

Digital Didi

Ensuring Menstrual Hygiene and Fostering Self-Learning
through Community Digital HealthPreneurs

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 – Ensuring Menstrual Hygiene and Fostering Self-Learning through Community Digital Health-Preneurs 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 1,588 individuals. From these individuals, 36% of the respondents (574) surveyed are adolescents aged between 13-20, and 64% (1014) 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, 47% respondents were either currently enrolled in, or have studied up to secondary level (class 9-10), 23% had studied till/are currently enrolled in senior secondary (11-12), 1% had diploma, 9% were graduate, 3% were postgraduate. Of the respondents, 4% had no education, 7% had primary education, and 6% 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 farmer, jobseeker, and agricultural worker being some of the other larger groups of respondents in terms of occupation.
4. Among the respondents, 307 were earning members and 1281 were non-earning members. Of the earning members, 62% earned less than INR 10,000 a month.
5. The respondents were asked to self assess if they consider themselves aware of safe practices in regards to menstrual hygiene management. 28% responded “yes”, and 72% 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 that they possessed the knowledge of the 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, the respondents were asked about the availability of sunlight to dry reusable absorbents. Only 28% considered drying reusable absorbents in the sunlight feasible.
10. 62% respondents did not find awareness about menstruation before menarche to be necessary for girls.
11. Respondents were asked if they own a personal smartphone. 54% owned a smartphone, 46% did not.
12. Respondents were asked about their access to a desktop computer. 75% reported never having used a computer, 2% (31/1588) reported having their own computers.
13. The school-going adolescents were asked if their school provides computer education. A majority of them reported “no”.
14. Of the 44% (692/1588) respondents who have used the internet to access information on health issues, 91% reportedly found it useful.
15. At 58%, the proportion of respondents with bank accounts was slightly higher than those who did not hold a bank account.
16. Respondents were asked if they know the function of QR codes. A majority of them reported they did not. 1.5% (24/1588) respondents reported not noticing QR codes in their day-to-day life. 6% (100/1588) reported having used QR code for purposes other than banking.
17. 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.
18. The individuals who owned a personal smartphone were asked if their phone was password protected. Majority (64%) of the individuals had autonomy over who had access to their phones.

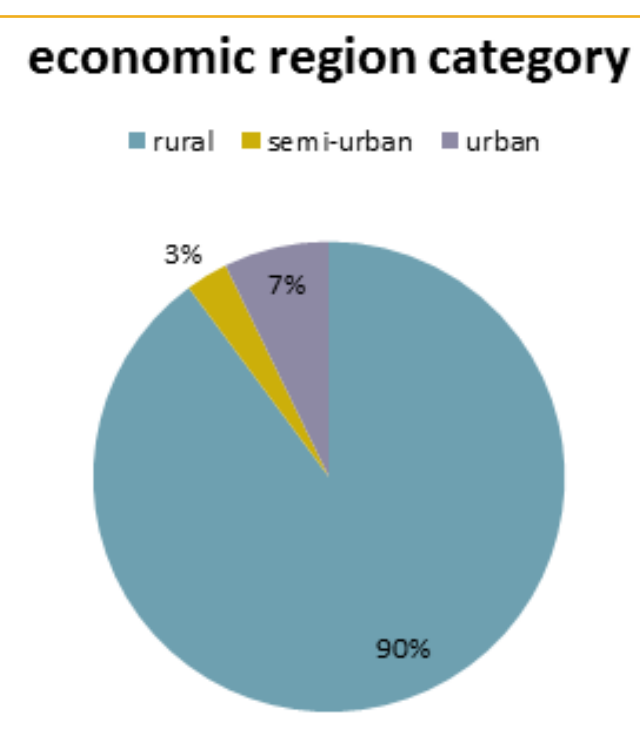


Socio-economic Landscape

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.

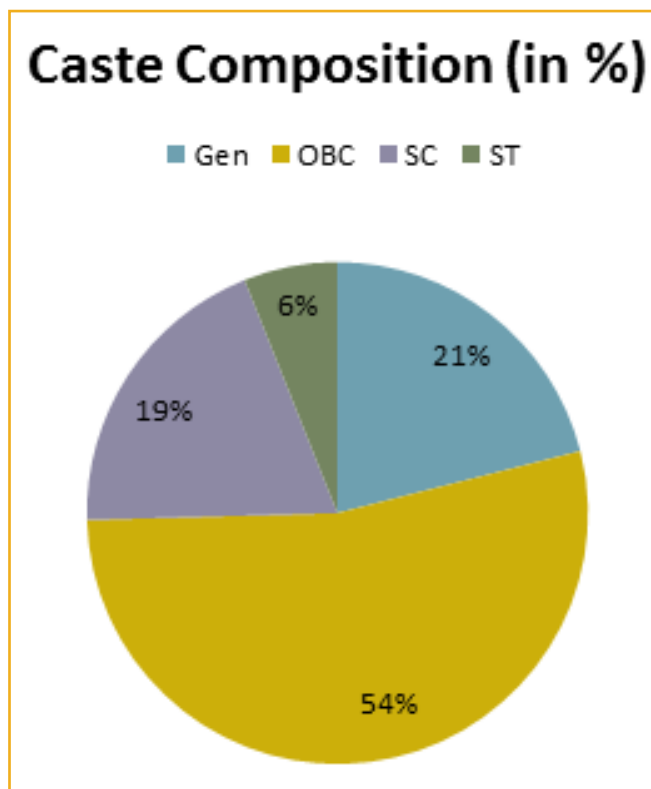
Sr. No.	Name of State	Number of respondents
1	Assam	70
2	Bihar	322
3	Chhattisgarh	102
4	Haryana	74
5	Jharkhand	32
6	Madhya Pradesh	144
7	Odisha	165
8	Rajasthan	320
9	Uttar Pradesh	115
10	West Bengal	274
Total		1588

