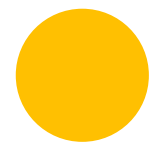


Adolescent Trouble: A Qualitative Study on Menstrual Hygiene and Forms of Sexual Exploitation among the Female street Children in Dhaka City

Presented By Faria Binte Arif
Research Fellow, Share-Net Bangladesh
MSS Student, Anthropology
Department, Shahjalal University of
Science and Technology, Sylhet



Background



Objective



Methodology



Findings and Discussion



Conclusion



Background

- **Defining Adolescent:** Adolescence is the period when an individual has to deal with significant physical, mental and emotional changes as they begin the transit from childhood to adulthood. Given the vulnerability of this life stage, it is crucial to ensure that adolescents are given necessary services, information, skills and opportunities to develop their full potential to become productive, healthy and peace-loving adults (MoHFW, 2017). These changes occur simultaneously but at a different pace for each adolescent depending on her/his gender, socioeconomic background, education and exposure to various other structural and environmental factors (UNICEF, 2006).





Sexual and Reproductive Health in Bangladesh

- SRH is still a cultural taboo in Bangladesh, especially for adolescents and young people, and particularly outside marriage.
- Parents do not feel comfortable discussing SRH issues with their adolescent children and schools provide very limited or no information on SRH.
- Being sexually active in adolescence without having proper knowledge and information about sexual and reproductive health.
- Facing difficulty in access to information and knowledge about adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH).
- Unable to access the services needed to act on that knowledge and protect their health (UNESCO 2009).
- Lack of proper sex education forward the adolescents to be ill-informed about sexuality and unprepared to protect themselves from possible negative outcomes such as STIs .



Background (Cont.)

This study focused on female street children's reproductive health practices focusing on menstrual period and sexual harassments at the street work environment and make this portion of the population visible to the respective institutions, groups, policymakers, development partners for assistance regarding these issues to improve their sexual and reproductive health.





Background (Cont..)

In Bangladesh, about one and a half million children roam in the street of urban areas (Hosen, 2015). Millions of children have a childhood with deprivation of proper food, rights, nutrition, education, health and hygiene facilities in society (Ahmed et al, 2015). Among them, female street adolescents are the most vulnerable group.

Bangladesh
Context

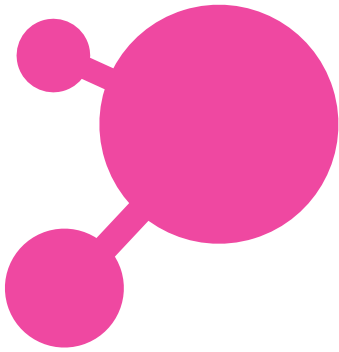
- **Defining Street Children-** According to the United Nations-"any boy or girl, for whom the street in the widest sense of the word which has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults." Again or Save the Children Fund, "a street child is any minor who is without a permanent home or adequate protection" (UNESCO 1995, p. 286).

Typology

- **Children on the street**-Those who work on the street but return home at night.
- **Children of the street**- Those who work on the street and stayed in the night

Objectives

- To understand the degree of knowledge, practice, and socio-cultural and economic dynamics regarding menstruation hygiene management among the female street adolescents in Dhaka city.
- To explore the experiences of sexual exploitations of the adolescent girls being street worker.
- To identify the supports, perceptions, and roles of community-based organizations (non-government organizations) to ensure the accessibility of health services and social protection for them.



Methodology

Qualitative Study

Primary Sources

Methods	Respondent Category	Number of respondent
IDI	Female street children	18
	Guardian	6
	Community Police	2
KII	Service Provider(Non-government community-based organization)	4
	Total	30

Snowball Sampling

Sampling

1. Airport railway station
2. Dhanmondi lake
3. TSC and Shaheed Minar
4. Chandrima Uddan

Study Site

Journals, thesis papers, dissertations, conference papers, newspaper, books, national strategy paper, survey reports, government reports, project papers

