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A Causal-Comparative Study of Parental Engagement With Digital Menstrual Health Tools Across Contrasting Policy Contexts

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Abstract

This study examines parental use of digital tools for adolescent menstrual health education in response to inconsistent and limited instruction in United States public schools. Little empirical research has examined how parents' knowledge, digital literacy, and educational policy context influence their engagement with digital resources. The purpose of this quantitative causal-comparative study was to examine whether parents' menstrual health knowledge, digital literacy, and state-level menstrual health education policies affected the frequency with which parents used digital tools to educate their children and the menstrual health topics they prioritized. Guided by critical pedagogy and the UNESCO digital literacy framework, the study compared parents residing in two urban cities of similar size with contrasting state-level menstrual health education policies. Data were collected through a survey of parents of children enrolled in public K-12 schools and analyzed using factorial ANOVA and descriptive statistics. Results indicate that parents with higher levels of digital literacy reported more frequent use of digital tools for menstrual health education. No statistically significant differences were found based on menstrual health knowledge or policy context. Across groups, parents prioritized topics related to menstrual cycle understanding, hormonal health, and pain management. One implication of this study is that parents may be motivated to learn through digital resources regardless of their menstrual health knowledge or policy environment, highlighting digital literacy as a key leverage point. One recommendation for future research would be to examine changes in knowledge from a digital tool with the recommended content preferences.

Keywords: Critical-Pedagogy; Dysmenorrhea; Health; Menarche; Parents