asserts that sampling is the process of selecting a few cases to provide information that can be used to make judgment about a large number of cases. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) suggest that for descriptive research, 30 cases or more are required; for descriptive studies, Gay (1989) suggests that ten percent of the accessible population is enough. The Sampling Procedure used was purposive sampling. The accessible population of girls from the schools selected in the three council wards was 2,488. The sample size comprised 10% of the female teachers in each of the selected schools and 20% of the female students in each of the selected schools. The sample size selected was 300 respondents.

Table 1: Sample Size Selection Plan

Council Ward	Schools	Sampling Female Teachers	Sample Size of Female Teachers (10%)	Sampling frame Female Students	Sample Size of Female Students (20%)	Total Sample Size
Ikpa	GGC	38	8	876	88	
STS		10	2	88	9	11
Ir	Govt. Model	40	8	942	94	102
hool. North Bank						
lley Gyado		42	8	454	91	99
ard 2	College					

Source: Field survey (2025).

3.5 Method of Data Collection.

Primary data were collected from some secondary schools. Basically eight students in the selected three council wards of Makurdi Local Government Area were interviewed.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique.

Descriptive statistics was used for analysis. Specifically, objectives i and ii were analyzed using frequency, mean and percentages.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1: Effects of culture on period's management on school attendance among secondary school girls

The effects of culture on period's management on school attendance among secondary school girls is presented in Table 2. The result revealed the mean response of: kneeling or prostrating (M=2.26); extended family ties. (M=4.32); family welfare (M=3.92); Community's welfare (M=3.78); Hospitality (M=3.80); Religion and Spirituality (M=3.52); Traditional beliefs (M=3.56); Cultural ceremonies (M=3.82); Weddings (M=3.52); naming ceremonies (M=3.57); Festivals (M=3.81); Traditional attire (M=3.80); Dance, and music (M=3.83); Hustling (M=2.34) and Community support systems (M=2.26). The finding is a clear indication that culture is a factor which affects period's management as well as school attendance among secondary school girls.

Culture and menstruation are deeply intertwined, influencing how individuals and societies perceive, experience, and manage menstruation. Cultural beliefs and taboos surrounding menstruation contribute to the stigma associated with periods, leading to shame, silence, and discrimination. In many communities, menstruation is

considered impure or taboo, leading to the marginalization of women and girls and hindering open discussions about menstrual health (Sumpter & Torondel, 2018a). These cultural norms often prevent women and girls from seeking information and support regarding menstrual hygiene, perpetuating misinformation and reinforcing harmful practices.

Different cultures attach diverse beliefs to menstruation. Some reach an extent of specially labelling it as "the curse," "on the rag," "weeping womb," "bloody scourge," "the red plague," "under the weather," and "being unwell." which all have affiliated local names i.e. the "Red" (Costos, 2017). Just like in the findings by Marco and Betti, girls reported being prevented from cooking and serving food, citing dirtiness and impurity (Water Aid Report, 2019).

The embarrassment surrounding menstruation is somewhat universal phenomenon, found in most cultures of the world and with many associated code words, euphemisms and phrases used as linguistic substitutes (Sumpter & Torondel, 2018b). Despite the presence of minimal empirical evidence of boy's feelings and thoughts about menstruation, sometimes boys get to know when girls keep sweaters around their waists, which action they can't stop because they always are in fear of unnecessary accidents. Most girls always avoid instances that would let the males know that they are going through menstruation not even their fathers (Marni, 2016).

Menstrual beliefs and practices are often culturally constructed. In some cultures, menstruation is considered a sign of physical maturity and fertility; however, in some, it is considered a source of pollution and impurity (Garg *et al*., 2015a). Several studies have indicated that menstruation is subjected to several forms of stigma in many communities and among school girls, thereby affecting their attendance to school. For instance, in some communities, women fear revealing about their periods, and hide it from the male (family) members and, have restrictions in relation to daily activities, foods and clothing during their periods (Garg *et al*., 2015b). In addition to social stigma and traditional practices, physical symptoms, such as menstrual cramps, feeling sick or disgusted, or experiencing disruptions of mood, aggravate menstrual experience and thus, women are more likely to report negative attitudes towards menstruation (Hennegan et al., 2016).

According to del-Campo *et al*. (2022), Menstrual stigma has significant impacts

on the lives of those women including their health, education, economic opportunities, and participation in public and social life. The stigma can result in a lack of support for women and the propagation of harmful and misogynistic stereotypes (Olson *et al*., 2022). Period shaming can make women feel insecure about the menstrual process and thus less likely to carry period products on hand, as well as less likely to have conversations on menstrual health with friends and family members (IPPF, 2021). This, if not mediated, can cause chronic mental illnesses to onset such as depression and anxiety. This is due to feelings of isolation and exclusion that menstruation may bring about if a menstruator feels she cannot adequately "handle" the situation.

