

# Menstrual Social Norms Supplement

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## Introduction

A supportive social environment is a requirement for optimal menstrual health. The definition of menstrual health notes that a requirement for menstrual health is to *experience a positive and respectful environment in relation to the menstrual cycle, free from stigma and psychological distress, including the resources and support they need to confidently care for their bodies and make informed decisions about self-care throughout their menstrual cycle.* This can include a broad range of factors such as support at the level of the individual, family, school, community, and broader society. At a more proximal level, this includes support and sociocultural influences directly related to menstruation.

Menstrual-related social norms are social norms directly related to menstruation that dictate the behaviour of many individuals within a community. These norms may be harmful or protective. We undertook preparatory qualitative work in our study context to diagnose the presence of social norms related to menstruation and identified a strong privacy norm linked to menstruation. We measure girls' perceptions of these norms, as well as information from guardians.

Reasons to include measures on **social norms about menstruation** in your work:

- To understand how girls and parents think people who menstruate should act and how menstrual products should be treated
- To estimate the impact of more restrictive social norms around menstruation on girls' health and social outcomes.

## Overview of Menstrual-related Social Norms

<b>Definition</b>	“A rule of behavior such that individuals prefer to conform to it on condition that they believe that (a) most people in their reference network conform to it (empirical expectation), and (b) that most people in their reference network believe they ought to conform to it (normative expectation)” <sup>1</sup>
<b>Importance to Menstrual Health</b>	Social norms that menstruation should be kept secret and hidden significantly shape menstrual behaviors and experiences. <sup>2,3</sup> These norms can restrict social and educational participation, negatively impact mental health and feelings of self-worth, and prevent people from enacting preferred menstrual management behaviours. <sup>2-5</sup>
<b>Measurement Method</b>	<b>N1a-e, N2a,c:</b> Self-reported by girls on an enumerator-administered survey <b>N1a,c-e, N2a:</b> Self-reported by parents/guardians on an enumerator-administered survey
<b>General Considerations</b>	Questions for this construct were developed based on qualitative interviews, cognitive interviews, and the pilot survey. Further, these questions build on those used in past research on women’s menstrual health in Uganda <sup>2</sup> and hygiene-related norms in Bangladesh. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Question Source</b>	<b>All Questions drew from:</b> Hennegan J, Bukenya JN, Makumbi FE, et al. Menstrual health challenges in the workplace and consequences for women’s work and wellbeing: A cross-sectional survey in Mukono, Uganda. Pastor Bravo M del M, ed. <i>PLOS Glob Public Health</i> . 2022;2(7):e0000589. doi:10.1371/journal.pgph.0000589 <b>All Questions drew from:</b> Gon G, Szekely A, Lowe H, Tosi M. Hand Hygiene Social Norms Among Healthcare Workers During Early COVID-19: Results of a Global Survey. <i>Int J Public Health</i> . 2022;67:1604981. doi:10.3389/ijph.2022.1604981

Main Use in the AMEHC Study			
Proximal Exposure for:	Distal Exposure for:	Covariate for:	Outcome for:
Mental Health Education	SRH		

<b>Included in the Following AMEHC Study Activities*</b>					
Baseline Girls Survey	Baseline Guardians Survey	Baseline School Audit	Sub-cohort 1 Survey	Sub-cohort 2 Survey	Sub-cohort 3 Survey
X	X				X
Wave 1 Survey	Wave 1 School Audit	Wave 2 Survey	Wave 2 Guardian Survey	Wave 2 School Audit	
X		X	X		

**\*Specific questions varied over different data collection activities according to study needs.**

## Menstrual-related social norms Survey Questions in AMEHC

Question Number	Question	Response Options
<b>FOR GIRLS</b>		
N1a	Do you think girls should keep their menstrual materials hidden at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
N1b	What do you think, of the girls in your class, how many think that girls should keep their menstrual materials hidden at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No girls</li> <li>• Less than half of girls</li> <li>• More than half of girls</li> <li>• All girls</li> </ul>
N1c	What do you think, of your class, how many girls' mothers think that girls should keep their menstrual materials hidden at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No mothers</li> <li>• Less than half of mothers</li> <li>• More than half of mothers</li> <li>• All mothers</li> </ul>
N1d	Thinking about girls in your class, how many do you think actually keep their menstrual materials hidden at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No girls</li> <li>• Less than half of girls</li> <li>• More than half of girls</li> <li>• All girls</li> </ul>
N1e	Imagine there are visitors in your home and your cloth or pads are visible, how would your mother react?  <i>Select all that apply.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mother would hide materials</li> <li>• Mother would scold</li> <li>• Mother would punish</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
N2a	Do you think girls should go to school during menstruation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>
N2c	If we asked this question to your mother, what do you think she would say, Does she think girls should go to school during menstruation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>
<b>FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS</b>		
N1a	Menstruating women and Girls should keep their menstrual materials (the pads, cloth, or other materials they use to absorb their menstruation) hidden at all times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree</li> <li>• Disagree</li> <li>• Don't know</li> </ul>

N1c	What do you think, in your community how many parents think that their daughters should keep their menstrual materials hidden at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No parents</li> <li>• Less than half of parents</li> <li>• About half of parents</li> <li>• More than half of parents</li> <li>• All parents</li> </ul>
N1d	Thinking about girls attending [the girl participants' school], how many do you think actually keep their menstrual materials hidden at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No girls</li> <li>• Less than half of girls</li> <li>• About half of girls</li> <li>• More than half of girls</li> <li>• All parents</li> </ul>
N1e	Imagine there are visitors in your home and [the girl participant] had cloth or pads that were visible, how would you react?  <i>Select all that apply.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would hide materials</li> <li>• Would scold</li> <li>• Would punish</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
N2a	Do you think girls should go to school during menstruation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>

## References

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