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#### CONTENTS

Sr. No.	Title	Page No
1.	The Role of Local Self-Government during Covid-19: The Experience of Kerala Nithya N.R.	1-3
2	Quality of Work Life towards Employees of Private Management Schools and Colleges-A Case Study of Vijayapur Mallappa.S. Khodnapur	4-8
3	An Empirical Study on Rewards and Job Satisfaction: Evidence from the SMIORE (Deogiri) Thotya Naik V, Pavitra R Alur	9-11
4	Employee Motivation – Modern Creating Techniques Dr. Shrikant L. Patil	12-14
5	Addressing issues of Urbanization and commercial activity through Sufism spread in Indi region Ravindra Chavan, Dr. K.L.N. Murthy	15-17
6	Apologue of Epiphany Smt. Poornima S V	18-19
7	Impact of Constructivist Approach in Mathematics Learning Dr B Y Khasnis	20-21
8	Exploring Women Buying Behaviour of Online Apparels: A Brief Review Kusuma M, Dr. J K Raju	22-24
9	Impact of Violence on Reproductive Health Dr.Vinay K.U	25-28
10	Protection of Devadasi Women's and Indian Laws Jakkavva B Wathar, Prof.R.Sunandamma	29-31
11	A Study on Customer Perception and Satisfaction towards Union Bank Services with Reference to Bengaluru District, Karnataka Dr. Kanagaraju. P, Ganesha B	32-34
12	Perception regarding Accreditation Anil.N, Subramanya S.V	35-38
13	Performance Analysis of Selected Large CapEquity Funds during Pandemic: A Study of India Parashuram Mohansing Devi	39-42
14	Evolution of Data Analytics and Decision Making Ms. Nithya S M, Dr. R. Shashidhar	43-49
15	An Economic Analysis of Maize Production - A Case Study of Madhugiri Taluk Dr. L. Manju Bhargavi	50-54
16	Factors Responsible For Consumer Behaviour towards Disposal of Plastic Goods Mahalakshmi N	55-60
17	A Case Study On Financial Stability Of Nestle India Ltd. Rekha.B. N	61-67
18	Agri-Preneurs: A Case Study of Tumakuru Farmers Dr. Mamatha K R.	68-73
19	Case Study of Financial Inclusion through Socialfinancing Institutions Davalasa Pinjar	74-78
20	Study on Stress Management among Bank Employees in Tumakuru District Ramesh. T. Ballolli	79-81
21	The Impact of Covid-19 on Indian Economy Megharaja.B.L	82-84
22	COVID-19: Impact on Employment and Labor Prakash.H.B	85-87

	Sustainable Development and Environmental Issues	
23	Comparative Study of Customers' Buying Behavior towards Insurance Products Dr. Devaki M, Ramesha GK	88-92
24	Assessment of Social Health in Elderly Dr. Venkataravanappa	93-96
25	The Cultural Interface & Structural Changes - With Special Reference to Architecture around Vijayapura Region Hema. L. Jainapur , Dr. Suma. S. Nirni	97-99
26	Role of Education in Women Empowerment Asociological Study Dr. Jahida S Makandar	100-102
27	Role of NGOs and Empowerment Women Dr. M.H.Hullur	103-104
28	Socio-Economic Problems of Devadasi Children: A Case Study of Belgaum District Smt. Kavita H. Kulkarni	105-108
29	The Role of Indian Federal Judiciary during the Pandamic. Dr. Hanumanthappa D. G., B. G. Patil	109-110
30	Impact of theatre on Social and Political Sensitivity Sharana Gouda , Prof. N. Shantha Naik	111-114
31	Evolution of Irrigation System in Kolar Region during Vijayanagar Rulers K.N. Srinivasa Gowda, Dr. K.L.N. Murthy	115-117
32	Impact of Climate Change on Hill side Agriculture: A Study on the Western Ghats and Coastal Region in Karnataka Jagadeesh , Ponnaluru Srinivasa Sasdhar	118-122
33	Role of Social Media in Marketing of Handloom Products Maruti. R. Joshi	123-126
34	Ashoka's Dhamma and Akbar's Din-I-Ilahi: A Comparative Study Santhosh Kumar C	127-130
35	Rainfall Characteristics in Nashik District of Maharashtra State, India Dr. Dilip Akaram Gade	131-134
36	Ecocriticism and Environmental Education in India Dr. Nidhi Mishra	135-136
37	Impact of Rainfall on Cotton Crop Yield Production in Parbhani District (MH) Kachare Namdev V., Dr. M. V. Suryawanshi	137-141
38	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act – A Gender Neutral Indian Law for Sustainable Development <b>Prof. T. Sita Kumari, Kedara Gouri Avula</b>	142-145
39	Global Pandemic, Organizational Performance and Modifying the Future of HR Practices Prof. Neha Sharma	146-148
40	An Analytical Study of Shelter and Well-Being in Mandya District Dr. Ruby Sinha	149-153
41	The Study Decadal Growth of Population in Osmanabad District Dr. Kondewar Smita Umakantrao, Dr. Kotalwar Rajeshwar Balaji	154-157
42	Geographical Study Of Regional Disparity In Levels Of Economic Development In Rural Areas Of Sangli District <b>Prof. (Dr) S. B. Gaikwad, Mr. Amit Mahadev Mali</b>	158-163
43	Land Use Efficiency in Selected Village in Man Tahsil: A Geographical Analysis Soban S. R., A.J.Barakade	164-166
44	An Analysis Of Tribal Sex Ratio Trend In Nandurbar District Of Maharashtra Arvind A. Badgujar	167-170
45	A case study on menstrual waste disposal techniques used by women: A sustainable approach Radhika Awasthi, Dr. Priyanka Suryavanshi	171-175

