

“Menstrual Health, Sanitation Policy, and Adolescent Well-Being: An Evaluation of Swachh Bharat Mission in Government Girls’ Schools of Kota, Rajasthan”

Dishi jain

Under Guidance of

Dr. Mrs. Sunita Vigesh Yadav

Ph.D,MPHIL,M.COM,M.A,M.B.A,B.ED

SHYAMNARAYAN THAKUR MARG, THAKUR KANDIVALI [EAST]

Abstract

Menstrual health is an important but often overlooked aspect of adolescent well-being in government schools. Despite sanitation policies aimed at improving school infrastructure, many adolescent girls continue to face challenges in managing menstruation during school hours. This study examines menstrual health practices and sanitation support in selected government girls’ schools of Jaipur and Kota districts, Rajasthan. The study follows a descriptive and qualitative research design and is based on questionnaire responses, field visits, and direct interactions with adolescent girls. It focuses on the availability and usability of sanitation facilities, access to menstrual hygiene products, disposal practices, awareness levels, and institutional support within schools. Brief awareness interactions were also conducted to understand students’ comfort and responses.

The findings indicate that although basic sanitation facilities are present in most schools, their effective use during menstruation is limited due to poor maintenance, irregular availability of sanitary products, and lack of open communication. Menstruation continues to affect school attendance, concentration, and emotional well-being. The study concludes that effective menstrual health management requires an integrated approach combining infrastructure, awareness, regular monitoring, and supportive school environments.

Keywords: Menstrual health, Sanitation facilities, Adolescent girls, Government schools, Menstrual hygiene management, Jaipur and Kota districts.

INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a natural biological process, yet for many adolescent girls it remains a difficult and uncomfortable part of school life. In government girls’ schools, managing menstruation often becomes challenging due to limited sanitation facilities, lack of privacy, and hesitation in discussing the topic openly. These challenges affect not only physical comfort but also emotional well being, confidence, and regular school attendance.

Although national sanitation initiatives have improved school infrastructure, menstrual health has often been addressed only indirectly. Toilets may be available, but their usability during menstruation depends on cleanliness, water supply, disposal facilities, and regular monitoring. When these elements are missing, girls feel unsafe and embarrassed, leading many to stay absent during their menstrual cycle.

Urban districts such as Jaipur and Kota present an important context for studying menstrual health in schools. Despite being developed areas, several government girls’ schools continue to show gaps in menstrual hygiene awareness and institutional support. Field interactions reveal that many girls rely on informal sources for information and feel uncomfortable approaching teachers or staff for help.

This study examines menstrual health and sanitation practices in selected government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts, focusing on how sanitation policies function at the ground level. By combining field visits, questionnaires, and awareness interactions, the research aims to understand adolescent experiences and highlight the need for a more supportive and dignity centred approach to menstrual health in schools.

Review of Literature

Menstrual health has been widely discussed in public health and education research as an essential factor influencing adolescent girls' well being and school participation. Several studies highlight that menstruation, when not supported by proper sanitation facilities and awareness, becomes a major challenge for school going girls. Researchers emphasize that menstrual health is not limited to physical hygiene but is closely connected to dignity, emotional comfort, and confidence within school environments.

Studies conducted in government schools across India reveal that the availability of toilets alone does not ensure effective menstrual hygiene management. Poor maintenance, lack of water supply, inadequate privacy, and absence of disposal facilities often discourage girls from using school toilets during menstruation. As a result, many girls prefer to remain absent from school, particularly during the initial days of their menstrual cycle.

Research on menstrual hygiene practices further indicates that access to sanitary products in schools is inconsistent. Several studies report that girls depend on irregular pad distribution or personal arrangements due to limited availability in government schools. The quality of menstrual products provided has also been identified as an important concern, as discomfort and fear of leakage affect students' sense of safety and concentration during school hours.

Policy based literature reviewing national sanitation initiatives suggests that while sanitation infrastructure in schools has improved, menstrual health needs have not received adequate attention. Scholars argue that sanitation policies often prioritize construction targets rather than usability, monitoring, and menstrual specific support. Without regular maintenance and awareness programs, sanitation facilities fail to address the real needs of adolescent girls.

Region specific studies from Rajasthan reflect similar challenges, where cultural hesitation and limited school based education restrict open discussion on menstruation. Research points to the need for district level studies that focus on adolescent experiences and institutional sensitivity. These findings highlight a clear gap between policy intentions and ground level realities, which the present study seeks to address through field based research in Jaipur and Kota districts.

