

**THE EFFECTS OF MENSTRUATION ON GIRLS' EDUCATION IN PUBLIC
SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF IBANDA DISTRICT**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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Declaration

I, **AINEMBABAZI ANABEL**, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has never been submitted to any institution of higher learning for academic consideration.

Sign

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. Anabel', written in a cursive style.

AINEMBABAZI ANABEL

Approval

This research dissertation has been reviewed and approved under my supervision.

Sign

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mwiye Solomon', written in a cursive style.

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Abstract:

This research, on the effects of menstruation on girl's education in public schools as conducted form Ibanda district, with the aim of investigating how menstruation periods affect girl child education in the locality. This research was driven by three main objectives which were; to examine the effects of menstrual related absenteeism on the academic performance of the girls in public school in ibanda district, to assess the impact of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of the girls in public schools, and to evaluate the existing support systems and resources available for the girls in public schools during the menstruation. This researcher employed both the qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies through the interviews and questionnaire application. The respondents were both male and female across different age brackets who showed that the most commonly used types of materials were disposable pads, reusable pads and then only underwear, which are purchased from both market, given at schools, and others made from home by the parents. This menstruation is associated with stigma, sickness, absence from school mention but a few. This research therefore, provides a several strategies and suggestions on how to support the girls during menstruation such as provision of the menstrual products, sensitisation, especially in rural areas to create awareness. Through the uplifting of these menstrual related strategies, the cases of girls dropping out of schools shall be minimised in the long run.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Menstruation is a natural biological process experienced by adolescent girls and women worldwide. However, its implications extend beyond mere physiological changes, significantly impacting various aspects of a girl's life, including education. Over the past several decades, 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 & Rosenzweig, 2022).

Laws (1990) describes how girls are taught “menstrual etiquette”, or self-management approaches to successfully hiding menstrual blood flow from public, and particularly male, as may about their daily activities. The existence of a societal menstrual etiquette, and its implications for schoolgirls, can be found in countries and cultures throughout the world where adolescent girls and women manage monthly menstrual flow, oftentimes in strict secrecy, while doing agricultural work, fetching water or firewood, conducting business in shops, or working in government offices. Menstrual etiquettes may vary greatly depending on the particular social, cultural and economic context, as does the induction of girls into the pragmatics of following such etiquettes (Sommer, 2020).

Since girls and women did not traditionally have to stay in confined sitting with boys and men during their monthly menses, such as school environments today, it is also less well known how appropriate traditional menstrual management guidance is for enabling girls to manage their menses comfortably for prolonged hours in coeducation settings. Indeed, preliminary evidence from a menstrual-management project in Ethiopia suggests fear of bullying by boys is a primary factor in menstruating girls' decisions to miss school (ICOWHI, 2010).

The onset of menstruation, as an event in itself, puts the girls at educational risk. As a proxy indicator for adulthood and a traditional announcement of a girl's sexual availability, menarche brings on an array of negative practices, including sexual harassment even from teachers, withdrawal of economic support from the home, and sudden pressure to marry, to take a boyfriend for economic reasons, or to leave the community to find work (Linda et.al, 2009).

Ibanda, a district located in south-western Uganda, is no exception to these challenges. Despite efforts to promote education, girls in public schools in Ibanda continue to face significant obstacles related to menstruation as of Uganda National Committee on Girls' Education (2016). The Ibanda Child Development Centre, operated by Compassion International, serves as a pivotal institution in the community, offering support to vulnerable children, including girls facing menstrual-related challenges. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a critical aspect of girls' health and wellbeing, particularly during their school years. In Uganda, as in many other countries, girls face unique challenges related to menstruation, which can significantly impact their educational experiences. This background provides an overview of the context, cultural perceptions, and challenges associated with MHM in Ugandan schools.

Two of the barriers the global education community has identified for girls' successful pursuit of an education are of particular relevancy to menstrual-hygiene management. These barriers include: one, the need for appropriate water and sanitation in schools, with a particular emphasis on having separate latrines for girls and boys; and two, the role of gender bias in school curricula and teacher behaviour that inhibits girls' educational success in the classroom and school atmosphere UNESCO(2007) World Bank, (2005), UNICEF(2006). These barriers may act synergistically in augmenting the hurdles for menstruating girls' school attendance and participation, and are structural factors within the school context that are in need of more overarching social, political, and economic approaches to solve.

1.2 Problem Statement

There has been silence and lack of information on menstruation among girls in public schools as issues of menstruation has been perceived as shameful subject to tackle not only for adolescent girls but also for some parents and relatives and hence it has been ignored both at home and in schools. While menstruation is a natural phenomenon, its effects on girls' education in public schools in Ibanda, Uganda, remain underexplored. Limited research exists on the specific challenges faced by girls in this context, hindering the development of targeted interventions and policies to address these issues effectively (Tanton et al., 2021). Understanding the multifaceted impacts of menstruation on girls' education is crucial for designing comprehensive strategies that promote gender equality and equitable access to education (Kansiime et al., 2020; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020).

1.3 Purpose of The Study

The primary aim of this research was to investigate the effects of menstruation on girls' education in public schools in Ibanda, Uganda. By exploring the challenges and barriers faced by girls during menstruation, this study sought to generate insights that inform the development of evidence-based interventions and policies aimed at enhancing educational outcomes and promoting gender equality.

1.4 Specific objectives

To examine the effects of menstrual related absenteeism on the academic performance of girls in public schools in Ibanda District.

To assess the impact of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of girls in public schools in Ibanda District

To evaluate the existing support systems and resources available in public schools to support girls during their menstruation periods in Ibanda District.

1.5 Research Questions

What are the effects of menstrual related absenteeism on the academic performance of girls in public schools in Ibanda District?

What are the impacts of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of girls in public in Ibanda District?

What are the existing support systems and resources available in public schools to support girls during their menstruation periods in Ibanda District?

1.6 scope of study

1.6.1 Time Scope:

My research project approximately took three weeks, covering various stages such as data collection, analysis, and reporting. This timeframe was chosen to ensure efficiency while allowing sufficient time to gather comprehensive data on menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in public schools in the Ibanda district of Uganda. By adhering to this timeline, the researcher captured any seasonal variations and address emerging issues promptly. Additionally, regular progress assessments enabled me to stay on track and make necessary adjustments as needed, ensuring the quality and integrity of the study.

1.6.3 Geographical Scope

This research was conducted in the Ibanda district, located in the south-western region of Uganda. This district is characterized by its rural landscape, agricultural activities, and vibrant community life, providing a unique context for studying menstrual hygiene management. By focusing on public schools within the Ibanda district, I gained insights into the specific challenges and opportunities related to MHM in this area. Public schools are selected as the study population due to their significant role in educating children and adolescents in the region. Additionally, studying public schools allowed me to assess existing practices, challenges, and gaps in menstrual hygiene management, informing policy recommendations and infrastructure development efforts.

1.6.4 Content Scope

The content scope consisted of the different impacts of the menstruation on Girls education such as the menstrual related absenteeism hence missing out the tests and classes, the menstrual stigma leading to low self-esteem and the limited participation and the evaluation of the available support strategies to support those girls during the menstruation.

