

The Red Revolution

The Impact of Menstrual Product Access on Health and Academic Performance in UCSD Students

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Introduction

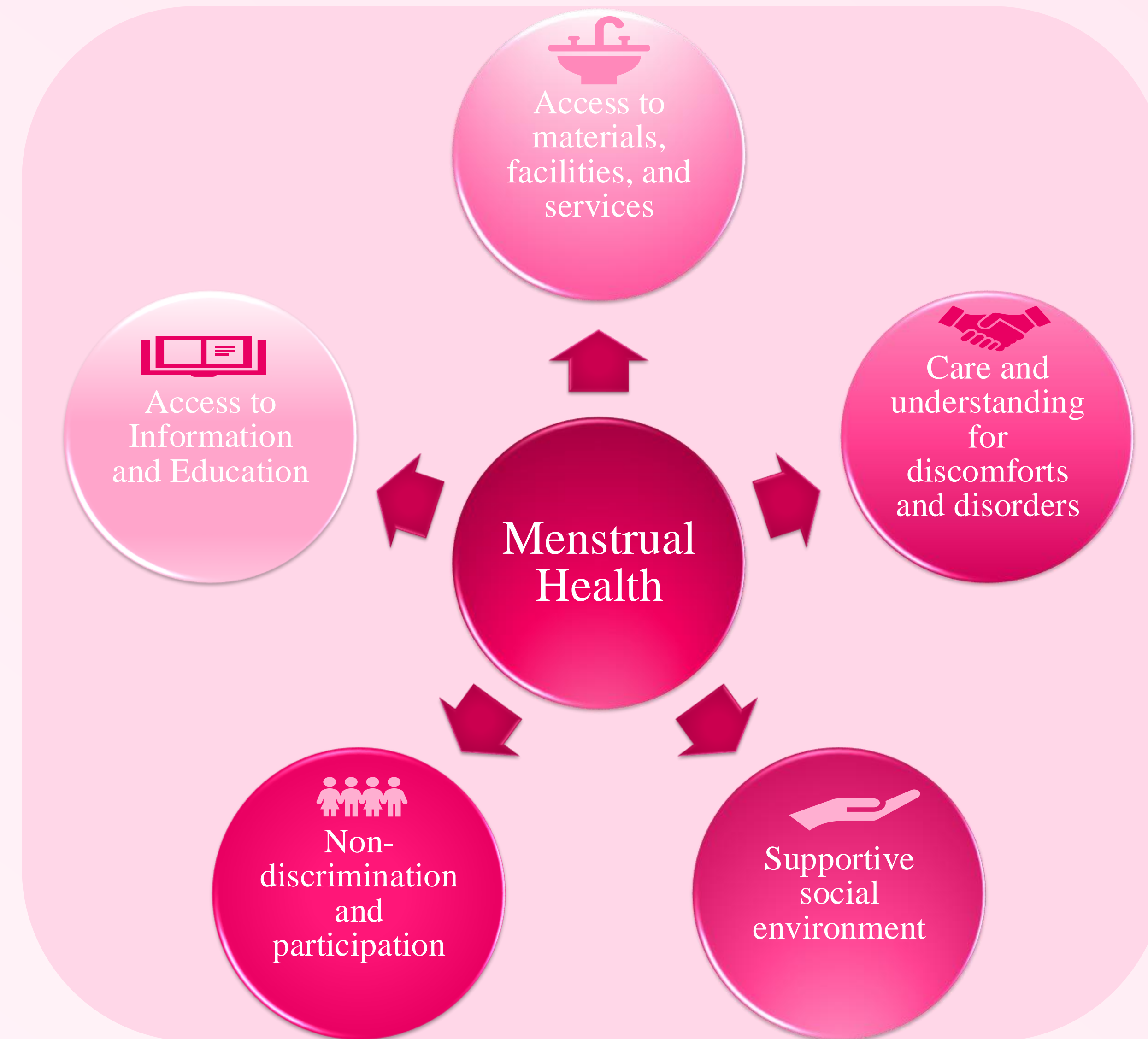
The Issue:

Many college-aged individuals (18-24) struggle with painful menstrual symptoms that make attending class and completing daily tasks difficult. Lack of access to menstrual products, known as **period poverty**, worsens both mental health and academic outcomes.

Key Findings:

- Financial Barriers** – Menstrual products are taxed in 30+ U.S. states, making them unaffordable for many.
- COVID-19 Worsened Access** – 30% of menstruating individuals reported increased difficulty accessing products, with 18% missing work due to shortages.
- Period Poverty is Widespread** – 14% of U.S. college students experience period poverty, with higher rates among Latinx and Black students.
- Health & Well-Being Impact** – Period poverty is linked to **higher rates of anxiety, depression, and social isolation.**
- Academic Consequences** – Students without access to menstrual products face **absenteeism, difficulty concentrating, and lower academic performance.**

Why It Matters: Reliable menstrual product access is essential for students' mental health, confidence, and academic success. Addressing this issue through policy changes and institutional support can improve student well-being and educational outcomes.



