



Human Rights Council Resolution 57/30- Mental Health Challenge; Young People's Human Rights

Menstrual Discrimination is underlying factor for Mental Health Challenge among Young People: Access to Education, Participation in Society, Employment Opportunities, and Protection from Discrimination and Exclusion

I. Introduction

A. Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation

Founded in 2019, the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation (GSCDM) is a survivor-led international coalition headquartered at the Radha Paudel Foundation in Kathmandu, Nepal. The coalition seeks to redefine the power and patriarchy through narrative change around menstruation moving beyond the conventional, biomedical framing of menstrual health and hygiene management. Instead, it advocates for a holistic, life-cycle, human rights approach that places dignified menstruation at the center of menstrual and other human rights discourse.

In alignment with its transformative vision, GSCDM established International Dignified Menstruation Day on 8 December, strategically positioning this within the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This timing is both symbolic and strategic, as it underscores the Coalition's assertion that menstrual discrimination constitutes a pervasive yet underrecognized form of GBV and a direct violation of fundamental human rights.

With a membership network comprising over 90 non-governmental organizations across diverse regional and socio-political contexts, GSCDM engages in research, policy advocacy, webinars, trainings, publications, conferences and other global activities.

B. Dignified Menstruation

Dignified menstruation is a transformative, inclusive, holistic, human rights-based, life cycle framework that envisions a world where all menstruators live free from any form of menstrual discrimination at home, school, community, workplace, and everywhere.¹

The framework confronts and challenges how discriminatory menstrual practices function as systemic tools of oppression, deliberately constructed to create and enforce gender stereotypes to maintain patriarchal power structures and hierarchies across societies. It exposes how deeply embedded socio-political beliefs, religious restrictions, and institutional barriers operate simultaneously and systematically to suppress young menstruators' state of justice, and fundamental human rights, thereby perpetuating and reinforcing power imbalances between young menstruators and non-menstruators. Through this critical lens, the framework reveals how seemingly disparate forms of menstrual discrimination collectively serve to maintain systems of social control or invisible conflict, injustices, and menstruation-based subordination.¹



Global South Coalition

For Dignified Menstruation

Input Requested: Mental Health Challenge and human rights impacts
What are the main mental health issues affecting young people in your country?
How do these challenges impact their rights-particularly for marginalized group

A. Menstrual Discrimination: misinterpretation, and often forgotten in Mental Health Discourses globally

GSCDM defined that the *Menstrual discrimination is an umbrella term that includes silence, taboos, shame, stigma, shyness, restrictions, abuses, violence, and deprivation from services and resources associated with menstruation throughout the life cycle of menstruators (2019).*¹

Menstruation is not merely a periodic biological event but constitutes a continuous, life-cycle experience that profoundly shapes the lives of approximately 4.06 billion individuals, representing 49.72% of the global population as of 2024.² While an estimated 1.9 billion people are of reproductive age and actively menstruating, menstrual discrimination transcends the act of menstruating itself, impacting individuals across the entirety of their lives.

Menstrual experiences are not confined to cisgender women and girls; they also affect transgender men, non-binary individuals, and all those born with ovaries and uteri, collectively referred to here as menstruators. These individuals exist in all their diversity and are found across every sector of society: from corporate boardrooms to agricultural fields, from academic institutions to refugee camps, and from densely populated urban centers to climate-vulnerable and conflict-affected regions.

Globally, menstruation is considered dirty, impure, and a state of weakness with various forms, names, and magnitudes, transcending all socio-political boundaries, regardless of class, caste, topography, and educational, economic, or political status.³ The depth of this phenomenon is reflected in its linguistic presence alone - with over 5,000 euphemistic expressions known globally.⁴ In Asia, certain communities enforce menstrual seclusion, food restrictions, restrict participation in public activities, including religious activities, etc. In North America and Australia, young menstruators report decreased participation in the workplace and professional activities, along with reduced concentration during menstruation due to the internalized status of shame and anxiety about maintaining secrecy around their menstrual status and the impact of menopause.⁵ Studies also indicate that many restrict social activities like swimming and exercise due to fears of blood leakage and subsequent teasing.⁵ Similarly, in European countries like Germany, young menstruators also express shame about purchasing menstrual products and feel restricted in their participation in routine domestic and academic activities.⁵

¹ Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation. (n.d.). Dignified menstruation, from <https://www.dignifiedmenstruation.org/>

² UNFPA. "State of World Population Report 2023: Menstruation and Reproductive Health Statistics." United Nations Population Fund, New York.

