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Amanda K. Molina Ms.
Ramapo College of New Jersey, akmolina928@gmail.com

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Normalizing the Topic of Menstruation through the *#Prideintheperiod* Campaign

Amanda K. Molina), Ramapo College of New Jersey

Conference Paper (Undergraduate)

Abstract

Since shame is embedded in the discourse of menstruation, the researcher chose to naturalize the conversation of menstruation since it is an innate bodily function that menstruators should not be embarrassed about. Granted the improper sex education and the continuous genderization of menstruation promoted societal menstrual shame, the researcher found that both genders needed to be re-educated on menstrual stigma and be included in menstruation conversations. Through a needs assessment, the researcher created five campaign messages that allowed participants to see varying perspectives on periods. Both a questionnaire and a survey evaluated if the campaign changed the participants' perceptions of menstruation. The campaign results vocalized that participants previously viewed menstruation as 'embarrassing' based on being uninformed of the other gender's relationship to menstruation. To normalize menstruation, participants stressed that education and conversations need to value both genders' perspectives and display menstruation realistically.

Keywords: menstruation, menstrual stigma, shame, sex education, awareness campaign

Introduction

The proposed topic for this paper discusses the prevalent social stigma against people who experience menstrual cycles. Despite the menstrual cycle representing fertility within women and other individuals who have uteruses, society deems menstruators as 'unclean' when they menstruate. Our modern-day society views menstruation as taboo since it goes against the social construct of femininity, which dictates frailty, innocence, and beauty to be

ideal for womanhood. Therefore, society regards periods as a “blemish to one’s character” since sexual maturity within a woman is unfeminine (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013, p.10). Even though patriarchal society is infatuated with females as “objects of male desire,” periods are conceptualized as an inconvenience to males since it reduces sexual availability (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2005, p. 325). Since shame is embedded in the discourse of menstruation, the researcher chose to naturalize the conversation of menstruation since it is an innate bodily function that menstruators should not be embarrassed about.

There is a need to normalize the discourse on menstruation since many misconceptions are spread about the female reproductive system. These misconceptions about the vagina and the act of menstruation are caused by the exclusion of men from the conversation and its limited presentation in sex education (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013). By gendering the conversation as a female issue, women are taught to keep this process a secret out of convenience to men. When framing menstruation as a private conversation, women will internalize periods as shameful and that concealing menstruation is necessary to avoid negative perceptions (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013). This lack of education on the female reproductive system leads to the belief that “not only is the act of menstruation shameful but the young woman who menstruates becomes dirty and shameful” (Schooler et al., 2005, p. 325).

Similarly, maintaining menstruation as a gender-specific conversation reinforces that menstruators’ bodies need to be “clean” or their feelings of embarrassment and self-hatred are deserved (Siebert, 2018). As a result of menstrual shame, “58% percent of women have felt embarrassment from being on their period and 42% of women have experienced period shaming,” discouraging females for their body and its natural functions (Brannagan, 2018). Granted that shame about menstruation prompts females to objectify their own bodies, it is essential for society to learn about the female reproductive system to encourage body confidence in menstruators.

In the hope that education on female reproductive health will create compassion toward menstruation, the current project will showcase how these stigmatized views affected the representation of menstruators in media texts, their relationships, and body confidence. By making both genders cognizant of media promoting this stigma, the current project will try to change how menstruation is represented. By the same token, making both genders familiar with female reproductive health will encourage women to vocalize the discrimination they feel in society in terms of their bodies and gain more knowledge on their reproductive processes. Given that menstruators feel indecent due to their period, the project’s key message will elaborate on how menstruators should not be ashamed of their period since it is a natural part of the female experience. The researcher concentrated on a key message that stresses menstruation as a positive conversation to discuss within society

since menstruators have been tormented for showcasing their period, which is evident within media texts, euphemisms, and advertising for period products. As stated by Siebert (2018) citing a survey conducted by Think, "62% of women admit that they have felt irked simply by using the word 'period' and 47% of women have resorted to using more 'palatable' names for their periods". As a result of shame being embedded into the conversation of menstruation, individuals with periods are taught to be apologetic of their ability to reproduce since it goes against the female gender norm of purity, making them humiliated of their whole body due to its irrepressible nature. By framing menstruation as a process that displays the health of the menstruator, the researcher hopes to increase the self-worth and self-efficacy of menstruators.