	Sustainable Development and Environmental Issues	
46	Distribution of primary education facilities according to rural and urban geographical features of the settlement and study of Scheduled Caste Women's participation in education – A case Study of Dhule District(Maharashtra). Sanjay B. Ghodase	176-178
47	The Transition from Traditional to Digital Using "Rearviewmirrorism,"convey stories from the televised Mahabharat and Ramayan through rap songs Dr. Yatindra Ingle	179-181
48	Impact Of Covid-19 On Various Sectors Of Indian Economy And Its Repercussions (Present And Future) Sruthi S	182-185
49	A Critical Study of the West Asian Economy and Strategies for Sustainable Development Dr. Hassan J., Dr. Manu T.	186-191
50	An Analysis of online Education and their issues Nadaf Saidasab Muktumsab Dr. Sonia .P.Rajput	192-193
51	Trend and Theories of Migration and its inferences in International Migration from Kerala Dr. Shajila Beevi S	194-196
52	Decent work for internal Migrants in Kerala VIPIN A <sup>1</sup> Dr. R Rajendran <sup>2</sup>	197-199
53	Health, well being and challenges faced by adolescents Sija, Dr. R Rajendran	200-202
54	Impact of Irrigation on levels of Agricultural Technology of Western Maharashtra: A Geographical analysis Dr. Chandrakant Narhari Kale	203-207
55	Natural Resources Management And Sustainable Tourism Development In Tribal Area Nashik District <b>Mr. Laxman Suresh Shendge, Dr. Deepak Narayan Thakare</b>	208-210
56	Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis Dr. Kritika, Poonam Verma	211-215
57	A study on digital marketing and government interventions in Rural Areas Dr. L. Marulasiddappa	216-220
58	Impact of Irrigation Systems on Agricultural Development: A Study of Satara District (Maharashtra) Mr. Vishal S. Gholap, Dr. D.B. Nalawade	221-226
59	Right to Occupational Health and Safety in Plantation Sector: - A Critical Appraisal Chitta Ranjan Gogoi, Prof. Sudhansu Ranjan Mohapatra	227-231
60	Conscientious Study On Women Empowerment: Herassessment On Decision Making Dr. Reshma	232-234
61	Radio Programmes On FM Channels: A Comparative Study Radio Mirchi and Red FM In Hubli - Dharawad City Mahesh Walwekar, Dr M Gangadharappa	235-237
62	Attributes of 21st CenturyPolitical Leadership Shrikant Muchandi, Dr. Y.S. Balavantagol	238-241
63	Savitribai Phule's Enlightening Contributions to Indian Society Vidyashree G.Kolkar , Prof. Y. S. Balavantagol	242-244
64	Sustainable Development and Environmental Issues in India <b>Prof. Dr. Nita Rameshwar Kalaskar</b>	245-249
65	History Writing: Other (Other's) Perspective Dr. Remya V. P.	250-252
66	Impact of Information Technology on Rural Development Dr. Caroline David	253-256

