



**LOCALLY MADE, LOW COST SANITARY NAPKINS : A PRODUCT AND NEEDS
ASSESSMENT STUDY IN VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT WITH ADDITIONAL FOCUS
ON FISHER WOMEN**

Dr. Tadi Sobhasri

Associate Professor
Dept. of Social Work
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Mr. Yadla Ramana

Faculty & Research Scholar
Dept. of Social Work
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam

Introduction:

It is well known to everyone that people are suffering from many diseases mainly due to the unhygienic living atmosphere and living status. So, to reduce the spreading of such diseases among the people the foremost step should be establishing a clean, hygienic living environment and status. Generally people in cities are suffering from different diseases mostly from unhygienic

living atmosphere like- poisonous gaseous atmosphere, dusty or un-cleaned air, improper and un-cleaned drainage system etc. Another important factor is that the rural women and girls generally do not maintain cleanliness during menstruation period. As a result they become the host of many infectious diseases. This is due to the lack of awareness among them and also due to the economic inability for adopting better precautions like- use of good sanitary napkins during menstruation period. Usually different varieties of sanitary napkins are found available in the market. But the reason is that these napkins are not affordable for rural poor women and girls. Thus, if the use of hygienic sanitary napkins could be initiated among the rural women and girls at low cost then growth of different diseases could be arrested or minimize to a large extent among them.

Study Goal:

“Assessment of prevailing menstrual hygiene practices and market potentiality of new sanitary napkin product among rural population in Visakhapatnam district”

Purpose:

- Ø To achieve comprehensive understanding about the menstrual hygiene practices and assess the need/scope for introducing new sanitary napkin product to the rural non users
- Ø To measure the feasibility of sanitary napkin project as a successful enterprise

Objectives:

- Ø Understand the existing and future market dynamics in terms of product quality, price, placement and promotion



- Ø To identify the core customers of our product and ways/channels to reach out
- Ø To assess the market potentiality of the locally produced sanitary napkin
- Ø To understand the respondents knowledge levels and barriers to use sanitary napkins
- Ø To identify the motivators in using the sanitary napkins which can be addressed in the promotional campaign

Scope:

The main purpose of the study is to assess the current menstrual hygiene practices of the rural population and estimate the demand or opportunity to promote new sanitary napkin product among rural women in Visakhapatnam district with additional focus on Fisher women. Apart from this, the study would also attempt to assess the size of the current rural market and overall demand for the sanitary napkin product in the targeted villages. The scope of the study extends to identifying the barriers to use napkins and motivators to encourage use of napkins in order to utilize the findings for implementing IEC effectively. This study will try to throw some light on the existing competition in the market for sanitary napkin product and basic recommendations for better pricing and enhanced quality standards. Meanwhile efforts will be made to understand the production capacity of the machinery and efficiency of the product in the given project scenario. The assessment report will also try to represent the market dynamics like competition, ability to update and modify the quality and price as per the market conditions and ways to make the market for the product regular and sustainable.

Sampling:

5% of total women between the age group of 16 to 35 in 2 panchayats on the beach road namely Chapaluppada and Nidigattu.

Sample size:

Population in each Panchayat	= 4000
2 Panchayats	= 8000
50% women	= 4000
60% between 16 to 35 age group	= 2400
5% of total women	= 120 women

Sample representing both literate and illiterate women in equal proportions
Proportionate sample representing students, working women and housewife will be of comparative sample

Methodology:

Data collection through In-depth Interviews with rural women between age



group of 16 to 35 Focus group discussions to understand their perceptions of knowledge practices and attitudes of using sanitary napkins.

The study will be conducted in Chapluppada and Nidigattu Gram Panchayats covering 50% of fisher women and 50% non fisherwomen on the beach road from Bhimili to Visakhapatnam.

