

Digital Didi

Innovation to Ensure Menstrual Hygiene and Fostering
Self-Learning and Entrepreneurship

Baseline Survey Report
2022- 2023



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Executive Summary

This report highlights the key findings from the baseline survey conducted for the Digital Didi Project – Innovation to Ensure Menstrual Hygiene and Fostering Self-Learning and Entrepreneurship in a total of 9 states– Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The number of respondents was a total of 2,455 individuals, of which 45% respondents (1112) surveyed are adolescents aged between 13-20, and 55% (1343) are women aged 20 and above. The survey was conducted by Digital Empowerment Foundation in October 2022. The survey was conducted to assess the degree of access to digital devices and internet, scope of imparting financial literacy and knowledge, access to menstrual hygiene management knowledge and facilities among the sample respondents across different age groups, occupation and educational qualification.

1. Majority (90%) of the respondents were from rural areas.
2. In terms of educational qualifications, 56% respondents were either currently enrolled in, or have studied up to secondary level (class 9-10), 1% had studied till/are currently enrolled in senior secondary (11-12), 2% had diploma, 10% were graduate, 7% were postgraduate. Of the respondents, 9% had no education, 6% had primary education, and 9% were educated till middle standard.
3. Their occupational status was captured under the categories of agricultural worker, displaced worker/previously employed, entrepreneur, farmer, jobseeker, private sector employee (formal), private sector employee (informal), public sector employee, self-employed, wage labourer (non-agricultural), youth in school, youth not in school, and college/university students. Youth in school category had the highest number of respondents, with jobseeker, farmer, and entrepreneur being some of the other larger groups of respondents in terms of occupation.
4. Among the respondents, 428 were earning members and 2027 were non earning members. Of the earning members, 85% earned less than INR 10,000.
5. The respondents were asked to self assess if they consider themselves aware of safe practices in regards to menstrual health. 34% responded “yes”, and 66% responded “no”.
6. The respondents were asked if they were aware of discussions on the environmental cost of commercially available disposable pads. Only 31% respondents reported having possessing the knowledge of environmental cost of disposable pads.
7. The respondents were asked to confirm one or more kind of absorbent they use. Aside from commercially available pads which is the dominant choice of absorbent, single use and reusable cloth were the other more popular choices.
8. The respondents selected from a list of probable disposal techniques they use. Disposing with other household waste was the most dominant method. In “others” some specified burying the used absorbents in the ground, and of disposing in the river.
9. In an attempt to interpret the scope for destigmatising menstruation, and of generating social awareness respondents were asked about the availability of sunlight to dry reusable absorbents.

Only 32% considered drying reusable absorbents in the sunlight feasible.

10. 59% respondents did not find awareness about menstruation before menarche to be necessary for girls.
11. Respondents were asked if they own a personal smartphone. 58% owned a smartphone, 42% did not.
12. Respondents were asked about their access to a desktop computer. 65% reported never having used a computer.
13. The school-going adolescents were asked if their school provides computer education. A majority of them reported “yes”. However, only 51% (261/509) of these reported accessing the computer once a week.
14. Of the 40% (986/2455) respondents who have used the internet to access information on health issues, 80% reportedly found it useful.
15. The proportion of respondents with bank accounts was slightly higher than those who did not hold a bank account.
16. The respondents were asked to self assess on a scale of 1-5 whether they feel sufficiently aware of UPI payments, net banking, and mobile wallets. A majority of them reported not feeling adequately aware of digital banking methods.
17. The individuals who owned a personal smartphone (1281/2455) were asked if their phone was password protected. Majority 73% (1079/1281) of the individuals had autonomy over who had access to their phones.

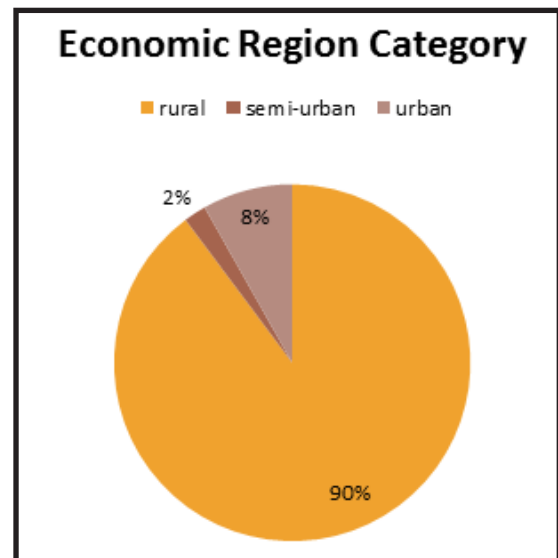


Socio-Economic Landscape

The survey was conducted in a total of 9 states– Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The table below lists the state-wise breakup of the number of respondents.