'Akshar Wangmay' UGC Care Listed, International Research Journal, ISSN: 2229-4929, October 2021, Special Issue, Volume-IV Sustainable Development and Environmental Issues

67	Energy policy of India Mr. Dattatraya Shivaji Thorat	257-258
68	India: Issues and Priorities for Agriculture Krishna B. Patre	259-262
69	Trend and Spatial Distribution of Growth Rate of Livestock in Satara District: A Geographical Analysis <b>Mr. Mali U.H., Prof. Dr. Lokhande T. N.</b>	263-267
70	Interdependence Between Academic Performance and Physical Capability Dr. Sunil D. Chavan	268-269

## A case study on menstrual waste disposal techniques used by women: A sustainable approach

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#### Abstract

The correct disposal of old menstrual products is still lacking in many countries around the world. Most countries have developed techniques to manage their faeces and urine wastes, but women discard their sanitary pads and other menstrual articles in domestic solid waste or garbage bins, which eventually become part of solid waste, due to a lack of menstrual management practises around the world. Menstruating women in India are unable to manage their menstrual hygiene due to a shortage of sanitary pad disposal bins and hand washing facilities in public bathrooms. In urban places, current disposable menstruation products are disposed of by flushing them down toilets and throwing them away. In rural areas, however, there are a variety of choices for disposing of menstrual material, including burying, burning, throwing them in the trash, or using pit latrines. In rural areas, reusable and non-commercial sanitary items, such as reusable pads or cloths, are commonly used by women. As a result, they produce less menstrual waste than women in metropolitan areas who rely on commercial disposable pads. The present study focuses on the menstrual waste disposal techniques used by a 82 school girl studying in the government schools of the Lucknow city.

Keywords: flushing, burying, disposal bins, menstruation products

#### Introduction

Menstruation and menstrual behaviour are still hampered by a host of societal, cultural, and religious restraints, which make effective menstrual hygiene practises difficult.

Because many girls in many parts of the country, especially in rural areas, are unprepared for and ignorant of menstruation, they face a variety of difficulties and challenges at home, in school, and at work. According to our review of the literature, it is found that having little, erroneous, or incomplete understanding about menstruation is a substantial hindrance to managing personal and menstrual hygiene by the females.

Education on menstrual health and sanitation is needed, the issue of waste generated as a result of improper sanitary napkin disposal is always brought up. India's current sanitary napkin disposal practises would only exacerbate the waste problem in the future, a comprehensive solution is required. With 350 million menstruation women in India, and assuming that 35% of women use sanitary napkins on a monthly basis, sanitary napkin waste amounts to around 200 tonnes per day.

#### Approaches for the disposable of sanitary aids

1. Sanitary product makers should use environmentally friendly materials to reduce soil and water pollution and speed up the decomposition process.

2.. Providing adolescent girls and women with menstrual management advice is a crucial step.

3. Providing adolescent girls and women with menstruation management advice is an important step. Menstrual hygiene management should be a component of every student's education.

4. Institutions that do research on the management of menstrual wastes should be granted financial assistance.

5. Scientific study on the best disposal methods for sanitary pads and other menstrual products should be encouraged

6. Menstrual products should be distributed free of charge at schools and educational institutions.

7. Toilets must be planned and developed with girls and women in mind.

8. Install semi-automatic sanitary napkin vending machines in restrooms that are operated by inserting a coin.

9. A separate collecting system for menstrual wastes should be established without jeopardising women's privacy and dignity.

10. Menstrual waste should be collected using specific sanitary dispensers.

11. Enough space should be provided for washing, cleaning private parts and hands, as well as changing or dealing with damaged clothing.

12. Water, toilet paper, trash cans, and a sink to wash menstrual products must all be available.

13. To keep the toilets free of flies, insects, and bad odours, dustbins should be covered with lids and emptied on a regular basis.

14. Covered containers and dustbins have the advantage of concealing garbage from view. They are placed in a location that provides privacy.

15. The cleaners should be equipped with gloves and adequate safety equipment so that they are not exposed to pathogenic organisms or dangerous fumes.

