



STUDENT'S MLE REPORT

MENSTRUAL EQUALITY IN CAMBODIA:

Evaluation on Puberty and Menstrual Health Teacher Training and Education for Students Third-Year Project

DAYS FOR GIRLS

Client : Days for Girls (DfG)
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Date : November 08, 2025, v1

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01 Research Background & Objectives



Following a successful pilot project in 2022, DfGI and CRESO have an MOU agreement with the MoEYS, for a multi-year menstrual health project between 2023-2025 to increase access to timely, accurate, well-delivered, age and culturally appropriate puberty and menstrual health education and menstrual products for 15,000 students and 600 teachers in Phnom Penh, Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri, Kratie, and Kampong Som Provinces, Cambodia.

DfG commissioned Indochina Research to conduct an MLE to understand the impact of the teacher training on the teachers and the Grade 5 to Grade 8 lessons on the students during the second year of the project.

01 Research Background & Objectives



STUDENTS

- To assess and measure changes (if any) to students' knowledge of menstruation and puberty.
- To assess and measure changes (if any) in students' attitudes about puberty and menstruation.
- To assess and measure changes (if any) in students' confidence in discussing puberty and menstruation with others.
- To assess and measure changes (if any) in female students' menstrual experience (as it pertains to access and use of menstrual products, including DfG washable pad Kits).



02

Research Design

Research Methodology

A Mixed methods approach was employed to collect primary quantitative and qualitative information.

1. Area Coverage

Ratanakiri Province

2. Respondent Criteria

- Occupation: Student
- Grade: Primary & Secondary
- Gender: Male & Female

3. Fieldwork date

Pre-test & Post test | February–August 2025

QUANTITATIVE

Method:

- Face-to-face, paper-based self-completion structured questionnaire in Khmer language using SurveyToGo as the survey software for data entry after completion.
- Purposive random sampling was employed to select the target respondents.

Sampling Frame:

- All students of grade 5-6 & grade 7-8 in the selected schools were invited to join the survey.

Sample Size:

- Primary level
 - + School = n4
 - + Student = n215
- Secondary level
 - + School = n18
 - + Student = n1,287

QUALITATIVE

Method:

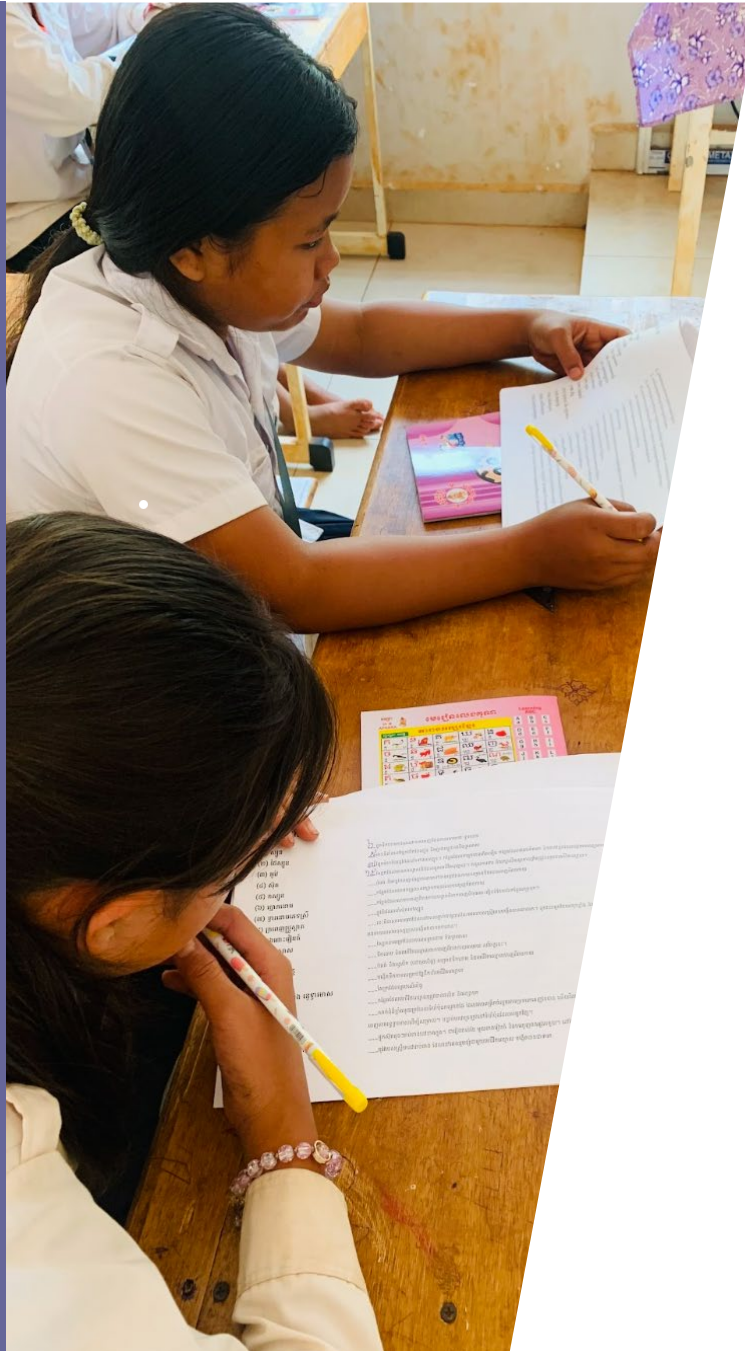
- Offline Face-to-Face, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with students.
- Interviews are audio-taped and moderated by an experienced Khmer moderator.
- Respondent selection was via purposive/ convenience sampling.

