

Drivers of menstrual material disposal and washing practices

Read the full paper: *PLoS One* 16 (12), e0260472
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0260472>

Read the summary:
<https://wash.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2022/02/2022-MHM-Disposal-Brief.pdf>

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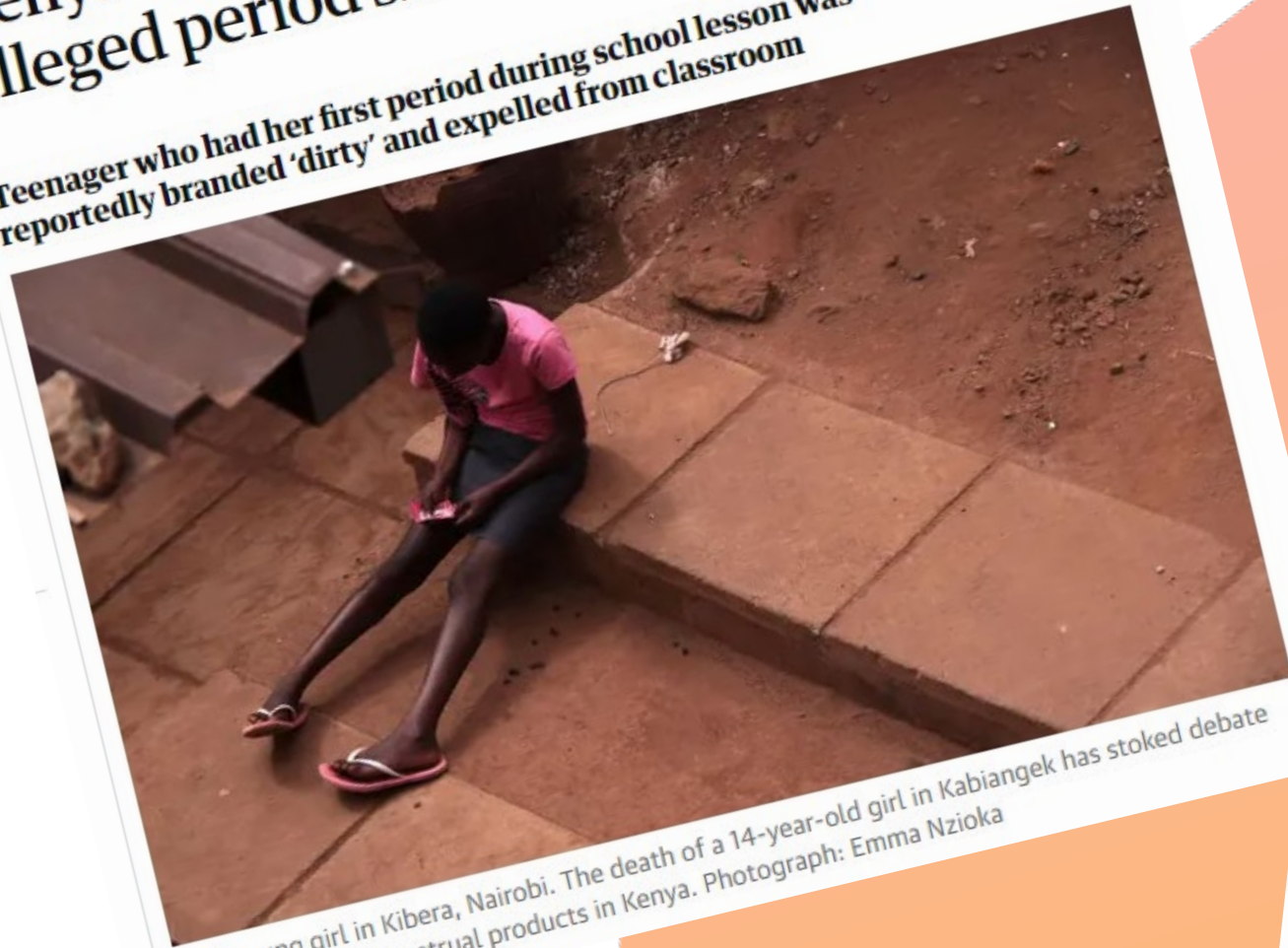
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WHY?

