

# DIGITALDIDI

INNOVATION TO ENSURE  
MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AND  
FOSTER SELF-LEARNING AND  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## ENDLINE STUDY 2023








# CONTENTS

Executive summary	2
Socio-economic Landscape	4
User's Menstrual Health Management Awareness	9
User's general digital use and experience	11
User's financial literacy	14
User's feedback on SmartPad and self-learning components	15
Recommendations	17
Discussion and Conclusion	18



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This report highlights the key findings from the endline survey conducted for the DigitalDidi Project – Innovation to ensure Menstrual hygiene and foster self-learning and entrepreneurship in a total of 10 states – Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The number of respondents was a total of 5,548 individuals of which 39% respondents (2165) surveyed are adolescents aged between 13-20, and 61% (3383) are women aged 20 and above. The survey was conducted by Digital Empowerment Foundation in June 2023. The survey was conducted to assess the degree of access to digital devices and internet, level of 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 (92%) of the respondents were from rural areas.
2. In terms of educational qualifications, 41% respondents were either currently enrolled in, or have studied upto secondary level (class 9-10), 27% had studied till/are currently enrolled in senior secondary (11-12), 2% had diploma, 12% were graduate, 4% were postgraduate. Of the respondents, 14% respondents had either no formal education or had less than secondary level education.
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, 1944 were earning members and 3604 were non earning members.
5. The respondents were asked to self assess if they consider themselves aware of safe practices in regards to menstrual health. 97% responded “yes”, and 3% responded “no”.
6. The respondents were asked if they were aware of discussions on the environmental cost of commercially available disposable pads. Only 4% (209) respondents reported not having 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, reusable pads (37%) like the Smart-Pad and new 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 (61%) was the most dominant method.

9. In an attempt to interpret the stigma around menstruation, and of generating social awareness respondents were asked about the availability of sunlight to dry reusable absorbents. A majority of 94% considered drying reusable absorbents in the sunlight feasible.
10. At the time of endline, 99% respondents found awareness about menstruation before menarche to be necessary for girls.
11. Respondents were asked if they own a personal smartphone. 89% (4912) owned a smartphone, 11% did not.
12. Of the 95% (5271/5548) respondents who have used the internet to access information on health issues, 93% reportedly found it useful.
13. Since the course is digitally administered, the respondents were asked about the barriers faced in accessing the internet. The respondents were asked to select one or more options that apply to them from a predefined list. Cost of data and being involved in household chores are two of the most widely reported barriers to accessing internet.
14. The proportion of respondents with bank accounts was fairly high at 96% (5315) respondents who held a bank account.
15. 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 feeling adequately aware of digital banking methods.
16. The 122 respondents who did not consider the SmartPad a good alternative menstrual hygiene product were asked about the prohibitive issues with the SmartPad. Issues with the quality of SmartPad as an absorbent (24/122), and personal preference for disposable pads (49/122) were 2 of the most widely reported issues



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE

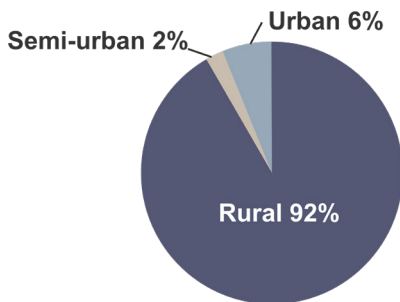
The survey was conducted in a total of 10 states – Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The table below lists the state-wise breakup of the number of respondents.

Sr. No.	Name of State	Number of respondents
1.	Assam	129
2.	Bihar	490
3.	Chhattisgarh	221
4.	Haryana	121
5.	Jharkhand	419
6.	Madhya Pradesh	432
7.	Odisha	317
8.	Rajasthan	920
9.	Uttar Pradesh	557
10.	West Bengal	1942
<b>Total</b>		<b>5548</b>

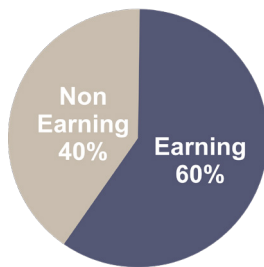
The economic geographical region of the respondents was captured within the categories of rural, semi-urban, and urban. The respondents are mostly from rural areas, with 111 individuals from semi-urban areas and 349 from urban areas.