Sampling Frame:

- Students of grade 7-8 in the selected schools were invited to join the study.

Sample Size:

- Secondary level
 - + FGDs= 6 groups (3 groups of males and 3 groups of females)



03

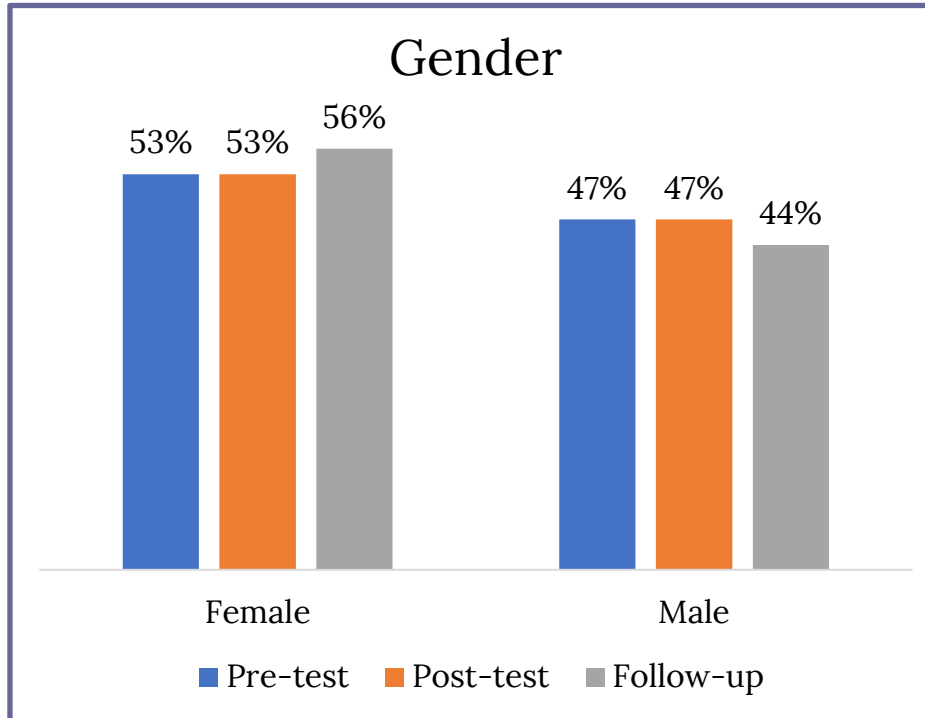
Research Findings

QUANTITATIVE

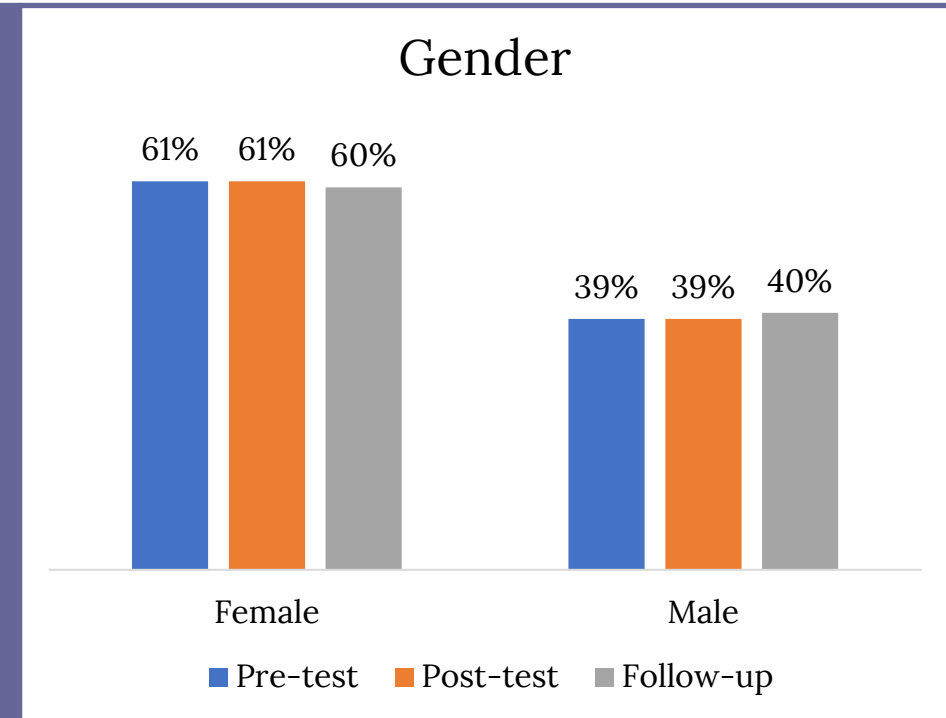
PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL



There are more female students in both secondary (61%) and primary school (53%). Most of them are Khmer (45% in secondary school and 84% in primary school) and range in age from 10 to 19 years old.