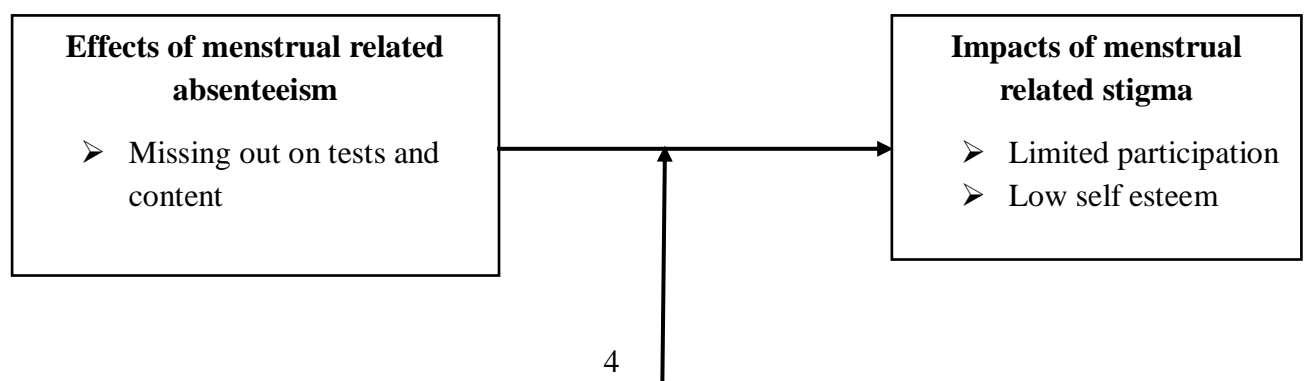
1.7 significance of the study

The study aimed at the effects of menstruation girl's academic performance in schools within Ibanda district. This study therefore looked at the salient issues like menstrual related absenteeism, the stigma and the available strategies to support the girls during their menstruation period. Therefore, this shall provide a platform on reducing the negative issues aroused in the issue of menstruation resulting into the improved performance girls affected.

1.8 Conceptual framework

The study assumed that there was a relationship the effects of the menstruation on the girl's academic performance exploring the effects of menstrual related absenteeism, impacts of stigma and the existing support systems to support the girls in during their menstruation.

Figure 1. conceptual framework.



Existing support systems

- Guidance and counselling
- Support groups

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The impact of menstruation on girls' education is a critical area of concern, particularly in resourceconstrained settings like the Ibanda district in Uganda. In this literature review, the researcher explored existing research to understand the multifaceted effects of menstruation on girls' educational experiences. By examining relevant studies, the researcher aimed to inform evidence based interventions and policies that address the challenges faced by girls during their menstrual cycles.

Numerous studies highlight the direct link between menstruation and school attendance. Girls often miss school during their periods due to discomfort, inadequate menstrual hygiene materials, and fear of embarrassment (UNGEI, 2020 & Sustain for Life, n.d.). According to UNESCO (2022), one in 10 girls in Sub-Saharan Africa misses school while on their period due to inadequate MHM facilities and social support. In Uganda, schoolgirls miss one to three days of school per month because they cannot manage their menstrual periods at school, equivalent to losing 11% of learning time for a girl pupil (CIDI Uganda,nd.). According to a study conducted by Summer et al. (2021), cultural norms amplify feelings of shame and discomfort, affecting girls' participation in education.

Effects of menstrual related absenteeism on the academic performance of girls in public schools

Absenteeism referred to the condition of a student being absent from school(Birioukov,2016). A report on 02 August 2021 by BMC women's health states that close to 59% of the girl's miss school during their menstruation periods. This report further stated that the girls stayed out of school for close to five days a month. This was because of the lack of the menstrual products, stigma aroused within the communities and the low self-esteem among the girls in schools (UNICEF 2019). The key issues that lead the girls not to attend the classes are lack of access to soap and water and privacy.

The inadequate social support and presence of taboos can lead to psychosocial consequences of menstruation including shame, fear anxiety and disturbance. These can potentially affect girl's ability to thrive and succeed within the school environment (McMahon, 2016). The poor menstrual hygiene management has been linked to high degree and increased risk of the reproductive tract infections which hence lead to the absenteeism at school (menstrual hygiene charter 2015)

Impact of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of girls in public schools

Stigma is any mark or stain that sets apart one or group from the others (Goffman, 2020). Menstrual stigma is the negative social cultural beliefs, perceptions and taboos surrounding menstruation; characterizing the menstruating body as abnormal, and abject. Across different cultures, menstruation is stigmatized and conceptualized as something that is dirty or impure and something that should be kept private (Barrington et al,2021). Abomination of the body concerns physical deformities such as bleeding, Blemish relates to “blemishes to one's character “; the social markers are linked to (discriminated) group affiliation. Using Goffman's categories of stigma, JohnstonRobledo and Chrisler (2020). Conceptualize menstruation stigma as the negative from the people around them.

The society believed that menstruating women are physical (during the menstrual phase) or mentally (during the premenstrual phase) disordered, perceiving them as out of control, ill, crazy and unfeminine (JohnstonRobledo and Chrisler,2020). These negative views toward menstruation and menstruating people are related to stigma and society's views of women in general. The stigma associated with menstruation is communicated to us every from a young age through a variety of social cultural routes (Johnston & Chrisler,2020) whereby many young girls and boys grow up knowing menstruation is dirty, embarrassing and something that need to be hidden (Barrington ,2021), hence piling up a foundation for stigma amongst the girls. The stigma surrounding menstruation can lead to negative consequences for women's physical and mental health, sexuality, social status, and quality of life (Barrington, 2021)

Existing support systems and resources available in public schools to support girls during their menstruation

Provision of the menstrual supplies appeared to be a promising support system towards the girls during their menstruation, in here, the children can often access the sanitary towels, tampons and flow cups to use during their times in periods (Monica Grant, 2015). Community and society sensitisation on menstruation and all about it tends to reduce the

issue of stigma and the beliefs about the issue thereby widening the knowledge base about the issue raised. The sensitisation can be done by either the men, women, the affected people within the society hence the reduced and minimises effects menstruation.

The issue of menstruation should be addressed holistically they should include the men, women, the girls and the community members not excluding their families and parents. This included the health care system, the schools and the correctional facilities especially the toilet and the incinerators where the pads are deposited (Engender health,2020). The study by Winnie Mucherah, Kendra Thomas on reducing barriers to primary school education for girls in rural Kenya: reusable pads' intervention. She suggests that the support that parents and guardians can support the children menstruating with pads to carry to schools which would reduce the barriers to successful schooling and performance of girls academically. According to Marni Sommer, Bethany A Caruso and Belen Torondel stressed that school aged girls have adequate physical environments and social support in schools that can enable the girls to thrive in schools.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explained the research methodology that was used in the collection of the data while in the field. It elaborated more on the methods of data collection, the instruments used in the collection of data, the type of research conducted, the research plan, sources data to be collected, the procedures of data collection and processing and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

A research design refers to the strategy used to answer the research questions using the data to be collected. The design is made after a thorough look on the research objectives, research questions and where the data is to be collected as well as the analysis of the data (pritha, 2023). This study employed a qualitative research design to answer the research questions and objectives. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, provide deeper insights into girls' experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies. Through open-ended questions in interviews and group discussions in focus groups, I can explore challenges faced by girls, their coping strategies, perceptions of menstruation, and recommendations for improvement. These narratives offer a richer understanding of the emotional impact of menstruation on girls' education.