Further, 60% of all respondents covered in the endline survey were earning members of their family while 40% were not earning at the time.

### ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

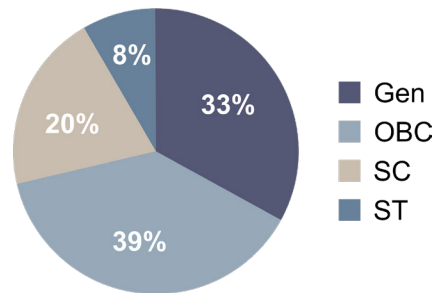


### EARNING STATUS



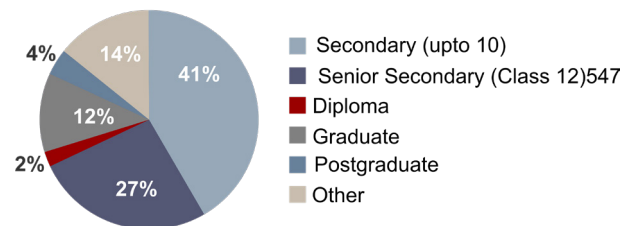
The caste location of the respondents was captured within the categories of General, OBC, ST, and SC. At 2136 of 5548 or 39%, OBC respondents form the largest share of respondents followed by General (1828), SC (1116), and ST (468).

### CASTE COMPOSITION



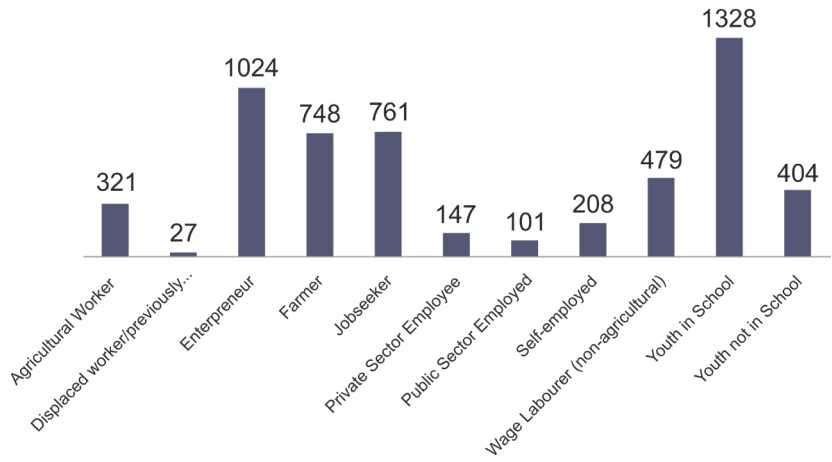
In terms of educational qualifications of the respondents, respondents who are educated upto class 10 level (2303) form the largest group of respondents. At 785, the second largest respondent group is covered under 'others' – these are respondents who have no formal education or have primary level and less than secondary level education. A sizeable number of respondents have attained education to the level of graduate (657), post graduate (215), with some holding a diploma (114) as their last educational qualification.

### EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS



In terms of employment status, the three most represented respondent groups among the 11 groups that were categorised are youth attending school, entrepreneurs, and jobseekers; public sector employees and private sector employees were some of the least represented groups in this survey along with displaced workers or those who had recently lost their job. A complete break-up of the respondents by their employment is presented in the chart below.

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS



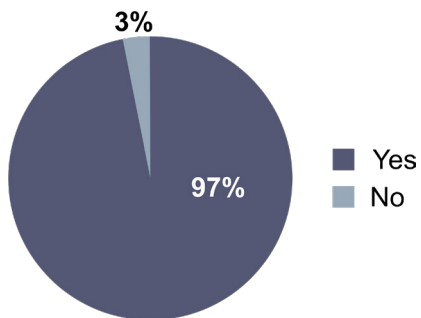


# USER'S MENSTRUAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT AWARENESS

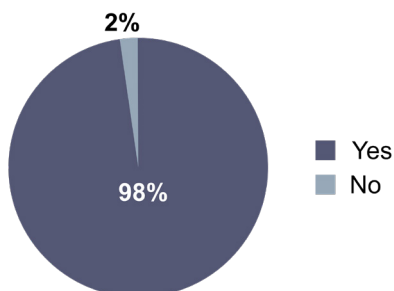
*This section of the survey records the beneficiaries' responses to questions regarding general awareness of menstrual health and their use of absorbents at the end of the project.*

The respondents were asked to self-report if they felt knowledgeable about basic safe practices regarding menstrual health, and the environmental costs of using commercially available disposable pads. Only 165 individuals and 99 individuals of the total 5548 respondents did not feel adequately knowledgeable on the two sub-topics and as such, majority of the beneficiaries were now made aware of these topics.