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.

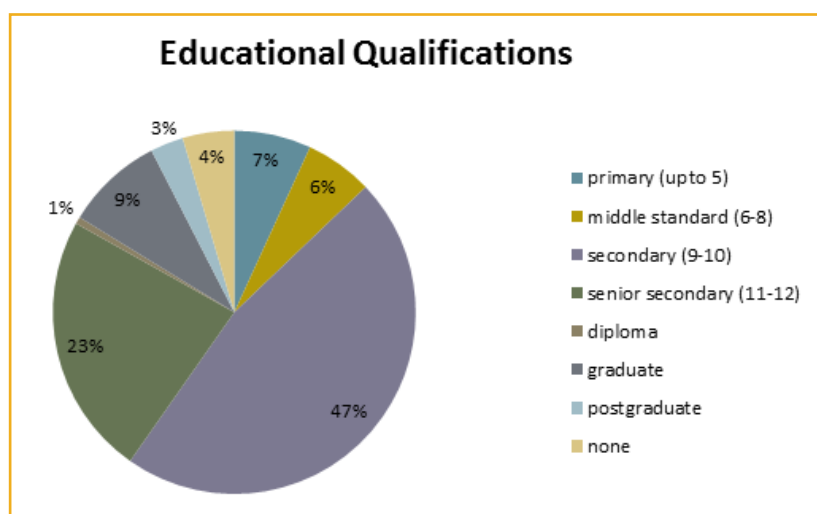


The caste location of the respondents was captured within the categories of General, OBC, ST, and SC.

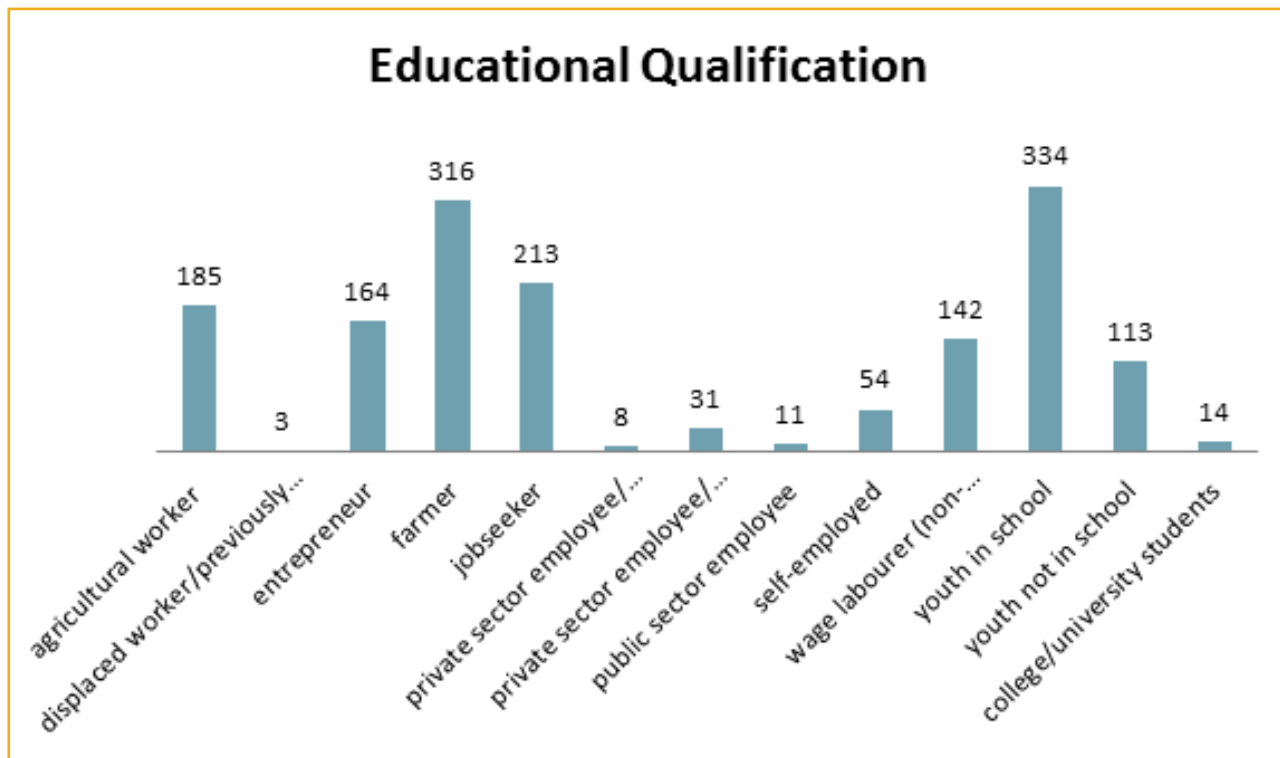
In keeping with the scope of the intervention, menstruating individuals were approached to respond to a self-assessment based questionnaire. From a total of 1588 respondents, 36% respondents (574) surveyed were adolescents aged between 13-20, and 64% (1014) were women aged 20 and above.