3.2 Area of study

This research was conducted in Ibanda district amongst the selected students from the different schools in the area. These schools will be selected using the random simple sampling.

3.3 Sources of Data

This research focused on both the primary and the secondary sources. The primary sources focused on the people themselves as the people know what they go through themselves especially the girls. The secondary data included the textbooks, journals, and reports, all with the related data equivalent to the topic

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Interviews.

Interviews were conducted with a subset of participants, allowing for in-depth exploration of girls' experiences, challenges, and perceptions. Through open-ended questions, it gave a deeper exploration on emotional impact of menstruation and uncover nuanced insights that may not be captured through surveys alone. Since this study involved young girls who have no knowledge to scrutinize the questionnaire, the study focused on the interview guide with the help of prompt questions to make the survey inclusive and fun yet detailed.

3.5 Population and sampling strategy

During the research, the random sampling techniques was used to select the sample population for the study. The simple random technique ensures that every person in the population has an equal probability of being chosen as a response(Thomas,2020). Out of the 150 participants. 100 girls and 50 teachers. Yamane's formula was used to calculate the sample size.

Using the confidence interval of 90%

N =sample size

N =study population

e =margin of error

n =? $N=350$ $e=0.1$

$n=N/(1+N(e)^2)$

$n=350/ (1+350(0.1)^2)$

$n=77.7777$

Approximately 77 respondents were interviewed

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The following ethical considerations were put into use during the research.

3.6.1 Approval

Seeking ethical approval serves as a testament to my commitment to conducting responsible research. Submitted my research proposal to local research ethics committees or relevant authorities for review. These committees meticulously assess the study design, informed consent process, and data handling procedures to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. Approval from these bodies is crucial as it validates the ethical integrity of my research and safeguards the rights and welfare of participants. For instance, upon submitting my proposal to the Ibanda District Research Ethics Committee, they carefully evaluated aspects such as methodology, participant consent forms, and privacy safeguards

3.6.2 Data protection

Ensuring secure data storage is essential to prevent unauthorized access and maintain the confidentiality of participant information. Data was stored securely, either in password-protected electronic files or locked physical cabinets. Electronic files were encrypted to safeguard against cyber threats, and backup copies were maintained to prevent data loss. By implementing these measures, the researcher assured participants that their data are handled with the utmost care and confidentiality throughout the study for example, during interviews, were taken meticulous care to avoid recording any identifying information.

3.7 Data Analysis

The following data analysis methods were used during the analysing of the data.

3.7.1 Qualitative Analysis

Thematic coding serves as a vital tool in systematically identifying and categorizing recurring themes or patterns within interview transcripts. This approach allows me to delve into the lived experiences of girls, their challenges, and the community dynamics surrounding menstruation and education. Through meticulous steps such as transcription, open coding, grouping codes, refining themes, and narrative synthesis, the researcher aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the qualitative data collected during interviews. By relating these themes to the overarching topic of menstruation's impact on girls' education in Uganda, the researcher enriched the narrative and provide nuanced insights into the subject matter.

3.8 Methodological constraints

The following challenges were encountered during the data collection;

3.8.1 Accessibility to information

The researcher faced difficulties in the accessing the data from the community people. This as a result of the stigma from the school girls as a result of the shield of culture around menstruation, stigma and desire for the money from the research conducted in the long run. This is one of the challenges the researcher encountered during the collection of data.

3.8.2 Limited resources.

This was faced while during the collection of the data especially in the transportation of the respective schools, facilitation of the instructors and the local leaders within the respective localities. This is most likely to be a challenge.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents analyses and interprets the findings based on research objectives as derived from research questions. The research findings are presented in graphs, and percentages. After the presentation of the study findings, the study made recommendations thereupon.

4.1 Response rate

The researcher targeted to collect data from 77 respondents but only managed to collect data from 56 accounting to 72.7%. This response rate was representative enough since it covered above the recommended rate of above 70% for the face to face method of delivering and collecting data collection tools (Survey, Monkey, 2009 & Fan, 2010).

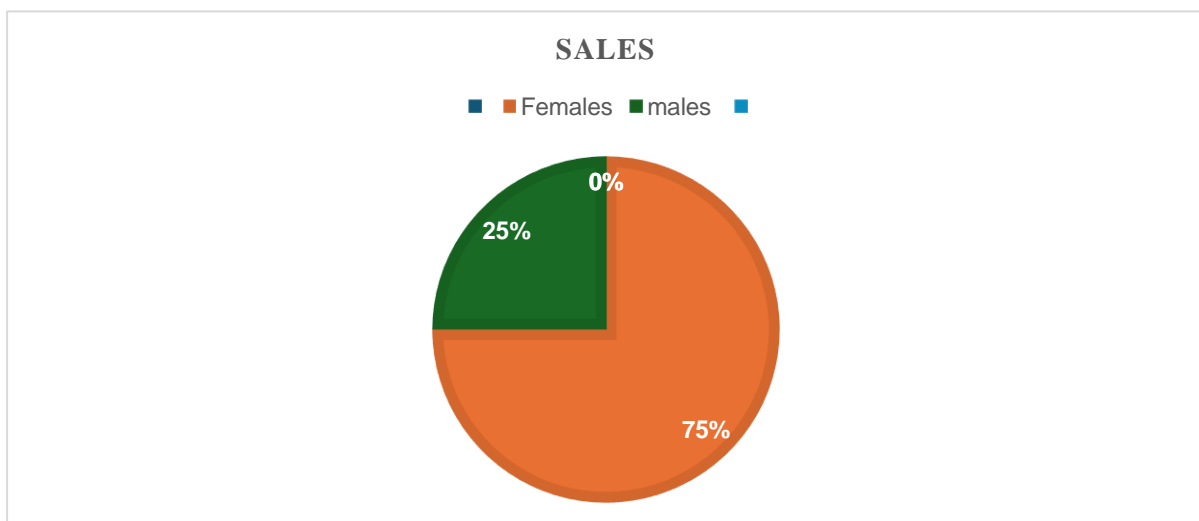
4.2 Background information

4.2.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

4.2.1.1 Gender of respondents

The gender of the respondents was distributed as in pie chart below

Figure 1: Gender of the respondents



The study included a majority of female respondents, constituting 75.0% of the total participants, while male respondents made up 25.0%. This gender distribution, while showing a significant variation (50.0%), reflects the inclusion of perspectives from both genders.

The participation of both males and females in the study is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the support systems for menstruating girls. Female respondents, being directly affected by menstruation, provided firsthand experiences and insights into the challenges and support systems available. Male respondents contributed valuable perspectives on the awareness, attitudes, and support provided by their peers and school staff towards menstruating girls.

The data collected from both genders ensures a balanced and holistic view of the current support systems and resources in public schools. This gender balance is instrumental in making relevant and inclusive conclusions and recommendations.

The inclusion of both female and male respondents allows for a thorough analysis of the support systems from multiple perspectives.

