Menstrual Health: Making the Case for Educational Interventions

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Shame, Silence and Secrecy
ATTENTION!

WOMEN ARE NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER THE TEMPLE DURING MENSTRUATION

THANK YOU

Photo Credit: Dominique Bergeron
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Artist: Satbir Kaur.
Courtesy of Binti International
constructs menstruation as a failing, a shortcoming or a handicap.
KEEP THAT
“JUST SHOWERED”
FEELING
ALL DAY LONG
WITH NEW ALWAYS DAILIES LINERS.
Stay fresh morning, noon and night with these flexibly thin liners.
Try it for a week, and feel the difference for yourself!
Experience the New Whisper Ultra Clean. Here’s the pad that lasts all day long!
#WEAREDONEwhispering
There are over 5,000 terms for period.
Women associated with the tampon were rated as less competent and less likeable than women associated with the hairclip
• Psychological health
• Decision making
[Johnston-Robledo et al. 2007]
• Psychological health
• Decision making
[Johnston-Robledo et al. 2007]

shapes perceptions

• Lower social status
[Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler 2011]
• Irritable
• Impure
[Forbest et al. 2003]
**Stigma**

**IMPACTS**
- Psychological health
  
  [Johnston-Robledo et al. 2007]
- Decision making

**SHAPES**
- Lower social status
  
  [Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler 2011]
- Irritable
- Impure

**INSTIGATES**
- Self-Consciousness
  
  [Oxley 1998]
- Self-Monitoring
  
  [Laws 1990; Young 2005]
“Girls learn that they must keep menstruation clean and invisible, and they are set out on a long and demanding path of ‘housekeeping’ their bodies for their own comfort and the sensibilities of others.”

(Diorio and Munro 2010, 358)
“Girls across LMIC (Low and Middle Income Countries) have limited knowledge and understanding about menstruation prior to reaching menarche” (Chandra-Mouli and Patel 2017)

In Northeast Ethiopia, 49% of pre-menarchial girls lacked any menstrual knowledge. (Tegegene et al 2014)

In slums & villages in 3 Indian states, “41 % of girls had no information (Mahon & Fernandes 2010)

In rural Kenya, it is common for girls to learn of menstruation only at menarche (Mason et al., 2013)
Girls’ Misconceptions about Menstruation

- 97.5% of West Bengalese girls did not know the source of menstrual bleeding (Dasgupta & Sarkar 2008)
- In a study in Nepal, 82% of girls regarded menstruation as 'a curse'; 6% understood menstruation as a physiological process (Adhikari et al. 2007)
- In Maharashtra, India, all girls were aware of menstruation but 72% thought menstrual fluid was impure (Nemade, Anjenaya, & Gujar 2009)
- In a study of a semi-nomadic tribe in Jammu & Kashmir, girls thought menstruation's purpose was the removal of ‘bad blood’ (Dhingra et al. 2009)
- In a study in India, 39% of urban and 56% of rural girls regarded menstruation as a disease. (Dube & Sharma 2012)
What Do Girls THINK about their Menstruation?

In a study of in Kenya girls, expressed fear, shame, distraction and confusion associated with menstruation.

WHY? They fear stigma and embarrassment and see menstruation as the advent of their sexual status.

(McMahon et al. 2011)

In the US, girls have largely negative feelings about menstruation.

WHY? They see it as a marker of maturity and a source of embarrassment.

(Stubbs 2008)
Men Take the Lead
Event
Bangalore, India
organized by
Urmila Chanam.
Menstrual Literacy: Read Your Cycle
“Practitioners [are urged] to use menstruation in girls and adolescents as a vital sign.”

Menstrual Literacy

Embodied Agency
Early Menstrual Experiences:
gateways to lifetimes of dis/engagement with one’s body
Creative, body-positive culturally-sensitive, high quality and ongoing menstrual cycle education... not only for girls but for everyone in girls’ lives.

Bobel 2018
Not all girls and women menstruate.

Not only girls and women menstruate.
How can we keep girls safe?
How can we keep girls safe?

How can we promote menstrual cycle facts without trampling on traditional belief systems?
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How can we promote menstrual cycle facts without trampling on traditional belief systems?

How can we supportively contextualize menstrual health?
Always put menstruators at the center