Research Gap

Existing research on menstrual health and sanitation in schools has largely focused on national trends, rural areas, or broad state-level analyses. Many studies evaluate sanitation policies primarily in terms of infrastructure development, such as the number of toilets constructed, without closely examining how these facilities are actually used by adolescent girls during menstruation. As a result, the lived experiences, emotional comfort, and day to day challenges of school going girls often remain underrepresented in policy oriented research.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to district level comparative studies within the same state. Urban districts like Jaipur and Kota are frequently assumed to have better facilities and awareness due to their developed status; however, existing literature provides insufficient evidence on how sanitation policies function at the school level in these districts. There is a lack of research that compares implementation, monitoring, and menstrual support practices between such urban settings.

Additionally, most studies emphasize data collection but do not incorporate field based interaction and awareness initiatives as part of the research process. The impact of creating safe spaces for discussion and immediate awareness on adolescent confidence and comfort remains underexplored.

Therefore, a clear research gap exists in understanding menstrual health through a school level, experience based, and district specific approach. The present study addresses this gap by combining field visits, questionnaires, and awareness interactions in selected government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts, linking sanitation policy implementation with adolescent well being and dignity.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to understand menstrual health in government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts with a focus on sanitation facilities and adolescent well being. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine the availability and usability of sanitation facilities in government girls' schools during menstruation.
- To assess access to menstrual hygiene products in schools and understand their regularity and quality.
- To understand the level of awareness and comfort among adolescent girls in discussing menstruation within the school environment.
- To identify challenges faced by girls during menstruation related to sanitation, privacy, disposal, and institutional support.
- To study the impact of menstrual health conditions on school attendance and emotional well being of adolescent girls.
- To suggest practical measures for improving menstrual hygiene management and creating a supportive school environment.

Hypothesis

H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):

There is a significant relationship between the age of adolescent girls and their level of menstrual health awareness in school.

H₀ (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant relationship between the age of adolescent girls and their level of menstrual health awareness in school.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and qualitative research design to examine menstrual health and sanitation practices in government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts, Rajasthan. The methodology was chosen to understand not only the availability of sanitation facilities but also the lived experiences, perceptions, and comfort levels of adolescent girls during menstruation.

Selection of Study Area

The study was conducted in selected government girls' schools located in Jaipur and Kota districts. These districts were chosen to allow a comparative understanding of menstrual health support in two urban settings within the same state. Schools showing limited menstrual health awareness and inadequate sanitation support were purposively selected based on preliminary field observations.

Sample Selection

The sample consisted of adolescent girls studying in middle and senior secondary classes. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on students who had already attained menarche. This ensured that responses were based on personal experience and relevance to the research objectives.

Data Collection Methods

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study.

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to students. The questionnaire covered sanitation facilities, availability and quality of menstrual hygiene products, comfort in approaching school staff, and the impact of menstruation on school attendance and well being.

Informal interviews and field interactions were conducted to understand students' reactions, emotions, and awareness levels in a natural and comfortable setting.

Observational visits were carried out to assess the condition, cleanliness, and usability of sanitation facilities within school premises.

Secondary data was collected from academic journals, government reports, health surveys, and published research related to menstrual hygiene management and sanitation policies.

Awareness Interaction

Along with data collection, brief awareness interactions were conducted with students to explain menstruation as a natural biological process, importance of hygiene, and availability of support within schools. These interactions helped create a safe space for discussion and provided deeper insight into students' comfort levels and concerns.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using descriptive and thematic analysis. Quantitative responses were summarized using simple percentages, while qualitative responses from interviews and observations were analysed thematically to identify recurring challenges and patterns.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Verbal consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing school names and avoiding personal identifiers.

Scope of the Study

The present study focuses on menstrual health and sanitation practices in selected government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts, Rajasthan. It examines the availability and usability of sanitation facilities, access to menstrual hygiene products, disposal practices, and institutional support within the school environment.

The study includes adolescent girls studying in middle and senior secondary classes who have attained menarche. Data is collected through questionnaires, field interactions, and observations to understand both infrastructural conditions and student experiences.

The scope of the study is limited to urban government schools in Jaipur and Kota and does not cover rural areas, private schools, or medical aspects of menstruation. The findings aim to provide practical insights for improving menstrual health support in schools.