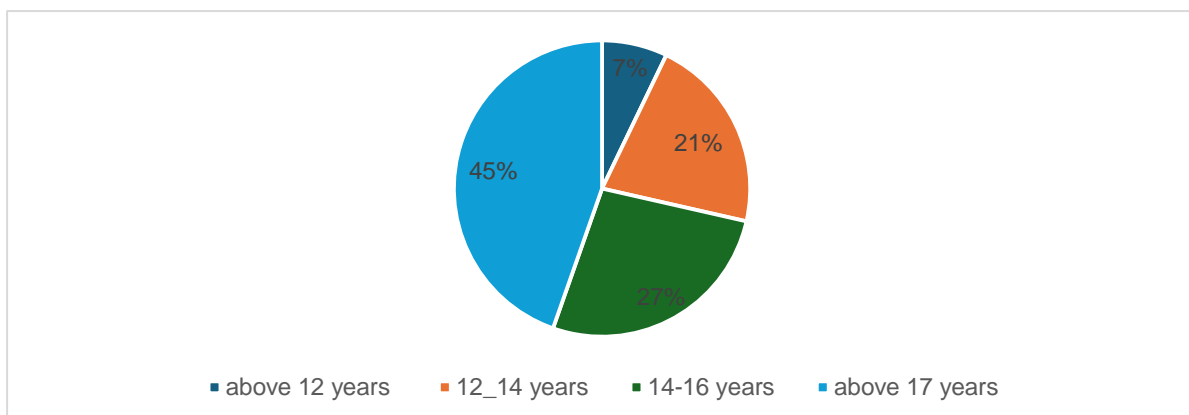
Insights from female students highlight the direct impact and efficacy of the current resources and support mechanisms. Perspectives from male students help identify areas where awareness and involvement can be improved, fostering a more supportive and inclusive school environment.

The balanced participation of both genders enhances the reliability and applicability of the study's findings. The results provide a strong foundation for making informed recommendations aimed at improving the support systems and resources available to menstruating girls in public schools.

4.2.1.3 Age Group by Respondents

The age group of the respondents was distributed as indicated in table 4.3

Figure 2: Age Group of the Respondents



The data from the pie chart above shows that the majority of respondents are within the age range of 12 to 16 years, which is a critical period for menstruation related challenges.

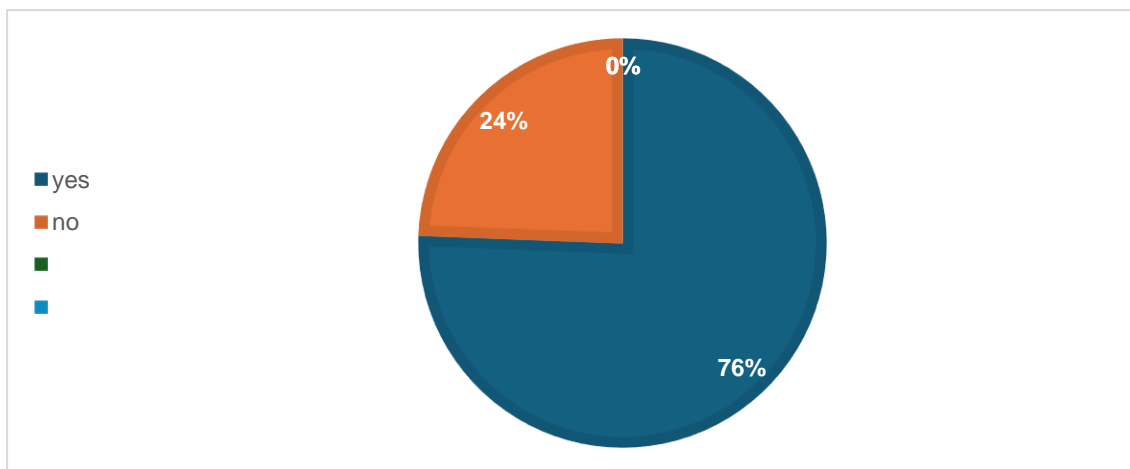
Also, the combined group of (14 years to 16years & 12 years to 14 years) represents nearly half of the respondents (48.2%), indicating that a significant portion of the participants are at an age where they are likely experiencing menstruation and related challenges.

The age group above 17 years were (44.6%), while older, may still provide relevant insights, especially regarding their experiences and the support they received during their earlier school years. Also, while those below 12 years were (7.4%) which is a smaller group, their inclusion is important for understanding the onset of menstruation and the initial challenges faced by younger students.

The age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents are at an age where menstruation is a prominent and relevant issue. This enhances the credibility and relevance of the data concerning menstruation challenges and support systems. Also, the inclusion of respondents from various age groups provides a comprehensive view of the support systems across different stages of adolescence. This allows for a thorough analysis of how needs and challenges evolve with age.

The results highlight that a substantial portion of the respondents are in the critical age group (12 to 16 years) that is most affected by menstruation challenges. This focus is essential for understanding the current support systems and identifying gaps that need to be addressed. The age distribution data will help in formulating targeted recommendations that cater to the specific needs of students at different stages of adolescence. This ensures that support systems are both effective and age-appropriate.

Figure 3 Menstruation stage



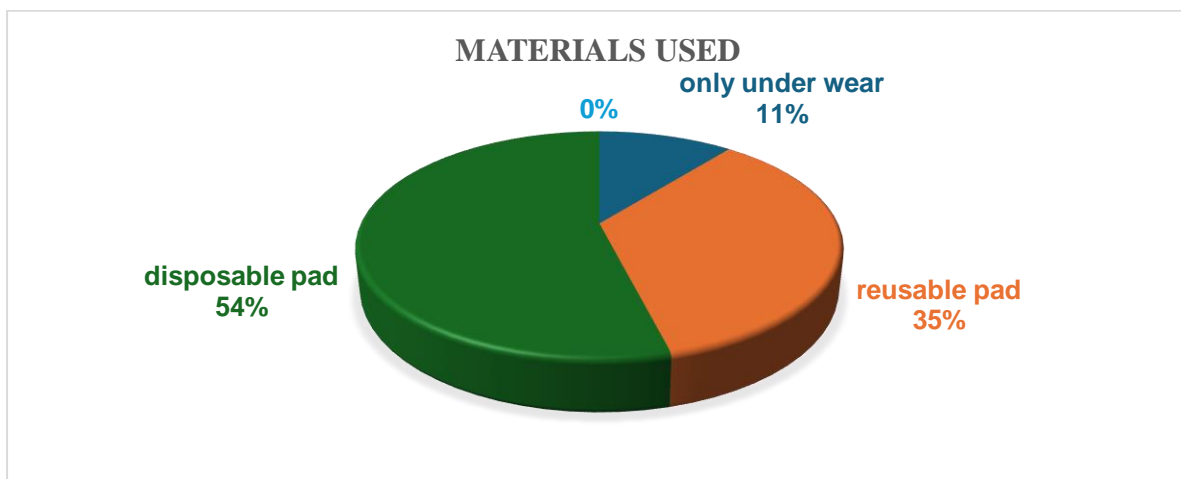
The data from the table above shows that a significant majority of the interviewed females (28 respondents) have started menstruation, representing 75.6% of the total female respondents.

Not Started Menstruation: A smaller portion of the interviewed females (9 respondents) have not started menstruation, making up 24.4% of the total female respondents.