## WHETHER AWARE OF SAFE PRACTICES REGARDING MENSTRUAL HEALTH

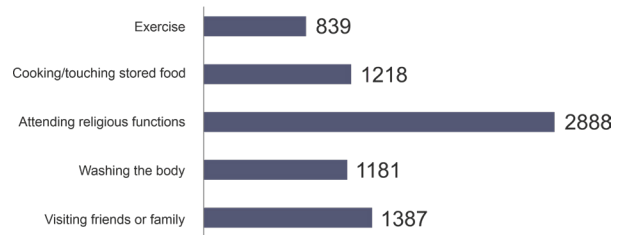


## WHETHER AWARE OF DISCUSSIONS AROUND THE ENVIRONMENTAL COST OF USING COMMERCIALY AVAILABLE DISPOSABLE PADS



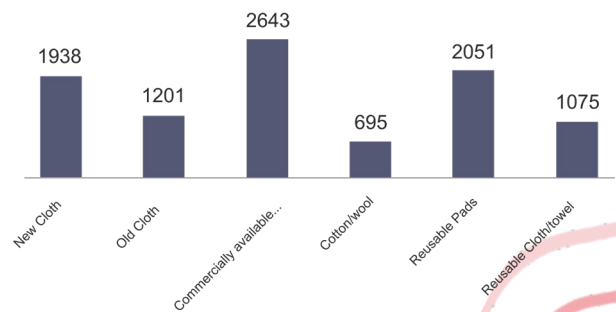
The activities avoided by the respondents on account of periods was recoded on along a predefined list of 5 options. Fewer respondents avoided exercising, bathing, cooking at the time of the endline survey.

## ACTIVITIES AVOIDED ON ACCOUNT OF PERIODS



In terms of choice of absorbent, disposable or commercially available pads were still the leading choice of absorbent among the respondents. Reusable pads like the SmartPad was the second most sought after option among the beneficiaries.

## CHOICE OF ABSORBENT



The beneficiaries were asked if they were allowed to dry their reusable absorbent in the sun. Due to the prevalent social norms where menstruation is associated to shame and social stigma, many individuals find it unfeasible to dry their reusable absorbent in the sun. At the time of the endline, there were significantly less instances of the practice, with 94% respondents reporting to not face any difficulty in drying their reusable absorbent in the sun.



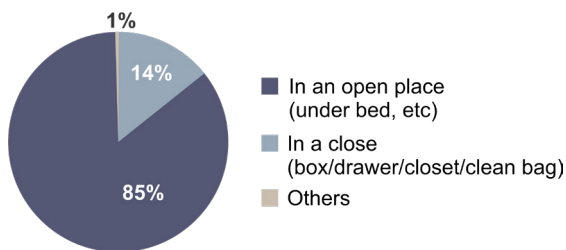
**QUESTION: IF USING REUSABLE ABSORBENT, ARE YOU ALLOWED TO DRY THEM IN THE SUN?**



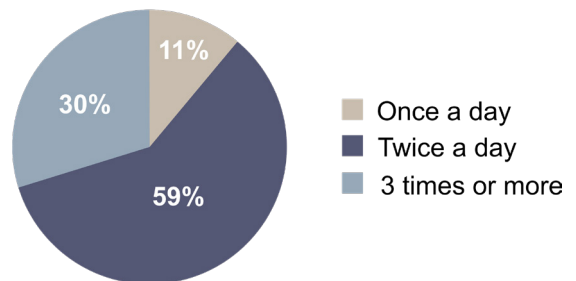
The respondents were asked where they store their reusable absorbent. At 85%, majority if the respondents reported storing it in a closed space, 24 individuals who chose 'others' reported unwilling to try reusable absorbents.

At the time of the endline survey, 59% of the 5548 respondents or a sizeable proportion of the beneficiaries reported adopting the healthy practice of changing their pad 3 times or more in a day.

