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Fall November, 2023

Exploring Policy Implications of Menstrual Symptoms and Quality of Life Across a Diverse Group of Young Adults

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Exploring Policy Implications of Menstrual Symptoms and Quality of Life Across a Diverse Group of Young Adults

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Introduction

- Most women spend about 3500 days menstruating.
- Menstruation can be associated with pain, heavy menstrual bleeding, and mood-related symptoms.¹⁻³
- These symptoms can be disabling, causing discomfort and missed activities including work.
- Some countries including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Zambia and (most recently) Spain offer menstrual leave.⁴

Methods

- Survey (eligibility criteria: age 18-25; have had menstrual cycle; n=625)
- Focus Groups (subset of interested survey participants; eight groups, n=44)
- Participants were recruited through emails and fliers posted on College and University Campuses in large Midwest metropolitan area

Results

Select Focus Groups Quotes

"Biggest concerns that I have is as a queer person navigating what it means to be menstruating."

"I don't make any big decisions. I don't purchase anything. I don't make any decisions about my job or my school. I don't have any big conversations with people, because I am not in a healthy state of mind during that time".

"The way it impacts me at school like I barely have like the energy to even go to classes or to even go to work. So sometimes I call off, which, like that, definitely impacts me financially"

"In some countries you are able to do that (take days off), and I think we should be able to do that everywhere."

"I don't go anywhere because I'm scared of being stained or embarrassed. So, it affects my work and my daily activity."

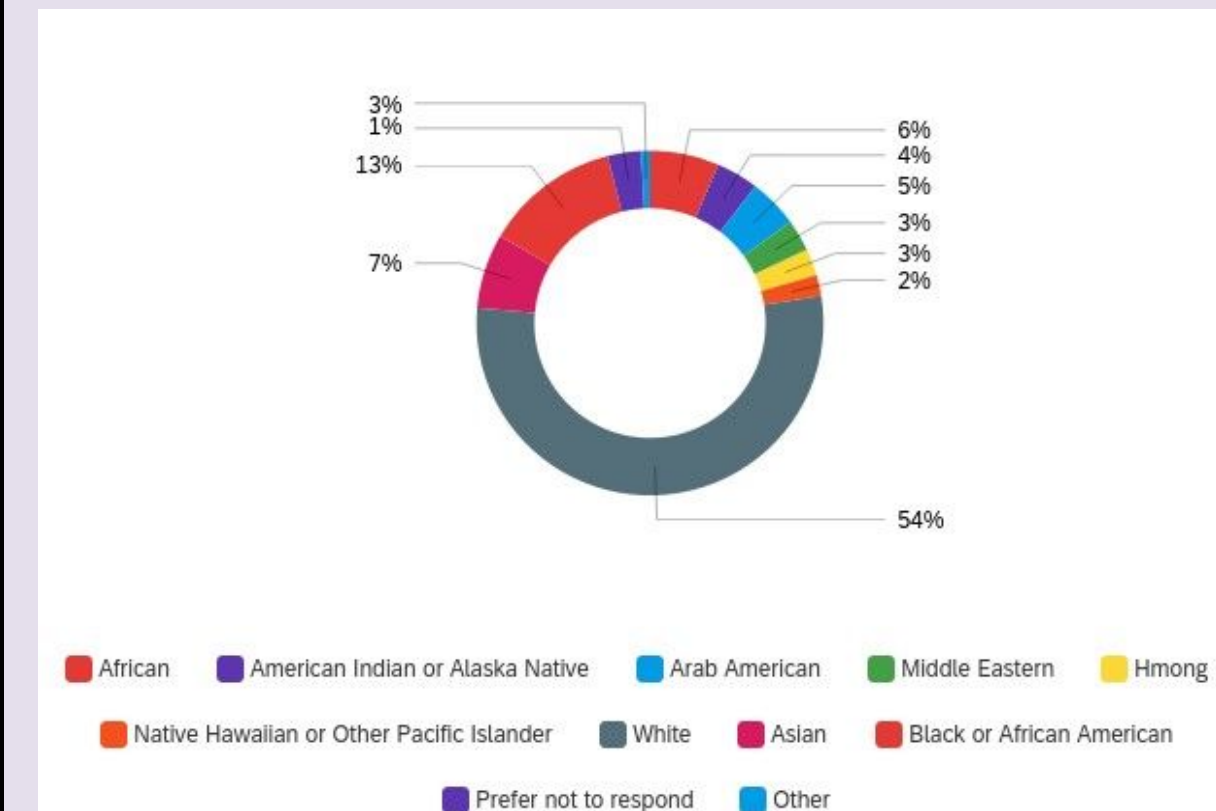
"If I were to take time off because of menstrual pain like it wouldn't be seen as taboo or weird. But I feel it's quite common in other circumstances..."

