

MENSTRUAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT PRACTICE FOR ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

RESULTS FROM A SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS, AND QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS WITH SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

BACKGROUND

This study is the second in a series of data-driven research that seeks to not just understand the context of menstrual health in for adolescent girls in schools but also to identify strategies that will promote good menstrual health and practices. This study focuses on testing identified strategies recommended by adolescents in schools to help improve their menstrual health and reduce menstrual stigma during the first series.

LEARNING GOALS

- We need to know how effective comic books are in addressing stigma and menstrual health needs so that we can identify the gaps and increase the effectiveness of comic books.
- We need to know whether engaging school champions is an effective strategy to reduce poor menstrual health practices and stigmatization so that we can invest in building [school] champions.
- We need to know what roles boys can play to support girls during menstruation so that we can encourage the practice of these roles, in order to increase good menstrual hygiene practices and reduce stigmatization.

METHOD

A mixed-method study was conducted in five secondary schools in the South West Region of Cameroon. A survey, focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted. The survey and focus group discussions were conducted with adolescent boys and girls in secondary schools while key informant discussions were conducted with the school administrators. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.0 and qualitative analysis was conducted through NVIVO using thematic analysis.

RESULTS

- A total of 100 secondary school students took part in the focus group discussions, 50 were girls and 50 were boys while 10 school administrators took part in the in-depth interviews.
- A total of 316 adolescents responded to the questionnaires most of the respondents 81% were females and 19% were males.
- We learn that 71% of the students have read the comic book at least once and can identify the various issues discussed in the comic book, they can also connect the story to their everyday experiences.
- 42% of the students find the illustrations, and 58% of the students find the design, and colours of the comic book to be very attractive and aided the explanation and understanding of MHMP during peer-to-peer discussion.
- 78% of students found peer education to be very effective in promoting menstrual health management practices (MHMP) and suggest that regular talks with students should be held and that more comic books should be distributed to students.

RESULTS

- All school administrators think peer education on MHMP and the use of the comic book has improved students' knowledge of menstrual health and practices as well as reduced menstrual stigma and they also stated that discussion with parents on MHMP should be included in the strategy.
- 67% of girls feel comfortable getting support from boys during menstruation although a few (33%) don't feel comfortable because of the fear of being stigmatized by other boys.
- 69% of both boys and girls said advice and show of care are the main support girls expect from boys when menstruating.
- 44% boys feel comfortable supporting girls during menstruation and are willing to educate and advise girls on MHMP.



CONCLUSION

Peer education through the use of a comic book is an effective strategy to improve MHMP for adolescents in secondary schools.

Using boys in MHMP education can play a good role in normalizing menstruation in schools and communities.