In terms of educational qualifications, 47% respondents were either currently enrolled in, or have studied up to secondary level (class 9-10), 23% had studied till/are currently enrolled in senior secondary (11-12), 1% had completed a diploma, 9% were graduates and 3% were postgraduates. Of the respondents, 4% had no education, 7% had primary education, and 6% were educated till middle standard.

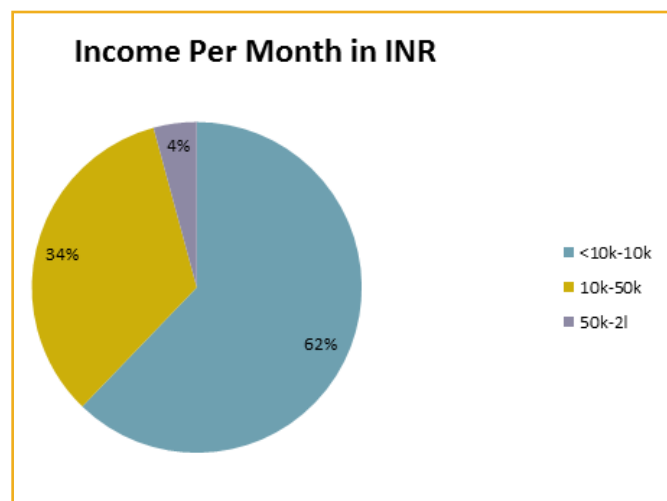


Their occupational status was captured under the categories of agricultural worker, displaced worker/previously employed, entrepreneur, farmer, jobseeker, private sector employee (formal), private sector employee (informal), public sector employee, self-employed, wage labourer (non-agricultural), youth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



Economic Background

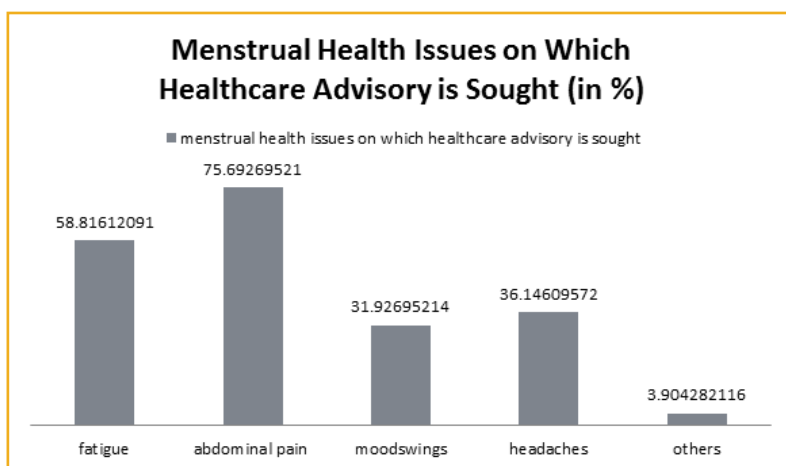
Among the respondents, 307 were earning members and 1281 were non-earning members. Of the 307, their income level has been represented in the chart below.



