

Adolescent schoolgirls' experiences of menstrual cups and pads in rural western Kenya: a qualitative study

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Description:

Poor menstrual hygiene management (MHM) among schoolgirls in low income countries affects girls' dignity, self-esteem, and schooling. Hygienic, effective, and sustainable menstrual products are required. A randomized controlled feasibility study was conducted among 14-16-year-old girls, in 30 primary schools in rural western Kenya, to examine acceptability, use, and safety of menstrual cups or sanitary pads. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to evaluate girls' perceptions and experiences six months after product introduction. Narratives from 10 girls' and 6 parents' FGDs were analysed thematically. Comparison, fear, and confidence were emergent themes. Initial use of cups was slow. Once comfortable, girls using cups or pads reported being free of embarrassing leakage, odour, and dislodged items compared with girls using traditional materials. School absenteeism and impaired concentration were only reported by girls using traditional materials. Girls using cups preferred them to pads. Advantages of cups and pads over traditional items provide optimism for MHM programmes

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