³ Paudel R., 2020. Dignified Menstruation, A Practical Handbook.

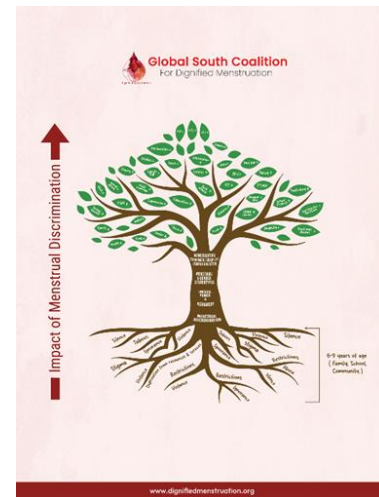
⁴ Paudel, R. (2024). Menstrual stories: An anthology from the Global South. GSCDM.

Even in Nordic countries, traditionally associated with greater gender equality, young menstruators report modifying their daily routines, avoiding physical activities, and experiencing heightened consciousness about their clothing choices during menstruation.⁵ Across various African regions, young menstruators face restrictions related to food consumption, bathing practices, crop harvesting, vegetable consumption, access to water sources, etc.⁵ Many communities also impose limitations on using shared water sources, toilets, and participating in religious activities. In Latin America, discriminatory beliefs lead to dietary restrictions during menstruation, including prohibitions on milk products, pork, and avocado, along with interactions with plants.⁵ Additionally, young menstruators report experiences of being secluded from domestic activities, sun exposure, and social engagement, etc.⁵

As such, menstruation functions as a biological tribal marker that has been historically weaponized to create social hierarchies. Through this lens, young menstruators have been systematically categorized as losers, weaker, inferior, and impure compared to young non-menstruators, who are positioned as winners, superior due to their absence of menstruation. This categorization extends beyond simple biological differences to serve as a foundational element of gender stereotypes across cultures, communities, and institutions. These false narratives and associated discriminatory practices, which manifest through a sophisticated network of socio-political controls ranging from explicit to implicit forms of violence, help in constructing and maintaining unequal power dynamics between young menstruators and non-menstruators.⁴

B. Menstrual Discrimination: nature and complexity of Menstrual Discrimination yet to acknowledged and addressed across all human rights framework globally

As highlighted above, irrespective of the Global North or Global South, young menstruators and non-menstruators begin internalizing discriminatory menstrual perceptions and practices from an early age of 6-9 years.⁴ For young menstruators, this inherited knowledge systematically erodes their sense of autonomy, agency, and self-worth. They begin to internalize messages that cast them as losers, weaker, inferior, and inherently disadvantaged. Simultaneously, young non-menstruators absorb and adopt feelings of being winners, superior and powerful over young menstruators, creating a deeply ingrained socio-political hierarchy. This dynamic becomes self-perpetuating, constructing and reinforcing patriarchal cultural and political norms. This is how the menstrual discrimination resulting from menstrual and gender stereotypes serves to maintain unequal power structures and systemic inequalities, including invisible conflict and injustices in a vicious cycle.⁴





C. The power structures and systemic inequalities constructed and reinforced by menstrual discrimination changed the landscape of human rights among young people globally