Secondary Sources

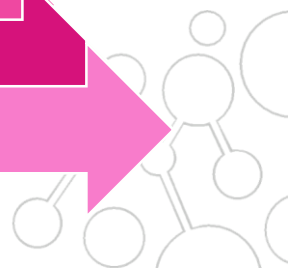
Data Analysis Process

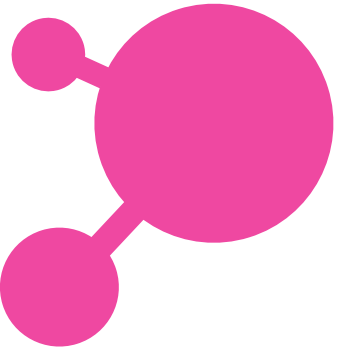
Recorded Data

Transcribe data

Manually Coding

Thematic Analysis





Results

Menstrual Hygiene

Knowledge about menstruation

Sources of information

Beliefs and restrictions during menstruation

Practices during menstruation

Health seeking behaviour

This research investigated the adolescent girls' menstruation practices among the adolescent girls. Five major themes have been identified regarding menstrual hygiene management that are explained in this section:

Socio-demographic Information

Category of the respondent	Income	Occupation	Reasons for moving in the street	Education
Children on the street and children of the street	200-400	Selling flower, betel leaf, chocolates, begging, rag picking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic violence by the relatives, parents. Parental deaths Poverty Offering jobs. 	Did not attend school



Results

- Menstruation is an unfamiliar concept among the participants until they face it.
- Know about menstruation when they first started menstruating.
- Do not know why it happens and from where the blood comes.

Knowledge about
menstruation

- Having very limited sources of information due to not attending school.
- Main source of information is mother. Moreover elder sister, grandmother (*Nani*), cousins and peers acted as a source.
- In one case, mothers are sometimes feeling shy to share menstruation related information, she thought that it is not her duty, this kind of knowledge should discuss with the young females of the family.

Sources of
Information



Results

Practices during
menstruation

- **Using material- old cloths (80%), adult pampers (1%), sanitary pads (1%). Few of them used pads during street work and cloths when they are at home.**
- **Disposal and re-use strategy- most of the respondent re-used their menstrual cloths by washing. A few of them who used pads, they dispose the pads by covering with the soil. But they always wash before disposing it. There are some beliefs regarding the disposal of the menstrual absorbent.**
- **Changing cycle of the absorbent- it has been found that most of the respondent changed their absorbent material once in a day. Few who used pads they changed it twice or thrice in a day depending on their blood flow.**
- **Most of the respondents do not come when they are on their menstruation.**

Results

"We learned that we need to avoid pads because if we throw it without washing the evil power will harm us. In our village, one woman used pads and threw these used pads in the dustbin. A few months later she gave birth to a dead child and never became pregnant." (IDI. 11)

- **Menstrual pads should be washed before disposing because it can be used for black magic,**
- **Regarding menstruation there are wide range of social taboo, stigma, restrictions have been practiced among them.**
- **Considered menstrual cloths as shameful, harmful. It should be hidden from the male members of the family.**
- **Menstrual cloths should be dried in a narrow place, sometimes under the bed. After drying it should be kept on secret place.**
- **Prohibited Food- sour items-It causes excessive blood flow,
-fish- It causes bad odour in blood.**
- **Restrictions on roaming in the outside, can not touch the cattle, can not touch any religious book.**

Beliefs and
Restrictions during
menstruation

Results

Health Problems and
Health Seeking
Behaviour

- **Common problems-** pain in lower abdomen, vaginal irritation, rashes, vaginal infection, tiredness, physical discomforts.
- **Being very reluctant to seek treatment for any health problems.**
- **Prefer to seek treatment from mothers, peers, and elder sisters. If they did not recover, they consulted local pharmacists.**
- **Visit a government hospital or doctor only for a severe case. However, hospital-based healthcare-seeking behaviour is absent among them.**



Sexual Exploitation

This section has been divided into two themes

Perceptions towards sexual exploitation

Forms of sexual exploitation

- No previous knowledge about exploitation and abuse.
- Few respondents added that her mother give her knowledge about how to protect herself.
- They get familiar with the forms of exploitation after getting experience from any incident.
- “The abuser perceived them as a powerless group”-They stayed at the street, they are extreme poor that’s why the people do harm without any fear.
- Sometimes resistance creates more worst for her. She has been harmed physically.

