

# Assessing the Economic Burden and Health Consequences of Sanitary Pad Inaccessibility on Adolescent Girls in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Datoel Fatima Takfuna'an\*, Oluwatoyosi Adekeye

Department of Community Medicine and Primary Health Care

\*Corresponding Author

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) has been recognized at a global level as an essential public health issue, particularly for the health, well-being, and development of the millions of adolescent girls. The gap in access is especially pronounced in low or middle-income context, where women and girls in rural and underserved areas, such as Nasarawa State, Nigeria, bear significant economic and health consequences due to the inaccessibility to sanitary pads.

**Objective:** The study assessed the economic barriers, health implications, educational impact, and socio-cultural factors connected with adolescent girls' limited access to sanitary pads in Nasarawa State.

**Methods:** Using a descriptive cross-sectional design, this study assessed the extent to which economic constraints prevent adolescent girls from accessing menstrual products and explored how these limitations lead to a wider range of impacts on their health, education, and social inclusion. A total of 422 adolescent girls were selected using a multi-stage sampling technique, and the data was collected with the help of structured questionnaires.

**Results:** Results from the study revealed that many families couldn't afford sanitary pads and the high cost of the sanitary pads imposed a significant financial burden on them, forcing majority of girls to use unhygienic alternatives like rags and cloth materials, which heightened their risk of infections. The inaccessibility of pads also leads to frequent school absenteeism and difficulty concentrating in class. The study added that these further hampered the girls' experiences of exclusion and embarrassment, lower self-esteem as well as limited participation in school and community activities.

**Conclusion:** The study concluded that to tackle the economic and health consequences of menstrual product inaccessibility, there is a need for a comprehensive plan to be adopted which includes investment in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, menstrual health education initiatives and government-subsidized menstrual hygiene interventions. The results underscore the need for inclusive policies that treat menstrual equity as a fundamental human right, not a privilege. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and school authorities must collaborate to ensure open conversations that dismantle misconceptions about menstruation.