Literature Review

Within *Cycles of Shame: Menstrual Shame, Body Shame, and Sexual Decision Making* (2005), Schooler et al. vocalize how the lack of discussion on menstruation creates a culture where the female body is shamed for being gross. To expand further, this study highlights how women being humiliated for their menstrual cycle connects to their sexual decision making and objectification of their own bodies. Schooler et al. stresses that discourses revolving around female sexuality focus on women's bodies being sites of consumption rather than personal pleasure which leads women to "sexual risk taking and reduced sexual satisfaction" to appease their partners (2005, p. 326). This study is important to naturalizing the conversation of the menstrual cycle since it will help educate both genders on menstruation, bring awareness to how providing accurate information on the female anatomy can increase female body confidence, self-efficacy in terms of contraceptive use, and female sexual assertiveness.

As seen within *The Menstrual Mark: Menstruation as a Social Stigma* (2013), Johnston Robledo and Chrisler pronounce how menstrual stigma is seen through religion, media, and merchandising to frame period blood as corruption to femininity. Both authors discuss how the lack of education on the menstrual cycle and lack of experience with periods has caused males to personify menstruators as "mysterious, poisonous, and out-of-control" (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, 2013, p. 10). As a result of these negative representations of menstruators, women are told to be conscious of their bodies by concealing their menstrual cycles to maintain femininity. As stated by Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler (2013), "in a culture where women's bodies routinely are sexually objectified, women themselves can internalize the sexual objectification of their bodies and view themselves through the lens of a critical male gaze" (p. 13). This text is important to naturalizing the conversation of menstruation since it expresses how society has conceived this stigma due to lack of education and images in popular

culture as well as advertising that continues to permeate the stigma. In a like manner, this text provides the researcher with ideas on how to challenge the stigma of menstruation through online media that can aid in rewriting the negative narrative of menstruation and encourage positive identity development (Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, 2013).

In *Men and Menstruation: A Qualitative Exploration of Beliefs, Attitudes, and Experiences*, Peranovic and Bentley (2017) dissect men's varying perspectives on menstruation with a focus on their management of the taboo, current attitudes, past experiences, relationships, and interaction with media texts as well as social commentary. Both authors highlight how menstruation is viewed negatively due to excluding men from the conversation of female reproductive health, as seen in education and family systems (Peranovic & Bentley, 2017). Similarly, Peranovic and Bentley underscore how a lack of adequate education of female reproductive health creates a discourse of secrecy and reflects how some men are reluctant to talk about a "woman's problem," since it does not affect them. Despite the polarity in the reactions from males in the study, the authors grasp that challenging the idea of menstruation will help improve male's relationships with menstruators and increase their agency in reproductive decision-making. The researcher believes this text is essential to naturalizing the conversation of menstruation since it highlights how men gain negative representations of menstruators through a lack of education.

Theoretical Framework

To naturalize the conversation of menstruation to both genders, the researcher will utilize the theoretical frameworks of Social Cognitive Theory and Agenda Setting Theory. Through Social Cognitive Theory, the researcher intends to understand how participants gain the negative perception of menstruation through societal influences and understand how to create a behavioral change through observational learning, allowing the researcher "to watch the actions of another person and the reinforcements that the person receives" (University of Twente, 2004, p. 43). By understanding participants' behavior toward menstruation, the researcher hopes to promote positive images of menstruation through role models to encourage self-efficacy. The researcher will also provide educational resources that will help participants on female reproductive health and demonstrate how media shames menstruators. Another theory the researcher plans to use to naturalize the conversation of menstruation is Agenda Setting Theory since it demonstrates how powerful media can be in creating images to the public (University of Twente, 2004). By bringing awareness to how menstrual shame makes women feel inferior, it will allow participants to understand that "media does not reflect reality" (University of Twente, 2004, p. 104). Through agenda setting, the researcher will pronounce how proper health education will make the conversation of menstruation natural between both genders.

