

## Letter to the editor

### **Role of Schools in Promoting Proper Menstrual Hygiene Management Practices among Schoolgirls in Ghana.**

**Dear Editor,**

Menstruation is a natural biological process that occurs in females, yet it remains under discussed subject in many cultures. In many parts of the world, including developing countries, menstruation is surrounded by myths, misconceptions, and negative attitudes [1]. A study conducted in Bangladeshi schools indicated that, stigma and lack of puberty education among both boys and girls was a major contributing factor to poor menstrual management among adolescent girls in school [2]. Despite the majority of participants having more knowledge on proper menstrual hygiene management and practices, some of them (30.9%) uses clothes and (4.6%) uses other absorbent material when menstruating[3]. Poor menstrual hygiene management practices among adolescent girls can lead to several health risks, including reproductive tract infections, and urinary tract infections[4]. In many parts of the world, girls lack access to adequate menstrual products, clean water, and sanitation facilities, leading to poor MHM practices[5].

#### **Factors of poor MHM practice:**

1. Inadequate source of information and health education: One of the major causes of poor menstrual hygiene management among girls in school in Ghana is poor health education and sensitization in various basic schools.
2. Lack of menstrual hygiene products and inadequate toilet facilities: Proper menstrual hygiene comes with a cost in acquiring products like sanitary pads, soaps and among others. Literature in Ghana suggests that the prices of sanitary has more than tripled in less than a year[6]. These are usually challenges faced by these young girls in acquiring them, hence they resort to use of unhygienic materials due to their poor financial backgrounds. Most schools lack toilet facilities where these girls who are in their menses can go in to change or wear their pads. This is a challenge for girls who experiences menstrual irregularities, those who have soiled their under-wears and those who experiences their menses for their first time (menarche). In situations like this, they have to abandon their classes periods and rush to their dormitories or homes in order to avoid embarrassment. The few toilet facilities that are found in some of the schools are left uncleaned which poses more health risk to these girls.

3. Lack of support: Most girls are timid in discussing menstrual hygiene issues to their teachers at school. Most schools lack guidance and counselling personnel to support adolescent girls who are in their menstrual periods.

Schools, therefore, have a crucial role to play in promoting proper menstrual hygiene management practices among schoolgirls. Importance of proper menstrual hygiene management MHM is critical to the health and well-being of girls and women worldwide [7]. Proper MHM practices can prevent infections, reduce absenteeism, and increase educational opportunities for girls. Lack of menstrual hygiene education on the management practices, place of residence and lack of open discussions on menstrual issues between parents and their daughters were some of the factors that affects good menstrual hygiene [8]. Contrary, a study conducted in Ghana elucidates that, majority of adolescent girls had the information about proper menstrual hygiene from their mothers and that of their school teachers [3].

**The strategies; The role of Schools:**Schools can provide education on menstrual hygiene management. Teachers can educate girls on proper menstrual hygiene management practices, including how to clean themselves, how often to change sanitary pads, and how to dispose of used pads. This education can be integrated into the school curriculum, and girls can be taught in groups or individually, depending on the school's resources. Schools can also provide girls with access to information through pamphlets, posters, and brochures.

**Role as provision of safe menstrual hygiene practice:**Schools can provide girls with access to menstrual hygiene products. Schools can provide sanitary pads and tampons for free or at subsidized rates. This provision will ensure that girls who cannot afford these products do not miss school during their periods. Schools can also provide a safe and private space where girls can change and dispose of used sanitary pads or tampons.**The government, non-governmental organizations and school authorities should provide clean and safe toilet facilities that enable girls who are their menses to be able to use.**

**Role as supportive environment:**schools can create a supportive environment for girls during menstruation. Schools can ensure that girls are not stigmatized or embarrassed during their periods. Teachers can be trained to provide support and empathy to girls during their menstrual periods. Schools can also create a culture where girls can talk openly about their menstrual periods without fear of being judged.

## Conclusion

Schools have a critical role to play in promoting proper menstrual hygiene management practices among schoolgirls. The provision of education, access to menstrual hygiene products, and the creation of a supportive environment are crucial strategies that schools can adopt. These strategies will ensure that girls do not miss school during their periods and are not stigmatized or embarrassed during menstruation. It is, therefore, essential for schools to prioritize menstrual hygiene management practices among schoolgirls.

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