

# Survey on Menstrual Hygiene Awareness in School Going Girls

**Dr. Pradnya Sevakdas Ghodake**

Associate Professor  
OBGY Dept., MHF'S HMC, Sangamner

**Dr. Sadhana Mahendra Kolhe**

Assistant professor  
Organon of medicine Dept., MHF'S HMC, Sangamner

**Dr. Sham Dadasaheb Dholi**

Assistant professor  
HMM Dept., MHF'S HMC, Sangamner

**Abstract-** On any given day, more than 300 million women worldwide are menstruating. In total, an estimated 500 million lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM) <sup>1</sup>. Need of this awareness sessions are to overcome the various problems like genital infections, Anaemia, mental ill health etc. if woman is not aware of menstrual management she may suffer from different health issues during her reproductive life i.e. From menarche to menopause. AIM: To promote Menstrual hygiene awareness in adolescent girls. OBJECTIVE: 1. to educate the in adolescent girls about menstruation & its awareness 2. To Survey regarding menstrual hygiene & its awareness in school going adolescence. Conclusion: This survey study is conducted in the school where the students are coming from the remote areas. During this study we observed that 65% of questions were not responded by participants. It indicated the timidity & fear regarding the menses also reflect the social stigma related to the menstruation. The survey study emphasizes the need to motivate safe and hygienic practices among the adolescent girls especially during menstrual cycle. Need to gate rid of from social taboos, wrong beliefs, misunderstanding regarding menstruation.

**Keywords:** Menstruation, Hygiene, Awareness Program, Adolescence, Survey, Sanitary pads, reproductive health.

## INTRODUCTION:

According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme 2012, menstrual hygiene management is defined as: "Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials. They understand the basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fear."<sup>1</sup>

A UNICEF report had found that 71 per cent adolescent girls remain unaware of menstruation until they attain menarche .The silence around the subject, accompanied with myths and taboos, leave young girls unsure about navigating their daily lives during the menstrual cycle. It leaves them vulnerable to menstrual health challenges, leads to absenteeism, even dropping out of school.<sup>2</sup> Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH) is essential to the well-being and empowerment of women and adolescent girls. On any given day, more than 300 million women worldwide are menstruating. In total, an estimated 500 million lack access to menstrual products and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management (MHM). To effectively manage their menstruation, girls and women require access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, affordable and appropriate menstrual hygiene materials, information on good practices, and a supportive environment where they can manage menstruation without embarrassment or stigma.

## Priority Areas

**Education:** In low-income countries, half of the schools lack adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene services crucial to enable girls and female teachers to manage menstruation (UNICEF 2015). Many studies argue that inadequate sanitary facilities affect girls' experiences at school, causing them to miss classes during their menstruation or even drop out. Schools that have female-friendly facilities and incorporate information on menstruation into the curriculum for both girls and boys can reduce stigma and contribute to better education and health outcomes.

**Health:** When girls and women have access to safe and affordable sanitary materials to manage their menstruation, they decrease their risk of infections. This can have cascading effects on overall sexual and reproductive health, including reducing teen pregnancy, maternal outcomes, and fertility. Poor menstrual hygiene, however, can pose serious health risks, like reproductive and urinary tract infections which can result in future infertility and birth complications. Neglecting to wash hands after changing menstrual products can spread infections, such as hepatitis B and thrush.

• Studies have found that giving out sanitary pads to girls leads to a significant reduction in sexually transmitted infections and bacterial vaginitis. (Benshaul Tolonen et al. 2019; Phillips-Howard et al. 2016).

• The lack of means for hygienic management of menstruation can cause discomfort and psychological stress and adds to the shame and sometimes depression that women and girls experience because of menstruation-related taboos and stigma (Sweetman and Medland 2017).

**Gender Equality:** Promoting menstrual health and hygiene is an important means for safeguarding women's dignity, privacy, bodily integrity, and, consequently, their self-efficacy. Awareness of MHH contributes to building an enabling environment of nondiscrimination and gender equality in which female voices are heard, girls have choices about their future, and women have options to become leaders and managers.