Objectives

How does access to menstrual products affect the mental health and academic performance of college-aged people who menstruate?

This research examines how menstrual product access affects the mental health and academic performance of college-aged individuals who menstruate. It explores the links between period poverty, increased stress, anxiety, and academic challenges such as absenteeism and lower performance. By identifying financial, institutional, and social barriers, this study aims to inform policies that improve access, support mental well-being, and enhance educational outcomes.

Methodology

Data was collected through on-campus and off-campus forums, student organizations, and group messaging platforms. The survey was shared on UCSD-related social media (Snapchat, Instagram, Reddit) and included a bot capture to ensure valid responses. A clarifying message at the start confirmed eligibility based on student status and menstrual cycle experience.

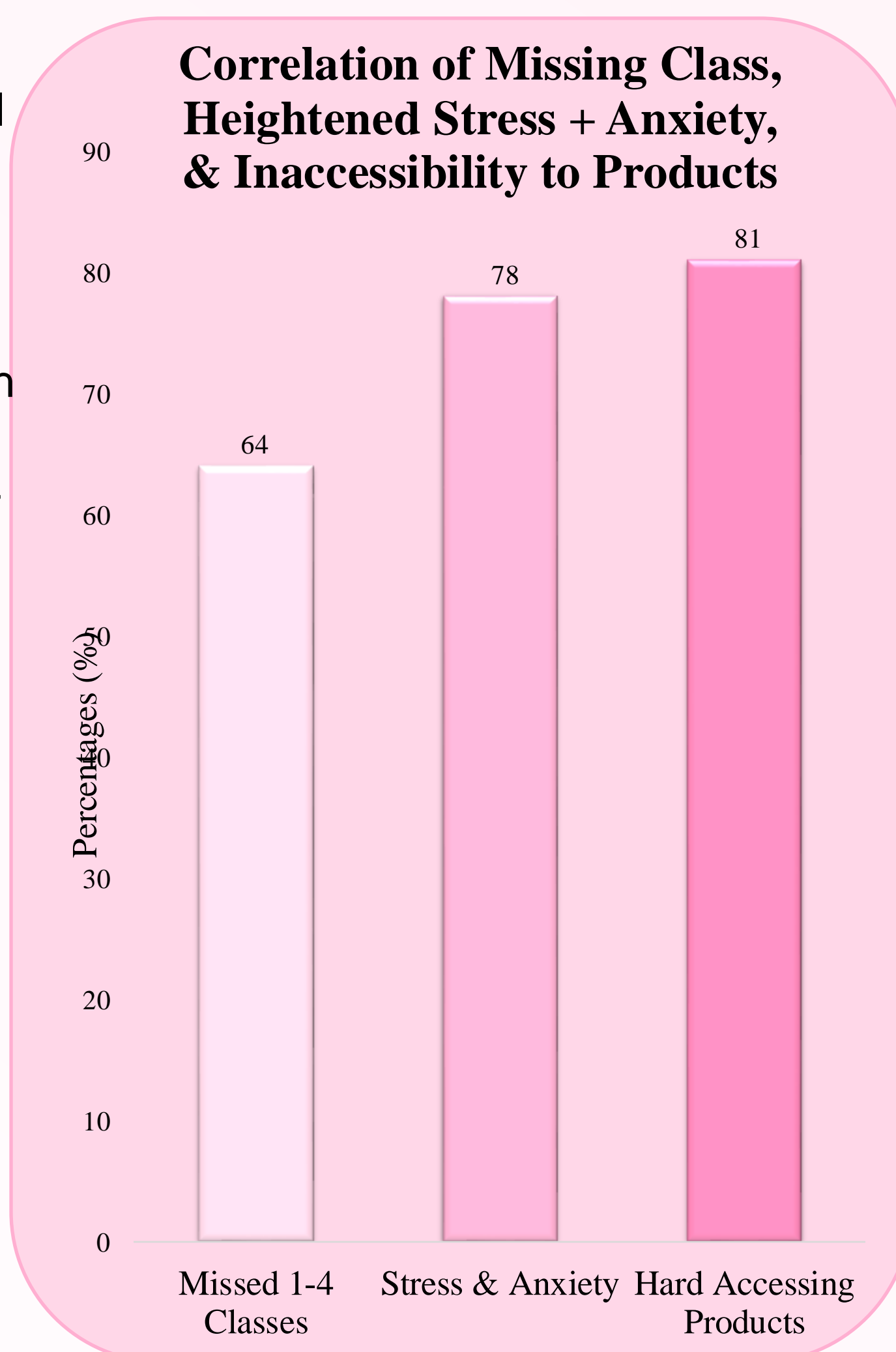
We examined the following variables:

- Age ● Affordability ● Accessibility ● Income ● Menstrual Symptoms ● Class Attendance

Call to Action: Advocate for affordable and accessible menstrual products on college campuses to support student success!

