

Reflective Essay on Social Internship Experience with Yoni Bleed with Pride

Part 1: Transformation and Personal Growth

Embarking on a social internship with Yoni Bleed with Pride has been a transformative journey, reshaping my perspectives and deepening my understanding of menstrual equity. Before joining this NGO, my knowledge about menstruation was limited, influenced by societal stigmas and misconceptions. However, this internship has enlightened me, eradicating any preconceived notions of impurity associated with menstruation.

Highlights of My Internship:

1. Plantation Drive: Participating in a plantation drive was a unique experience that intertwined environmental sustainability with menstrual equity. The drive symbolized growth and renewal, mirroring the ongoing efforts to foster a more inclusive and educated society regarding menstrual health. We planted trees and plants that symbolized life and growth, reminding us of the natural cycles and the importance of nurturing both our environment and our communities. Working alongside volunteers who shared a passion for both environmental and social causes was inspiring and motivating. This activity emphasized the interconnectedness of various social issues, showing that caring for the environment and promoting menstrual health can go hand in hand.

2. Essay and Poem Writing Competition: Organizing this competition was a profound experience. I interacted with participants who shared their stories and reflections on menstruation, providing a platform for voices often unheard. The creativity and authenticity expressed in their writings highlighted the personal and societal impacts of menstrual stigma and the urgent need for change. Reading through the essays and poems, I was struck by the diversity of experiences and the common threads of resilience and hope. This competition not only gave participants a chance to express themselves but also fostered a sense of community and solidarity.

3. Seminar on Menstrual Education: Conducting a seminar was both a challenging and rewarding task. Preparing PowerPoint presentations and posters required thorough research and understanding. Engaging with the audience, answering their queries, and witnessing their transformation from skepticism to understanding was immensely gratifying. The seminar covered various aspects of menstrual health, including hygiene practices, managing pain, and debunking myths. Seeing participants gain confidence in discussing menstruation openly was a testament to the power of education and dialogue.

Challenges and Overcoming Them:

One of the significant challenges was addressing deeply rooted stigmas and misconceptions about menstruation. Many participants hesitated to discuss the topic openly due to cultural taboos. Overcoming this required patience, empathy, and persistence. By creating a safe and respectful environment, encouraging open dialogue, and providing factual information, we gradually fostered a more accepting and informed community. Another challenge was coordinating activities and ensuring active participation. Balancing different tasks and managing time effectively were crucial for the success of our initiatives.

Learning Teamwork and Coordination:

Throughout my internship, I learned the importance of teamwork and coordination. Working with a diverse group of volunteers and staff required effective communication and collaboration. We had to plan, delegate tasks, and ensure that everyone was on the same page. This experience taught me the

value of different perspectives and the strength that comes from working together towards a common goal. Whether it was organizing events, conducting seminars, or running awareness campaigns, our collective efforts made a significant impact.

Submitting Event Proposals:

As part of my responsibilities, I regularly submitted event proposals to the NGO. This involved identifying relevant themes, planning the logistics, and outlining the objectives and expected outcomes of each event. This task enhanced my organizational skills and allowed me to contribute creatively to the NGO's mission. Proposing new initiatives and seeing them come to fruition was incredibly fulfilling and demonstrated the importance of proactive engagement in social work.

Part 2: Understanding the Focus Area - Menstrual Equity

My internship focused on promoting menstrual equity, a critical aspect of health and human rights. Menstrual equity goes beyond providing sanitary products; it encompasses education, breaking stigmas, and ensuring that everyone has the resources and knowledge to manage menstruation with dignity.

Key Understandings:

1. Educational Empowerment: Through seminars and competitions, I realized the power of education in dismantling myths and promoting informed discussions about menstruation. Educating both men and women about menstrual health is essential for creating a supportive and equitable society. Menstrual education should start early in schools and continue through community programs, ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, understands the biological and social aspects of menstruation. Comprehensive education can help break down barriers and foster a culture of respect and support.

2. Societal Impact: Menstrual equity is intrinsically linked to broader social issues, including gender equality, health, and education. Women and girls often face barriers in education and employment due to inadequate menstrual health management. Addressing these issues is crucial for achieving overall societal progress. Ensuring access to menstrual products and education can improve attendance and performance in schools, increase productivity at work, and enhance overall well-being. Menstrual equity is not just a women's issue; it's a societal issue that affects everyone.

3. Policy and Advocacy: Effective change requires robust policies and advocacy efforts. Collaborating with local communities and policymakers to implement sustainable solutions is vital for long-term impact. This includes providing accessible menstrual products, promoting menstrual education, and challenging discriminatory practices. Policy changes at local, national, and global levels are necessary to ensure that menstrual health is prioritized in public health agendas. Advocacy efforts should focus on creating systemic changes that address the root causes of menstrual inequity.

Part 3: Vision for Making a Difference

Immediate Impact:

1. Awareness Campaigns: I plan to continue organizing awareness campaigns in my community and college. By leveraging social media, workshops, and local events, I aim to reach a broader audience and foster a culture of openness and support regarding menstrual health. Using creative approaches such as art, storytelling, and interactive sessions can engage people and make the topic more

approachable. Collaborating with influencers and local leaders can amplify our message and reach a wider audience.

2. Educational Initiatives: Developing educational materials and resources tailored to different age groups can make a significant impact. Collaborating with schools and community centers to integrate menstrual education into their curriculum is a practical step toward sustained awareness. Creating engaging and age-appropriate content can ensure that students understand the importance of menstrual health and can discuss it without embarrassment. Training teachers and educators to handle the topic sensitively and accurately is also crucial for effective education.

Long-Term Goals:

1. Policy Advocacy: In the long term, I aspire to engage in policy advocacy, working with NGOs, healthcare professionals, and policymakers to implement comprehensive menstrual health programs. Ensuring that menstrual health is prioritized in public health agendas is crucial for systemic change. Advocating for policies that provide free or subsidized menstrual products in schools, workplaces, and public spaces can make a significant difference. Lobbying for menstrual health to be included in health education curricula and public health campaigns can also create lasting change.

2. Research and Innovation: Investing in research and innovation to develop sustainable and affordable menstrual products is another area I am passionate about. Supporting initiatives that focus on eco-friendly solutions and accessibility can address both environmental and economic challenges associated with menstrual health. Encouraging the development of biodegradable and reusable products can reduce environmental impact and provide long-term, cost-effective solutions. Collaborating with researchers, manufacturers, and communities to pilot and implement these products can drive progress.

3. Community Engagement: Building strong community networks and support systems is essential for lasting impact. Encouraging community leaders, influencers, and stakeholders to champion menstrual equity can amplify our efforts and drive collective action. Creating support groups and safe spaces for discussions about menstrual health can empower individuals and build a sense of solidarity. Community-driven initiatives that involve local voices and needs can ensure that solutions are relevant and sustainable.

Conclusion

My internship with Yoni Bleed with Pride has been a journey of personal growth, learning, and empowerment. It has not only transformed my views on menstruation but also equipped me with the knowledge and skills to advocate for menstrual equity. By continuing to educate, engage, and empower others, I am committed to making a positive difference both immediately and in the long term. Together, we can create a society where menstrual health is understood, respected, and supported, ensuring that everyone can live with dignity and equality. The lessons learned and experiences gained during this internship have laid a strong foundation for my ongoing efforts to promote menstrual equity and create meaningful change. Additionally, the skills in teamwork, coordination, and event planning have broadened my capabilities, allowing me to approach social issues with a more holistic and strategic mindset. These experiences have prepared me to take on more significant challenges and contribute effectively to the cause of menstrual equity and beyond.