Menstrual Hygiene Management Awareness

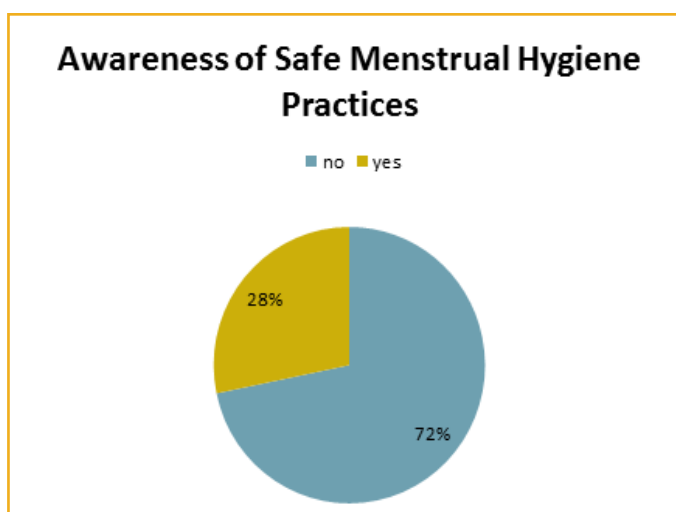
In order to understand the state of awareness of menstrual health practices, questions were asked around the use of absorbents; need for advisory options to learn about menstrual and reproductive health; present disposal options, if using disposable commercial sanitary hygiene products, etc.

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

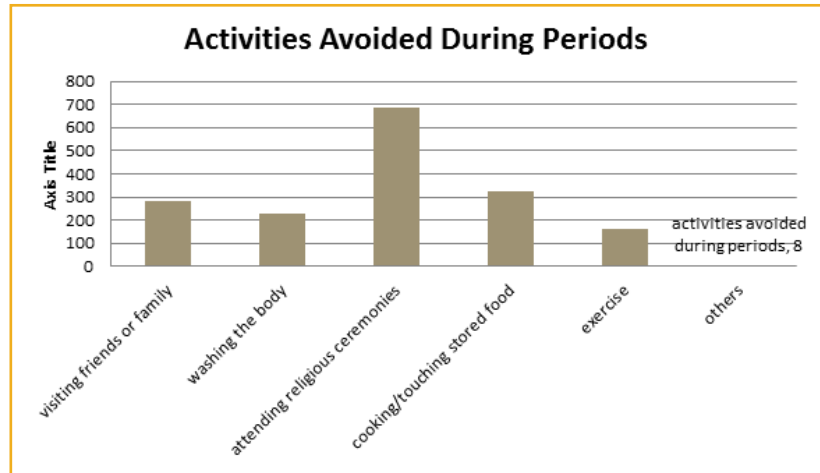


In others, the respondents specified issues like irritability, stomach issues, body ache and sleep disturbance. Some respondents specified they would like general advisory on nutrition and mental health.

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. 449 responded “yes”, and 1139 responded “no”.

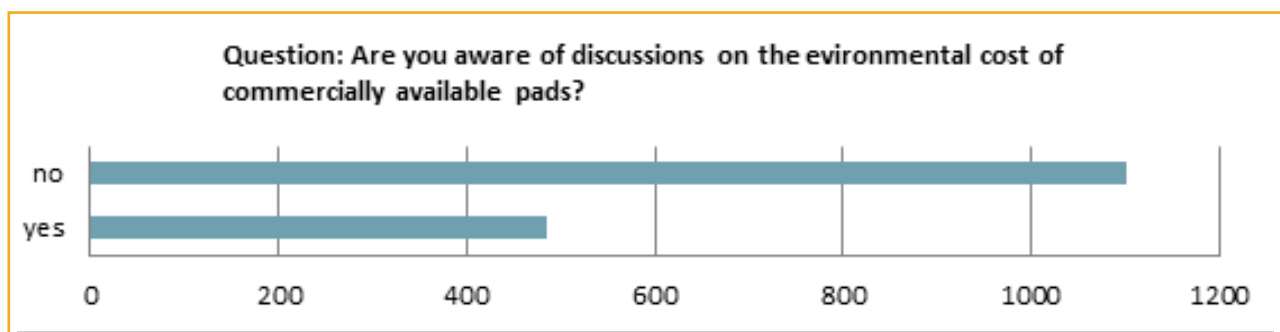


The respondents were asked if they refrain from participating in any activities from a selection due to periods. 18% responded they keep from visiting friends and family, 13% keep from washing the body, 82% avoid religious ceremonies, 20% do not touch stored food/cook, 16% avoid exercising.