16. The government should enact new guidelines for the safe disposal and treatment of menstrual wastes, similar to those already in place for solid and biological wastes.

18. School budgets should be allocated to assist studies on menstrual hygiene management.

19. Efforts should be made in collaboration (e.g., trash bins).

20. Incinerators are a preferable option for disposal, but they must be operated in a regulated atmosphere to avoid dangerous gas emissions harming the environment and persons around.

#### Sustainable Approach for Disposing Menstrual Wastes

- 1. Improved Waste Disposal Techniques: Menstrual waste should be collected in specific bins that are covered. For proper disposal of these products, manufacturers should provide disposal bags with color-coded instructions. These bags should be freely distributed by schools and institutions. Menstrual waste should not be disposed of in the trash. Before throwing away pads, they should be properly wrapped in newspaper. It's also safe for rag pickers because it doesn't expose them to disease-causing germs.
- 2. Products that are biodegradable: Companies that make commercial sanitary goods must make products with fewer chemical and plastic content. Bamboo fibre pads, banana fibre pads, water hyacinth pads, and sea sponge pads should all be encouraged.
- 3. Incinerators: Incinerators that are operated in accordance with environmentally acceptable criteria produce less pollutants. To emit fewer hazardous gases, they should be run at a certain temperature of roughly 800°C. They should be placed in schools, institutions, and slum regions, as well as in the community.
- 4. Cloth Pads That Can Be Used Again: These reusable cotton pads are a better choice because they contain less chemicals and plastic. As a result, they decompose quickly in comparison to other commercial items.
- 5. Incinerators made of clay or cemented: The usage of clay and cement incinerators by the is a positive step forward in menstrual hygiene management. This incinerator, termed "Ashudhinashak" by a woman named "Swati," burns many sanitary napkins at once without emitting any smoke. Rural women embrace this environmentally friendly and low-cost invention.

#### Materials and Methods

Approximately 82 adolescent girls are included in the study. Data were collected after taking consent of all the girls those who were willing. Data was collected online before and after the intervention programme. Those girls who were fit to the inclusion criteria & willing to participate had filled the google forms. Before filling the questionnaire proforma was explained to them.

Study type: An epidemiological study was conducted by Cross sectional studymethod.

**Study population:** All adolescent girls enrolled in the schools of Lucknow city & fit to theinclusion criteria were included in the study.

Inclusion criteria: Unmarried, non- pregnant, non- lactating adolescent girls

Age 13 - 19 years

**Exclusion criteria:** Not willing to give consent

Married, pregnant, lactating adolescent girl

**Data collection:** For the pilot study a self-structured structured questionnaire was used. Care was taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality. The pre-testedquestionnaire was administered under supervision of the investigatorto prevent the participants from sharing responses. The semi-structured questionnaire includes topics relating to knowledgeregarding menstruation, source of information regarding menstruationand hygiene practice during menstruation. Following data collection, queries from the participants relating to menstrual and reproductive health were clarified by the investigator.

**Data Analysis** Datawas reported in the form of descriptive statistics. Statistical analysis as done by using frequency

Table 1

S.No	Items	Pre (n=82)		Pe	ost(n=82)
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Have you heard of period absorbents?	23 (28.04)	59(71.95)	71(86.58)	11(13.41)

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	63(76.82)	19(23.17)	77(93.90)	05(6.09)
Do you use codes for				
menstruation?	09(10.97)	73(89.02)	11(13.41)	71(86.58)
Were you prepared for				
the onset of	07(8.53)	75(91.46)	54(65.85)	28(34.14)
menstruation?				
Do you know about the				
types of absorbent	57(69.51)	25(30.48)	61(74.39)	21(25.60)
materials available in				
the local market?				