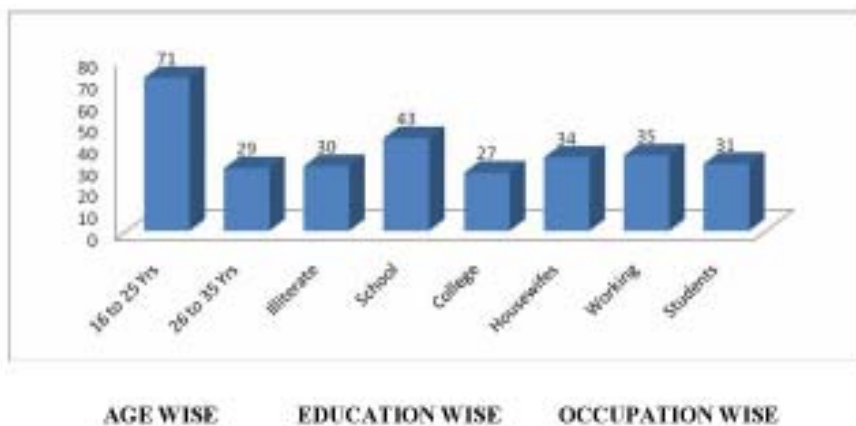
Analysis report of In-dept interviews conducted in Chapaluppada and Nidigattu Gram Panchayat to understand menstrual hygiene practices and demand for sanitary Napkins.

Data Analysis:

This study ensured both Fishermen and non fishermen villages are equally covered i.e- 61% of respondents from Chapalupada(Fisherwomen) and 39% from Nidigattu (Non Fisherwomen) Gram Panchayats. Which is equal representation as the SC community in Chapaluppada also covered under fishermen panchayat (chapaluppada).

Demographics:

Interviews conducted for 126 rural women between 16 to 35years of age. 71% of respondents are between 16-25 years of age. More young women covered as the students constitute 1/3 of the sample size.



Students, Housewives and Working women are equally covered for this study i.e. 31%, 34% and 35% subsequently.

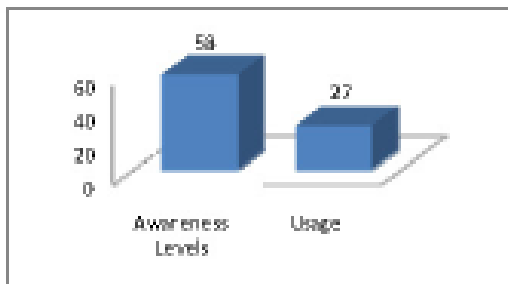
70% of the respondents are literates including 31% students. 30% of respondents are illiterates' majority representing from working women segment i.e. 57%

35% of the respondents monthly household income is less than Rs. 3000.00, majority i.e. 53% monthly incomes is between Rs. 3000.00 to 5000.00 and 9.5% respondents monthly income is above Rs. 5000.00

Knowledge & Usage of Sanitary napkin:

- 42% of the women interviewed have never heard about the sanitary napkin.

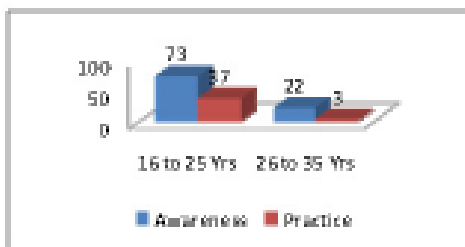
AWARENESS LEVELS VS. USAGE PRACTICES



58% of the rural women are aware of sanitary napkins, but

- Among those who are aware of sanitary napkin, majority i.e. for 57% the source of knowledge is media (mostly television) very little interaction among friends, relatives and parents about menstrual hygiene.
- Knowledge levels about sanitary napkins is directly linked to the level of education as 97% women studied college are aware of sanitary napkins whereas only 18.4% illiterate women are aware.

AWARENESS VS. PRACTICE AMONG TWO AGE GROUPS



Young women have high awareness levels and high usage practices

- Only 27% of the respondents are users of sanitary napkin, including 20% exclusive users and 7% users of both sanitary napkins and old cloths.
- Among users 37% are between the age group of 16-25 yrs. i.e. out of the total users 97% are between age group of 16 to 25Yrs.



- only 5.3% illiterate women are using napkins, 22% of those who studied up to school and 59% of college going women are using sanitary napkin.
- 51.3% students, 18% working women and 14% housewives are using the sanitary napkin.
- No significant inferences out of household monthly incomes on factors like knowledge levels, usage of sanitary napkin and price affordability.
- 56% of beneficiaries' need 8pads, 35% needs between 8 to 12 pads and 9 % needs more than 12 pads per month.
- Only 29% of the respondents wrap the napkins/cloths before disposing, 34% dispose them just like that and 37% of respondents dispose them in the pits.
- Only 7% of the respondents using cloths are washing them with detergent and the rest 93% don't wash.