Goals, Objectives, & Indicators

The main goal of the campaign is to encourage both genders to comfortably converse about menstruation without shaming the menstruators' reproductive processes. Additionally, the researcher hopes to reduce menstrual stigma to promote body confidence within menstruators since they feel insecure about their body during menstruation due to framing this process as immoral and unhygienic. Lastly, the researcher wants to educate both genders on the history of the stigma against menstruation, basic female reproductive health, and how menstruators feel shame from society. By bringing awareness to the negative societal perceptions of menstruators that is disseminated through popularized media texts, the researcher hopes to change how menstruation is represented in society. To adopt menstruation as a common topic in conversation, one objective of this campaign is to utilize educational resources that provide credible data and personal experiences of menstruators that involve shame and societal discomfort. By using the various forms of educational resources that focus on fact and experience, it will help reduce the stigma against periods that are created due to a lack of knowledge and understanding seen within both genders. Without educating males on the female reproductive system and how menstruation affects these individuals, they will lack the ability to empathize with period stigma and continue the cycle of shame through spreading misconceptions (Siebert, 2018). On the other hand, without educating menstruators on their reproductive systems, they will continue to feel shame when discussing their period in mixed company, have low self-esteem, use euphemisms, lack knowledge on their external genitalia, and engage in sexual risk-taking (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether, & Caruthers, 2005). This education on the social taboo of menstruation will also bring awareness to how society shames menstruators through specific terminology in advertising and their portrayals in media that depicts them as crazy or imbalanced.

Another objective of this campaign is to feature media conversations that vocalize the discomfort menstruators feel when they are shamed for their bodies' processes. By showing the common discomfort menstruators experience, it will allow the audience to grasp how society does not pronounce menstrual stigma as a problem and continues to underscore menstruation as improper. Additionally, the researcher wants to make males more understanding of period stigma through education to feel as though they can help their loved ones who have periods. The last objective of this awareness campaign hopes to make men sympathize with women through their own shameful experiences with puberty. Through making males acknowledge their own genitalia shame, it will help them understand how menstruators feel when they are degraded for their bodily functions. The indicators of this campaign will measure if the target audience of 14- to 50-year-old females has gained more knowledge of their menstrual cycle, reproductive system,

and if their negative perception of menstruation has changed. Also, the researcher plans to measure if the target audience will feel comfortable talking about menstruation in a mixed audience to see if there was a reduction in menstrual stigma. This indicator will be measurable through the comparison of the questionnaire and survey where the researcher could observe if there are changes in the participants due to exposure to educational resources. This awareness campaign will be successful if between 40% to 50% of participants have a more positive view of menstruation and feel comfortable talking about menstruation in mixed company. Since education clarifies misconceptions about menstruation and brings awareness to the stigma, the researcher believes the audience can accomplish this goal throughout their questionnaires and surveys in a time frame of ten days.

Audience Analysis & Needs Assessment

The audience of this campaign will be relatives and friends of the researcher who are both genders that are accessible in person and over the phone during the Coronavirus quarantine. Despite the inaccessibility to many participants during social isolation, the researcher will interact with an audience that lives in Northern New Jersey since they were exposed to similar gender norms that influence their view of menstruation. Seeing that menstruation occurs from ages fourteen to about fifty in individuals with vaginas, the researcher will centralize on menstruators within this age range. To expand, the researcher chose this demographic since it will allow her to understand their feelings on menstruation and how to change the negative perception of menstruation to a more positive outlook that encourages body positivity. To find the audience's needs for the campaign, the researcher created a needs assessment that contained fourteen questions for all seven participants. The participants preferred the anonymous nature of surveys and questionnaires since they could answer more honestly and do it in the comfort of their homes. It was also found that the audience is most responsive to a mixture of educational and storytime videos, reading material on menstruation and shame, lectures, and strong visual aspects. Most participants felt that personal stories were more relatable, solidified facts, and showed varying levels of stigmatization of menstruation.