The feeling of being a loser, weaker, inferior, disadvantaged, and vulnerable is not only societal or young non-menstruator's perceptions but also deeply entrenched among young menstruators themselves as a construct shaped by menstrual discrimination. Globally, by and large, the casual factor for power relations and patriarchy pointed to class, ethnicity, religion, poverty, education, or geopolitics. Therefore, the global efforts are focused on eliminating the gender-based violence, improving the SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights), participating in the table of peace, electoral and constitutional reforms, climate justice, economic initiatives, and everywhere. Unfortunately, globally, the progress is so nominal in comparison to efforts and investments, and has always remained as a gigantic battle. As a systemic causal factor for power structure and patriarchy, the menstrual discrimination is the primary and invisible contributing factor behind every violation of human rights and, the bedrock of every intervention around human rights. Therefore, globally, young menstruators are marginalized and experiencing low mental health issues across healthcare, education, agriculture etc., and are continuously subject to rape, forced marriage, sterilization, slavery, pregnancy, displacement, HIV, poor SRHR (sexual and reproductive rights), climate crises, disasters, pandemics, AI and cyberattacks etc.

Few stakeholders, currently, focused on symptomatic impact of menstrual discrimination however, they again not aligning the values and principles of dignified menstruation. For instance, distribution of plastic (90 % world's menstrual pad takes 200-1000 years to decay means accelerate the impact of climate crisis) and chemical contained menstrual pad is institutionalize menstrual discrimination instead of dismantling menstrual discrimination.

D. Menstrual discrimination is not only the cause and result of SGBV, including child marriage, but also the causal factor for invisible conflict and injustice.

To be straightforward, the UN categorized the four (sexual, physical, emotional and deprivation of services, and resources) forms of sexual and gender-based violence (1993). Even in simple calculation, an individual menstrual discriminatory practice often spans multiple categories, more than two. For example, when menstruators are restricted from harvesting crops, this constitutes both emotional violence and deprivation of resources and services. This pattern extends to health outcomes; chronic conditions like anemia among young menstruators are often misattributed to menstruation itself rather than recognized as the result of continued nutritional deprivation due to discriminatory menstrual practices.

Through the lens of the role of menstrual discrimination in power structures and inequalities, the whole category of SGBV is also an outcome of menstrual discrimination. Both systemic and symptomatic impacts of menstrual discrimination are applied across all forms of SGBVs.

For instance, let us examine child marriage. Systemically, as a young menstruator, she is not counted as an equal as her even her young brother. Symptomatically, discriminatory menstrual norms disrupt approximately five days each month for learning/educational opportunities through various practices: requiring early wake times, restricting food access, limiting educational materials, enforcing separate seating arrangements, interrupting educational participation, taking forced or unpaid leave in vocational training, etc. This amounts to roughly 60 days, or two months, of disruption annually.⁵ This results in an increase in absenteeism, leading to an increased risk of educational failures/school dropout, to voluntary/forced/early child marriage.⁷ This scenario is already existed in many locations all around the globe. If there is deforestation or drought and sources of water is far, and the young menstruator experience another layer of violence. If there is dignified menstruation, young non-menstruator assigned for fetching the water which is not happening at all. In this case, she destroys her inner peace countless times, and constantly faces disputes with her family, school, and authority. Despite this significant impact, menstrual discrimination in human rights has been overlooked as a key driver of child marriage in global intervention strategies over the past six decades.⁷

E. Misinterpretation of Menstrual Discrimination and Mislend the human rights and mental health

The UN and other international communities categorized menstrual practices as discriminatory alongside other 'traditional harmful practices' such as witchcraft accusations, breast stoning, living goddess or female genital mutilation, etc. This classification fails to capture both the scope and inherent complexity of menstrual discrimination. This mischaracterization is particularly concerning for three key reasons. First, menstruation affects approximately half of the world's population, making its direct impact far more widespread than its current classification suggests.⁶ Second, menstrual discrimination manifests in various forms and degrees across different cultures and regions worldwide rather than being limited to a single practice.⁴ Third, the term "Chhaupadi" itself has been misappropriated; it simply means "menstruation" in the local Achhami language of a few districts of west Nepal rather than referring to discriminatory practices. Furthermore, often, the media, donors, and NGOs use widely publicized cases of fatal snake bites in huts as a sole example of menstrual discrimination in Nepal; however, this is a misinterpretation and an assumption that misleads the global interventions for menstrual equity. Such fatal cases are a result of the failure of the state to protect fundamental health rights and the right to education rather than being solely attributed to discriminatory menstrual practices. This characterization diverts attention from the broader systemic issues and state responsibilities at play, further compounding discrimination against Nepal.