**QUESTION: HOW DO YOU STORE YOUR REUSABLE ABSORBENT?**



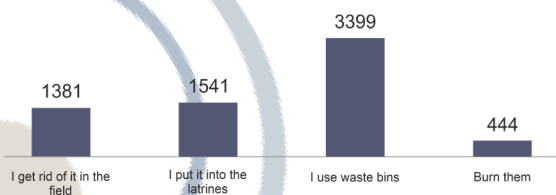
**QUESTION: HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU CHANGE YOUR PAD IN A DAY?**



When asked about the mode of disposal for their absorbent, 61% reported using waste bins. However, at 28%, a sizeable proportion of respondents admitted to improperly disposing their absorbents in the toilets. A complete break-up of the responses is presented below.

It can be considered a success on part of the project that an overwhelming majority of the respondents now supported that there is no harm in educating young girls on menstruation before they attain menarche.

**CHOICE OF DISPOSAL**



**QUESTION: DO YOU FEEL GIRLS SHOULD HAVE AWARENESS ABOUT MENSTRUATION BEFORE MENARCHE**

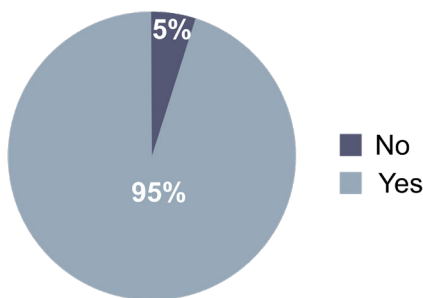


# USER'S GENERAL DIGITAL USE AND EXPERIENCE

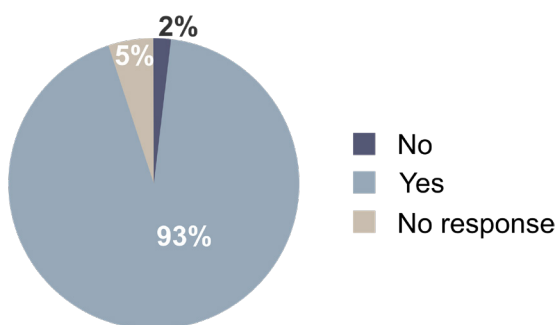
*This section of the survey recorded the nature of accessibility of internet, digital devices, and the chatbot assisted self learning programme.*

At the time of endline, 95% or 5271 respondents reported using the internet to find need based information on health related topics.

## WHETHER RESPONDENT MADE USE OF INTERNET TO ACCESS INFORMATION ON HEALTH ISSUES



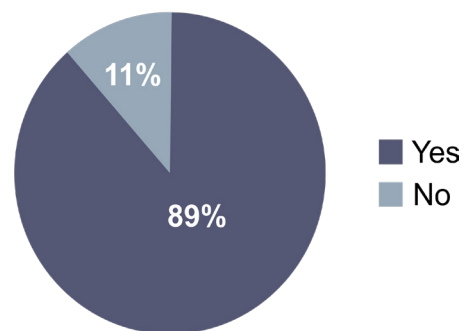
## WHETHER INTERNET SEARCH RESULTS WERE FOUND TO BE USEFUL



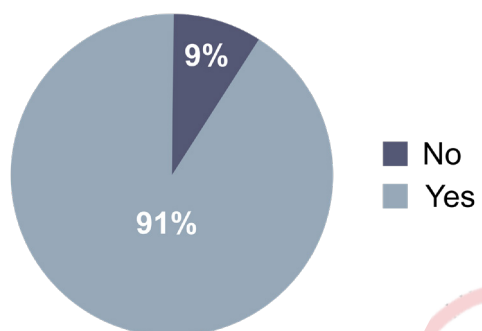
4912 of the 5548 individuals owned a smartphone at the time of the endline. Very often women have been allowed access to smartphones later than most other members. While we cannot authoritatively claim that our project helped provide the necessary intervention to ensure more women had their own phone, awareness on the possibilities from using a smartphone may have

helped advocate for greater smartphone ownership and meaningful use among the beneficiaries. Further, at 514 only 9% respondents reported not putting a password on their phone. 91% respondents were now aware of the benefits of securing their phones with a password.