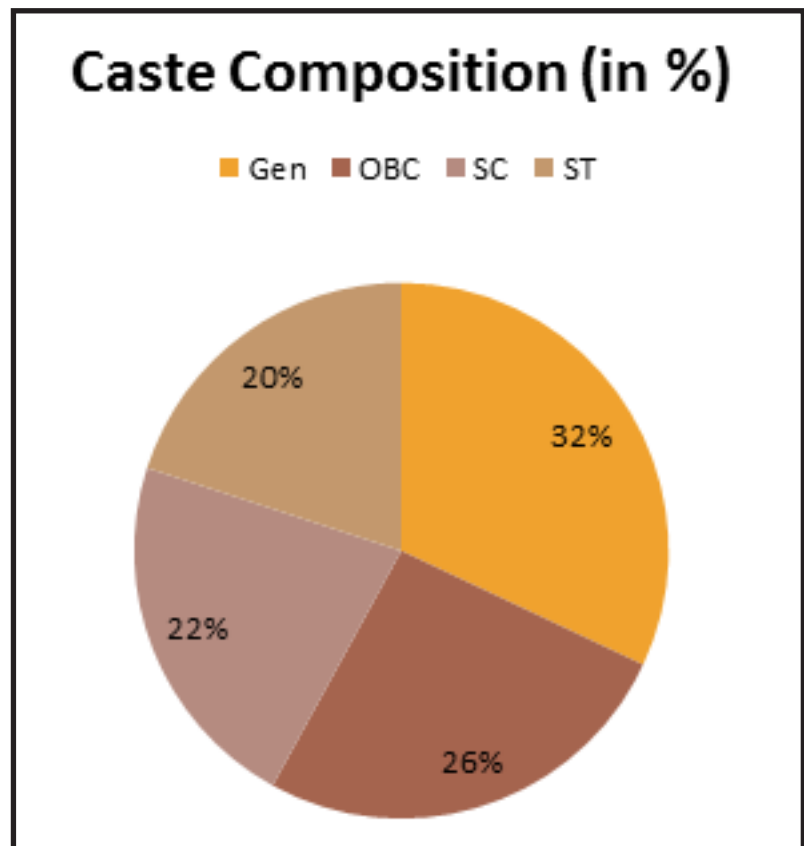
| Sr. No. | Name of State | Number of respondents |
|---------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Assam | 3 |
| 2 | Bihar | 471 |
| 3 | Jharkhand | 173 |
| 4 | Madhya Pradesh | 53 |
| 5 | Maharashtra | 3 |
| 6 | Odisha | 120 |
| 7 | Rajasthan | 247 |
| 8 | Uttar Pradesh | 327 |
| 9 | West Bengal | 1058 |

The economic geographical region of the respondents was captured within the categories of rural, semi-urban, and urban. The respondents are mostly from rural areas, with 50 individuals from semi-urban areas and 201 from urban areas.

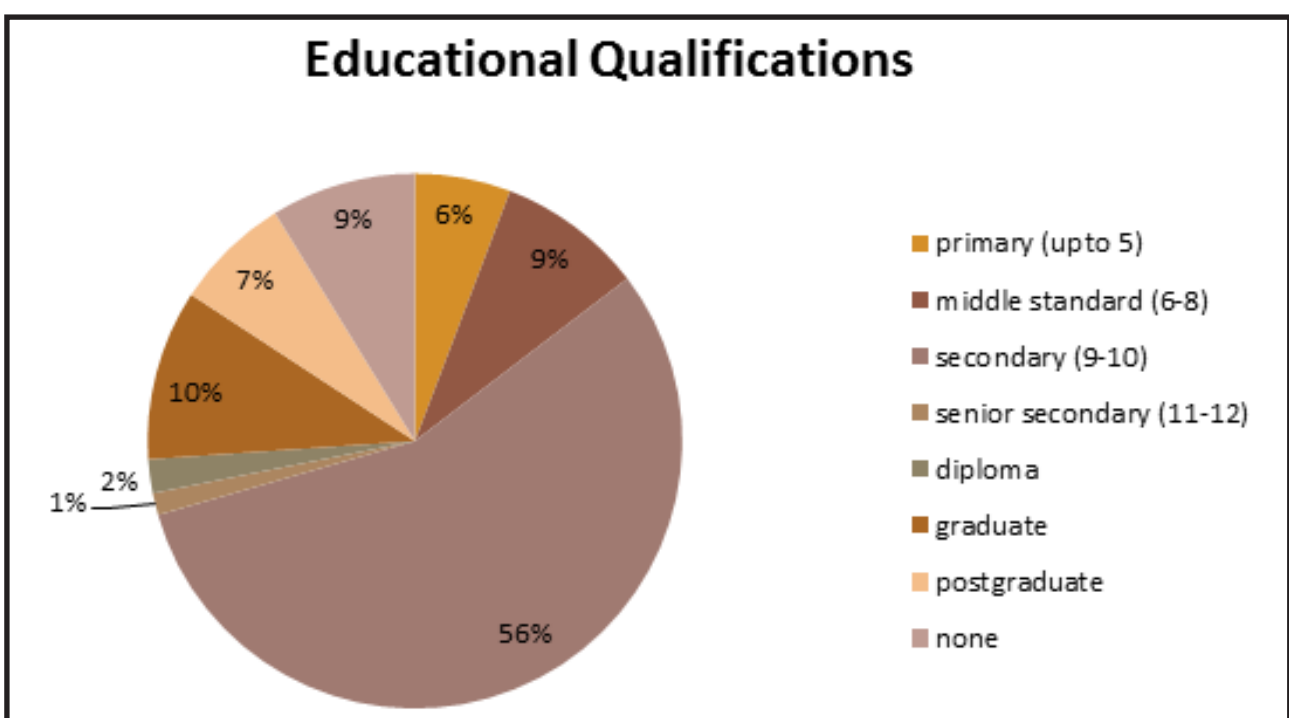


The caste location of the respondents was captured within the categories of General, OBC, ST, and SC.