The global menstrual movement focused on five days of menstruation through menstrual products or toilets instead of dismantling the menstrual discrimination for sustained human

⁵ Paudel, R., Shah, N. J., & Ahmed, T. Isn't Menstrual Discrimination a Driver for Child Marriage?

⁶ McAllister, J., Amery, F., Channon, M., & Thomson, J. (2025). Where is menstruation in global health policy? The need for a collective understanding. *Global Public Health*.

rights and climate action. And the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policies are globally neglecting the menstrual needs and priorities of young menstruators⁷, where the human rights along with mental health is heavily compromised.

F. Menstrual discrimination is missing in SRHR, LGBTQIA+, disability, and humanitarian and climate disaster discourses and mental health matters everywhere

The discourse around reproductive justice, and SRHR, consistently neglects both the scope of menstruation and the impact of menstrual discrimination. This systematic exclusion is evident in major policy frameworks, from the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and Beijing Platform for Action (1995) to the WHO SRHR strategy (2019), though menstrual dignity is fundamental to achieving SRHR.⁸ Even recent developments, such as the WHO statement modification at the 50th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (2022), fail to explicitly recognize the global scope of menstrual discrimination, instead limiting the focus primarily to menstrual health.⁶ This oversight has profound implications. Young menstruators who are socialized to accept discriminatory menstrual practices and internalize perceptions of being "weaker" or "inferior" struggle to advocate for their sexual and reproductive rights. This conditioning undermines their ability to refuse unsafe sex, negotiate safe sexual practices, make autonomous decisions about family planning and contraception, or access safe abortion services.⁶ Eventually, they are forced to live in invisible mental health issues.

Likewise, young menstruators with disabilities face stark challenges in maintaining body autonomy, accessing menstrual education, and exercising the right to menstrual dignity. They are subjected to forced sterilization and non-consensual pharmaceutical menstrual suppression, particularly affecting those with intellectual disabilities.⁴ The UN CRPD (2006) and other related policies do not address menstrual discrimination as one of the underlying barriers to disability rights.⁹

Furthermore, the menstrual movement's primary focus on women and girls as default young menstruators reflects a limiting gender binary perspective. This exclusion of transgender, queer,

⁷ Bruinvels, G., Burden, R., Brown, N., Richards, T., & Pedlar, C. (2016). The prevalence and impact of heavy menstrual bleeding (menorrhagia) in elite and non-elite athletes. *PLoS ONE*, 11(2), e0149881.

⁸ Wilson et al., "Seeking synergies: understanding the evidence that links menstrual health and sexual and reproductive health and rights," *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 29, no. 1 (2021)

⁹ United Nations General Assembly. (2019). Rights of persons with disabilities: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/74/186).



and non-binary individuals' experiences and challenges compromises their fundamental rights, including peace and security.^{10, 4, 6}

To date, the global policies and programming (GR 37, GR 30) around humanitarian support, and pandemic or climate disasters are confined to management of five days of bleeding instead of unveiling the gravity of menstrual discrimination.

Input Requested: Government Actions

What steps are being taken to address root causes and protect the rights of affected young people?

How are affected population accounted for ?

Globally, there is no any specific government action to address the complex and multifaceted menstrual discrimination for young people. However, government of Nepal has been working around dignified menstruation since 2017 by promulgating National Policy on Dignified Menstruation (2017). Furthermore, in March 21, 2025, National Assembly of government of Nepal endorsed the resolution motion on dignified menstruation which pledge to address the menstrual discrimination in specific populations such as children, young people, disable and all menstruators¹¹.