Limitations of the Study

The present study is confined to selected government girls' schools in Jaipur and Kota districts of Rajasthan. Since the study focuses only on urban government schools, the findings cannot be generalized to rural areas or private educational institutions, where menstrual health conditions and institutional support may differ.

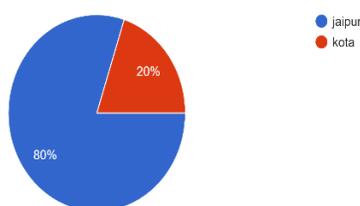
The sample size of respondents was limited due to time constraints, school schedules, and accessibility during field visits. As the topic of menstruation is sensitive, some students were hesitant or uncomfortable while responding to certain questions. This may have affected the depth and openness of a few responses.

The study largely relies on self-reported data collected through questionnaires and informal interactions. Such responses may be influenced by personal perceptions, fear of judgment, or social desirability. In addition, limited interaction with teachers and school authorities restricted a deeper institutional and administrative analysis of menstrual health policies at the school level.

Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful and realistic insights into menstrual health, sanitation practices, and adolescent well-being in government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts

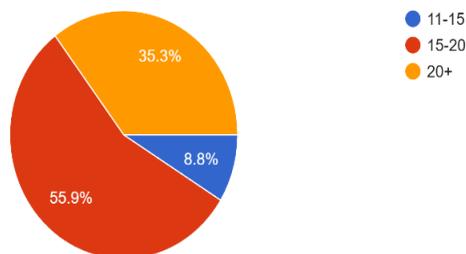
DATA ANALYSIS

1) District:
30 responses



District	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Jaipur	27	80%
Kota	7	20%
TOTAL	34	100%

2) Age
34 responses

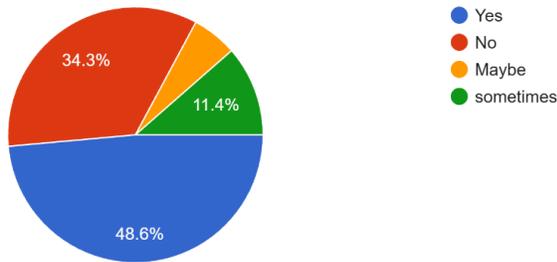


Age Group (Yrs.)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
11-15	3	8.8%

15-20	19	55.9%
20 & above	12	35.3%
TOTAL	34	100%

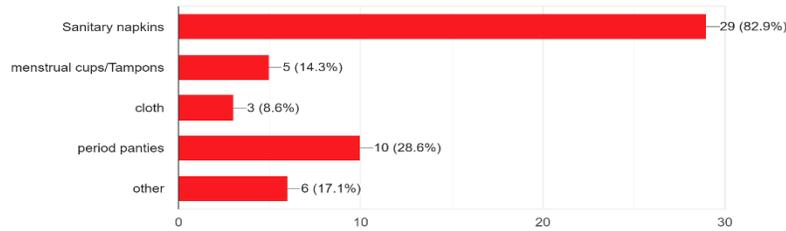
4]Are the sanitation facilities regularly cleaned and monitored by the school staff?

35 responses



Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	48.6%
No	12	34.3%
Sometimes	4	11.4%
Maybe	2	5.7%
TOTAL	35	100%

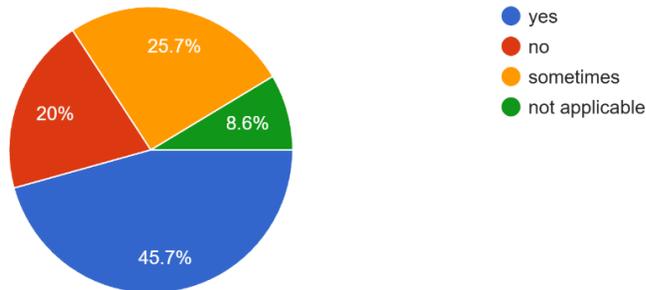
5) Which menstrual hygiene product do you usually use during menstruation? (You may select more than one if applicable) Disposable sanitary pads
35 responses



Menstrual hygiene products	Frequency	Percentage
Sanitary napkins	29	82.9%
Menstrual cups/ Tampons	5	14.3%
Cloth	3	8.6%
Period panties	10	28.6%
Other	6	17.1%

7]menstrual products are provided, are they refilled on time when the stock finishes?