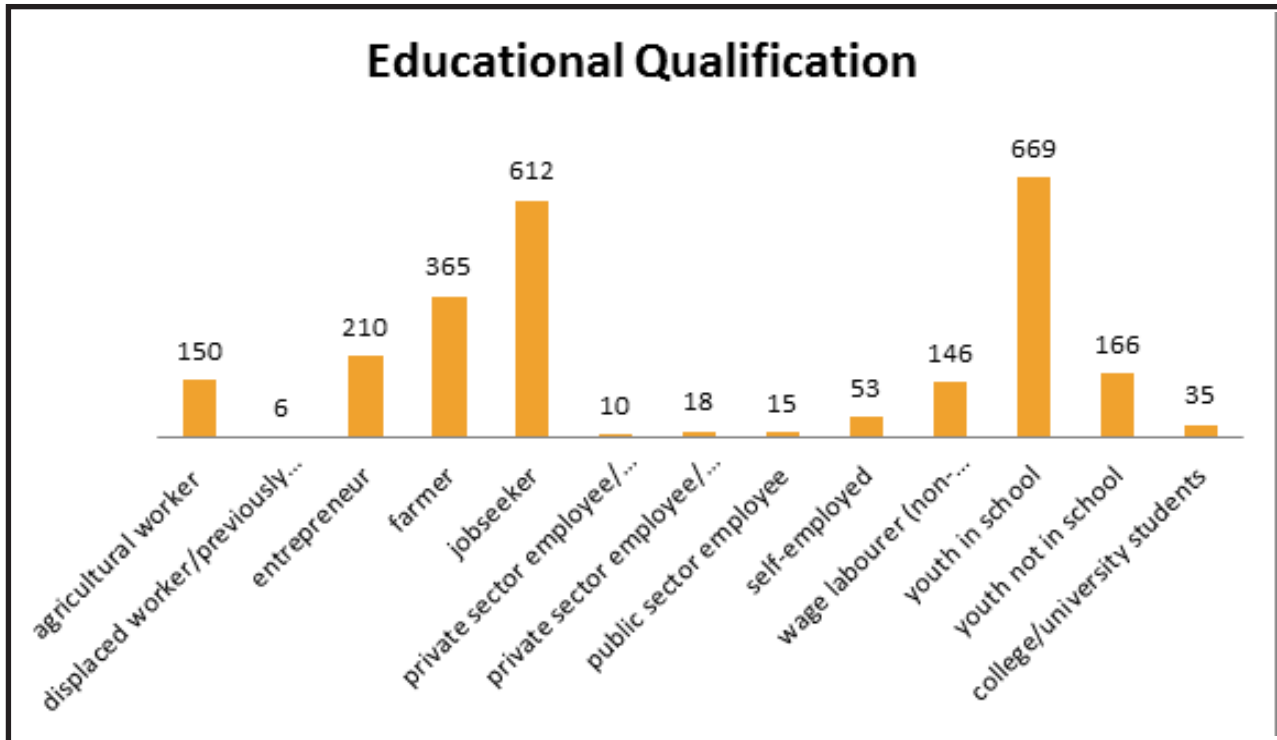
In keeping with the scope of the intervention, menstruating individuals were approached to respond to self assessment based questionnaire. From a total of 2455 respondents, 45% respondents (1112) surveyed are adolescents aged between 13-20, and 55% (1343) are women aged 20 and above.



In terms of educational qualifications, 56% respondents were either currently enrolled in, or have studied up to secondary level (class 9-10), 1% had studied till/are currently enrolled in senior secondary (11-12), 2% had diploma, 10% were graduate, 7% were postgraduate. Of the respondents, 9% had no education, 6% had primary education, and 9% were educated till middle standard.



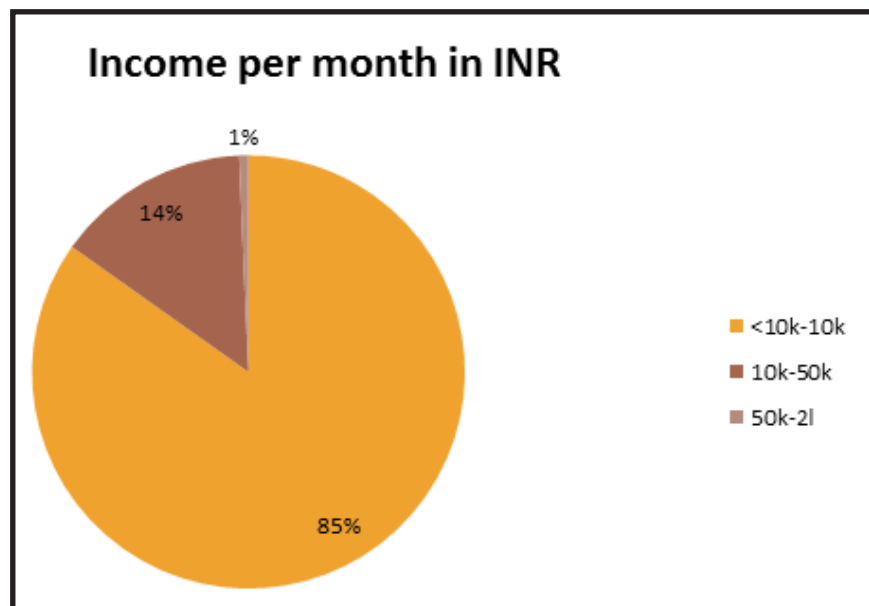
Their occupational status was captured under the categories of agricultural worker, displaced worker/previously employed, entrepreneur, farmer, jobseeker, private sector employee (formal), private sector employee (informal), public sector employee, self-employed, wage labourer (non-agricultural), youth in school, youth not in school, and college/university students.



Economic Background

Among the respondents, 428 were earning members and 2027 were non-earning members.