The fact that 75.6% of the female respondents have started menstruation means that the majority have direct experience with menstruation related challenges and can provide first-hand insights into the effectiveness and availability of support systems and resources in their schools. Also, the inclusion of 24.4% of females who have not yet started menstruation provides a broader perspective on the awareness and preparedness of young girls regarding menstrual health. Their views can highlight the level of premenstrual education and support available.

The high percentage of females who have started menstruation ensures that the data collected is relevant and reflective of the actual challenges faced by menstruating girls in public schools. This lends credibility to the study's findings. Also, the combination of experiences from those who have started menstruation and those who have not allows for a comprehensive understanding of the support systems.

Figure 4 Materials used manage menstruation

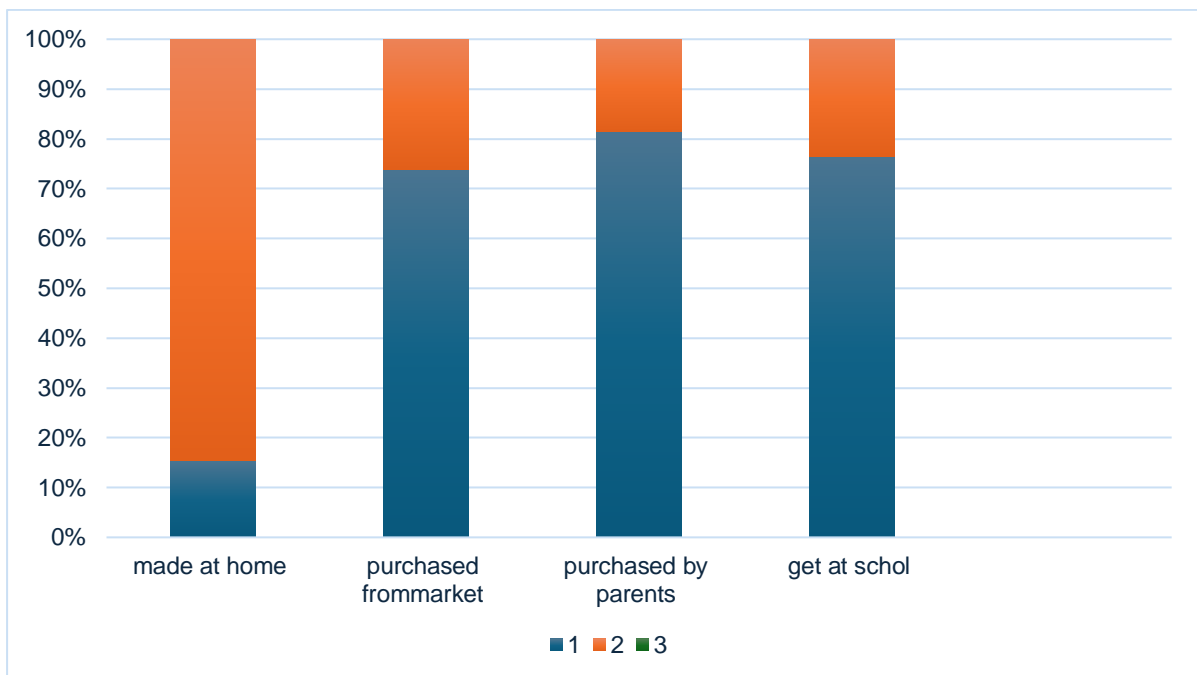


The pie chart above shows that out of the 28 people who have started their menstruation, majority used disposable pads (53.7%), 10 used reusable pad (35.1%) while 3 used only underwear (8.1%). The data suggests that not all girls have consistent access to suitable menstrual products. The use of only underwear by some respondent's points to gaps in the availability and distribution of menstrual materials in schools. Therefore, lack of access

to proper menstrual products can lead to embarrassment and discomfort, potentially contributing to higher school dropout rates among menstruating girls. This underscores the need for improved support systems and resources. Also, overreliance on reusable pads and underwear indicates economic barriers that prevent some girls from purchasing disposable pads. This economic disparity can further exacerbate educational challenges. Participant 1 said *“in most cases due to the limitation in the availability of the products and money, sometimes we use the disposables and on other occasions, we use only the underwear and stay home to avoid the shame”*

The study findings highlight the necessity for parents and guardians to provide adequate and accessible menstrual products to all girls to ensure their comfort and dignity during menstruation is secured. Also, there is a need for policy interventions and enhanced support systems to ensure that all girls have access to the menstrual products they need in order to keep them in school.

Figure 5 Materials for managing menstrual

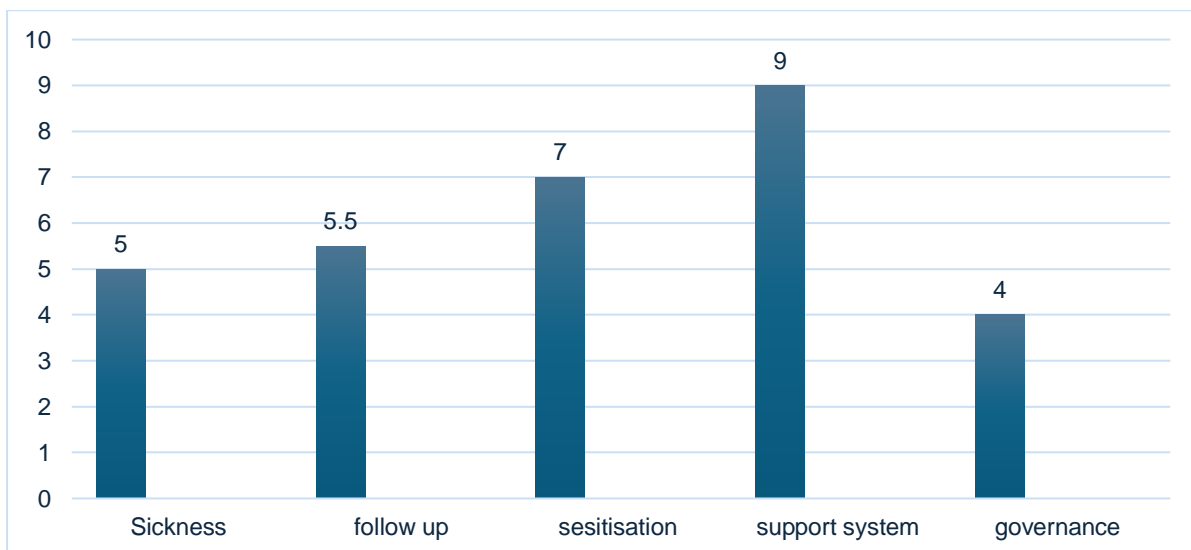


The table above shows majority of menstrual materials are purchased by parents (39.8%), indicating a significant reliance on family support for menstruation hygiene, only a small percentage (14.2%) of the materials are provided by schools, suggesting that schools have limited resources or programs in place to support menstrual hygiene for students, a substantial portion of the materials (35.7%) are obtained from the market, reflecting the economic burden on families to purchase menstrual products while the use of homemade

materials (8.0%) highlights the resourcefulness of some families, but it also suggests possible economic constraints and the need for better access to commercially available products. One of the respondents remarked that *“sometimes we make the pads from the old materials at home especially during holidays, some a purchased from the market and others are purchased by the parents”* Another respondent remarked that *“our school provides some pads during the times of menstruation.....though not given to all the girls”*

The findings highlight the urgent need to enhance support systems within schools to provide menstrual hygiene products. This could include school funded programs or partnerships with organizations to supply these essential items, also empowering young girls with education about menstrual hygiene and providing them with the necessary resources can boost their confidence, reduce absenteeism, and help them stay in school. And finally there is a critical need for policy interventions and community engagement to address the economic barriers to accessing menstrual products. Schools, parents, and communities must work together to ensure that all girls have the materials they need for proper menstrual hygiene.