The participants wanted to be involved in this campaign for the intrinsic motivation of learning, to be more empathetic, and to make others aware of the menstrual stigma. Several participants disclosed to the researcher that they want to be involved in the conversation of normalizing menstruation to feel more confident in their bodies and change the negative perception of menstruation. Through their involvement in the campaign, the participants hope to frame periods as natural and get rid of the stigma against menstruation to better a menstruator's life. The main point that participants vocalized to make menstruation relevant to both genders was by sharing their shameful experiences with their genitalia to compare male conditions to menstruation. Participants felt that the campaign would be more efficient if

the researcher created social media content that contains memorable slogans, related men's genitalia shame to menstruation, and used more personal experiences. Additionally, the participants thought the campaign of naturalizing the conversation of menstruation would be successful if both genders were made aware of the stigma of menstruation and if the negative perception of menstruation was changed into a more positive topic.

Communication Activities & Implementation

For the message design, the researcher wanted to create five campaign messages called #Prideintheperiod encouraging viewers to think about period shame from varying perspectives. For the first campaign message, the researcher uses an image of a young boy and girl getting their first period with a headline stating, "Would we be less embarrassed to talk about periods if we all had them." The second campaign message will revolve around the image of a young boy and girl looking down at their genitalia underneath their pants with the headline of "Remember the shame we all experienced during puberty". Underneath the image of the boy and girl examining their genitalia, the researcher would utilize the sub headline of "Well, imagine if that shame continued every month for forty years of your life". Regarding the third message, the researcher will use the imagery of a bloody band aid in comparison to a bloody pad or tampon with the bold headline of "Why are we more comfortable with a bloody cut than period blood". Underneath the inquisitive headline and the following comparative imagery of feminine products, the researcher will use the subhead line stating, "Let's talk about periods because they are normal. Start the conversation with both genders to stop menstrual shaming, period". For the fourth campaign, the headline will state, "Blood runs through all our veins, so why is period blood any different," which will be accompanied by an image of a girl trying to discreetly hide a tampon up her sleeve. Underneath this image of a girl hiding a tampon in her sleeve, there will be a sub headline that states, "It is not a secret that menstruation happens, because it is natural. For anyone on their period, you are not shameful for menstruating. Remember, your period displays your vagina's health, and you are beautiful." For the last campaign message, the researcher will use the headline of "The problem is not the period, it's our perception". Along with this headline, there will be an image of both a girl and boy looking at a billboard of the fourth #Prideintheperiod message with their negative perspectives on periods in a conjoined thought bubble. Underneath this image, the last message will also include the subhead line of "By changing how society views menstruation through conversation and education, we can all put an end to period shaming". Through all five messages in the #Prideintheperiod campaign, the researcher plans to use both color, graphics, and message content to bring attention to the

stigmatization of menstruation and illustrate how periods should be normalized by both genders.

The five campaign messages were created to counter menstrual stigma in response to her target audience's needs of normalizing the conversation to avoid the embarrassment of their body, encourage body confidence, and make them comfortable talking about menstruation (Schiavo, 2013). By framing menstruation as a healthy bodily function, the researcher hopes to affect the attitudes of society to "understand, remember, and feel motivated to apply it to their everyday life" (Schiavo, 2013, p. 96). To frame menstruation as a normal bodily function, the researcher created the hashtag '#Prideintheperiod,' to help spur the change in the representation of menstruation as a positive topic of conversation. Through this campaign slogan, the researcher aims to promote menstruators' body confidence to feel that their bodies' menstrual process is not shameful since it displays their fertile health. The researcher also believes this message design is effective since it displays the complex nature of menstrual stigma that affects both genders. The first message in the #Prideintheperiod campaign showcases the discourse of shame that is embedded into menstruation but also displays imagery that includes men in the conversation as well. By choosing imagery with both genders, this message will effectively allow viewers to sympathize with menstruators' experience, despite not biologically experiencing this function. Similarly, the second campaign underscores how both genders are critical of their body during puberty, therefore making it easier for men to sympathize with menstruators. The third campaign message will express how society is more tolerable of blood from an accident or violence, rather than natural menstrual blood. Through the visual comparison of a bloody band aid to a used pad or tampon, it will create a conversation that will change the representation of menstruation from shameful to normalized, which will benefit the target audience.