*much her body can be touched by someone, to which extent they can consider it as abuse or harassment. They do not know about abuse or exploitation. Even we cannot give full protection to ourselves. So, the situation is worst in their case.”
(KII 3)*



Sexual Exploitation

Forms of Sexual Exploitation and abuse

Domestic Violence

One of the major reason for moving to the street is domestic violence by step parents and relatives. So, the violence does not only happened in the street.

Forced sexual intercourse

Being on the street they sometimes offered money to conduct sexual intercourse. Finding no other option some of them make it their survival strategy.

Verbal abuse

Teasing is a very common verbal abuse found among the respondent. They are often teased by the rickshaw puller, passers by.

Organ trafficking and human trafficking

Human trafficking and organ trafficking is very much common exploitation. The female children

Intentional touch

One of the major reason for moving to the street is domestic violence by step parents and relatives. So, the violence does not only happened in the street.



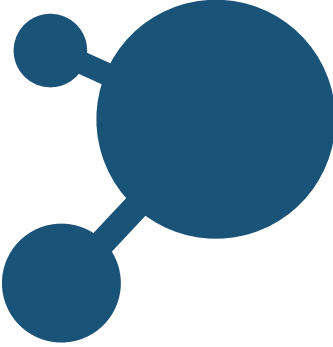
Organizational Responses

- ❑ Dhaka Ahsaniya Mission-
✓ Drop-in Centre-Project Base
- Provide food, clothes, all basic needs.
- Night shelter for girls
- Providing medical support
- Providing mental health counselling
- Providing recreational supports

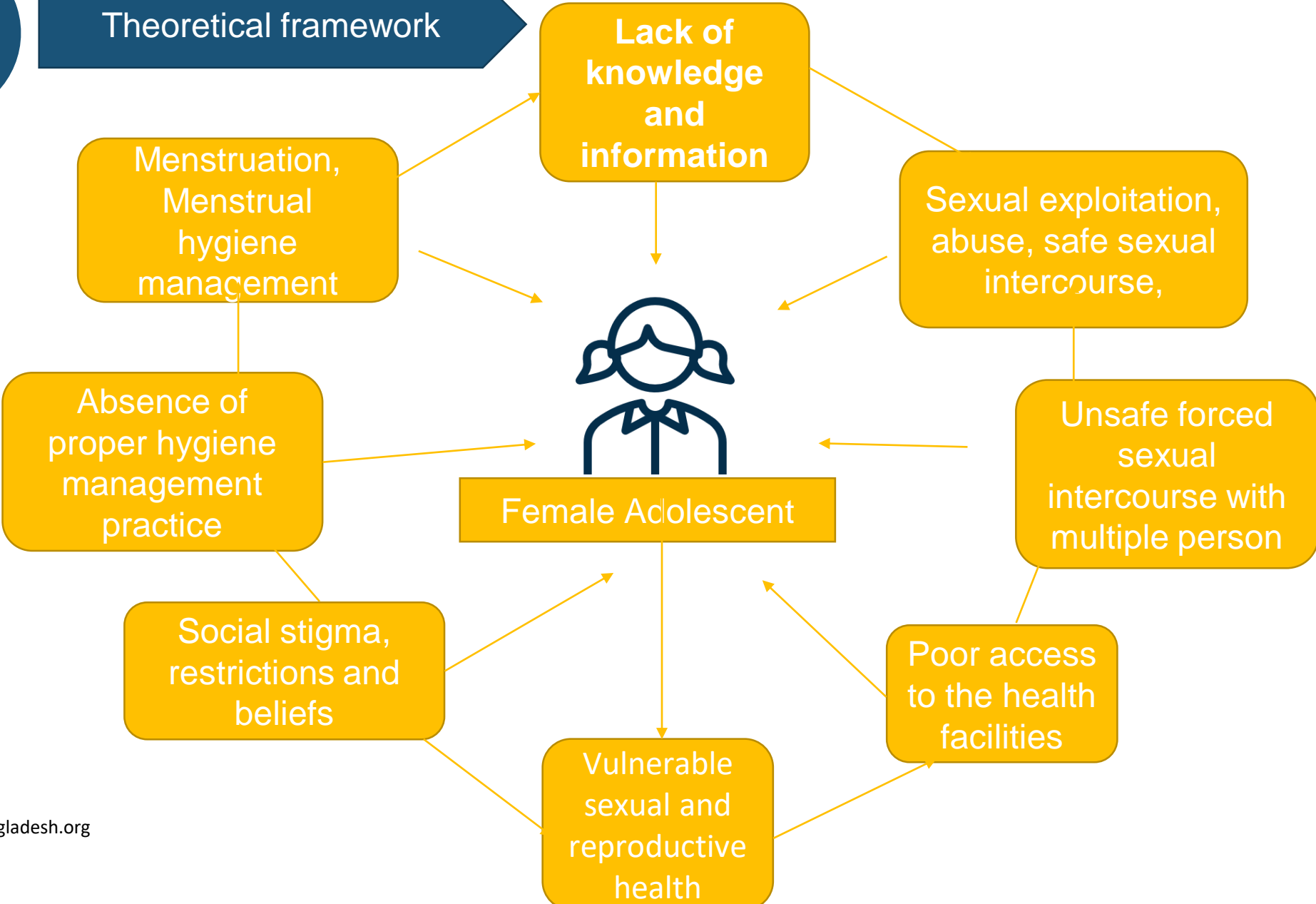
- ❑ *Pushpakali School*-education based project.
- Mainly provide the educational facility to the street children.
- Along with they provide services regarding menstruation, they have a medical team.
- Sometimes, they get some local exploitation case but they have very limited resources that's why they referred the cases to their partnered organization specially BLAST and Dhaka Ahsaniya Mission.

