

# Seeking and encountering online information for menstrual health: A qualitative study among adolescent schoolgirls in Gianyar Regency and Denpasar City, Bali, Indonesia



Accurate and timely information is essential for **menstrual health (MH)**. However, we know that menstrual education is limited at home, school and in the community, and that many adolescents worldwide have low menstrual health literacy.

Adolescents may use online sources to understand their menstrual cycles and seek further guidance. In Indonesia, **increasing mobile internet connectivity** makes online health information accessible and appealing, particularly among young populations.

Using qualitative methods, we explored the role and relevance of online information for menstrual health among 24 junior high school students in Bali, Indonesia.

We wanted to understand how they accessed this information and how they thought it influenced their menstrual experiences.

*My HP [mobile phone] is always with me, so Google is the answer*

*In TikTok, I saw on my FYP [for you page] about menstruation and the cycle. I didn't look for it, it just appeared*



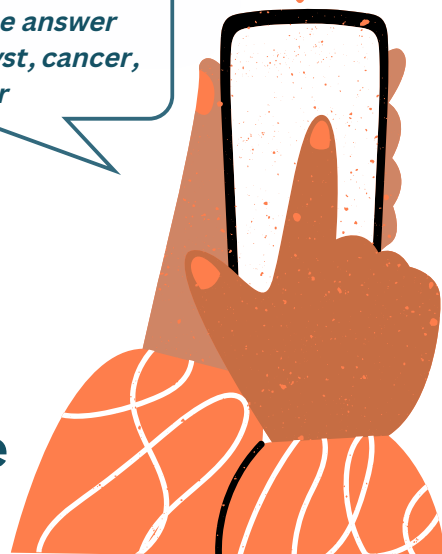
## Key findings

- MH information was frequently found online. Participants **actively** looked for information using search engines (Google) and **encountered** MH content on social media (TikTok)
- Smartphones were seen as an accessible and easy way to find MH information when needed
- Online information debunked menstrual myths, provided personalised information on menstrual experiences (e.g pain, discharge) and offered self-care strategies
- Excessive information caused worry and stress, and misinformation contributed to reinforcing menstrual myths

*In TikTok, there are so many doctors who make videos about menstruation, like what will happen during the menstrual cycle, like white discharge*

*[Mum says] don't drink ice [water] when you're menstruating. Then I said this to mum, 'that is a hoax mum'. I then searched for it in Google and drank it.*

*I was looking for why when menstruating there will always be a stomach ache [cramps] and why my menstruation was not heavy. Then, the answer from Google was a cyst, cancer, and tumour*



## Implications for policy and practice

- \* Programme and policy-makers should **acknowledge the importance and influence of online information** and ensure that young people can safely access diverse and high-quality information from a range of online and offline sources.
- \* **Collaborate to develop and/or promote existing menstrual health content** that is accessible (i.e in local languages), desirable (well-designed and engaging), reliable (evidence-based and/or expert-reviewed) and relevant (addresses day-to-day needs).
- \* **Digital literacy** should be considered as part of menstrual health and puberty education, supporting adolescents in utilising and **critically engaging with online health information safely**.

### Citation:

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