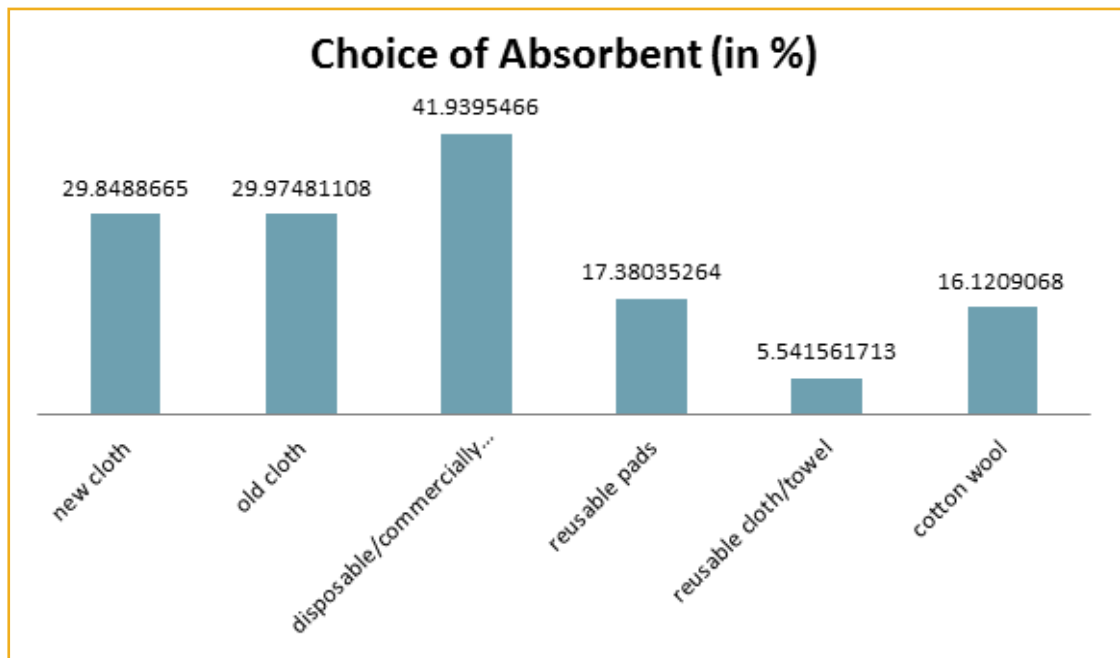


In 'others', some respondents specified they do not avoid any activities.

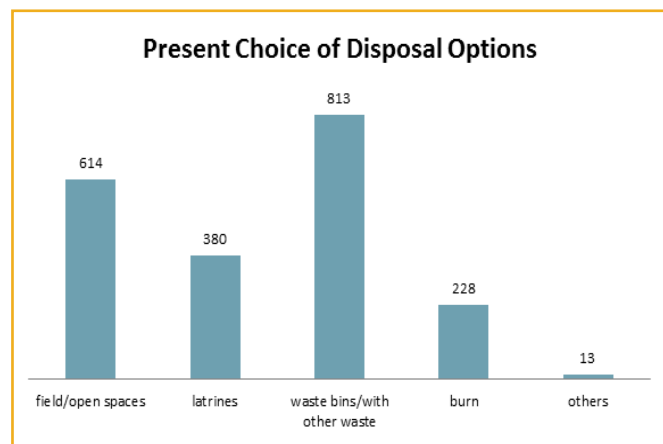
The respondents were asked if they were aware of discussions on the environmental cost of commercially available disposable pads. A majority of them were not.



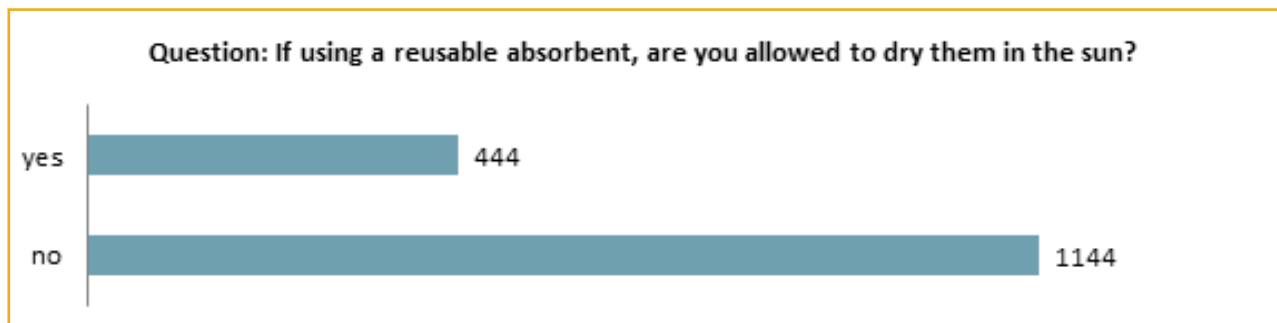
The respondents were asked to confirm one or more kind of absorbent they use. Aside from commercially available pads, which are the dominant choice of absorbent, single use and reusable cloth were the other more popular choices.



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 respondents specified burying the used absorbents in the ground, and of disposing in the river.