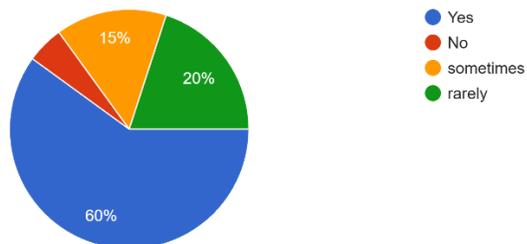
35 responses



Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	16	45.7%
No	7	20%
Sometimes	9	25.7%
Not applicable	3	8.8%
TOTAL	35	100%

9]Are you comfortable in sharing menstruation concerns with your family members

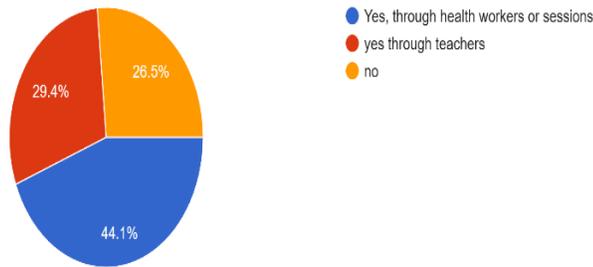
20 responses



Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	60%
No	1	5%
Sometimes	3	15%
Rarely	4	20%
TOTAL	20	100%

12] Did you receive any information or guidance about menstruation from your school?

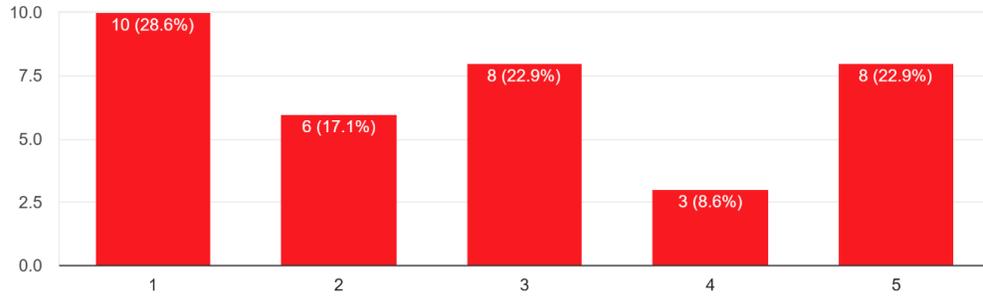
34 responses



Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, through health workers or sessions	15	44.1%
Yes through teachers	10	29.4%
No	9	26.5%
TOTAL	34	100%

[13] How comfortable do you feel during school hours when you are menstruating? [rate 1 for comfortable and 5 for uncomfortable]

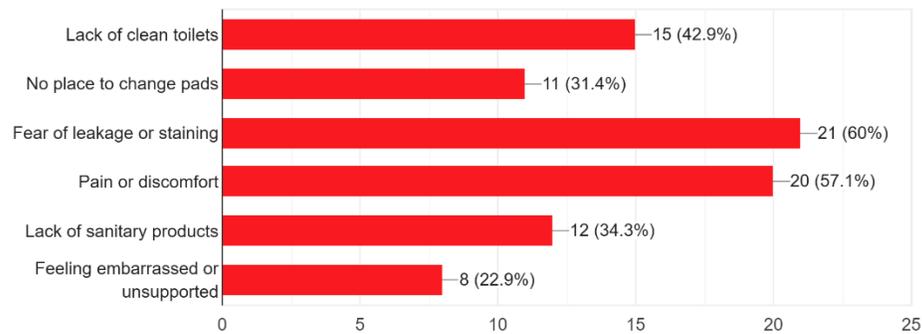
35 responses



Rating	Frequency	Percentage
1	10	28.6%
2	6	17.1%
3	8	22.9%
4	3	8.6%
5	8	22.9%
TOTAL	35	100%

15] What is the main reason that makes menstruation difficult during school time? (You may select more than one.)

35 responses



Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of clean toilets	15	42.9%
No place to change pads	11	31.4%
Fear of leakage or staining	21	60%
Pain or discomfort	20	57.1%
Lack of sanitary products	12	34.3%
Feeling embarrassed or unsupported	8	22.9%

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are based on questionnaire responses, field observations, and interactions with adolescent girls in selected government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts. The results reflect both infrastructural conditions and the lived experiences of students during menstruation.