"In black culture a lot of people don't talk about things like mental health and etc. So, for our menstrual cycles we really don't talk about that. ... you feel like you'll be excluded, or people won't understand you"

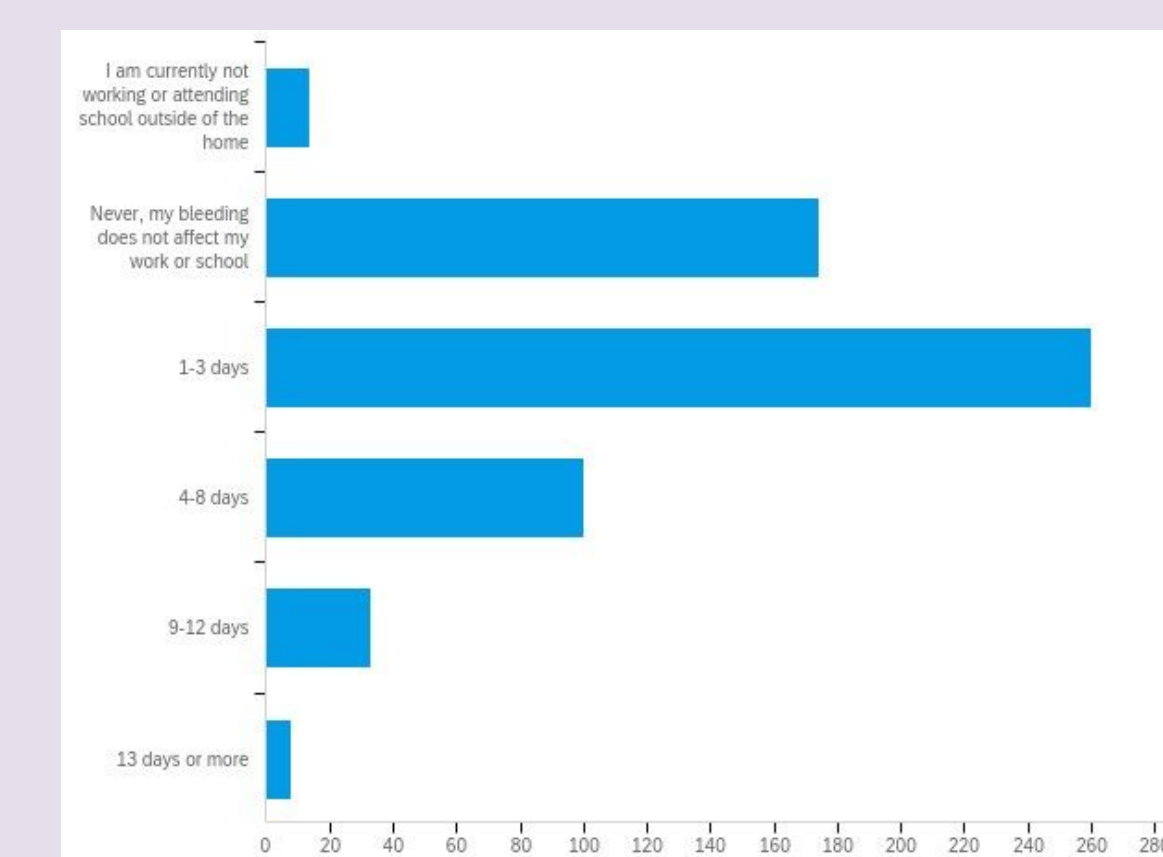
"It's hard when you have school or work and you need to take time off. My last 2 workplaces have been pretty heavy cis-male dominated, and they already are sexist and transphobic towards me and I don't to give them another reason to look down at me."