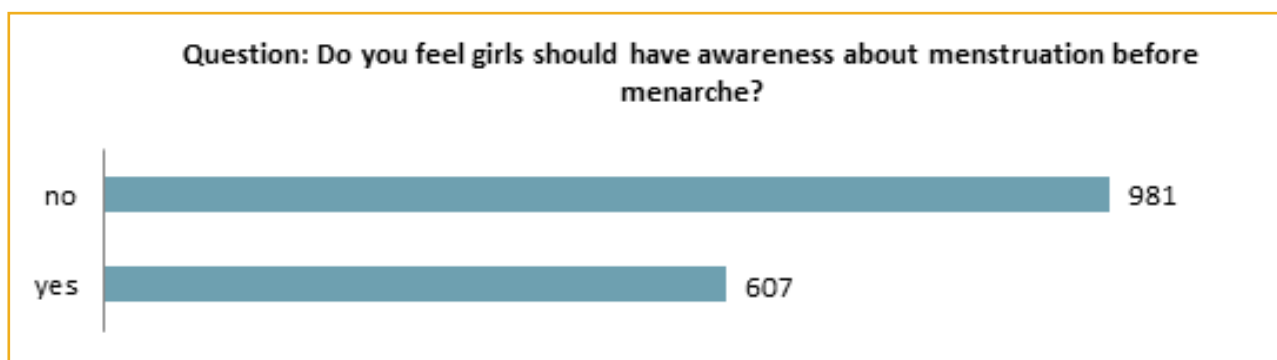
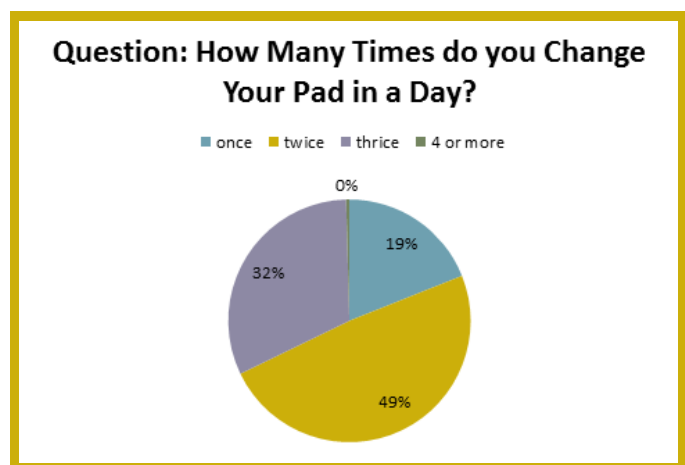


In an attempt to indicate the scope for destigmatising menstruation, and of generating social awareness, respondents were asked about the availability of sunlight to dry reusable absorbents. A majority of the respondents did not consider drying reusable absorbents in the sunlight feasible, but a significant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



The respondents were asked about the number of times they change the absorbent. A majority of the respondents reported changing 2 times a day, with 7 individuals reporting changing 4 times or more.

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

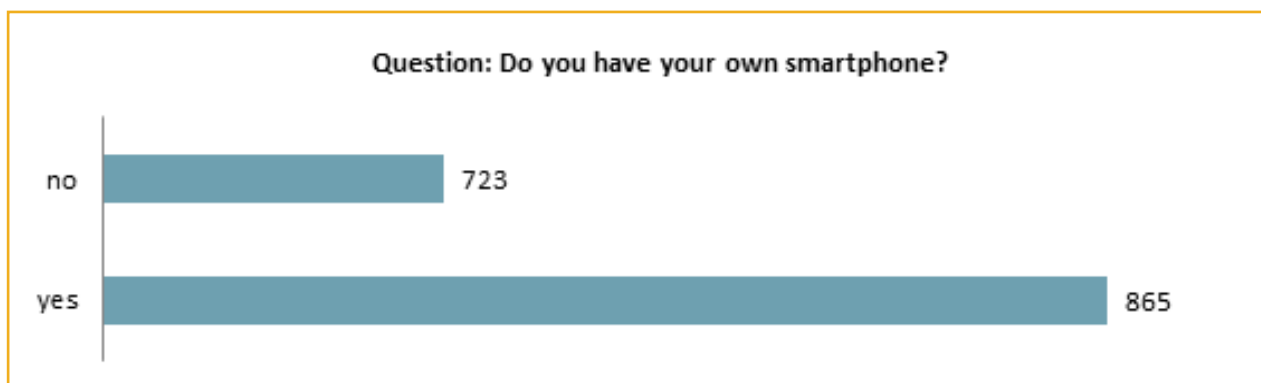


The general trend of the responses indicated that there is work to be done in building awareness around menstrual health at the individual and community level.