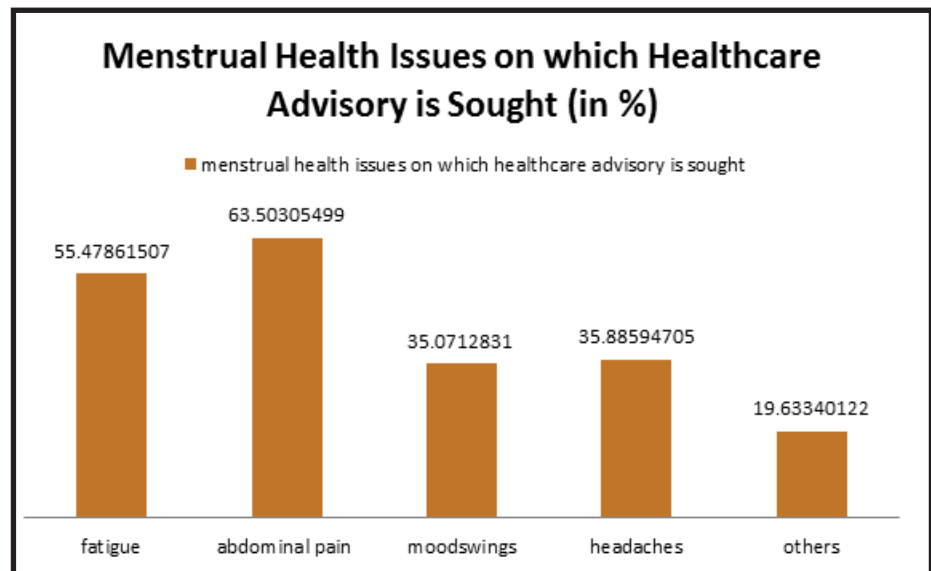
Of the 428, their income level has been represented in the chart below.



Menstrual Hygiene Management Awareness

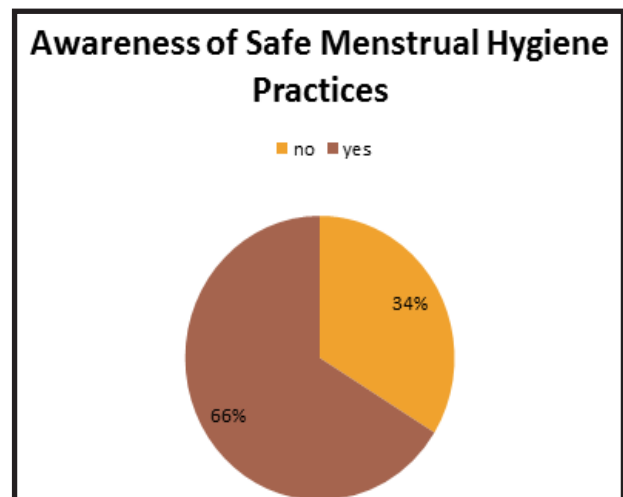
In order to understand the state of awareness of menstrual health practices, questions were asked around the use of absorbents; need for advisory options to learn about menstrual and reproductive health; present disposal options, if using disposable commercial sanitary hygiene products, etc.

The pie chart below represents the issues around menstrual health the respondents would like to have addressed by a healthcare provider.