## OWNERSHIP OF PERSONAL SMARTPHONE



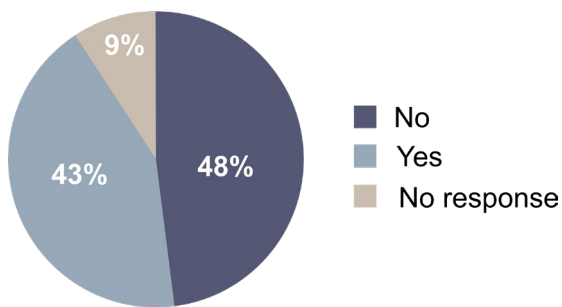
## WHETHER PHONE IS PASSWORD PROTECTED



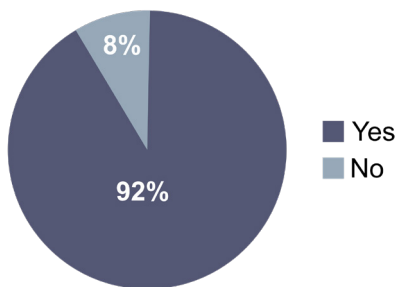
The respondents were asked to report if they were required to share their phone password. 43% reported having to share their passwords while 48% did not have to share their password.

The respondents were asked if they are able to navigate the settings section of their smartphone on their own—being able to change privacy and accessibility configurations on one's smartphone allows for greater chances of being able to make meaningful use of the device as well troubleshoot where need be.

### WHETHER REQUIRED TO SHARE PASSWORDS

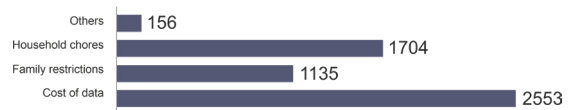


### WHETHER ABLE TO NAVIGATE THE SETTINGS SECTION IN THE SMARTPHONE



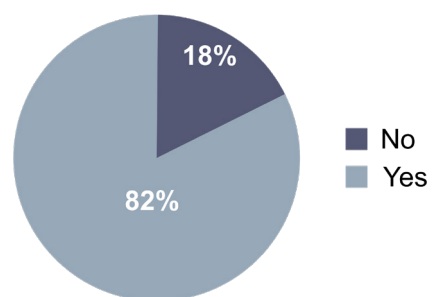
Since the course is digitally administered, the respondents were asked about the barriers faced in accessing the internet. The respondents were asked to select one or more options that apply to them from a predefined list. Cost of data and being involved in household chores are two of the most widely reported barriers to accessing internet. The 156 respondents who selected 'Others' option, the listed reasons were largely network problems; time constraints due to studies, or work; and lack of availability of the shared phone. The complete break-up of their responses is presented below:

### % REPORTED BARRIERS IN ACCESSING INTERNET

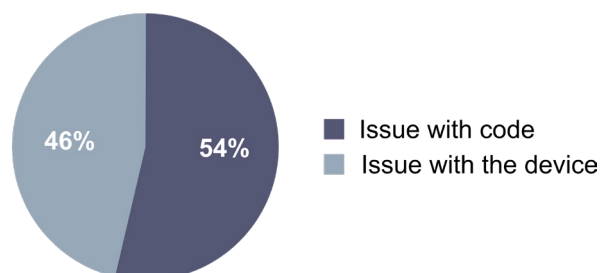


The respondents' experience in scanning the QR code was recorded. The 978 respondents (18%) who reported not being able to scan the QR code effectively were assisted in joining the training program via manually filling in the link to the course on Telegram.