Table 2: Effects of culture on period's management on school attendance among secondary school girls (n=300)

	TVGE F (%)	TVLE F (%)	TSE F (%)	TLE F (%)	TNE F (%)	Mean
eling Or ıtrating	13(4.33)	55(18.33)	46(15.33)	71(23.67)	115(38.33)	(M=2.26)
ːnded ilies' ties.	171(57)	82(27)	26(8.67)	15(5.0)	6(2.0)	(M=4.32)
ıily welfare	135(45.33)	67(22.33)	46(15.33)	40(13.33)	11(3.67)	(M=3.92)
munity's fare	143(47.67)	43(14.33)	48(16.00)	38(12.67)	28(9.33)	(M=3.78)
ɔitality	149(49.67)	36(12.00)	47(15.67)	44(14.67)	24(8.00)	(M=3.80)
gion And ıtuality	117(39.00)	47(15.67)	51(17)	45(15)	40(13.33)	(M=3.52)
litional ɛfs	112(37.33)	52(17.33)	59(19.67)	48(16)	29(9.67)	(M=3.56)
ural monies	114(38)	87(29)	46(15.33)	38(12.67)	15(5)	(M=3.82)
ldings	82(27.33)	91(30.33)	50(16.67)	54(18)	23(7.67)	(M=3.52)
ing ɛmonies	88(29.33)	96(32)	41(13.67)	51(17)	24(8)	(M=3.57)
vals	132(44)	67(22.33)	37(12.33)	42(14)	22(7.33)	(M=3.81)
litional attire	107(35.67)	100(33.33)	36(12)	40(13.33)	17(5.67)	(M=3.80)
ce, and Music	122(40.67)	72(24)	36(12)	42(14)	28(9.33)	(M=3.83)
ıtling	21(7)	60(20)	40(13.33)	58(19.33)	121(40.33)	(M=2.34)
ımunity ɔort systems	13(4.33)	55(18.33)	46(15.33)	71(23.67)	115(38.33)	(M=2.26)

Source: Field Survey(2025).

4.2: Effects of school menstrual etiquette on school attendance among secondary school girls

The result of the effect of school menstrual etiquette on school attendance among secondary school girls is presented in Table 3. The result of multiple-choice response analysis revealed that female are as follows; Attend school (57%), Missed class (91%) given assistance (like pads) (81%), Receive training from school on hygiene and wellbeing (15.66%) and unwarranted treatment (like isolation) from school (51%). This result implies that menstrual etiquette is a factor which affects period management as well as attendance among secondary schools girls. A 2017 UNICEF survey revealed that most school toilets in Nigeria are untidy with only 25% having clean water, soap and sinks. Further research has shown that girls' capacity to manage their periods in school is affected by lack of access to affordable hygienic sanitary materials, disposal options for used materials, hand washing facilities and access to changing rooms. If these facilities are not always available in school, it exposes many girls to manage their periods with great discomfort and in unhygienic conditions.

According to The National Democracy and Health Survey (2013), girls make up 60% of the 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria. This is partly, due to period poverty. Studies have shown that it is a common occurrence for girls to miss school during their menstruation periods, due to not having access to products to keep them clean during the day or drugs to reduce period pain. This puts them behind in school, as this time makes up about 20% of their school year. Some girls are even forced to drop out of school because of their inability to make up for the lost time.

Table 3: Effects of school menstrual etiquette on school attendance among secondary school girls

Menstrual etiquette	Freg	Percentage
Attend school	172	57%
Missed class	274	91%
Assistance to you (like pads)	245	81%
Receive training from school on your hygiene and wellbeing	47	15.66%
Unwarranted treatment (like isolation) from your school	153	51%

Source: Field Survey (2025).

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that the cultural taboos on menstrual management affect girls' school attendance greatly, especially in taking care of the young ones. Culture was found to restrict the things they do at school when they have menstruation periods. The study has also established that school management as it relates to menstrual – hygiene management affects school attendance among girls, due to lack of adequate toilets, water and majority of the girls stayed away from school because of menstruation periods.

5.2 Recommendations

It is therefore, recommended that: (**i**) the cultural taboos on menstrual management that affect girls' school attendance should be re-examined by the Government at Federal, State and Local levels with a view to taking urgent measures to rectify them so that girls are facilitated more to attend to schooling and (**ii**) the study also recommended that school management aspects as it relates to menstrual – hygiene management negatively affecting school attendance among girls should be a thing of the past, especially on very basic issues of lack of adequate toilets and water. This must be addressed urgently by building more toilets in schools and provision of water by the Government and NGOs to prevent girls from staying away from school because of menstruation periods.

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