Figure 6 Impact of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of girls in public schools



The data from the table above shows that the most crucial support system for young girls in school is the sensitization of menstrual hygiene (90%). This implies that effective education and awareness programs on menstrual hygiene are essential to help girls manage their periods confidently and reduce absenteeism. Therefore, sschools should implement comprehensive menstrual hygiene education programs to equip girls with the knowledge and confidence to manage their periods.

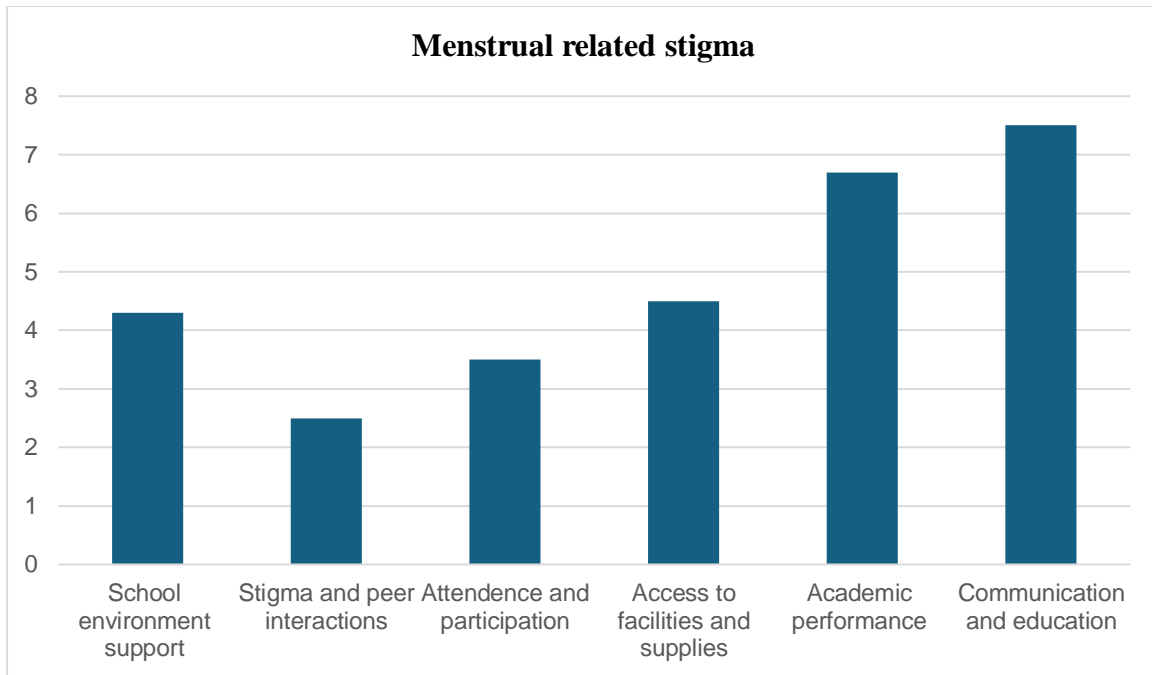
Also, 85% of the respondents showed that sickness is the primary excuse for absenteeism during menstruation, largely due to the lack of sanitary towels. This is mostly caused by absence of adequate menstrual products leads to health issues and discomfort, causing girls to miss school. Therefore, both parents and the government need to ensure that girls have access to necessary menstrual products to prevent absenteeism and support their academic performance. One participant said ***“there is a certain un usual way you feel when you having your periods which make you feel body weakness, loss of appetite, discomfort and sometimes even feel discomfort”***

Furthermore, 70% of respondents confirmed that menstruation significantly affects the academic performance of young girls in school. This indicates that menstrual-related absenteeism has a direct negative impact on girls' educational outcomes, making it imperative to address this issue to ensure their academic success.

Additionally, 80% of respondents agreed that regular follow-up can help keep girls in school with strong emphasis on the need for robust support systems, such as empowering girls to make reusable pads and providing adequate information. One participant remarked that ***“when the girls are empowered especially with the skills to sustain their own lives, make their own pads, self-advocacy, this can make it easy for us to go through menstruation effectively and efficiently”*** This avails continuous support and follow-up, along with empowerment initiatives, can help reduce absenteeism and improve girls' confidence and school attendance during menstruation. Therefore, establishing of robust support systems, including follow-up initiatives and empowerment programs, can significantly reduce menstrualrelated absenteeism and help girls stay in school.

70% of respondents suggested that if the government provided pads to school-going girls, menstrual absenteeism would be controlled, leading to improved academic performance. This implies that government provision of menstrual products can play a critical role in mitigating menstrualrelated absenteeism and enhancing the educational outcomes of girls. One participant said that ***“the government can actually do much more work in ending this menstrual related absenteeism in schools; through the giving out of pads to the students, reducing of the tax on the menstrual products which makes life easy for us as girls in schools”*** As a result, the involvement of the government in providing menstrual products can substantially reduce absenteeism and promote higher academic performance among girls in public schools.

Figure 7 Impact of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of girls in public schools



The findings from the table above indicated that 60% of respondents reported that their schools have a supportive environment for menstruating girls, one participant said that *“for us at our school, the environment is very supportive where we have incinerator’s at schools and places where we can change pads from”* while 40% felt that the environment is unsupportive or indifferent. Therefore, there is a need for a supportive school environment is crucial for reducing stigma and providing a safe space for menstruating girls. The lack of dedicated facilities highlights a gap in support, which may contribute to increased stigma and discomfort *“for us at our school, there is no room for changing the pads which means that in case you come with a pad in the morning, you can stay with the same pad up to evening when you go home. The toilets are purely dirty the teachers are not supportive including the senior woman teacher who only quarrels”* one participant noted.

Also, 80% of respondents experienced stigma or negative comments from peers regarding menstruation. These menstrual-related stigmata from peers significantly affects girls’ confidence and comfort, impacting their willingness to participate in school activities and potentially affecting their academic performance.