Select Survey Results

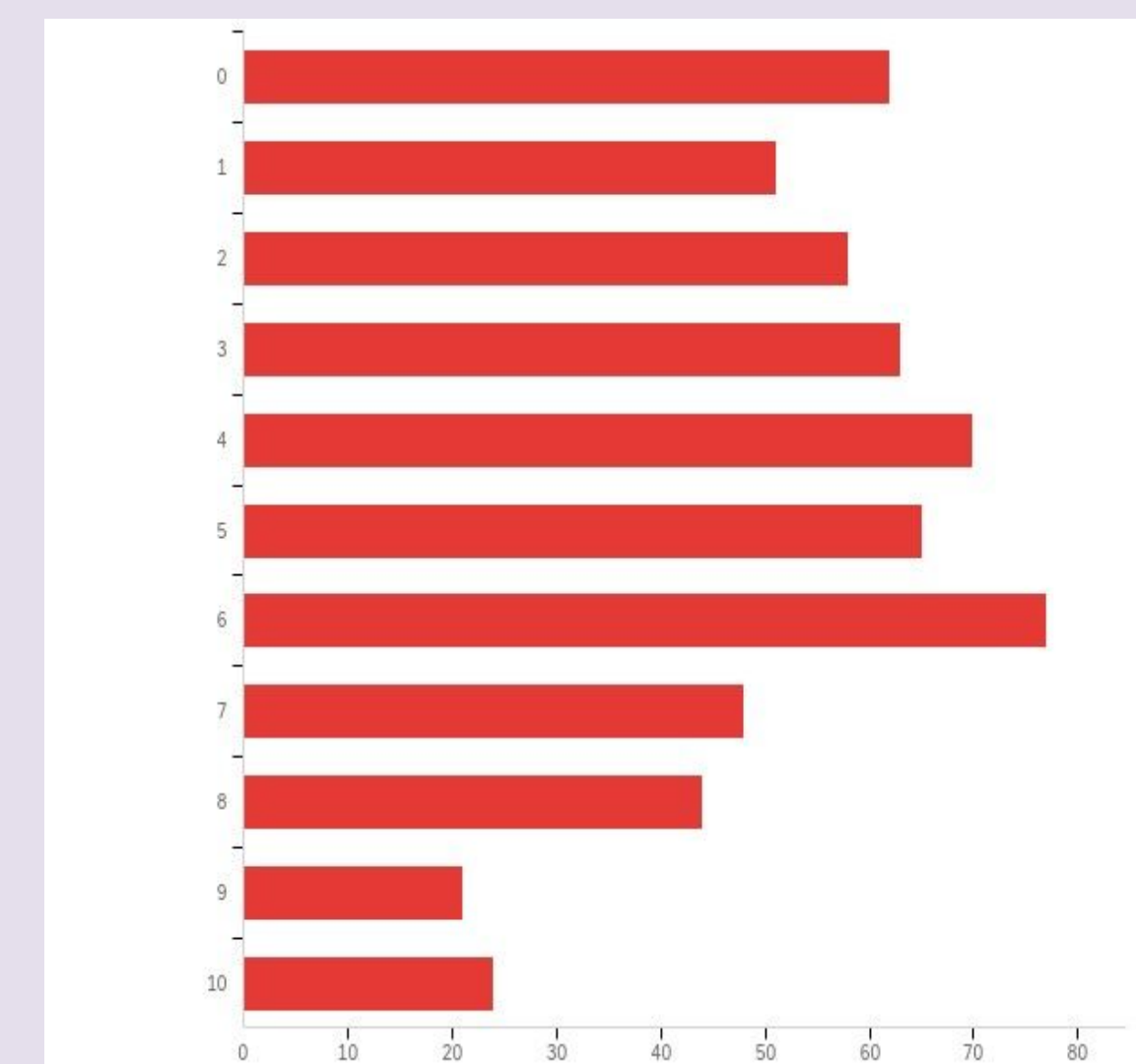
What race do you identify yourself with? (Select all that apply)