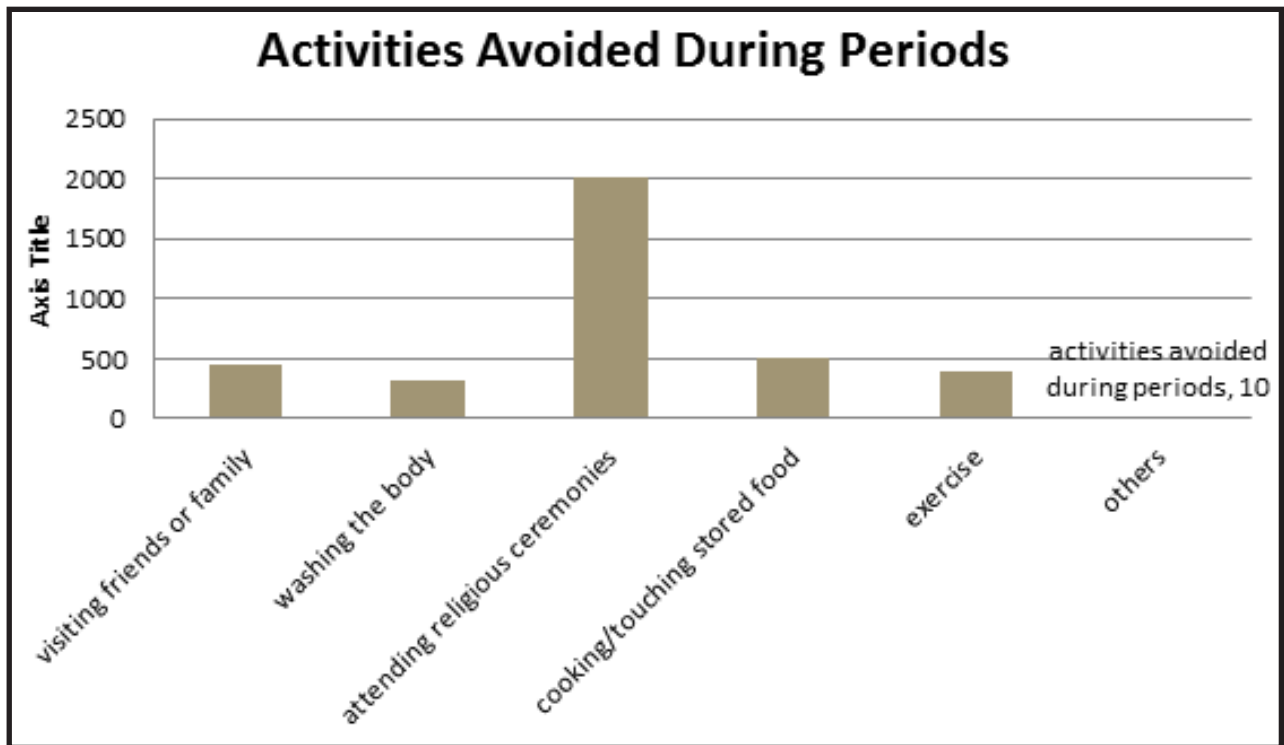


In others, the respondents specified issues like irritability, stomach issues, body ache, sleep disturbance. Some respondents specified they would like general advisory on nutrition and mental health.

The respondents were asked to self assess if they consider themselves aware of safe practices in regards to menstrual health. The chart below represents their responses. 830 responded “yes”, and 1625 responded “no”.

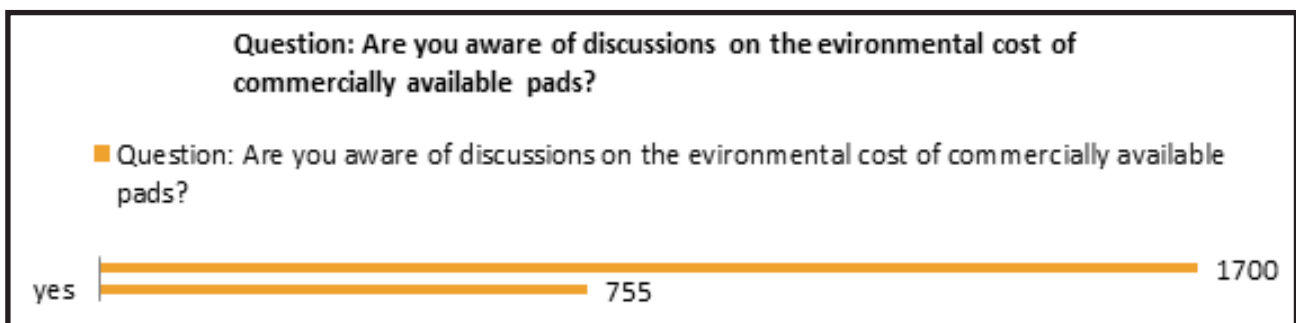


The respondents were asked if they refrain from participating in any activities from a selection due to periods. 18% responded they keep from visiting friends and family, 13% keep from washing the body, 82% avoid religious ceremonies, 20% do not touch stored food/cook, 16% avoid exercising.

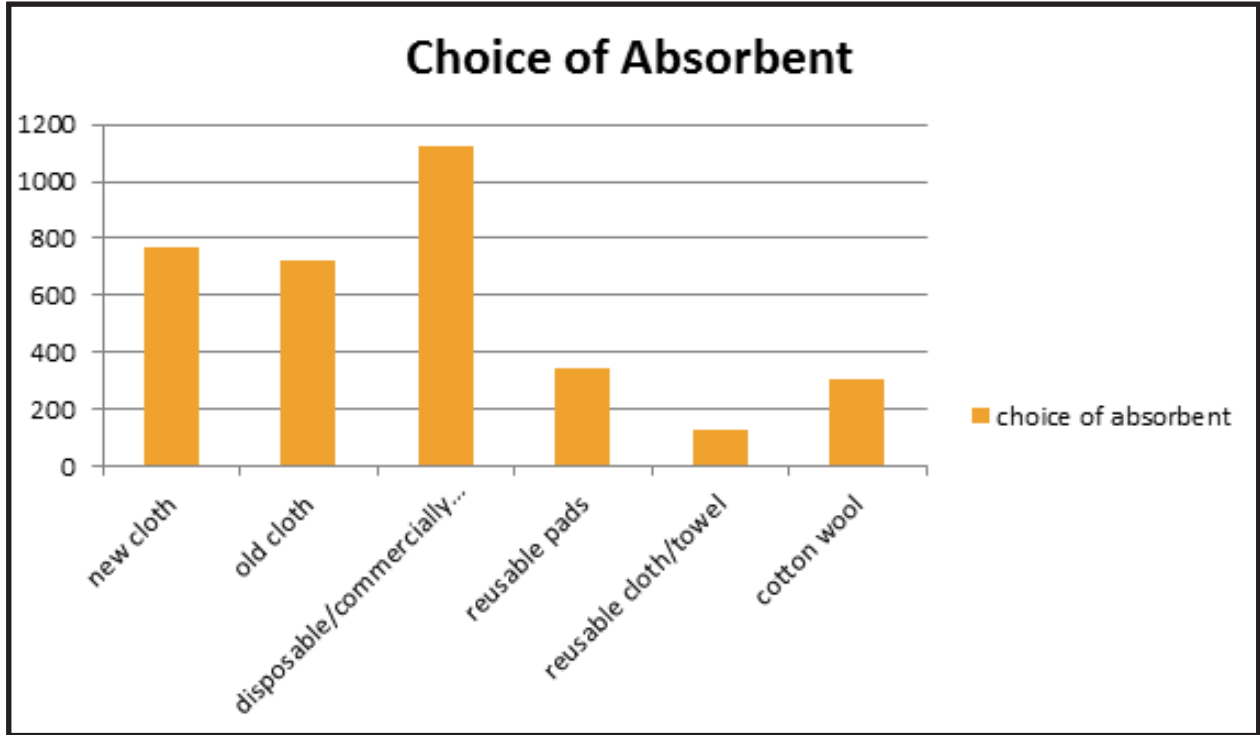


In 'others', some respondents specified they avoid activities such as– stepping out of the house, going to school, going to work, and doing physically demanding work.