Furthermore, 65% of respondents admitted to missing school occasionally due to menstrual-related stigma and discomfort. Stigma and associated discomfort can lead to absenteeism and reduced participation in school, which directly impacts academic performance and overall

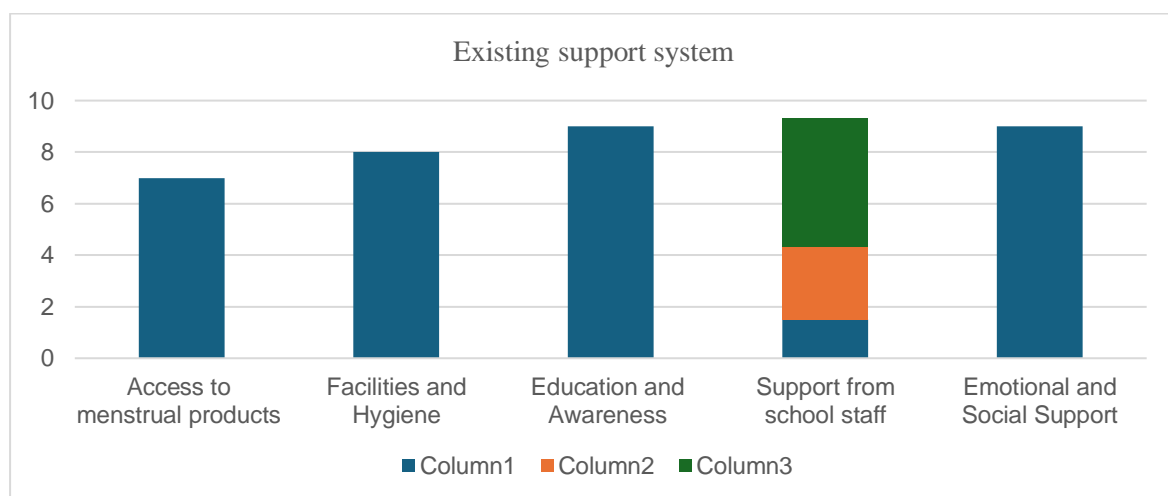
school engagement. *“almost everyone in my class has experienced trauma, stigma especially when periods find us at school without any pad on us..... The boys laugh at us and me personally, I stayed home fro like three weeks, others change school. me who stayed at the school, I can’t even participate in class”*

Results further indicated a 75% of respondents reported inadequate access to menstrual hygiene facilities and supplies at school. As a result, limited access to menstrual products and facilities contributes to stigma and discomfort, which can hinder attendance and academic performance. Improving access to these resources is essential for reducing stigma and supporting girls' education.

Also, 70% of respondents noted that menstrual-related stigma negatively affects their academic performance, including lower grades and decreased participation in class activities. This means that menstrual-related stigma has a clear impact on academic performance, as it affects concentration, participation, and overall engagement in school. Addressing stigma is crucial

Finally, 50% of respondents reported that their schools provide insufficient education on menstrual health and stigma management. Effective communication and education are essential for combating menstrual-related stigma. Schools need to implement comprehensive education programs to inform students and staff about menstrual health and foster a more supportive environment

Figure 8 The existing support systems and resources available in public schools to support girls during their menstruation.



Findings from the Data above show that; 75% of respondents did not know of any menstrual products provided by their schools. This lack of knowledge or provision of menstrual

products means many girls may be unprepared for their periods, leading to missed school days. Therefore, Schools should provide menstrual products and clearly inform students about their availability to prevent girls from missing school due to a lack of supplies.

The data also indicated that 80% of respondents confirmed that their schools do not provide specific facilities to support menstruating girls. This absence of dedicated facilities (such as private washrooms or rest areas) exacerbates the difficulties menstruating girls face, increasing the likelihood of absenteeism. This implies that the provision of dedicated facilities for menstruating girls is essential to create a supportive environment and reduce absenteeism

The data also showed that only 12% of respondents acknowledged receiving menstrual education from their schools. This low percentage indicates a significant gap in menstrual education, which is essential for helping girls manage their periods confidently and reduce stigma and absenteeism. Therefore, Schools need to implement comprehensive menstrual education programs to equip girls with the knowledge and confidence to manage their periods.

Furthermore, 5% of respondents identified sensitization as a key support system to provide emotional support and combat stigmatization. Emotional support through sensitization programs can help girls cope with the psychological and social aspects of menstruation, fostering a more supportive school environment. Sensitization programs aimed at reducing stigma and offering emotional support are crucial for helping girls navigate the social challenges associated with menstruation.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion of findings

5.0 introduction

The chapter clarifies the results of my findings relating them to the major aim of the research and the existing literature reviewed earlier. The discussion is still guided by the research objectives and highlights the conclusion to the research findings and recommendations.

5.1 General Discussion.

5.1.1 The effects of menstrual related absenteeism on the academic performance of girls in public schools

Menstrual-related absenteeism has been identified as a significant factor affecting the academic performance of girls in public schools. The data reveals that a substantial number of girls miss school due to menstrual discomfort and the lack of adequate menstrual products. This absenteeism not only disrupts their learning but also impacts their overall academic achievement. The absence of menstrual hygiene resources and support systems in schools exacerbates this issue, leading to gaps in learning and decreased academic performance. The findings underscore the necessity for schools to address menstrual hygiene comprehensively to reduce absenteeism and support continuous learning.

The results concurs with the reviewed literature for example, McMaho (2026) stresses that menstruation potentially affect girl's ability to thrive and succeed within the school environment. The poor menstrual hygiene management has been linked to high degree and increased risk of the reproductive tract infections which hence lead to the absenteeism at school (menstrual hygiene charter 2015).

5.1.2The impact of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of girls in public schools

Menstrual-related stigma significantly impacts the academic performance of girls. The data indicates that stigma from peers and inadequate education on menstrual health contribute to feelings of embarrassment and anxiety, which hinder girls' participation in school activities and reduce their engagement in academic pursuits. The stigma associated with menstruation can lead to lower self-esteem and reluctance to seek help, further affecting academic performance. Creating a more supportive and stigma-free environment through education and

open dialogue is crucial for mitigating these negative effects and fostering a more inclusive educational experience.

The study findings are in line with reviewed literature; Barrington et al (2021) explained that across different cultures, menstruation is stigmatized and conceptualized as something that is dirty or impure and something that should be kept private. Abomination of the body concerns physical deformities such as bleeding, Blemish relates to “blemishes to one’s character “, the social markers are linked to (discriminated) group affiliation (Robledo Chrisler (2020).

5.1.3 The existing support systems and resources available in public schools to support girls during their menstruation periods

The study highlights that current support systems and resources for menstruating girls in public schools are insufficient. Many schools lack dedicated facilities and adequate menstrual products, which contributes to the challenges faced by menstruating girls. The limited availability of resources and the lack of effective support systems exacerbate the issues of absenteeism and stigma. The data suggests that enhancing support systems, including providing menstrual products and creating supportive facilities, is essential for addressing these challenges. Schools should also invest in menstrual health education and establish comprehensive programs to support girls during their menstruation periods.

The study findings strongly agrees with literature including; Engender (2020) who highlighted that menstruation should be addresses holistically they should include the men, women, the girls and the community members not excluding their families and parents. This include the health care system, the schools and the correctional facilities especially the toilet and the incinerators where the pads are deposited. Also, a study by Winnie and Thomas (2020) on reducing barriers to primary school education for girls in rural Kenya suggests that the support that parents and guardians can support the children menstruating with pads to carry to schools which would reduce the barriers to successful schooling and performance of girls academically.

5.2. Conclusion

Menstrual-related absenteeism is a significant barrier to academic success for girls in public schools. The lack of access to menstrual products and inadequate support systems contribute to frequent absences, disrupting learning and negatively affecting academic performance. Schools need to implement measures to ensure that menstruating girls can attend school regularly without the impediments of menstrual hygiene issues.

