

Briefing Note



Perceptions of Latrine Safety and Anxiety in Kampala, Uganda

Background and Methodology

The objective of the MUSE project is to create and validate survey tools to measure sanitation-related women's empowerment¹. In December 2019-February 2020, enumerators administered the MUSE survey to 1,024 women in Kampala, Uganda. Using the survey data, we conducted multiple linear regressions to determine associations between latrine attributes, perceived lack of safety, and anxiety.

Findings

Sanitation characteristics

- Most respondents shared latrines with others; only 13% of participants used private latrines.
- Only 4% reported that their toilets had sufficient lighting inside; 19% had adequate lighting on the way to facilities.

Safety and Anxiety Outcomes

- 47% of respondents reported that they felt unsafe when using their latrine at night 'sometimes, often, or always'
- 33% of respondents had symptoms of anxiety based on the PHQ-4, an anxiety screening tool².
- Women with more frequent perceived lack of safety were significantly more likely to have higher anxiety scores.

The Role of Sanitation

- Latrines located in private, poorly-lit locations were associated with lower perceived safety.
- Farther distance to the latrine, poor lighting, and lower wealth were all associated with higher anxiety scores.
- Women with latrines that were not structurally private located in private areas were more likely to report frequent feelings of a lack of safety than women with latrines that were not structurally private located in, non-private areas.
- The only latrine attribute that was significantly associated with both perceived safety and anxiety was lighting: women with well-lit facilities inside *and* on the way to the latrine had lower perceived lack of safety at night and lower anxiety scores.

Funder



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Implications

- We identified evidence that sanitation stressors are associated with women's anxiety.
- There is a **need to devote additional attention to sanitation-related mental health research and services, particularly regarding anxiety**, in urban Kampala.
- Women in Kampala should be engaged to understand how best to improve sanitation conditions to strengthen their safety and ameliorate their sanitation-related anxiety.

References

1. Sinharoy, S. S., Conrad, A., McManus, S., Patrick, M., & Caruso, B. (2021). Development and validation protocol for an instrument to measure women's empowerment in urban sanitation across countries: The Agency, Resources, and Institutional Structures for Sanitation-related Empowerment (ARISE) Scales. *medRxiv*
2. Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., Williams, J. B., & Löwe, B. (2009). An ultra-brief screening scale for anxiety and depression: the PHQ-4. *Psychosomatics, 50*(6), 613-621.