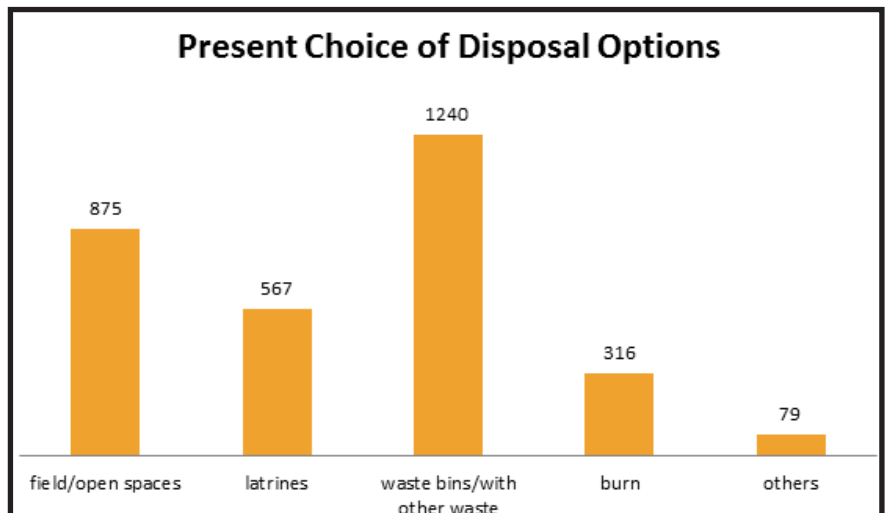
The respondents were asked if they were aware of discussions on the environmental cost of commercially available disposable pads. A majority of them were not.



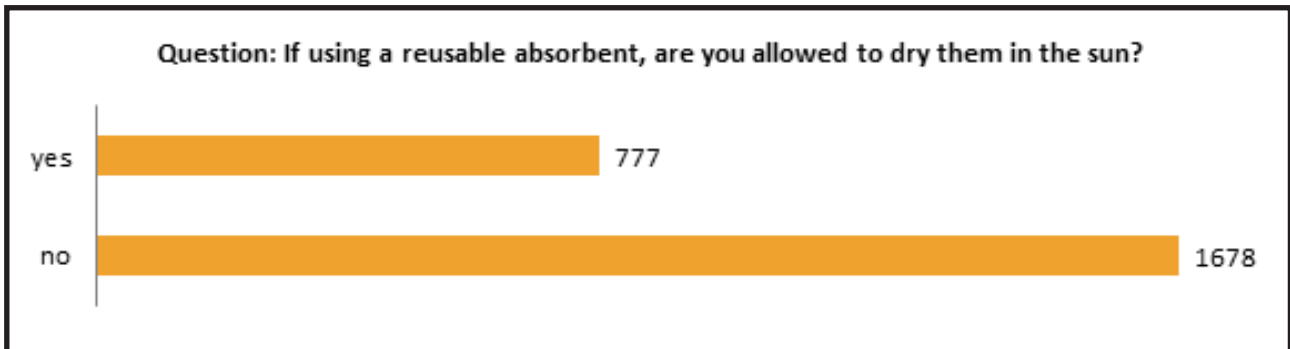
The respondents were asked to confirm one or more kind of absorbent they use. Aside from commercially available pads which is the dominant choice of absorbent, single use and reusable cloth were the other more popular choices.



The respondents selected from a list of probable disposal techniques they use. Disposing with other household waste was the most dominant method. In “others” some specified burying the used absorbents in the ground, and of disposing in the river.

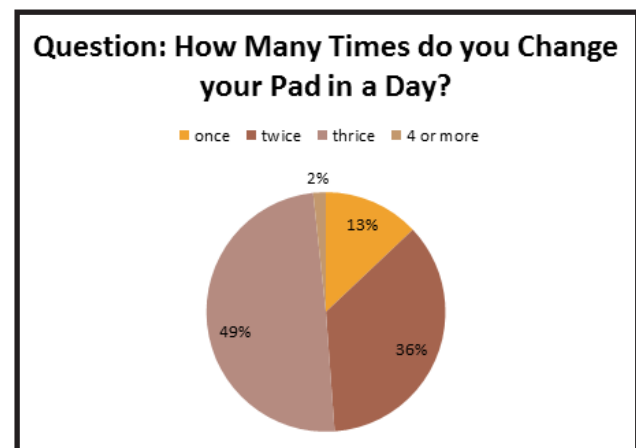


In an attempt to indicate the scope for destigmatising menstruation, and of generating social awareness respondents were asked about the availability of sunlight to dry reusable absorbents. A majority of the respondents did not consider drying reusable absorbents in the sunlight feasible, but a significant number did.

