

An exploratory study on socio cultural norms around menstrual hygiene management in Tanzania

A case study of Moshi district Kilimanjaro

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While menstrual Hygiene management (MHM) is gaining increasing recognition in the sanitation sector, socio cultural norms, act as barrier towards achieving effective MHM. This study aims at investigating motives behind the practice of existing social = cultural norms around menstrual blood and menstruation. This is done by unlocking perceptions and socio cultural norms around menstrual blood and menstruation by identifying and analyzing their impacts on MHM and their association with hygienic practices during menstruation. The mixed method research involved data collection using questionnaires, interview and focus group discussions and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods.

It was found that over 50% of families which women and girls belong to perceive menstruation positively as a part of women's growing process or maturity. Despite the positive perception, negative norms, taboos and beliefs still prevail, but are hardly straightforwardly mentioned because of the secrecy and privacy around menstruation issues, hence not frequently talked about among women. It was found that more than 40% of women faced health problems because of existing norms in the use of menstrual absorbents which were mostly sanitary pads and pieces of cloth or fabrics. About 52% of women using sanitary pads and 28.5% of women using fabrics experienced itching, while around 21% of women using sanitary pads and 48% of women using pieces of cloth have experienced yeast infection (candida). More than 30% of women face mobility restrictions in going to place and worship, market place and work place. It was also observed that 50% of women and girls felt scarred during the first menstruation (menarche) due to existing taboos and lack of menstrual knowledge.

Lastly menstrual norms and taboos were found to associate with women preference for menstrual hygiene products (171) and women's menstrual waste disposal practices