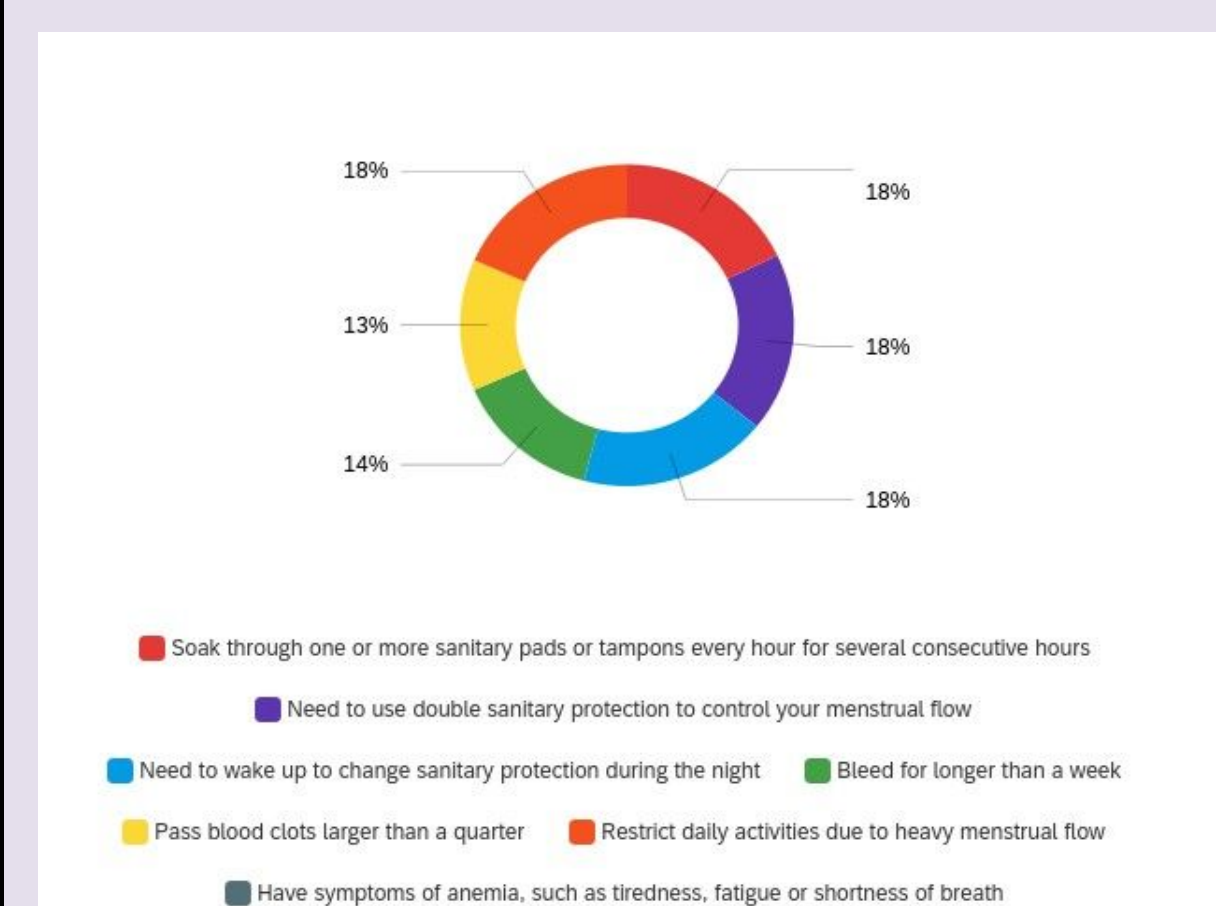
During the past three months, on how many days do you think your work at your job or school suffered because you were bleeding?