Through the utilization of the fourth message campaign, the researcher stresses the measures menstruators go through to conceal their periods from others out of fear of being ridiculed. This imagery of the girl hiding a tampon in her sleeve will resonate with the target audience since it will display their struggles of keeping their period secret. The last campaign message will bring attention to the skewed perception of menstruation as an immoral action and offer the solution to end period stigmatization through conversations and education. Through the creation of all five messages, the researcher hopes to reach the target audience by stressing the realistic struggles of menstruators, promoting sympathy from male viewers, encourage body confidence, and draw attention to a lack of awareness of menstrual stigma to change the negative representation of menstruation in society. By including all these factors in the #Prideintheperiod campaign, the researcher hopes to not only satisfy the needs of her target audience but show

“appreciation for others, help increase behavioral compliance, show personal experiences, and relieve stress by including both genders in the narrative” (Schiavo, 2013, pp. 97-98).

Through the five campaign messages in the #Prideintheperiod campaign, the researcher used the emotional persuasive appeal to convey the nature of menstrual stigma and the need to naturalize the conversation of menstruation to the audience (Bartley, 2019). Within the first campaign message, the researcher questioned the existence of menstrual stigma if both genders had this biological process. By putting both genders in the same experience of accidental bleeding, the researcher designed this campaign message to promote sympathy from both genders on the shame associated with menstruation. In a similar manner to the first campaign message, the second campaign message uses the comparison of the shame experienced during puberty to menstrual shame to make both genders relate to one another. Within the third campaign message, through the visual comparison between a bloody bandage to the used tampon and pad, the researcher demonstrated how society is more understanding of one type of blood since it is from both genders but are not accepting of menstrual blood. Through the fourth campaign message’s imagery of the girl hiding her tampon in her sleeve, the researcher showcased the lengths menstruators go through to conceal their periods out of fear of being humiliated. Therefore, the emotional persuasive appeal of this campaign message was meant for viewers to understand the fear of being ‘outed’ as a menstruator and to promote sympathy within participants. In the last campaign message, the emotional persuasive appeal was presented through a visual of both a boy and girl looking at the #Prideintheperiod campaign message with their negative thoughts on menstruation. This campaign points out all the common misconceptions about menstruation and how to fix the perception of menstruation through education and conversation. By offering how to fix the perception of menstruation through open conversations and proper education, the researcher showed the emotional persuasive appeal by showing how the participants can change the representation of menstruation themselves. Through using the emotional persuasive appeal within the visual campaign messages, the researcher aimed to appeal to the participants’ emotions in order to change their negative view of menstruation and feel able to talk about menstruation with both genders comfortably (Bartley, 2019). The researcher found that the emotional persuasive appeal was more “user-oriented,” allowing her to fixate on how menstruation representation needs to change in order to better the lives of fourteen- to fifty-year-old menstruators who suffer from period stigmatization (Bartley, 2019).