Results

- **69.8%** of student's with severe menstrual symptoms struggle to access menstrual products.
- **86%** experience high menstrual symptoms; **64%** of them miss 1-4 classes per quarter.
- **81%** of those who miss class due to menstrual symptoms face product access challenges.
- **18%** of students struggle with accessing products, and **67%** of those students find them unaffordable.



The study surveyed **155** participants with a mean age of **21 years**. Regarding gender distribution, 0.6% identified as men, 91% as women, 0.6% as transgender men, 5.2% as genderqueer, and 0% as transgender women or other identities. The average reported income fell within the **\$75,000–\$99,999** range.

- **78%** of menstruating students experience stress and anxiety.
- **63%** of those with stress and anxiety are unaware of campus resources.
- **42%** of students aware of resources have never accessed them due to barriers.
- Severe Symptoms (Yes/No) vs. Product Access Issues (Yes/No): **p < .001** = significant.
- Missed Classes (Yes/No) vs. Product Access Issues (Yes/No): **p = .007** = significant.
- Affordability of Products (Affordable/Not Affordable) vs. Product Access (Easy/Difficult) = **p < .001** = significant.
- Awareness of Resources (Aware/Not Aware) vs. Accessing Resources (Accessed/Not Accessed): **p = .054** = significant.

Conclusion



The findings of this study emphasize the critical impact of menstrual product accessibility on students' academic success and mental health. Significant relationships were found between severe menstrual symptoms, missed classes, and difficulties accessing products, highlighting the deep connection between period poverty and educational challenges.

Additionally, financial barriers to menstrual product affordability further show these issues, making it essential for institutions to intervene.

Despite the importance of available resources, a lack of awareness prevents many students from accessing the support they need.

Addressing these gaps through policy changes, campus initiatives, and financial support can create a more equitable learning environment. Ensuring free and accessible menstrual products on college campuses is not just a convenience, it is a necessity for student well-being, dignity, and academic success.