ICT and Internet Access– Uses and Practice

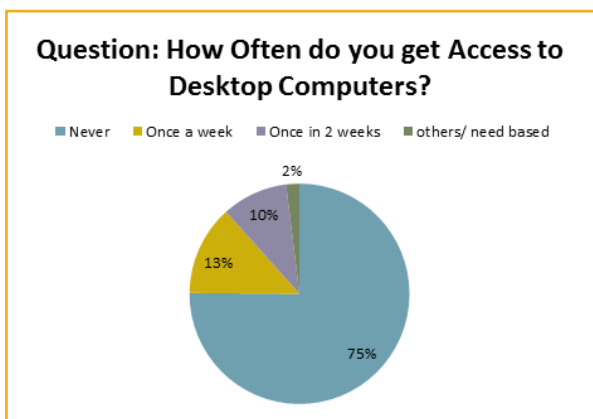
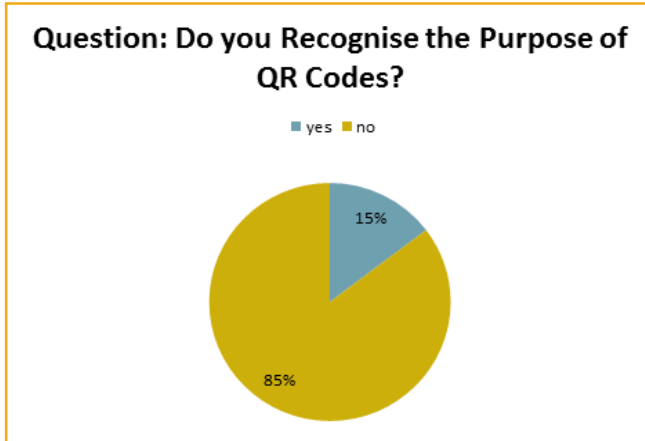
This section of the survey recorded some key parameters in trying to gauge the nature of ICT access and its use among the population.

Respondents were asked if they own a personal smartphone. About half of them (54%) did.



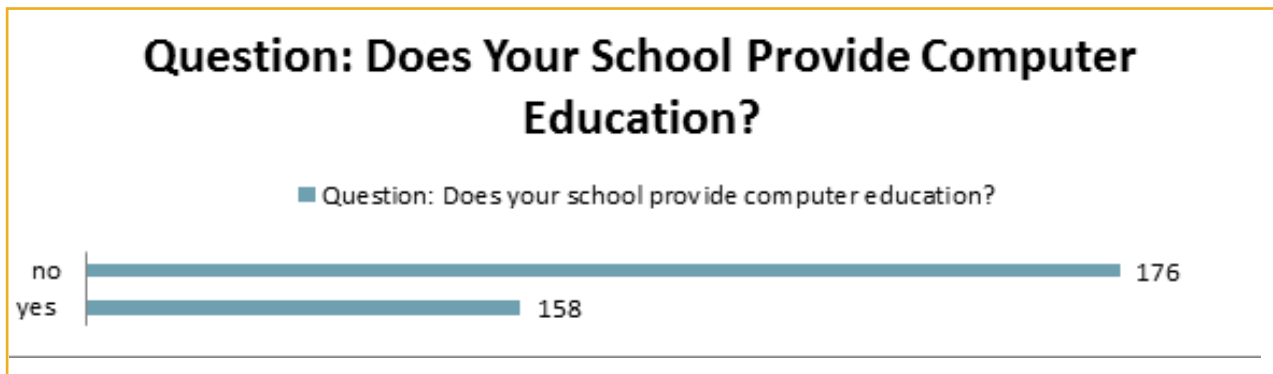
Respondents were asked if they can navigate the settings section by themselves. 40% respondents reported they can, 60% (932/1588) respondents reported “no”.

Respondents were asked if they know the function of QR codes. A majority of them reported they did not. 1.5% (24/1588) respondents reported not noticing QR codes in their day-to-day life. 6% (100/1588) reported having used QR code for purposes other than banking.



Respondents were asked about their access to a desktop computer. A majority of the respondents reported never having used a desktop. Of the ones who have access to a computer, much of them are afforded access via their jobs. 2% (31/1588) reported having their own computers.

The school-going adolescents were asked if their school provides computer education. A majority of them reported “no”.

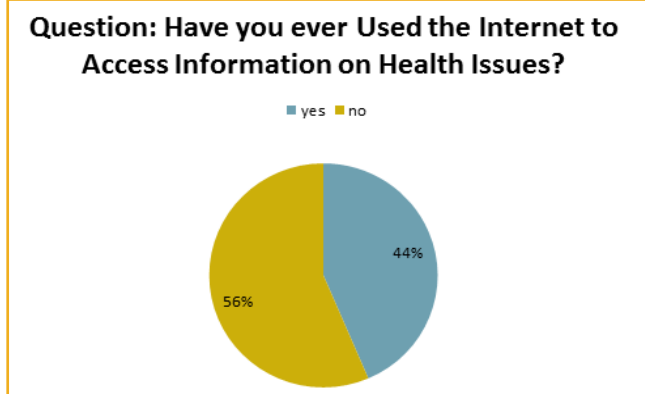


Respondents were asked whether they are aware that their mobile phone can be used as a learning tool. A majority of them reported ‘yes’.



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

Of the 44% (692/1588), 91% of the respondents who have used the internet to access information on health issues reportedly found it useful.