Menstrual-related stigma has a profound effect on girls' engagement in school activities and their academic performance. The embarrassment and discomfort associated with menstruation, compounded by negative peer interactions, inhibit girls' ability to participate fully in their education. Addressing this stigma through education and supportive practices is essential to creating a positive learning environment that encourages full participation and supports academic achievement.

The current support systems and resources available in public schools are inadequate to meet the needs of menstruating girls. Many schools lack essential facilities and resources, such as menstrual products and private spaces, which exacerbates absenteeism and stigma. There is a clear need for enhanced support systems that include the provision of menstrual products, dedicated facilities, and comprehensive menstrual health education.

5.3 Recommendations

Schools should improve access to menstrual hygiene products and ensure that these resources are readily available to all students. Establishing dedicated facilities and providing a supportive environment are crucial steps in reducing menstrual-related absenteeism.

Implementing robust menstrual health education programs can reduce stigma and empower girls with the knowledge and confidence needed to manage their menstruation effectively. Sensitization efforts should also extend to staff and peers to foster a more inclusive and supportive school culture.

There is a need to develop and enforcing policies that support menstrual hygiene management in schools, alongside community and government involvement, is essential for addressing the systemic issues related to menstrual hygiene.

Also, collaborative efforts can enhance resource availability and support systems, ultimately improving the educational experience and academic performance of menstruating girls.

Schools should offer free menstrual products (e.g., pads and tampons) to ensure that all menstruating students have access to necessary hygiene supplies. This can be implemented through school-based dispensers or distribution programs.

Establish private, clean, and well-stocked facilities for menstruating students, including restrooms equipped with menstrual products, disposal bins, and washing facilities.

Train teachers and school staff on menstrual health and how to provide support to menstruating students. This will help create a more supportive and informed school environment.

Launch school-wide campaigns to reduce menstrual stigma and promote positive attitudes towards menstruation. Use posters, workshops, and peer education to challenge myths and encourage open dialogue.

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APPENDIX I:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE STUDY.

Instructions

You are kindly requested to answer the questions below in the spaces or from the choices given as honestly as possible. You are also requested not to write your name anywhere in this questionnaire so that your responses remain anonymous and Confidentiality is assured.

Section A:

Background Formation

1. What is your gender?

A (male

B (female)

2. What is your age?

a) Below 12 [] b, 13 [] c) 14 [] d) 15 [] e) 16 [] f) over 17 []

3. Have you started menstruating yet?

a) Yes [] b No []

4. What materials/items/supplies do you use most of the times to manage your menstruation?

a) Nothing only underwear [] b) Reusable cloth [] c) Disposable pad (purchased in market)

d) Other (specify): _____

5. Where do you mostly obtain these materials/items for managing menstrual periods?

a Made at home/ found at home []

b Purchased at the market by self []

c Purchased at the market by mother []

d Purchased at the market by father

e Get at school []

Other (specify) _____

6. What material/item would you most like to use for managing menstrual periods?

a Only underwear []

b Reusable cloth []

c Disposable pad (purchased in market) []

d Tampon/ other inserted item []

e Other (specify): _____

SECTION B

Objective:1

To explore the effects of menstrualrelated absenteeism on the academic performance of girls in public schools.

1 General Information:

Could you please tell me about your role and how long you have been in this position at the school?

2. Absenteeism Frequency and Causes:

What are some common reasons girls give for being absent during their menstrual periods?

3. Impact on Academic Performance:

From your observation, how does menstrual related absenteeism affect the academic performance of girls in your school?"

4. Support Systems and Policies:

What kind of support does your school provide to girls who are absent due to menstrual related issues?

5. Teacher and Peer Reactions:

How do teachers typically respond to girls who miss school due to menstrual related issues?

6. Suggestions for Improvement:

In your opinion, what measures can be taken to reduce menstrual related absenteeism and its impact on academic performance?

7. Closing:

Is there anything else you would like to share about how menstrual related absenteeism affects the girls in your school?

Objective two:

The impact of menstrual related stigma on the academic performance of girls in public schools.

Questions:

1. General Experience:

Can you describe your general experience with menstruation while attending school? How has it affected your daily school life?

2. School Environment and Support:

How supportive do you feel your school environment is regarding menstruation?

3. Stigma and Peer Interaction:

Have you ever experienced or witnessed stigma or negative reactions from peers or teachers related to menstruation? How did it affect you or others academically?

4. Attendance and Participation:

How has menstruation influenced your school attendance and participation in class activities?

5. Access to Facilities and Supplies:

What is the availability of menstrual hygiene products and facilities (e.g., clean and private restrooms) like at your school?

6. Academic Performance:

In what ways do you believe menstrual related stigma and challenges have affected your academic performance (e.g., grades, concentration, and test performance)?

7. Communication and Education:

How comfortable do you feel discussing menstrual health issues with teachers or school staff?

8. Suggestions for Improvement:

What changes or improvements do you think could be made in your school to reduce menstrual related stigma and better support girls during their menstrual periods?

Objective three:

The existing support systems and resources available in public schools to support girls during their menstruation:

Interview Questions

1. General Overview

Can you describe the current policies or programs in place at your school to support girls during their menstruation?

2. Access to Menstrual Products

What types of menstrual products (pads, tampons, etc.) are available at your school?

3. Facilities and Hygiene

Are there specific facilities provided for menstruating girls, such as sanitary napkin disposal bins or private changing areas?

4. Education and Awareness

Does the school provide education on menstruation and menstrual hygiene management? If so, what form does this take (workshops, classes, informational materials)?

5. Support from School Staff

How are teachers and school staff trained to support menstruating girls? Are there specific protocols they follow?

6. Emotional and Social Support

What kind of emotional or social support is available for girls who may feel embarrassed or stigmatized about their menstruation?

7. Challenges and Barriers

What are the main challenges or barriers that girls face in your school when it comes to managing their menstruation?

8. Suggestions for Improvement

In your opinion, what improvements could be made to better support menstruating girls in your school?

Appendix 3 Consent Form for Participation in Research Study

Title of the Study

The effects of menstruation on girls' education in public schools: a case study of ibanda district, uganda

Principal Investigator

Ainembabazi Anabel

Institution

Uganda Christian University

Introduction

We are conducting a study to understand the existing support systems and resources available in public schools to support girls during their menstruation. Your child is being invited to participate because we believe their insights and experiences are valuable for this research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gather information on how public schools support girls during their menstruation and identify areas for improvement to ensure their wellbeing and continued education.

What Your Child Will Do in the Study

If you agree to let your child participate:

- ❖ They will be asked to participate in an interview or group discussion about their experiences and opinions on the support provided during menstruation.
- ❖ The interview/discussion will take approximately 30-45 minutes.
- ❖ Participation is entirely voluntary, and your child can choose not to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Confidentiality

- ❖ All information collected will be kept confidential.
- ❖ Your child's name and any identifying details will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study.
- ❖ Data will be stored securely and only accessible to the research team.

Risks and Benefits

- ❖ There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.
- ❖ The benefits include contributing to research that may lead to improved support systems and resources for menstruating girls in public schools.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact on:

Contact: 076 078074

Email: ainambabazianabel@gmil.com

Consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you understand the study and agree to let your child participate.

I have read and understand the information above. I agree to allow my child to participate in this study.

Child's Name:

Parent/Guardian Name:

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date:

Thank you for your support and cooperation.