S.No	Items	Pre (n=82) (%)	Post (n=82) (%)
2.	What absorbent would you prefer to you		
	use, if you could choose?		
	Menstrual cups	00	00
	Tampons	00	00
	Menstrual sponge	00	00
	Sanitary napkins	35(42.68)	46(56.09)
	Reusable cotton pads	35(42.68)	18(21.95)
	Biodegradable sanitary pads	12(14.63)	18(21.95)

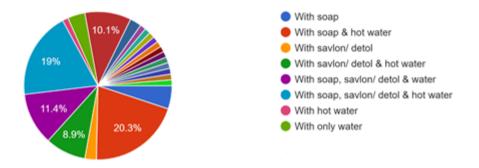
S.No	PRACTICE LEVEL (n=82)     Pre (n=82)       Yes/No(%)				Pre (n=82) Yes/No(%)
3.	Do you use reusable absorbent materials?	28(34.14)	54( 65.85)	66( 80.48)	16( 19.51 )
4.	Do you use disposable absorbent materials sometimes?	28( 34.14)	54( 65.85 )	66( 80.48)	16( 19.51)

5.	What do you do with used disposable materials in school?	Pre (n=82) Yes/No(%)		Post (n=82) Yes/No(%)	
	i.Wrap It Up and throw in dustbin	21(25.60)	61(74.39)	57(69.51)	25(30.48)
	ii.Wrap It Up and keep in bag	34(41.46)	48( 58.53 )	76(92.68)	06(7.31)
	iii.Throw in dustbin without wrap	42(51.21)	40( 48.78 )	18( 21.95 )	64(78.04)

S.No	ITEMS	Pre (n=82) Yes/No(%)			ost (n=82) es/No(%)
6.	Burn it (rural areas and peri-	11(13.41)	71(86.58)	11(13.41)	71(86.58)
	urban areas)				
7.	Throw them unwrapped into	03(3.65)	79(96.34)	03(3.65)	79(96.34)
	fields, rooftops, etc.				
8.	Wrap them in paper/ plastic bag and throwing them outside	58(70.73)	24(29.26)	74(90.24)	08( 9.75)
9.	Drying, wrap in paper/plastic bag and throw in dustbins (mostly non-rural)	16(19.51)	66(80.48)	12( 14.63 )	70(85.36)
10.	Burry them for de-composting	11(13.41)	71(86.58)	11(13.41)	71(86.58)

11.	Throw them in latrine / toilets	56(68.29)	26(31.70)	45( 54.87)	37(45.12)
12.	Using incinerators or special	00(00)	82(100)	00(00)	82(100)
	disposal dustbins (community or				
	school level)				
13.	Municipal waste management /	00(00)	82(100)	00(00)	82(100)
	burning in health clinics (more				
	urban)				

How do you clean/ wash period cloth



#### **Discussion:**

In the education intervention programme, a pre and post data was collected form the adolescent girls About 90.24% adolescent girls Wrap used sanitary napkins in paper/ plastic bag and then they throw them outside. Whereas, 86.58 % adolescent girls burry them for de-composting. About 45.12% throw them in latrine / toilets. About 30.48 % adolescent girls Wrap It Up and throw in dustbin. About 7.31 %Wrap It Up and keep in bag and about 78.04% throw in the dustbin without wrapping this can be due to the pattern in the procedures that can be seen depending on the place where they live. Most girls have shown that they throw their sanitary napkins in a trash. It also depends on whether it is disposed of at home or at the workplace/school. Only a small percentage of women actually burn their used sanitary napkins and the percentage was about 31.41%. Due to a shortage of hygienic facilities and a lack of a disposal system, damaged toilet lock/doors, a lack of a water tap, a bucket, and a lack of water supplies can cause poor hygiene practices amongst the young women/adolescents.

The correct disposal of old menstrual products is still lacking in many countries around the world. Most countries have developed techniques to manage their faeces and urine wastes, but most females discard their sanitary pads or other menstrual articles in domestic solid waste or garbage bins, which eventually become part of solid waste, due to a lack of menstrual management practises around the world.

#### **Conclusion:**

Menstruating women in India are unable to manage their menstrual hygiene due to a shortage of sanitary pad disposal bins and hand washing facilities in public bathrooms. In urban places, current disposable menstruation products are disposed of by flushing them down toilets and throwing them away. In rural areas, however, there are a variety of choices for disposing of menstrual material, including burying, burning, tossing in the trash, or using pit latrines. In rural areas, reusable and non-commercial sanitary items, such as reusable pads or cloths, are commonly used by women. As a result, they produce less menstrual waste than women in metropolitan areas who rely on commercial disposable pads. Menstrual waste was disposed of based on the type of product used, cultural beliefs, and disposal site. Because burning and burial were impossible due to a lack of privacy space in slum regions, women disposed of their menstrual waste in pit latrines.

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