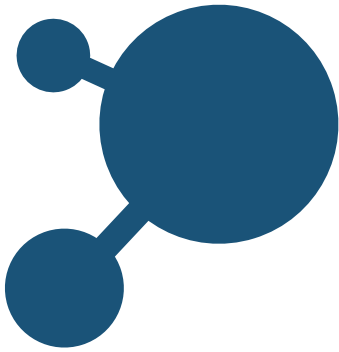
Challenges

- Cannot allocate all the children.
- All are short-term projects, after declining the project the children returned to the street life.
- Lack of sustainability.
- Lack of co-ordination between government and non-government organization.



Theoretical framework





Discussion

- Contextualizing the female street children
- Perceived as more defenceless in the endure moments of sexual aggression.
- Perceived them voluntarily promiscuous and have no morals.
- Willing to exchange sex for money and food.
- No schooling and no proper job –Reason behind choosing “streetism”.
- Hygiene Management during street work.
- Menstrual misconceptions and misleading.
- Social stigma and taboo.
- Different survival strategies-nexus work place.
- Sexual Reproductive Health and female street children.

Concluding Remarks (Cont.)

- Find a robust correlation between knowledge and practices during menstruation.
- Practice and knowledge associated with some factors such as their economic perspective, their socio-cultural perspective, and religious perspective.
- The present paper makes a strong case that ignorance, false perceptions, and unsafe practices regarding menstruation are not uncommon among female street adolescents, which results in profound implications for their reproductive and sexual health.
- Menstruation has been often overlooked and forgotten in reports addressing female street adolescents' health needs and therefore fails to come to policymakers and service managers' attention
- The silence that surrounds menstruation has uneven consequences on homeless women. Menstruation is a very natural phenomenon for every woman. But low- and middle-income families have poor knowledge about menstruation and count it as trouble especially the street dwellers.
- This inattention means that women without adequate financial resources must use irregular, and at times, potentially pathologically unsafe methods of hiding their menstrual blood.

Concluding Remarks

- Explore the experiences regarding sexual abuse and exploitation. They are the victim of everyday violence.
- Community based organizations are providing support but only their enlisted children. Their projects are not sustainable at all. After finishing the project, the children go back to the street again.
- Government should come forward to ensure the basic rights and security to the most visible underprivileged children in the urban population.
- This study would uncover these hidden issues to the policy makers, development partners, respected groups for supporting them.



The image features a central graphic composed of several interconnected circles and lines. A large purple circle is the primary focus, containing the text 'THANK YOU For your patience'. It is connected to three other purple circles of varying sizes. To the right, a yellow circle is connected to two smaller yellow circles. In the background, there are four isolated circles: a pink one at the top left, a teal one at the top right, and a dark blue one on the left side.

THANK YOU
For your patience