• Girls who drop out of school have limited employment opportunities and often marry early and begin bearing children, further reducing their options for earning income.

**Environment:** Disposable sanitary products contribute to large amounts of global waste. Ensuring women and girls have access to sustainable and quality products, and improving the management of the disposal of menstrual products, can make a big difference to the environment.

Every year, an average woman trashes about 150 kilograms of non-biodegradable waste. In India alone, roughly 121 million women and girls use an average of eight disposable and non-compostable pads per month; generating 1.021 billion pads waste monthly, 12.3 billion pads waste annually, and 113, 000 metric tons of annual menstrual waste.<sup>1</sup>

### Menstrual Hygiene Is Key in Promoting Good Health

These hygiene practices can help you stay healthy and comfortable during your period:

- **Wear lightweight, breathable clothing** (such as cotton underwear). Tight fabrics can trap moisture and heat, allowing germs to thrive.
- **Change your menstrual products regularly.** Trapped moisture provides a breeding ground for bacteria and fungi. Wearing a pad or period underwear for too long can lead to a rash or an infection.
- **Keep your genital area clean.** Wash the outside of your vagina (vulva) and bottom every day. When you go to the bathroom, wipe from the front of your body toward the back, not the other way. Use only water to rinse your vulva. The vagina is a self-cleaning organ. Changing the natural pH balance of your vagina by washing or using chemicals to cleanse out the vagina can be harmful and may result in a yeast infection or bacterial vaginitis.
- **Use unscented toilet paper, tampons, or pads.** Scented hygiene products can irritate the skin and impact your natural pH balance.
- **Drink enough liquids.** This can help wash out your urinary tract and help prevent infections, like vaginal candidiasis.
- **Track and monitor your period.** Your menstrual cycle is a valuable marker for your overall health. Irregular periods can be a sign of conditions like diabetes, thyroid dysfunction, and celiac disease. You can track your period on a calendar or with an app on your phone designed for this purpose.<sup>3</sup>

UNICEF work in four key areas for improved menstrual health and hygiene:

1. Social support
2. Knowledge and skills
3. Facilities and services
4. Access to absorbent materials and supportive supplies.<sup>4</sup>

Though now a day menstrual hygiene awareness programs are commonly conducted but still impact & implementation of this programs is not so effective, that's the reason of conducting awareness seminars with their survey is necessary. To maintain the holistic mental & physical health along with reproductive & sexual health of female, basic knowledge about menstruation, hygiene during menses, awareness regarding both is essential.

Need of this awareness sessions are to overcome the various problems like genital infections, Anaemia, mental ill health etc. if woman is not aware of menstrual management she may suffer from different health issues during her reproductive life i.e. From menarche to menopause. On the occasion of national period action day 9<sup>th</sup> October, we arranged the menstrual hygiene & awareness program for school going adolescent girls.

### AIM:

To promote menstrual hygiene awareness in adolescent girls

### OBJECTIVE:

1. To educate the in adolescent girls about menstruation & its awareness.
2. To Survey regarding menstrual hygiene & awareness in school going adolescence.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

**1. What is Menstrual Hygiene?** Menstrual hygiene is vital to the empowerment and well-being of women and girls worldwide. It is about more than just access to sanitary pads and appropriate toilets – though those are important. It is also about ensuring women and girls live in an environment that values and supports their ability to manage their menstruation with dignity. Globally, at least 500 million women and girls lack proper access to menstrual hygiene facilities and more than one-third of schools lack single-sex toilets. For adolescent girls, the presence of a safe water supply and clean, functioning, private toilet facilities for managing their menstruation can be the difference between dropping out and getting an education. Additionally, lack of proper menstrual hygiene products increases risk of reproductive and urinary tract infections

2. Menstrual hygiene, a very important risk factor for reproductive tract infections, is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent girls. Educational television programs, trained school nurses/health personnel, motivated school teachers and knowledgeable parents can play a very important role in transmitting the vital message of correct menstrual hygiene to the adolescent girl of today.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. How has India addressed menstrual hygiene?