It was found that **most schools had separate toilets for girls**, but their usability during menstruation was inconsistent. Issues such as irregular water supply, poor cleanliness, and lack of privacy were commonly reported. Even where facilities existed, they were not always regularly monitored, reducing their effectiveness for menstrual hygiene management.

The study revealed that **access to menstrual hygiene products within schools was limited and irregular**. While some schools provided sanitary pads occasionally, many students reported that supplies were not refilled on time. Concerns regarding the quality of pads were also expressed, with some girls feeling uncomfortable using them for long school hours.

Findings further showed that **a significant number of girls felt hesitant to approach teachers or school staff** regarding menstruation-related concerns. This hesitation was linked to embarrassment and fear of judgment, indicating a lack of open communication within school environments. Girls who felt supported by staff reported greater comfort in managing menstruation at school.

The study also found that **menstruation affected school attendance and concentration**. Several students admitted to missing school during menstruation due to sanitation issues, fear of leakage, or lack of adequate facilities. Emotional responses such as anxiety and discomfort were commonly expressed during field interactions.

A comparison between Jaipur and Kota districts indicated **minor variations in implementation**, with Jaipur schools showing relatively better facility maintenance, while Kota schools faced greater challenges related to monitoring and product availability. However, gaps in awareness and institutional sensitivity were observed in both districts.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the present study are based on questionnaire responses, field observations, and direct interactions with adolescent girls from selected government girls' schools in Jaipur and Kota districts. The results reflect both infrastructural conditions and the personal experiences of students during menstruation.

The study found that **sanitation facilities were present in most schools**, but their effective use during menstruation was limited. Many students reported issues such as poor cleanliness, irregular water supply, lack of privacy, and inadequate monitoring. Even when toilets were available, these conditions made it difficult for girls to manage menstruation comfortably during school hours.

It was observed that **availability of sanitary pads in schools was inconsistent**. Some schools provided pads occasionally, but timely refilling of stock was not regular. Several students also raised concerns about the **quality of pads**, stating that discomfort and fear of leakage affected their confidence and concentration in class.

The findings revealed that **a large number of girls felt uncomfortable approaching teachers or school staff** to discuss menstruation-related concerns. This discomfort was mainly due to embarrassment and lack of open discussion within the school environment. Girls who felt supported by staff showed greater confidence and better menstrual management.

The study further highlighted that **menstruation had a noticeable impact on school attendance and academic focus**. Some students admitted to missing school during menstruation because of sanitation issues, lack of products, or fear of staining. Emotional responses such as anxiety, stress, and uneasiness were commonly expressed.

A comparative observation between the two districts showed that **schools in Jaipur had relatively better maintenance of sanitation facilities**, while **schools in Kota faced more challenges related to monitoring**

and product availability. However, gaps in menstrual health awareness and institutional sensitivity were evident in both districts.

Overall, the findings indicate that while sanitation policies have improved infrastructure, **effective menstrual health management in schools remains incomplete without regular monitoring, quality menstrual products, awareness, and emotional support.**

Conclusion

The present study examined menstrual health and sanitation practices in selected government girls' schools of Jaipur and Kota districts with a focus on adolescent well-being. The findings indicate that while sanitation policies have contributed to the availability of basic infrastructure in schools, their effectiveness in supporting menstrual health remains limited at the ground level.

The study highlights that functional sanitation facilities, regular availability of menstrual hygiene products, and proper monitoring are essential for enabling girls to manage menstruation comfortably in school. In the absence of these factors, menstruation continues to affect school attendance, concentration, and emotional well-being. Hesitation in approaching teachers and lack of open discussion further deepen discomfort and silence around the topic.

Field interactions revealed that awareness plays a crucial role in improving confidence among adolescent girls. Even brief awareness conversations helped students feel heard and supported, suggesting that menstrual health cannot be addressed through infrastructure alone. Institutional sensitivity and supportive school environments are equally important.

The comparative analysis of Jaipur and Kota districts showed minor differences in implementation, but common gaps were observed in both districts. These findings emphasize the need for an integrated approach that combines sanitation facilities, quality menstrual products, awareness programs, and staff sensitization.

Overall, the study concludes that menstrual health is closely linked to dignity and educational equity. Strengthening school-based menstrual health support can contribute significantly to improving adolescent well-being and creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for girls.

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