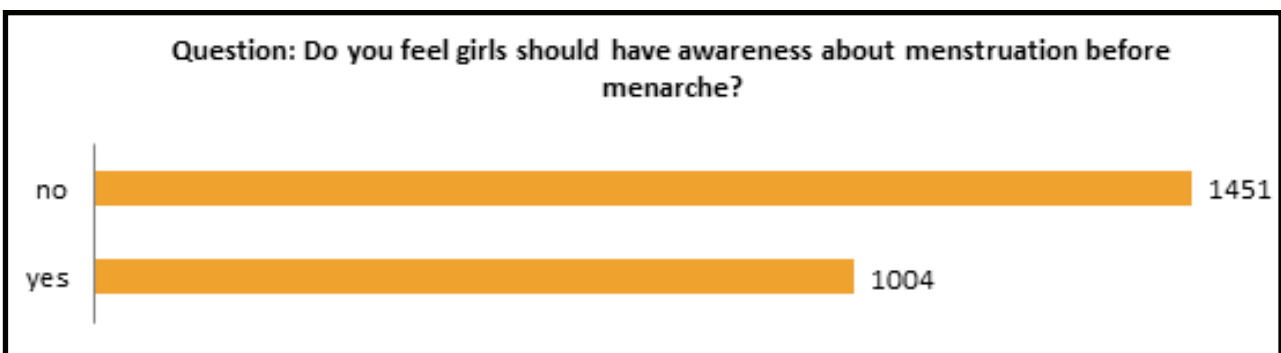


The respondents were asked about the number of times they change the absorbent. A majority of the respondents reported changing 3 times a day.

Lastly, the respondents were asked if they find awareness about menstruation before menarche to be necessary.



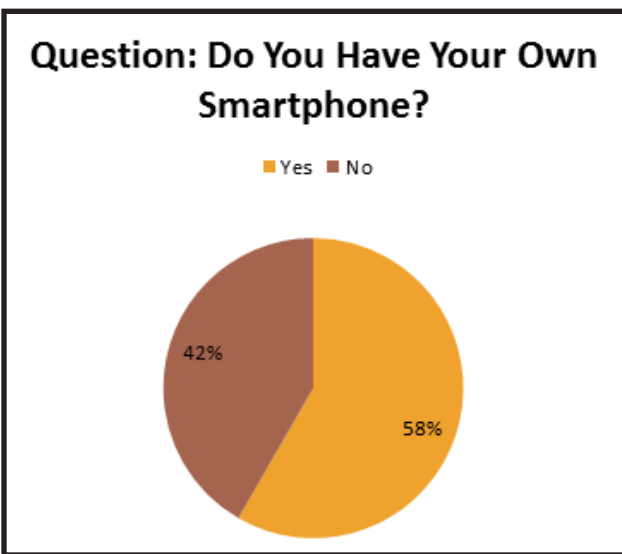
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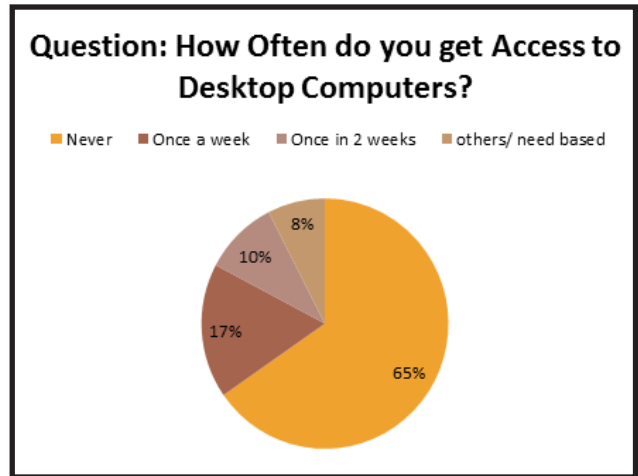
ICT and Internet Access – Uses and Practice

This section of the survey recorded some key parameters in trying to gauge the nature of ICT access and its use among the population.

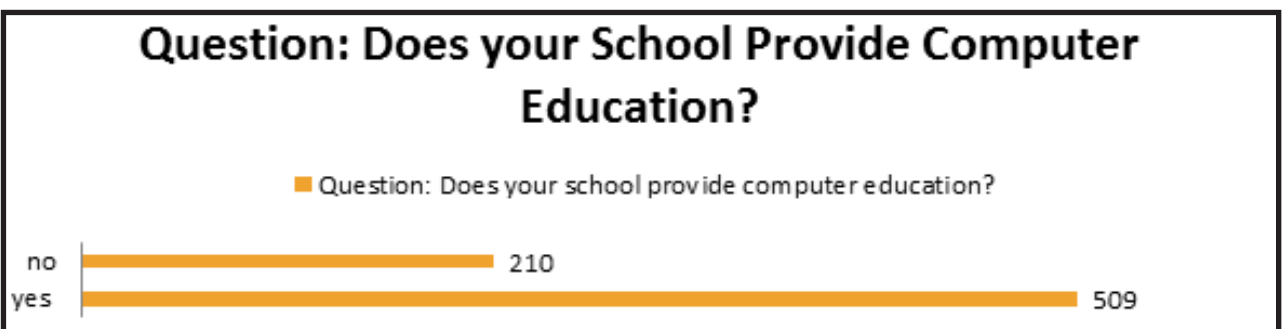
Respondents were asked if they own a personal smartphone. 58% owned a smartphone, 42% did not.