India has continued to do well on this front. The fifth National Family Health Survey (2019-2021) revealed that around 90% of women with 12 or more years of schooling used safe period products (locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins, tampons, and menstrual cups) in 17 states and Union territories. From the previous round of the survey, 20% more women aged 15-24 years used hygienic methods during menstruation.

MHH has a crucial part in achieving the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. Different states have their own schemes, but the primary focus of service delivery remains on the distribution of sanitary napkins. Maharashtra's 'Asmita Yojana', Rajasthan's 'Udaan', Andhra Pradesh's 'Swechcha', Kerala's 'She Pad', Odisha's 'Khusi', Chhattisgarh's 'Suchita', and Sikkim's 'Bahini' all have provisions to distribute subsidised or free sanitary napkins to adolescent girls. Kerala and Karnataka governments have been distributing menstrual cups as a sustainable alternative to sanitary napkins. These initiatives have helped promote MHH countrywide but there are important challenges to equity.

### 4. What are the challenges to MHH in India?

In India, social taboos about menstruation limit girls' and women's lives, including restrictions on eating, cooking, visiting places of worship, participating in social events, and sleeping arrangements on menstruation days. In Maharashtra, a study by researchers at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, found that the practice of segregating menstruating girls and women to 'kurmaghars', or "period huts", with no sanitation and other basic facilities poses a significant barrier to conducive sexual and reproductive health outcomes among females. Women in informal work (e.g. construction work, domestic work etc.) often have no access to washrooms, clean water for bathing, and to cost-effective hygiene products and their safe disposal. Often they also lack privacy to change their menstrual products. Third, recently, the Supreme Court refused to consider a PIL regarding menstruation leave for female employees and students nationwide, claiming that it was a policy issue. The 2022 'Right of Women to Menstrual Leave and Free Access to Menstrual Health Products Bill' specified three days of paid leave for women and trans-women during their periods, and additional benefits for students. Only two states, Kerala and Bihar, currently have menstrual leave policies for women.<sup>6</sup>

### 5. Health and psycho-social aspects

Poor MHM may affect the reproductive tract, but the specific infections, the strength of effect, and the route of transmission remain unclear. In India, a majority of girls are at risk for reproductive tract infections (RTI) because of poor MHM. RTI can lead to various disabilities if not treated early on and are the cause of 30–50% of prenatal infection. Due to prejudices surrounding the issue, some women in India do not eat or take showers during their menstruation. Girl's self-image may be negatively impacted by adverse attitudes towards menstruation.<sup>7</sup>

6. In India comic books [Menstrupedia Comic] have been used to educate children, street theatre performances to educate men and women, wall paintings and murals to engage community youth and art workshops and exhibitions to break the stigma and shame.<sup>7</sup>

7. Government has taken appropriate measures to improve menstrual hygiene practices through the schemes/ interventions of various Ministries/ Departments. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare implements the Scheme for Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene since 2011 to increase awareness among adolescent girls, to increase access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins to adolescent girls and to ensure safe disposal of Sanitary Napkins in an environmentally friendly manner. Further, teachers and Front line Workers - Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (FLW-ANMs), Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) worker and Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) are oriented appropriately in the scheme with the budget provided for the same under RashtriyaKishorSwasthyaKaryakram (RKSK). Further, one of the objectives of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) components of 'Misson Shakti' is to generate awareness about menstrual hygiene and use of sanitary napkins. Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has developed National Guidelines on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) for creating awareness on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in rural areas as part of its overall interventions related to behavior change on sanitation hygiene aspect. Further, Department of School Education and Literacy implements an integrated scheme namely 'SamagraShiksha' under which State specific projects for varied interventions on menstrual health and hygiene including installation of sanitary pad vending machines and incinerators are sanctioned. Ministry of Woman and Child Development implements the Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) under which, one of the component is improving their health and nutritional status and to motivate them to go back to formal schooling.<sup>8</sup>

