



A Data Descriptor on Menstrual Hygiene Management and School Absenteeism in HIV-Positive Adolescent Girls in Rural Malawi, 2003

A Data Descriptor on
Menstrual Hygiene

DOI
[10.5281/zenodo.18538657](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18538657)

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Received 03 April 2003

Accepted 03 May 2003

Abstract

Adolescent girls living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa face intersecting challenges, including potential educational disruption. While menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is known to influence school attendance, its specific impact on HIV-positive adolescents in resource-limited settings remains poorly characterised. This data descriptor presents a dataset collected to evaluate the association between access to menstrual hygiene management resources and school absenteeism among HIV-positive adolescent girls in rural Malawi. Its objective is to provide a detailed resource for analysing how MHM access correlates with missed school days in this population. A cross-sectional survey was administered to HIV-positive adolescent girls attending a rural health clinic in Malawi. Data were collected via structured interviews on MHM practices, material access, water and sanitation facilities, and school attendance records. Absenteeism was measured as the number of school days missed in the month preceding the survey. The dataset indicates an association between inadequate MHM access and increased school absenteeism. Preliminary analysis shows that girls reporting insufficient access to MHM materials missed, on average, more school days in the previous month compared to those with adequate access. The dataset highlights the role of menstrual hygiene management in the educational engagement of HIV-positive adolescent girls. Inadequate MHM access appears to be a tangible barrier to regular school attendance within this group. Further analysis of this dataset is recommended to explore confounding factors and causal pathways. The data support calls for integrated, adolescent-friendly health and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) programmes within HIV care services to mitigate educational disadvantages. Menstrual hygiene management, HIV, adolescent health, school absenteeism, Malawi, sub-Saharan Africa, cross-sectional data This dataset provides a resource for researchers and policymakers investigating the intersection of menstrual health, chronic disease, and education. It facilitates analysis of a specific barrier to schooling among a vulnerable population in a low-resource setting.

Keywords: *Adolescent health, HIV/AIDS, Menstrual hygiene, School absenteeism, Sub-Saharan Africa, Rural health, Educational disruption*

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