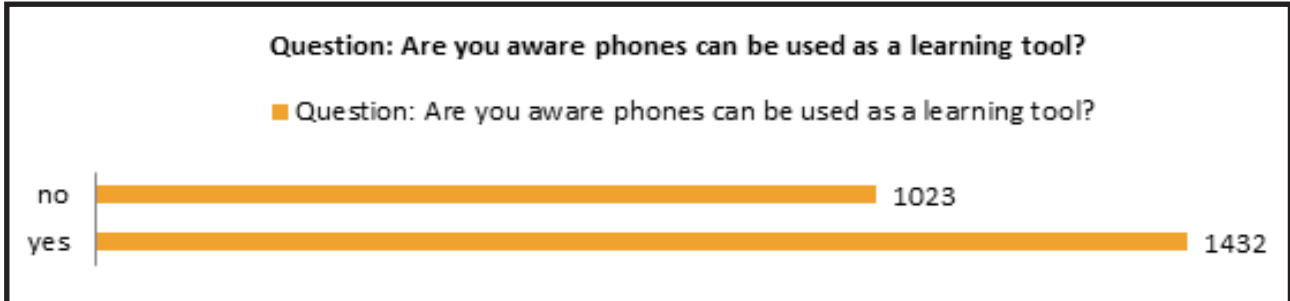
Respondents were asked about their access to a desktop computer. A majority of the respondents reported never using a desktop. Of the ones who have access to a computer, much of them are afforded access via their schools.



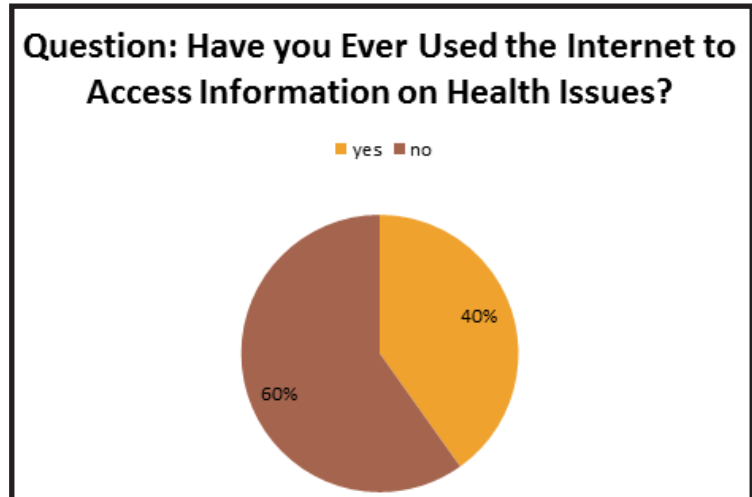
The school-going adolescents were asked if their school provides computer education. A majority of them reported “yes”. However, only 51% (261/509) of these reported accessing the computer once a week.



Respondents were asked whether they are aware that their mobile phone can be used as a learning tool. Of the 42% responding “no”, a sizeable section, 25% are still in school. This indicates towards a possible negative attitude towards mobile phone ownership at the community level.



Respondents were asked if they have used the internet to access information on health.



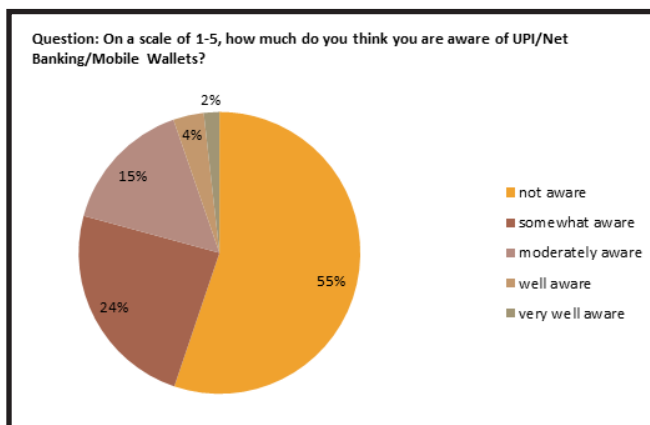
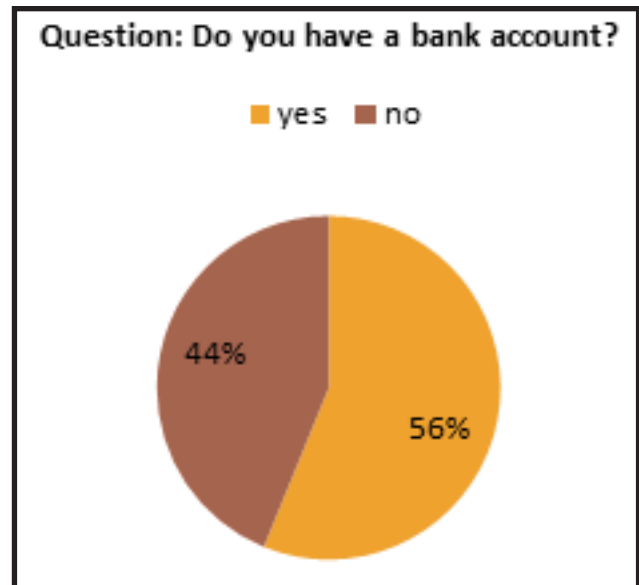
Of the 40% (986/2455) respondents who have used the internet to access information on health issues, 80% reportedly found it useful.



Financial Literacy and Internet Banking

The respondents were asked questions around banking to understand the scope of generating awareness on basic digital banking literacy.

The proportion of respondents with bank accounts was slightly higher than those who did not hold a bank account.



The respondents were asked to self assess on a scale of 1-5 whether they feel sufficiently aware of UPI payments, net banking, and mobile wallets. A majority of them reported not feeling adequately aware of digital banking methods.

The individuals who owned a personal smartphone (1281/2455) were asked if their phone was password protected. Majority 73% (1079/1281) of the individuals had autonomy over who had access to their phones.





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