### WHETHER ABLE TO JOIN THE TRAINING PROGRAM ON TELEGRAM BY SCANNING QR CODE

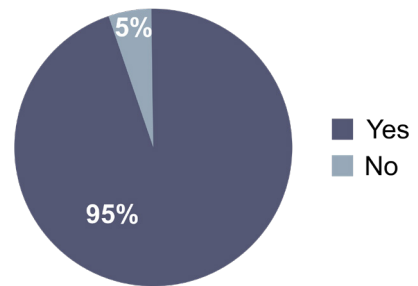


### NATURE OF PROBLEMS FACED IN SCANNING THE QR CODE

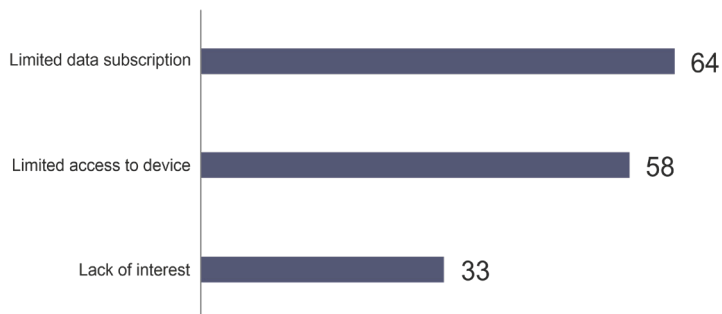


The setbacks faced by the respondents in finishing the training program on Telegram was surveyed. The respondents were further asked to select one or more issues they faced in finishing the chatbot course. Limited data subscription (64%) was one of the prime issues reported in finishing the course, followed by limited access to device (58%). Of the total respondents, 5% were unable to finish the course. A complete break-up of the findings by percentage is given in the charts below.

### WHETHER ABLE TO FINISH THE TRAINING PROGRAM ON TELEGRAM



### % REPORTED BY ISSUES REPORTED IN FINISHING THE CHATBOT COURSE

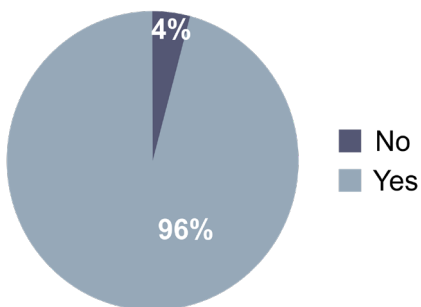


# USER'S FINANCIAL LITERACY

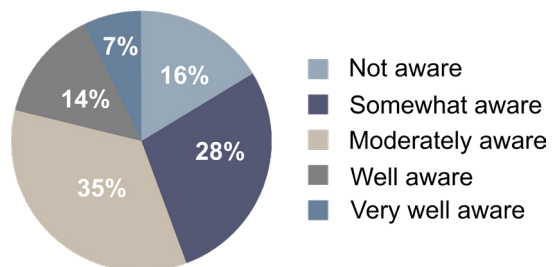
At the time of endline, 95% or 5271 respondents reported using the internet to find need based information on health related topics.

By the time of the endline survey, at 16% or 904 individuals, significantly lesser number of beneficiaries felt unaware of their ability to use digital payments.

## OWNERSHIP OF BANK ACCOUNT

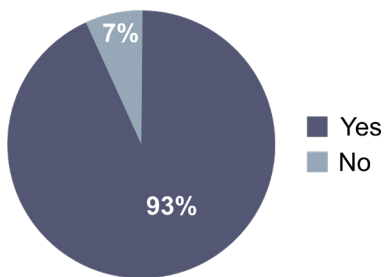


## QUESTION: ON A SCALE OF 1-5, HOW DO YOU THINK YOU ARE AWARE OF UPI/NET BANKING/MOBILE WALLETS?

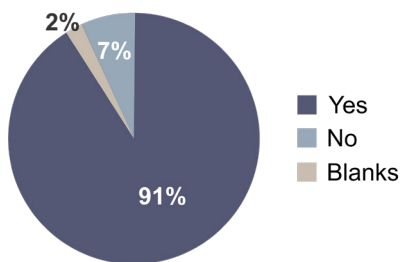


# USER'S FEEDBACK ON SMART-PAD AND SELF-LEARNING COMPONENTS

QUESTION: HAVE YOU TRIED THE SMARTPAD AS A MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCT?

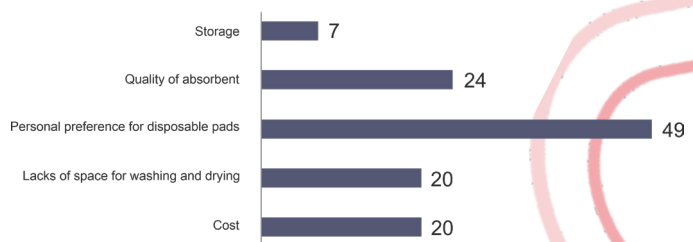


QUESTION: DO YOU CONSIDER THE SMARTPAD A GOOD ALTERNATIVE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCT?