The communication channels the researcher will use to disseminate the #Prideintheperiod campaign will be through Instagram and email. Through Instagram, the researcher will create five social media messages and post

them on the *Prideintheperiod* account. With the utilization of this account, the researcher will have the ability to share resources with her audience to help normalize the topic of menstruation. By using Instagram, the researcher will easily obtain their feedback. The researcher chose to use social media within her campaign since "it will personalize and reinforce health messages that can be more easily targeted to particular audiences and facilitate interactive communication" (Brodalski, Brink, Curtis, Diaz, Schindelar, Shannon, & Wolfson, 2011, p. 1). The researcher used social media to encourage users to share information easily, boosts participation, and increases accessibility to the message (Brodalski et al., 2011). The researcher chose her primary communication channel to be the social media platform of Instagram since the *#Prideintheperiod* campaign revolves around five visual campaign messages and easy interaction with her audience. In the case that several participants in this campaign do not have an Instagram account, the researcher will send the same five campaign messages over email and ask for their genuine reactions in a response email.

The researcher chose to use Instagram to spread her awareness campaign since five out of the seven participants have an account on this platform, allowing her to easily interact with participants to share resources and gain their authentic reactions to the campaign efforts. Additionally, the researcher thought the use of Instagram would be beneficial to her audience since they can interact with the campaign without the presence of the researcher to make them feel more comfortable discussing the taboo of menstruation. It was also found that the demographic that utilizes Instagram and social media the most are females which will help the researcher in her efforts to communicate with her target audience of 14- to 50-year-old menstruators (Brodalski et al., 2011). Additionally, the researcher thought the use of Instagram would be beneficial to her audience since they can interact with the campaign without the presence of the researcher to feel more comfortable discussing menstruation. If several participants do not have an Instagram, the researcher will send the campaign messages over email and ask for their reactions in a response email. Within *Prideintheperiod Resources* in the Instagram bio, it displays a link to the questionnaire meant to be taken before exposure to the resources and campaign messages to demonstrate the participant's initial thoughts on menstruation in society. After completing the questionnaire, the participants then chose from twenty-one resources on the document that are either academic papers, articles, YouTube videos, or speeches. By offering a variety of materials for the participants, the researcher was hoping for her participants to take agency in their efforts to learn about menstrual stigma. The researcher exposed one campaign message to the participants every two days to give them ample time to respond to the messaging. On the final day of the campaign, the researcher then implemented a survey on the effectiveness of the resources and the five campaign messages over the same platform of Google Forms.

Evaluation Plan

To make sure the campaign runs effectively for participants, the researcher twice a day during the ten-day-long campaign checked her Instagram account for commentary and the resource page's links to ensure they were still accessible. The researcher used the research approaches of both a questionnaire and a survey to evaluate the campaign outcomes. To expand, the survey was implemented into the campaign to understand the participant's initial thoughts on menstruation before exposure to campaign messages. Within the questionnaire, there were nine questions to understand their thoughts on menstruation, if they were comfortable with discussing menstruation in mixed company, if they have been exposed to menstrual shaming, and if they believe menstruation can be a positive conversation. After completing the questionnaire, the participants then choose various resources to suit their learning style and look at the campaign messages. Upon the completion of looking over the resources and campaign messages, the participants completed a survey to determine if the #Prideintheperiod campaign was effective in normalizing the conversation of menstruation in their life. To clarify, the researcher asked the participants twenty-two questions to understand if the campaign was effective in bringing awareness to menstrual stigma, encouraging body confidence in menstruators, and normalizing the conversation of menstruation in society. Through the use of the questionnaire and survey, the researcher hoped to see a positive change in the participants' perceptions of menstruation and encourage both genders to openly converse about menstruation to reduce the stigma among their own surroundings. Additionally, the researcher aimed to bring awareness to menstrual stigma and reduce its negative effects in order to promote body confidence and self-efficacy in menstruators. Lastly, by comparing shame during puberty to period shaming, the researcher hopes to make men sympathize with menstruators to understand how being socially ridiculed for one's natural bodily functions is degrading.

Outcomes

From utilizing the questionnaire and the survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign, the researcher found an interesting shift in how the participants viewed menstruation. In the questionnaire, the participants found menstruation to be both associated with negative and positive thoughts. The participants also displayed mixed feelings on if they felt comfortable talking to both genders about menstruation based on their given surroundings and the individuals, they surround themselves with. It was found that four participants felt comfortable conversing about menstruation but would only discuss it in varying contexts, such as education, in front of fellow menstruators, or in front of close friends or family. Similarly, all participants also demonstrated a lack of comfort in discussing menstruation with the other gender based on their perspective not being addressed in their common environments. As a

result of both genders' obliviousness to their varied perspectives, it created an unhealthy relationship with menstruation when discussing this topic in a mixed company.