Kenyan schoolgirl, 14, kills herself after alleged period shaming by teacher

Teenager who had her first period during school lesson was reportedly branded 'dirty' and expelled from classroom



A young girl in Kibera, Nairobi. The death of a 14-year-old girl in Kabiangek has stoked debate about access to menstrual products in Kenya. Photograph: Emma Nzioka



SYDNEY WATER ADVISES WHAT NOT TO PUT DOWN THE TOILET IN "CAN'T FLUSH THIS" CAMPAIGN



Images from:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43879789>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/sep/13/kenyan-schoolgirl-14-kills-herself-after-alleged-period-shaming-by-teacher>

<https://www.bandt.com.au/sydney-water-advises-what-not-to-put-down-the-toilet-in-cant-flush-this-campaign/>

WHY?

International standard for non-sewered sanitation systems

My feedback to a draft:

“although I don’t think that the systems have to be able to treat menstrual hygiene waste, I do believe that they need to have a contingency in place for cases where menstrual hygiene waste is, nevertheless, flushed/entered into the system.”

Shit happens.



 @FSM_Fail

OVERVIEW

Systematic appraisal of 80 studies

- 75 low + lower middle-income countries
- 8 high + upper middle-income countries
- Evaluations of interventions
- Research papers on knowledge, attitudes and practises
- Skew in favour of girls' experiences over women's experiences (no studies indicated participants were trans/non-binary/gender fluid)
58 girls vs. 29 women



BEHAVIOURAL DRIVERS

State of Available Facilities (56 studies)

- *Physical Infrastructure*: Does the sanitation facility meet desired physical sanitation needs?
- *Social Perceptions*: Does the sanitation facility meet desired social needs?

Menstrual Taboos and Social Stigma (55 studies)

- *Cultural Beliefs*: General beliefs discouraging / encouraging certain methods of disposal / washing
- *Embarrassment and Worry*: Unpleasant emotions related to doing something considered by others to be wrong or shameful
- *Fear*: Unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain or other harmful consequences

Knowledge (14 studies)

- *Lack of Knowledge*: Have not been taught how to dispose / wash / dry materials

EXAMPLES OF THE CONNECTIONS:

Knowledge and Society:

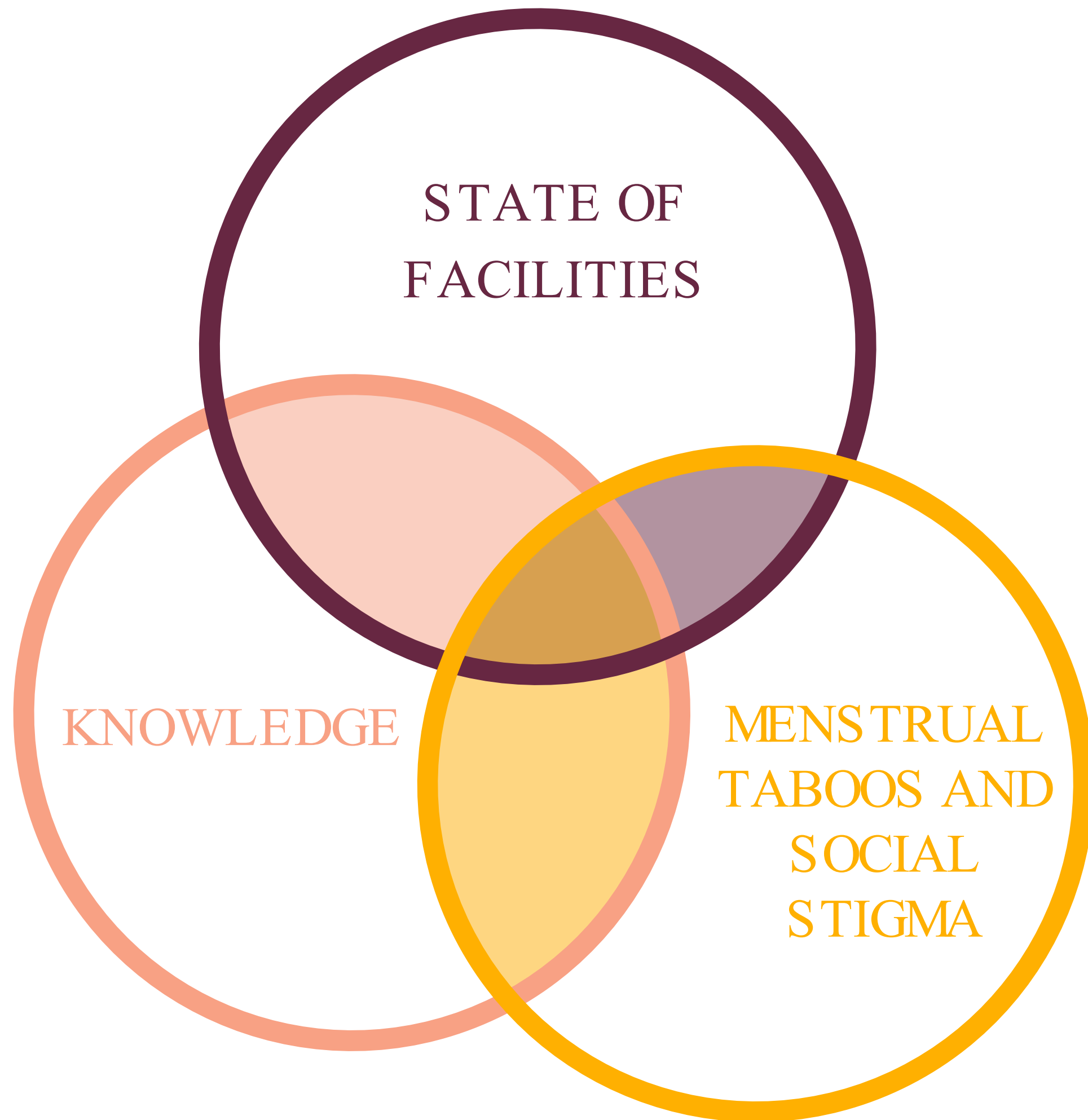
Girls had not been taught how to dispose of materials and felt shy and uncomfortable openly discussing disposal options due to menstrual stigma. Consequently, they threw their used materials into open spaces (including bushes, around school premises, under rocks at the beach...).

(Behera et al, 2015; Rheinlander et al, 2018)

Infrastructure and Society:

A fully functional incinerator was built on school grounds. But girls were embarrassed to be seen going in, especially by men. There was no mechanism/plan to take used materials from the toilets to the incinerator by staff. So, the facility was unused, and disposal still proved a barrier for girls at school.

(Crofts and Fisher, 2012)



THE DRIVERS ARE LINKED:
You need to consider them all if you want to create appropriate disposal and washing facilities

Menstrual Disposal and Washing Facilities:

Considering user preferences in design

A recent study reviewed and summarised all of the existing research (80 studies) on why users choose different menstrual material disposal and washing practices.

Recommendation:

Designers and builders of facilities for menstrual disposal and washing must consider the preferences of users within the local context. This includes the social appropriateness of facilities, local stigmas around menstruation, particularly who can and cannot know a person's menstrual status, and the knowledge level of users regarding menstrual disposal and washing practices.

Why was the study needed - what's the issue?

- The use of disposable menstrual materials continues to increase, contributing vast amounts to both formal and informal waste management systems, as well as polluting the environment;
- Menstrual materials are often flushed down or deposited into toilets, causing issues with wastewater and faecal sludge management;
- Campaigns often assume that undesired (by planners) menstrual material disposal behaviours are due to a lack of knowledge of their consequences;
- Even where technically and environmentally appropriate menstrual disposal and washing methods are available, they are often not used.

What influences the choice of menstrual material disposal and washing practices?

- The state of available facilities drove behaviour in 56 studies and included consideration of two components:
 - Physical infrastructure - the quantity of available and physically functional toilets, the design of toilets, the quality and availability of running water in and around toilets, the availability of soap for washing and the availability of a physically functional disposal mechanism and/or service for used materials;



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