Preferred brands & Affordability:

- 77% of the users are buying sanitary napkins from Vizag city, though the product is available locally in 2 shops. They are comfortable buying at the city and accessible as they come for college to City every day. Only 23% are buying from the local shops and shops at Bhimili (6Km)
- 80% of the users started using napkins on their own and 97% select specific brand of on their own choice and no influence of others.
- 50% of users preferring whisper, 44% preferring stay free and only 6% preferring kotex. Again choice of brands indicates the influence of media and brand appeal as we know the kotex is poorly promoted in the media.
- 85% of the users prefer price range between Rs. 20 to 39,15% between Rs. 30 to 40 and 3% above Rs.50.

Willingness to use:

- Among 73% non users responses regarding reason for not using are like; 36% lack of awareness, 22% financial problems, 20% no practice in the family, 6% shy to buy and use, 6% not available in the village, 4% mother advised to use cloths and 4% comfortable using cloths.
- Only 59% responded positively to use sanitary napkin if provided quality napkins for cheaper price
- 41% not ready to use napkins. Again 52% of those responded negatively to use napkins said there is no practice in their family, 19% don't like napkins and believe napkins are ineffective, 8% cloths are comfortable and easily available, 6% they use only branded napkins, 4% don't use undergarments, 4% financial problems, 2% buy from city



- 79% of respondents are using undergarments. 92% of users are between 16 to 25 yrs. age group.
- 35% women experienced white discharge, 32% abdomen pain, 27% no infections, 6% itching at genitals, 1% ulcers.

PRICING:

Price list of Sanitary napkin brands available in the market

Sl.No.	Brand Name – 8 pads	Cost in Rupees
1	Whisper choice	
	Wings	26.00
	Ultra Clean, 1000 gel crystals Wings	65.00
	Choice ultra with 2 free Whisper Ultra pads wings	30.00
	Choice regular	20.00
2	Stayfree Secure cotton soft	
	Regular with wings	20.00
	Extra large	26.00
	Secure Dry 18 anti leak channels	24.00
3	Kotex Soft	
	Smooth with gentle wings	24.00
	Soft & smooth Leak guard regular	18.00

AVAILABLE BRANDS PRICE RANGES



From the above picture we understand that proposed product price is almost same as the branded products available in the marker.

When the price is not highly competitive for a local brand it has to satisfy the following conditions to get reasonable market.

- i) Distantly high quality compared to the available brands or
- ii) Should target isolated community who have no access to other brands

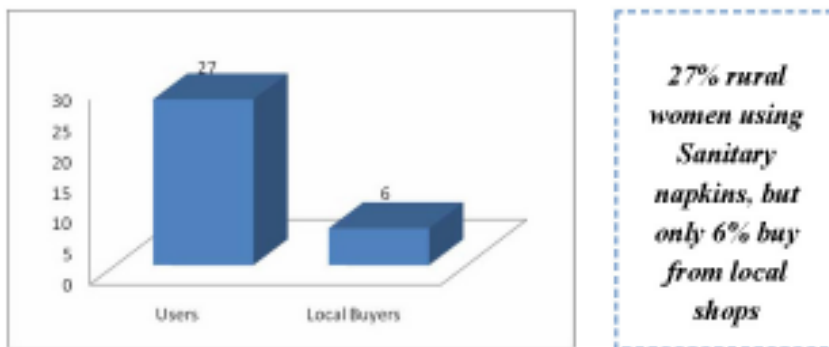
Local Market Assessment:

Conduct comprehensive sanitary napkin market assessment at petty shops and provisions stores on the beach road from Bhimili to Rushikonda covering 4 grampanchayats. Team has covered 56 shops including 31 petty shops and 25 provision shops.

Only 2 shops, one petty shop and 1 provision store are selling sanitary napkins i.e. 4%. Both these shops together self 16 napkins in a month. They are selling only Whisper and Stayfree brands. Price range is between Rs. 20 to 30.

Majority buy from the city and Bhimili whereas only 4% buy from the local shops. This may be because of two reasons like; women are shy to buy from known retailers, majority students buy in the city when they go for college.

USERS VS. BUYING PLACE



Retailers opined that nobody buys regularly, but only at the time of emergency they get sales. Due to the unpredictable sales they don't maintain the stock.

Note: Market is open for any new brand, but should provide great brand appeal for the new local brand. (IEC and advertisement)

PRODUCT FEEDBACK REPORT:

Few volunteers from the village and urban project have provided their feedback on the locally produced sanitary napkins using Jaysree Industries Machinery by DRDA, Srikakulum Following are the responses collected from 7 volunteers.