From the questionnaire, the researcher also found that six participants have either heard negative comments about menstruation, have seen period shaming firsthand or experienced period-shaming themselves. Within the questionnaire, four participants vocalized how menstruation is seen as gross and expressed how they sympathized with menstruators who were "exposed" during their menstrual cycle. Regarding the participants' personal experiences with menstruation, three participants identified themselves as menstruators who use euphemisms and only talk to other menstruators about their period, despite wanting to talk to both genders about the process. The rest of the participants either wanted to change the societal representation of menstruation to feel more comfortable with their bodies, have loved ones who experienced periods, or was in a relationship with a menstruator and did not find menstruation "a big deal." Despite their varied perspectives on menstruation, five participants believed that society is cognizant of menstrual stigma but chooses to ignore it. It was found that five participants believe menstrual stigma spurred from improper sex education were bias against menstruation existed and avoidance occurred to limit uncomfortable experiences in the classroom. By separating genders when learning initially about sex education, all participants felt embarrassed about their reproductive systems during puberty. Five participants also wanted menstruation to be normalized since it is natural, to understand innate body processes, and to encourage body positivity in menstruators as well as to help sympathize with others. All participants agreed that early exposure to proper sex education and open conversations that vocalize both male and female perspectives will aid in making menstruation a more comfortable and positive experience for both genders.

From the survey responses, all participants found that menstruation should be a normalized topic in society after exposure to both campaign messages and resources. The researcher was able to convince her participants that menstrual stigma exists and should be normalized in an everyday conversation between both genders. All seven participants felt more sympathetic to menstruators or other menstruators and feel as though the slogan, #Prideintheperiod, helped change their negative perception of menstruation to a more positive topic of conversation. It is evident the researcher has made all seven participants grasp that menstruation is a positive topic of conversation that is natural and depicts the health of menstruators. Even though some of the campaigns had mixed reviews from participants, all the participants felt the messaging effectively countered menstrual stigma, normalized the conversation of menstruation, and convinced participants the need to change the negative representation of menstruation. It was apparent to the researcher that six participants felt more

comfortable talking about menstruation in front of both genders after exposure to the campaign and its resources. Lastly, all participants believe the campaign helped encourage body confidence in menstruators, included men in the conversation of menstruation, and showcased both genders' perspectives on menstruation through its resources and campaign messages.

Limitations & Successes

From dissecting the campaign results, the researcher has determined several limitations and successes. One limitation of this campaign was the pool of participants in the study. If there were more individuals involved in the study, the researcher could have grasped new perspectives on menstruation that could aid in normalizing the conversation further. It has come to the researcher's attention that not only females and males should be included in normalizing the conversation of menstruation but other identities that could experience or witness menstruation as well. By including other individuals in this conversation of menstruation, society could further improve how menstruation is viewed and help advocate for those who experience menstruation and do not identify with their innate biological process. Another limitation of the campaign is the short duration of time the campaign was conducted for. If the researcher could have extended the campaign for a month by sharing more resources with the participants and creating more campaign messages, the campaign would have been more successful.

