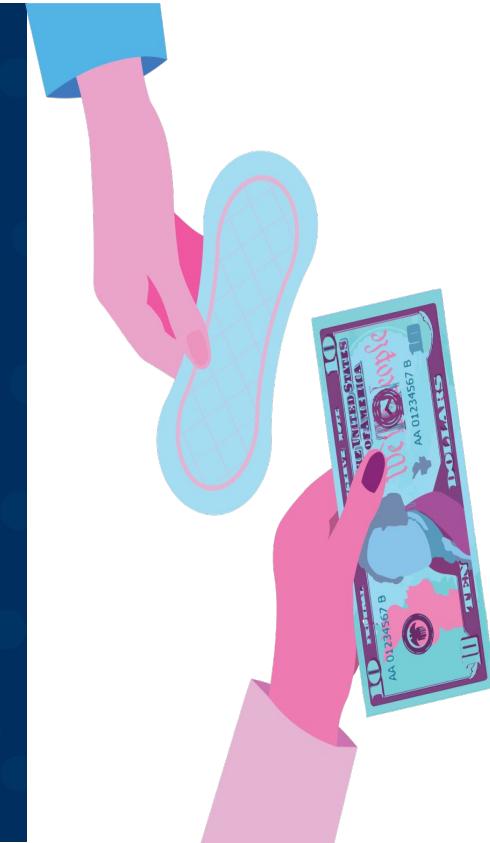


Breaking the Cycle: Addressing Menstrual Product Insecurity Among College Students

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Research Problem

What am I Addressing?

Many college students face significant challenges in obtaining consistent access to menstrual products when needed, whether due to financial constraints or limited availability in urgent situations. The absence of comprehensive, campus-wide solutions to this issue can negatively affect students' mental health and overall well-being.



Methods

- To explore period poverty among college students, I will conduct interviews and a photo elicitation activity.
- During interviews, I'll ask about daily routines and how menstrual challenges affect participation in various activities to understand the mental and physical health impacts.
- The photo elicitation activity will involve reactions to images of menstrual products in public spaces and their pricing, revealing opinions and awareness of current issues and solutions.
- Finally, a discussion on existing solutions will uncover desired improvements and valued aspects.

These methods will offer detailed insights into the practical issues that students face due to period poverty. They will also highlight the necessary changes needed to better support these students.

Recruitment and participants

The participants in this study were chosen based on their status as menstruating individuals and college students. By including individuals from various financial backgrounds and different educational institutions, I was able to gather a more diverse dataset.

This approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of how this issue affects a broader audience and offered deeper insights into what elements of current solutions are effective or problematic for different demographics

Findings

Some of the themes gathered from my analysis include:

- Participants often lack sufficient period products in public, leading to discomfort and panic.
- Participants appreciate when products are provided in restrooms or through other resources.
- Current solutions like coin dispensers and unstocked baskets with limited sizing are insufficient.
- The high cost of menstrual products is frustrating; making them free would help.
- Participants are disappointed in their schools' efforts; student groups often step in.
- They try to stay prepared but sometimes forget or have unpredictable periods.
- Many have discussed this issue with others, indicating its broad importance.

Deliverables

In this study, I employed a persona and a storyboard to encapsulate the insights gained from the participants.

The persona represents an individual with a heavier menstrual flow, illustrating the frustrations associated with such an unpredictable cycle. This persona was inspired by several participants who shared similar experiences and highlighted their need for improved accessibility to period products due to a more frequent need for products.

The storyboard, on the other hand, depicts a real-time scenario involving a student whose period arrived earlier than expected, resulting in noticeable discomfort and stress.

Together, these tools present diverse backgrounds united by a common need for accessible period products, emphasizing the broader impact of this issue on overall well-being.

Lessons Learned

For future projects, I would aim to recruit a more diverse group of participants from various colleges and financial backgrounds. In this study, I was only able to gather participants from two colleges and a limited range of financial backgrounds. Moving forward, it would be advantageous to gather insights from individuals with a higher dependence on publicly provided period products and those attending different universities to better understand the existing solutions.

Additionally, I learned that crafting unbiased, open-ended questions posed a significant challenge. It was difficult to avoid questions that reflected my own beliefs, which impacted the information gathering process. Consequently, I had to revise some interview questions to maintain objectivity. In future studies, I would try be more vigilant about minimizing such biases from the beginning.