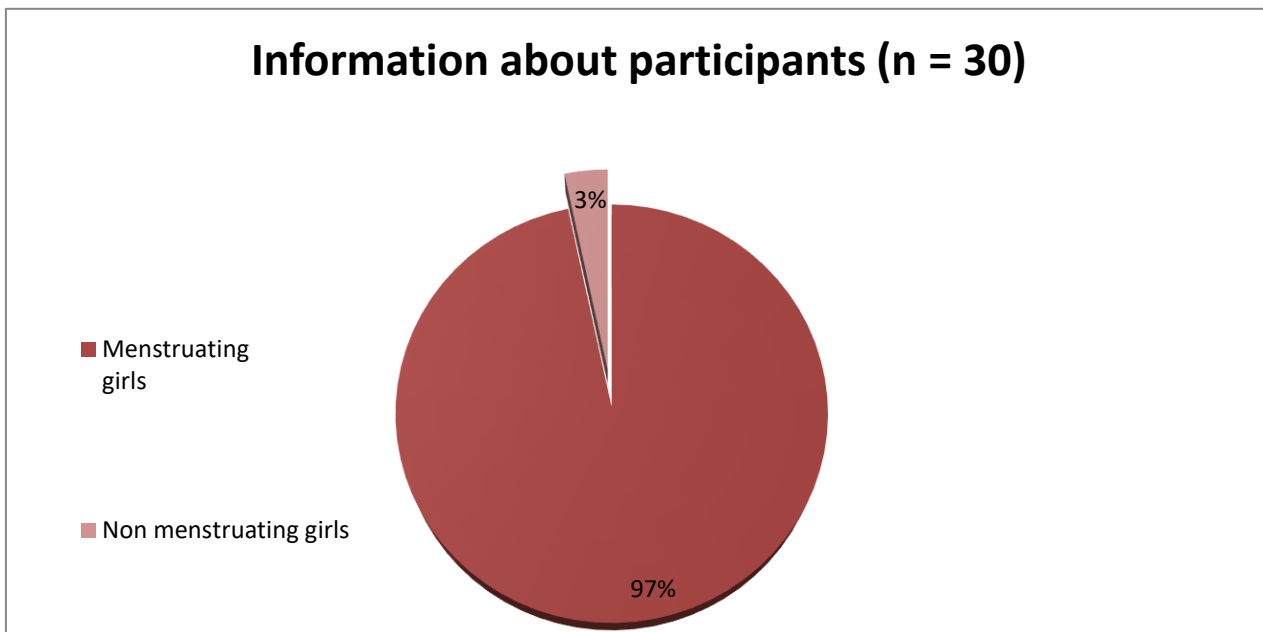
## MATERIAL METHOD:

- **Survey setting:** MHF'S Vrindavan English Medium School, Gunjalwadi Pathar, Sangamner
- **Prior permission of School Principal has been taken**
- **No. of Students participant:** 30 girls from the class VIII, IX & X.
- **Method of study of survey:**
  1. Pre-approved questionnaire related to Menstrual Hygiene & Awareness
  2. Pre -test of participants were conducted before session
  3. Session on Menstrual hygiene & awareness
  4. Followed by post -test of participants were conducted after the session
- **Ethical committee clearance is taken.**