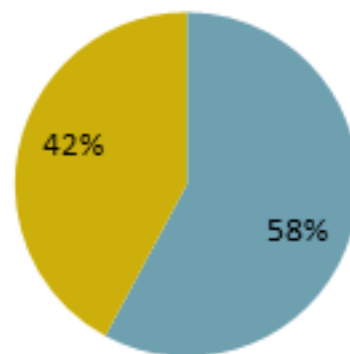
Financial Literacy and Internet Banking

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



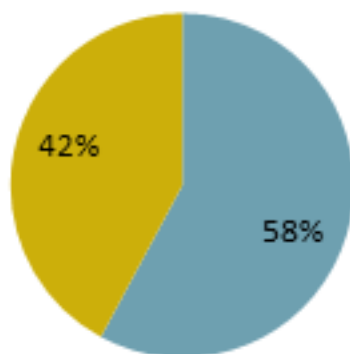
Question: Do you have a bank account?

■ yes ■ no



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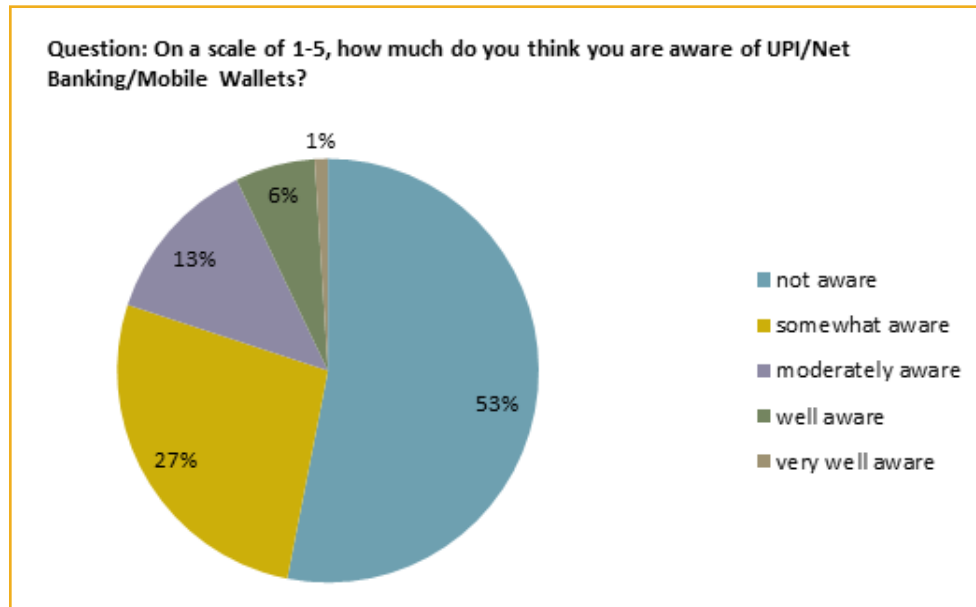
■ yes ■ no



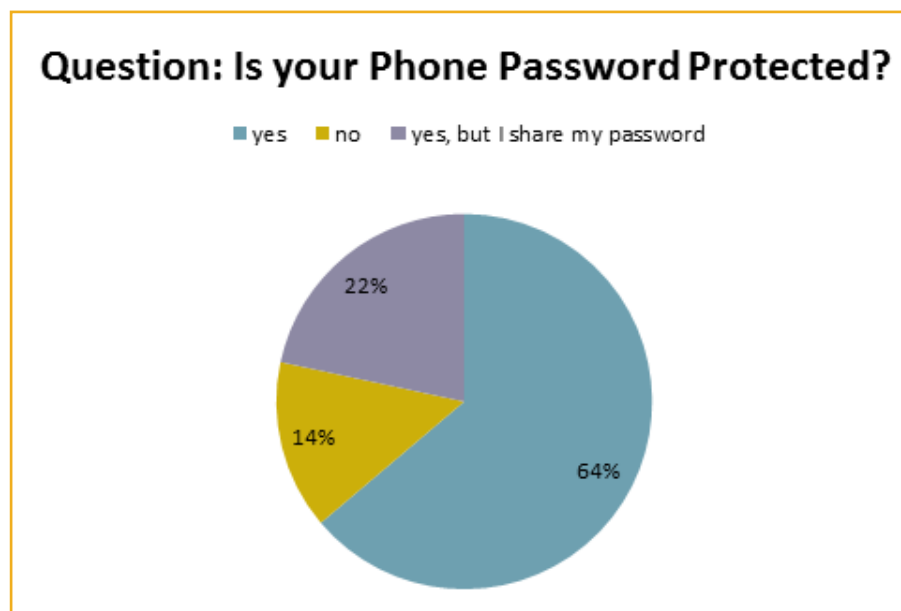
The proportion of respondents with bank accounts was slightly higher than those who did not hold a bank account.



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 were asked if their phone was password protected. Majority of the individuals seemed to have autonomy over who had access to their phones.





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