Recently, few governments e.g. Kenya in Africa have menstrual policies but they are primarily focus on fixing the accessibility of menstrual products or toilets instead of unveil the various forms of menstrual discrimination and its impact throughout the lives of young menstruators, The governments should recognize the menstrual discrimination as un underlying root cause of menstrual and gender stereotypes, systemic inequalities and patriarchal power structures. Likewise, governments should affirm menstrual discrimination as forms of SGBV and acknowledge its role in perpetuating other forms of GBV. There need to integrate the dignified menstruation in policies and programs related to disability rights, LGBTQUIA+. Likewise, governments need to incorporate the impact of menstrual discrimination in to disaster response, humanitarian action, pandemic preparedness and climate policies. Most importantly, the governments should redefine menstrual discrimination as a primary human rights violation rather than subsuming it under the category of `traditional harmful practice`. Dignified menstruation should incorporate across all gender equality and social inclusion polciies, child rights frameworks and educational curricula.

Input Requested: Barriers to accessing mental health care.

What are the main obstacles to availability, accessibility, accessibility, acceptability and quality of service?

How do these barriers affect human rights?

Globally, the mental health impact since the age of knowing something about menstrual practice at home,6-9 years, not acknowledge at all. None of the mental health frameworks from community to UN, from global north to west, do not address the reason of young menstruators

¹⁰ Rydström, K. (2020). Degendering menstruation: Making trans menstruators matter. The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies, 945-959.

¹¹ <https://www.dignifiedmenstruation.org/detail/201/resolution-on-dignified-menstruation-in-the-national-assembly-of-nepal-english>



feeling of fear, anxiety, stressed, crying, depressed, feeling unlucky, like to die or removal of uterus, taking medicine for ending menstruation, remained absent in school/college/work, avoiding sports or public activities etc. There is no research as well. The menstruation is seen only managing five days bleeding, or menstrual products not dismantling all forms of menstrual discrimination and its impact throughout the life of young people.

As discussed earlier, menstrual discrimination is an underlying cause for construction of unequal power and equality, strengthened the patriarchy and exclusion at home, school, community, workplace, parliament and everywhere and throughout the life cycle.

Systemically and symptomatically, menstrual discrimination is a perfect form of multiple human rights. For instance, not allowing to get food from kitchen is one of the common menstrual practices in many cultures all around the globe. In this example, the right to dignity, right to freedom, right to equality, right to non-discrimination, right to food, right to health and so on. There would uncountable violation of human rights while practicing various forms of menstrual discrimination including silence, taboos, stigma, shyness, restrictions, deprivation from resources and services. These rights violation other higher level of human rights like violation of economic rights. Sadly, such issues are not recognized across mental health conversations in all levels.

Input Requested: Laws, Policies and Programmes.

What national frameworks, strategies and action plans exist?

Were young consulted in their development?

As mentioned earlier, few governments and other actors started to develop and work around menstrual health by formulating the mental health frameworks, policies, programs etc. but the mental health issues occurred due to menstrual discrimination are not touch at all from UN to local level and vice versa.

Due to silence, stigma, ignorance around the implication of the menstrual discrimination on mental health also not aware because menstrual discrimination is yet to considered as serious cause and outcome for the mental health issues. Thus, the menstrual discrimination is hibernating in both demand and supply sides.

Input Requested: Public Expenditure

What proportion of the health budget is allocated to youth mental health?

Have there been recent funding increase or cuts?

The mental health among young people occurred due to menstrual discrimination is not prioritized at all therefore, there is no allocation of budget at all.

Input Requested: Promising Practicing

How can states strengthen implementation of young people's right to mental health?

What innovative or effective models exist?

As mentioned earlier, each mental health policies, framework and programs need to include the dignified menstruation as a cross-cutting issue. Because menstrual discrimination is an underlying cause for poor mental health in many contexts all around the globe. Therefore,



values and principles need to incorporate through school's curriculum, art, literature, sports, health, education, agriculture and everywhere because menstruators are everywhere and mental health could be issue in any time and place.

[Input Requested: Relevant Data](#)

The widespread of menstrual discrimination across the globe has already discussed under the sub-title of menstrual discrimination.

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