**ANALYSIS & EVALUATION OF SURVEY:**

**Table 1: Information about participants (n = 30)**

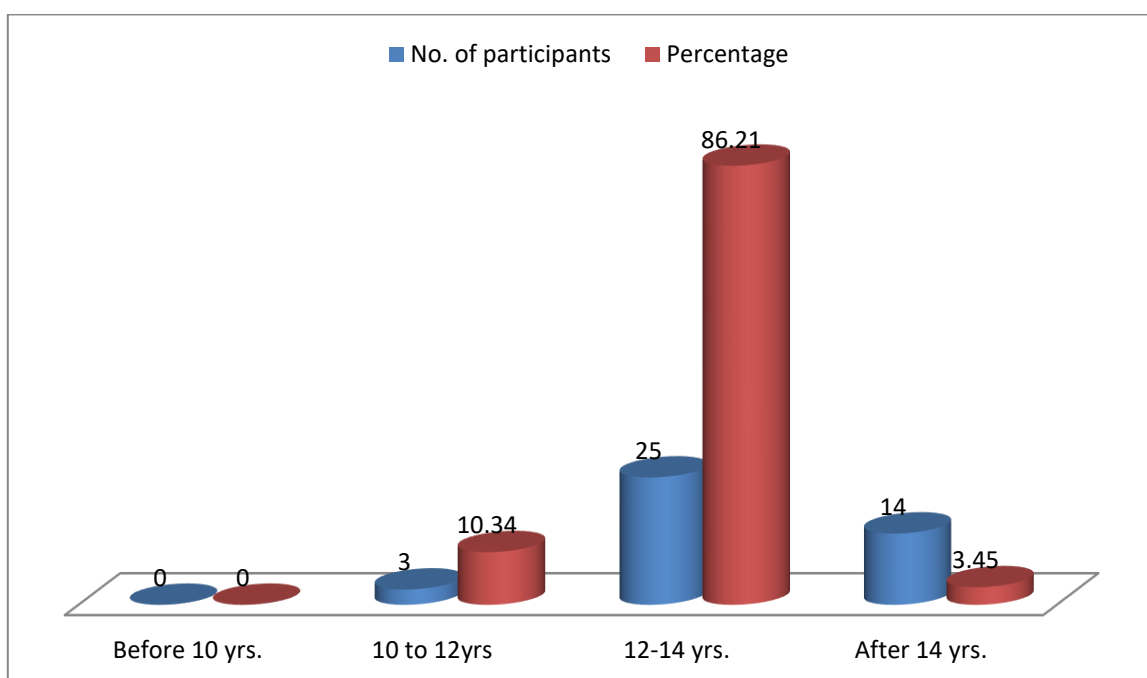
No. of participant	Menstruating girls	Non menstruating girls
30	29	01



• **Table 1** : Shows 30 girls from the class VIII, IX & X were selected for the survey study of menstrual hygiene awareness out of which 29(97%) girls were menstruating & 01(3%) girl was non menstruating.

**Table 2: Analysis of age group of menarche**

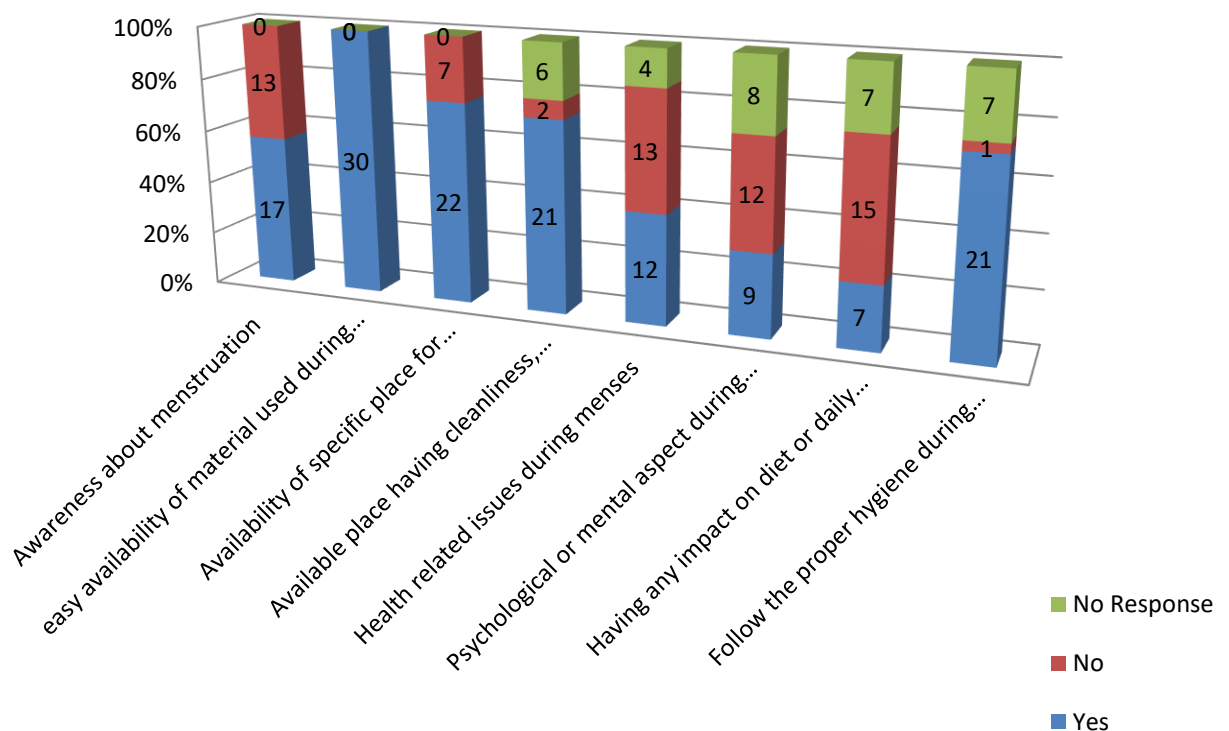
Sr. no.	Age group of menarche	No. of participants	Percentage
1	Before 10 yrs.	00	00
2	10 to 12yrs	03	10.34
3	12-14 yrs.	25	86.21
4	After 14 yrs.	01	3.45