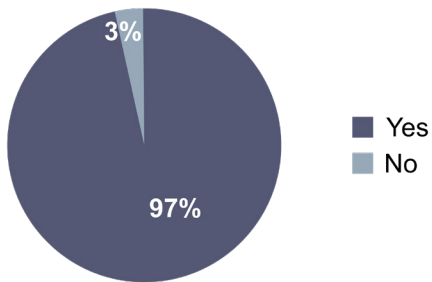
93% or 5171 of the 5548 respondents in the survey had tried the SmartPad as a menstrual hygiene product. Of these, 5049 respondents considered the SmartPad a good menstrual hygiene product. The 122 respondents who did not consider the SmartPad a good alternative menstrual hygiene product were asked about the prohibitive issues with the SmartPad. Issues with the quality of SmartPad as an absorbent (24/122), and personal preference for disposable pads (49/122) were 2 of the most widely reported issues. A breakup of their responses is presented in the chart below:

QUESTION: WHAT ARE SOME PROHIBITIVE ISSUES WITH THE SMARTPAD AS MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCT?

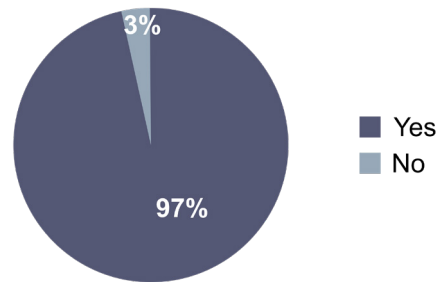


The respondents had largely found the financial education component as well as entrepreneurial activities component of the chatbot useful.

**QUESTION: WAS THE CHATBOT USEFUL IN PROVIDING INFORMATION ON THE FINANCIAL EDUCATION COMPONENTS?**



**QUESTION: WAS THE CHATBOT USEFUL IN PROVIDING INFORMATION ON ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES?**





# RECOMMENDATIONS

- *There is scope for community mobilisation towards the importance of leisure time for women, especially homemakers, to be able to use time to pick up a hobby or a new skill, or to be able to rest.*
- *Mere internet connection does not ensure equitable benefits and gains for all sections of the society equally. With the general increase in volume of content available, the beneficiaries need to be acquainted with pockets of curated content which have the capacity to increase their odds of converting their access to internet to improve their life chances and the list of choices available to them while making decisions.*
- *Awareness of waste management best practices can be of benefit- some respondents admitted to disposing absorbents inadequately. Beneficiaries should be given the option to “study up” where they benefit from exposure visits and watching documentaries of well-planned establishments to be able to situate the importance of waste segregation, composting, recycling, etc.*
- *Digital banking and extortion scams are evolving at a rapid pace in India. It can be of help to initiate the beneficiaries into the methods used by scammers such as phone cloning apps, etc. so that they are able to identify a digital payments scam underway and withhold sensitive information.*



# DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

- *While a social development initiative may be a great initiation for young girls and women towards de-stigmatising menstruation, for a community it is a cumulative process which may take longer than the intervention effected by the duration of the project. The survey captured the activities avoided by the respondents on account of menstruating under the 5 categories of exercise, cooking/touching stored food, attending religious functions, washing the body, and visiting friends or family. The proportion of respondents who reported each of the categories has largely remained unchanged, with least number of respondents avoiding exercise during their periods and highest proportion of respondents avoiding attending religious functions.*
- *Disposable/commercially available pads remain the dominant choice of absorbent due to its ease of handling and easy availability across various price-points. During the course of the project the favourability of reusable pads had gone up by 37%, but changing and managing a reusable absorbent during the day proves a hassle if the individual is not at home. There is scope for making people aware of other marginally sustainable menstrual hygiene products such as menstrual cups, menstrual discs, tampons, etc.*
- *Waste management in general has a lot of scope of work in moving towards sustainability. While disposing off waste into dustbins is treated as the correct way to dispose waste, vast areas within a city as well as villages in India remain underserved or unserved by the public waste collection of measures. As such, driving the waste out of one's sight begins to take precedence often leading people to resort to burning and burying waste.*
- *Access to the internet and ICTs is lower among girls and women in comparison to average population. Limited data subscription and access to device were two main factors leading to 6% of the respondents dropping out from the course.*





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