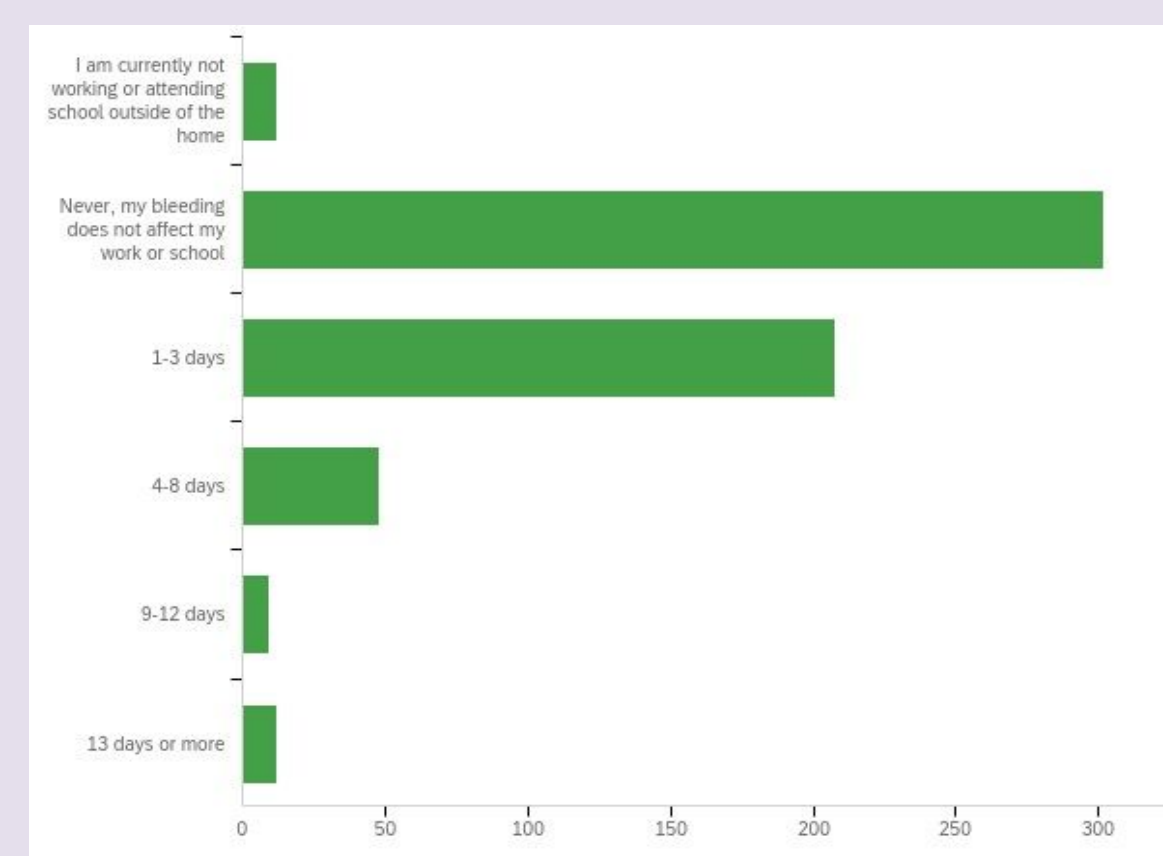
On a scale of 0-10, with 0 being no concern at all and 10 being extremely concerned, please rate your overall concern about your menstrual bleeding.



During your menstrual cycle, do you typically? (Select all that apply)



During the past three months, on how many days did you miss work or school because you were bleeding?



Conclusion/Next Steps

- Menstrual symptoms impact daily lives, including ability to work, study, and socialize.
- Differences in culture and upbringing impact how menstruation is experienced- including being banned from activities during periods and not having access to feminine products.
- Many women experience severe enough symptoms that then need time off from work.
- Employers and schools should consider how to best support menstruating individuals and identify potential opportunities adopting or implementing policies.

References

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