- **Table 2:** Shows that 12 to 14 years age group (86.21%) is the most common age group for menarche. Before 10 years not a single participant found, in 10 to 12 years age group 10.34% & after 14 years 3.45 % participants started their menarche.

**Table 3: Analysis of Participant's data**

Sr. no.	Observations	Participants			Percentage		
		Yes	No	No Response	Yes	No	No Response
1	Awareness about menstruation	17	13	00	56.67	34.33	00
2	easy availability of material used during menses	30	00	00	100	00	00
3	Availability of specific place for changing during menses	22	07	00	75.86	24.14	00
4	Available place having cleanliness, privacy & related facilities	21	02	06	72.41	06.90	20.69
5	Health related issues during menses	12	13	04	41.38	44.82	13.80
6	Psychological or mental aspect during menses	09	12	08	31.03	41.38	27.59
7	Having any impact on diet or daily routine during menses	07	15	07	24.14	51.72	24.14
8	Follow the proper hygiene during menses	21	01	07	72.41	3.45	24.14

**Analysis of Participants Data**

**Table 3:** Shows that about 56.67% girls know about menses before starting their own menses. 100% of girls have easy availability of material used during menses. For 75.86 % girls having specific place for change at home as well as school. Available place is comfortable for about 72.41 % girls as per cleanliness /privacy/facilities related. 41.38 % of girls are having health related issues / complaints during menses. 31.03 % girls having Psychological or mental aspect during menses. 72.41% girls follow the proper hygiene during menses. 65% of questions were not answered (not responding) by participants.

#### CONCLUSION:

Various problems as genital infections, anemia, mental ill health like mood swings, irritability, loneliness, unknown fear etc. are commonly observed in adolescent age group. Most probable cause behind all of these, especially in this age group is unawareness regarding menses, its hygiene & pubertal changes.

Though the participants are from the remote area, 100% of girls got information regarding menstrual cycle from their family & about 57% girls know about menses before starting their own menses. . All the girls are using the sanitary pads.

We do survey study in the age group 13 to 15 year's girls of class VIII, IX, X. here we found that 12 to 14 years age group is the most common age group for menarche. Majority of girls are comfortable with using disposable material during menses & using different ways to dispose the used material like wrapping it & throwing in dust bin & burning.

Survey study shows during menses girls feel safe to use the wash room area available in the school & also comfortable as per cleanliness, privacy & available facilities like water, dust bins, wrapping papers, wash basins etc. Maximum girls are aware about their cleanliness during menses.

This survey study is conducted in the school where the students are coming from the remote areas. During this study we observed that 65% of questions were not responded by participants. It indicated the timidity & fear regarding the menses also reflect the social stigma related to the menstruation.

There is necessity of free talk on "Me & My Menses" among the students & teachers which enhance gender equality & social awareness regarding normalcy of Menstrual cycle. Frequent Workshops on menstrual hygiene awareness are necessary.

The survey study emphasizes the need to motivate safe and hygienic practices among the adolescent girls especially during menstrual cycle. Need to gate rid of from social taboos, wrong beliefs, misunderstanding regarding menstruation.

**Matter of conflicts: No issue of conflict**

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