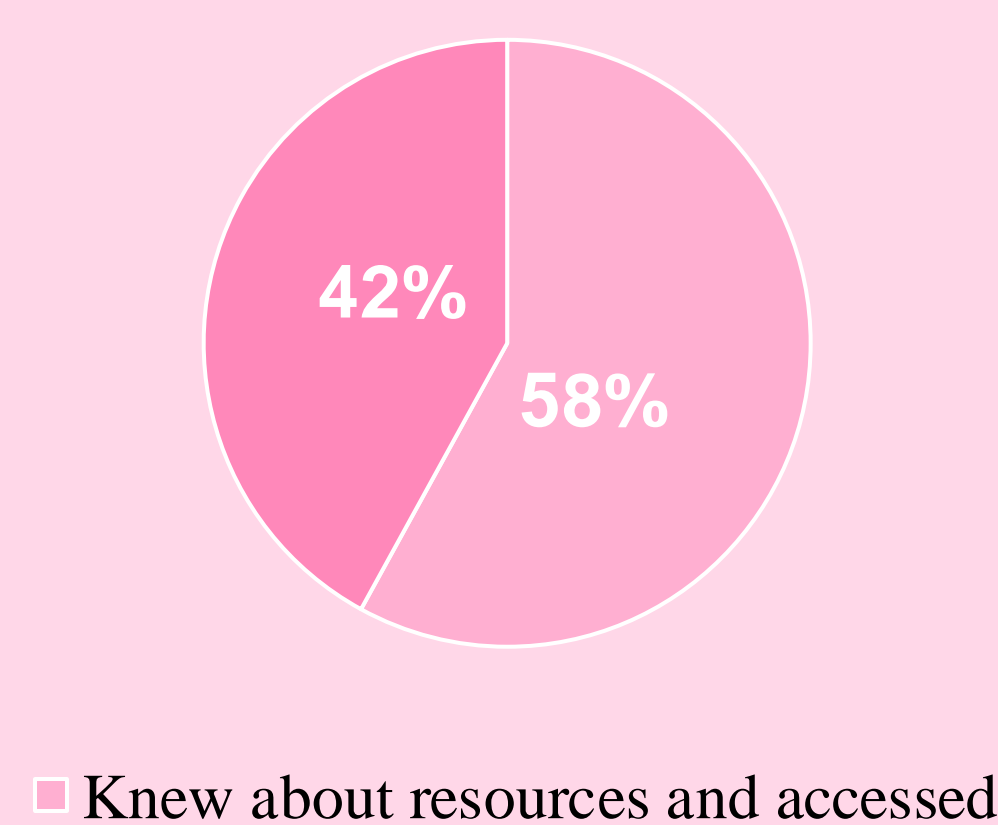
Policy Implications

Policy Implications: Tackling Menstrual Inequality on Campus

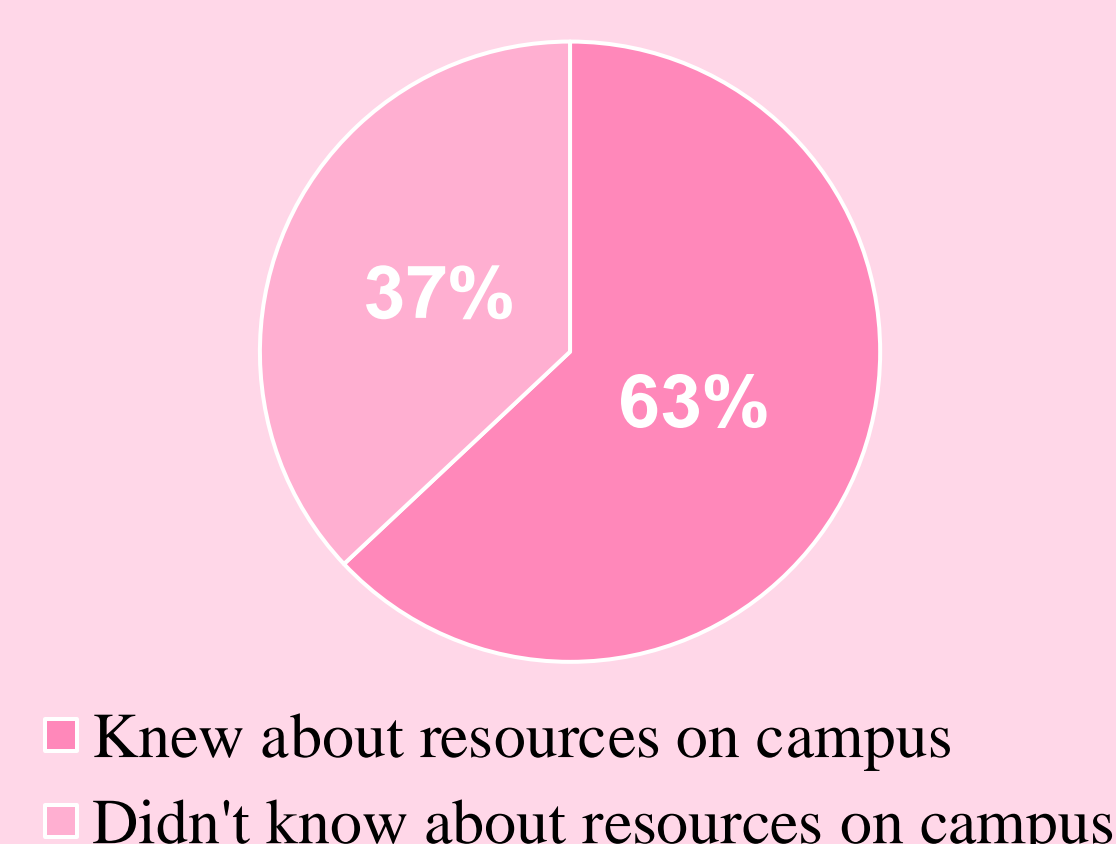
- ◆ **Free Menstrual Products** – Universities should fully sponsor stocking restrooms with free, easily accessible menstrual products, just like soap and toilet paper.
- ◆ **Financial Support** – Allocate campus funding or partner with organizations to provide subsidized or free menstrual products as well as additional resources to actively restock product stations in bathrooms.
- ◆ **Menstrual Health Awareness** – Integrate menstrual health education into wellness programs to reduce stigma and increase awareness.
- ◆ **Improved Campus Facilities** – Ensure restrooms have proper disposal options and create designated wellness spaces for those experiencing *severe symptoms*.
- ◆ **Legislative/Social Advocacy** – Support policies that require higher education institutions to provide menstrual products as a basic necessity. Additionally, offer campus wide initiatives to spread awareness on where to access menstrual products.

Act Now: Push for campus-wide change to support student health, dignity, and success and ensure all an equal opportunity in their academics!

UCSD Students' Awareness and Access to Menstrual Resources



Awareness of Menstrual Resources Among UCSD Students



Abstract



Resources



References

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