- Comfort in wearing, moving, working long hours, during journeys etc.
- Absorption capacity
- General comments on quality of product
- Price affordability

Feedback:

1. Napkins are very thick and hard making uncomfortable while walking
2. Becoming wet in no time
3. Fluids passing through to other side spoiling the inner garments.
4. Once it takes some fluids its becoming heavy and discomfort
5. Not firmly sticking to the inner garments, folding, feeling of dropping down and discomfort
6. Materials very delicate and cheap, turning into pieces after some time.

Overall comments:

- Very poor quality
- Not at all comfortable
- Not appropriate for longer time and journeys
- Due to the quality dissatisfaction no feedback on price was pointed by the volunteers

Note: Unfortunately there are no positive comments given by the volunteers on this product. This is one important area to improve as quality is key for success.

Findings/conclusions:

- 80% of rural women are not using sanitary napkin.
- Lack of knowledge about the availability and advantages of sanitary napkins largely prevails among the rural women.
- Media is effective in creating awareness. Mothers and friends play limited role in promoting menstrual hygiene or sanitary napkin usage practices.
- Young women between 16 to 25 yrs, students and women studied up to collage are more in favor of using sanitary napkins.
- Using sanitary napkin and brand selection are purely self-directed.
- Majority of those using old cloths are not properly cleaning them and genital



infections prevails.

- About the buying practices, majority buy from the city due to shyness, students buy from city when they go for college.
- Most of the cases using sanitary napkin or choosing particular brand is purely self driven behavior
- Majority prefer price range between Rs. 20 to 30
- Good number of rural women is willing to use sanitary napkin if provided quality product at affordable prices.
- 52% Women who are not willing to use if quality napkins made available have not mentioned substantial reason for unwillingness except there is no practice in the family. Very small % have negative opinion on usage of sanitary napkin and financial problems
- No concern over practice of wearing undergarments as majority women are responded positive

Recommendations:

- Lack of knowledge and unawareness is the main reason for poor usage of sanitary napkin among the rural women. More the awareness more the practice, hence effective promotional campaign will yield good results.
- Right knowledge, increased availability and price affordability will increase the use of napkins
- Young educated women between 16 to 25 yrs. are easy to approach and promote usage.
- Quality product at affordable/competitive price will surely increase the users.
- Campaign focus on cancer/genital infections due to poor menstrual hygiene will work.
- Rural women are positive to use napkins provided quality, comfortable napkins are made available at cheaper rates.

References:

1. G. Reuss, W. Disteldorf, A. O. Gamer, and A. Hilt, "Ullmann's Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry", 2002, Wiley-VCH, Weinheim.
2. B. M. Goldschmidt, J. Environ. Sci. Health, 1984, 2, 231.
3. Formaldehyde; CASRN 50-00-0, Compilation prepared by US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),
4. GB 18401-2001, "Textiles-Limit to Formaldehyde Content", Issued by General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the



People's Republic of China (AQSIQ), 2001.

5. J. F. Walker, "Formaldehyde", 3rd ed., 1964, Reinhold, New York.
6. Black C. M. (1997) Current methods of laboratory diagnosis of Chlamydia trachomatis infections. Clin. Microbiol. Rev. 10:160-184.
7. Carder C., Robinson A. J., Broughton C., Stephenson J. M., Ridgway G. L. (1999) Evaluation of self-taken samples for the presence of genital Chlamydia trachomatis infection in women using the ligase chain reaction assay. Int. J. STD AIDS 10:776-779.
8. Coutlée F., de Ladurantaye M., Tremblay C., Vincelette J., Labrecque L., Roger M. (2000) An important proportion of genital samples submitted for Chlamydia trachomatis detection by PCR contain small amounts of cellular DNA as measured by α -globin gene amplification. J. Clin. Microbiol. 38:2512-2515.
9. Green T. A., Black C. M., Johnson R. E. (1998) Evaluation of bias in diagnostic-test sensitivity and specificity estimates computed by discrepant analysis. J. Clin. Microbiol. 36:375-381.
10. Holmes K. K., Sparling P. F., Mardh P.-A., et al. Weström L., Eschenbach D. (1999) Pelvic inflammatory disease. in Sexually transmitted diseases. eds Holmes K. K., Sparling P. F., Mardh P.-A., et al. (McGraw-Hill Book Co. New York, N.Y), pp 783-809.