The successes of the #Prideintheperiod campaign were that the participants thought the visual campaign messages were well-executed since they emphasized the realities of menstruation, the various perspectives on menstruation, and the inclusion of both genders in the conversation. The participants also expressed how they enjoyed the variety in the resources, the ability to choose what resources they were exposed to, and emotionally felt connected to the material. The researcher also found that the participants were more open to the material since it displayed concern for both genders' understanding of the issue of menstrual stigmatization, showcased the same menstruators' experience, and compared a male's shame with puberty to period shame to get them more involved in the conversation. Lastly, the researcher found that giving participants a choice in their learning material made them more inclined to learn. To increase the future effectiveness of the #Prideintheperiod campaign, the researcher wants to implement a few changes. By creating more campaign messages that fixate on normalizing menstruation to both genders and promoting body confidence in menstruators, the researcher will create a stronger campaign that benefits menstruators. The next steps in the #Prideintheperiod campaign that will help normalize the conversation of menstruation in society are to spread this campaign over various social media platforms, such as YouTube and Twitter. By putting the campaign on the two popular social media platforms, it will gain more attention from audiences and help normalize menstruation in society. The researcher found that this campaign would be more successful if it was implemented into a school sex education program. By vocalizing that

menstruation is normal, individuals with vaginas could become comfortable with their bodies.

Conclusion

Through these findings, the researcher has been able to shed light on how both genders view menstruation and how menstruation can be a positive conversation in society. Despite several participants wanting to normalize the conversation of menstruation, it was found that all the participants displayed initial mixed feelings on if they felt comfortable talking to both genders about menstruation. The researcher found this sense of embarrassment when conversing about menstruation to be a result of their given support systems, hence why both genders only feel open to discuss menstruation in educational and close relationship contexts. Another factor that causes both males and menstruators to feel awkward when talking about menstruation is due to both genders not understanding one another's relationship to menstruation. Granted that males do not biologically experience menstruation, they felt like an outlier in the conversation of menstruation despite wanting to help their loved ones who experience the process. On the other hand, menstruators want to openly express their experiences with menstruation in society, however, they feel embarrassed to discuss menstruation since males do not menstruate and will not understand their feelings on the matter. Society ignores both genders' perspectives on menstruation has created a culture where menstruation is seen as a taboo.

By observing or experiencing negative experiences with menstruation, it has made both genders feel sympathetic to menstruators about the stigmatization of menstruation. The researcher also found that improper sex education and the separation of genders when learning about reproductive health has encouraged negative ideas of menstruation. If menstruation was discussed with personal bias or avoided in the classroom, it made all participants feel embarrassed about their differing reproductive systems. Regarding menstruators, this separation and avoidance of female reproductive health encouraged embarrassment for their body, making them adhere to the feminine norms of purity to be considered normal. By all the campaign messages resonating with participants, the researcher found that by bringing awareness to the menstrual stigma through education and open conversations that showcase both genders' opinions on menstruation can normalize menstruation in everyday conversation. It is also important to display menstruation in a realistic, unapologetic manner that promotes body confidence in menstruators and educates males who might not understand what menstruators experience during their cycle.

Regarding the scope of further research on normalizing menstruation in society, there are plenty of academics and activists who find it essential to normalize menstruation and emphasize the existence of menstrual stigma. For

instance, it was found by the researcher that numerous feminine hygiene companies, such as *Always*, *Thinx*, *Flex*, and *BodyForm*, are normalizing menstruation as a positive conversation in society. Through representing menstruation in a realistic manner with no shame, it has effectively encouraged those with menstrual cycles that menstruation is not shameful, but rather beautiful and a sign of strength. These various feminine hygiene companies also are changing the representation of menstruation to a celebrated biological process that should be discussed with both genders. There also have been global efforts to reduce the stigma against menstruation and normalize it in society throughout India, such as Dasra India's *First Period: MHM Story* film and Pravin Nikam's creation of unpatented menstrual pad machine to bring awareness and resources to unprivileged menstruators. It became clear to the researcher that academics are failing to bring together both perspectives of the menstruator and males into the conversation. As a result of not including both genders' perspectives on menstruation, it fails to normalize menstruation among patriarchal society. Therefore, to make normalizing menstruation a realistic outcome for non-profit organizations, feminine hygiene companies, and academics, they all need to vocalize both genders' perspectives on menstruation to encourage sympathy for one another. This goal of normalizing menstruation can then be accomplished through education and honest conversations that make society aware of menstrual stigma rather than solely one perspective that might be perceived negatively.

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