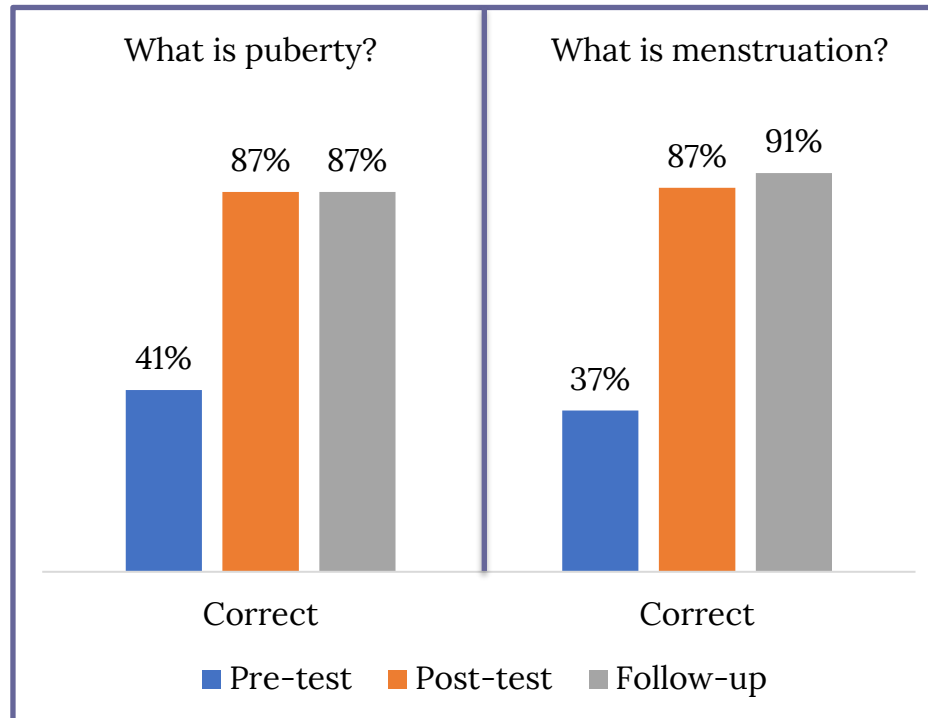
KNOWLEDGE



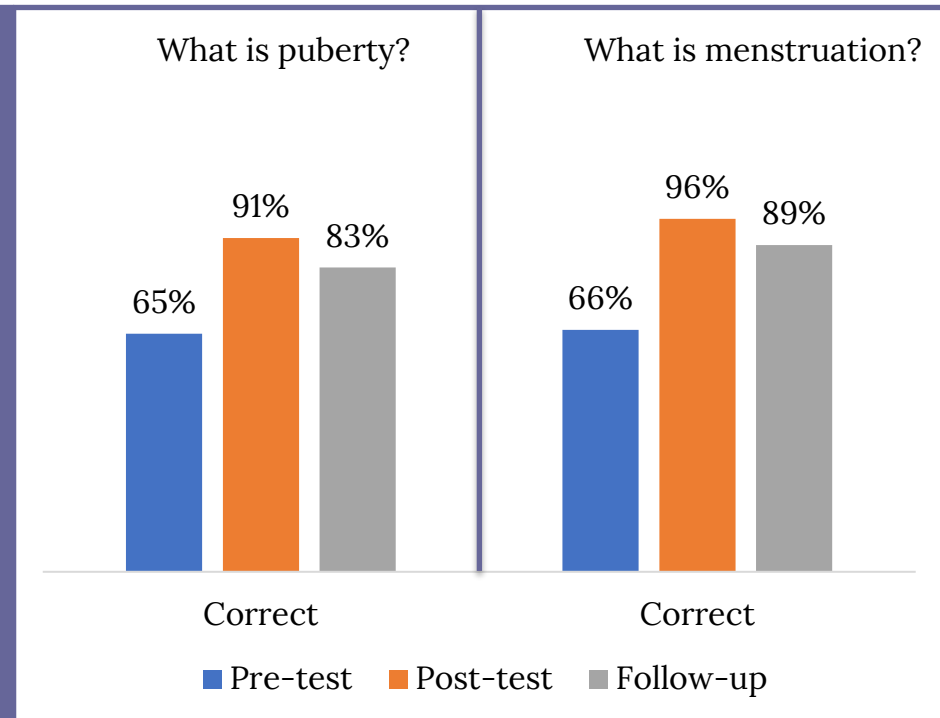
MEANING OF PUBERTY & MENSTRUATION

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

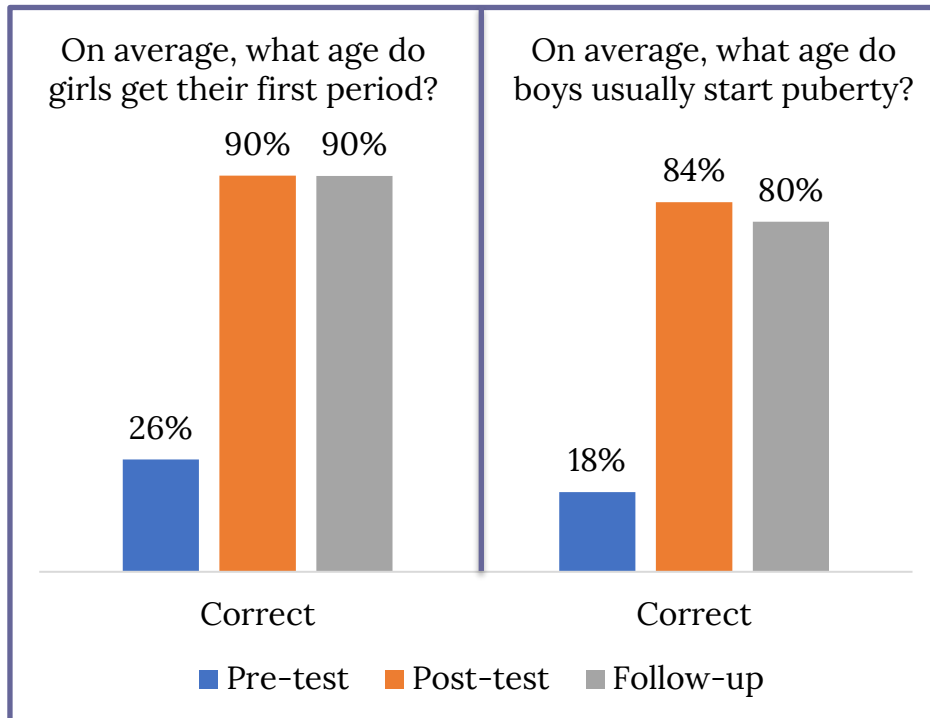


Prior to the intervention, a minority of primary school students could identify the meaning of **puberty (41%) and **menstruation (37%)**. This knowledge **significantly increased** at post-test and follow-up for puberty (both reaching **87%**) and similarly for menstruation, reaching **87%** at post-test and **91%** at follow-up. In contrast, **over 60%** of secondary school students could identify the meaning of both puberty and menstruation **before** the learning session. This figure rose to **over 90%** at post-test but showed a slight retention **decrease**, dropping to **over 80%** at the follow-up assessment.**

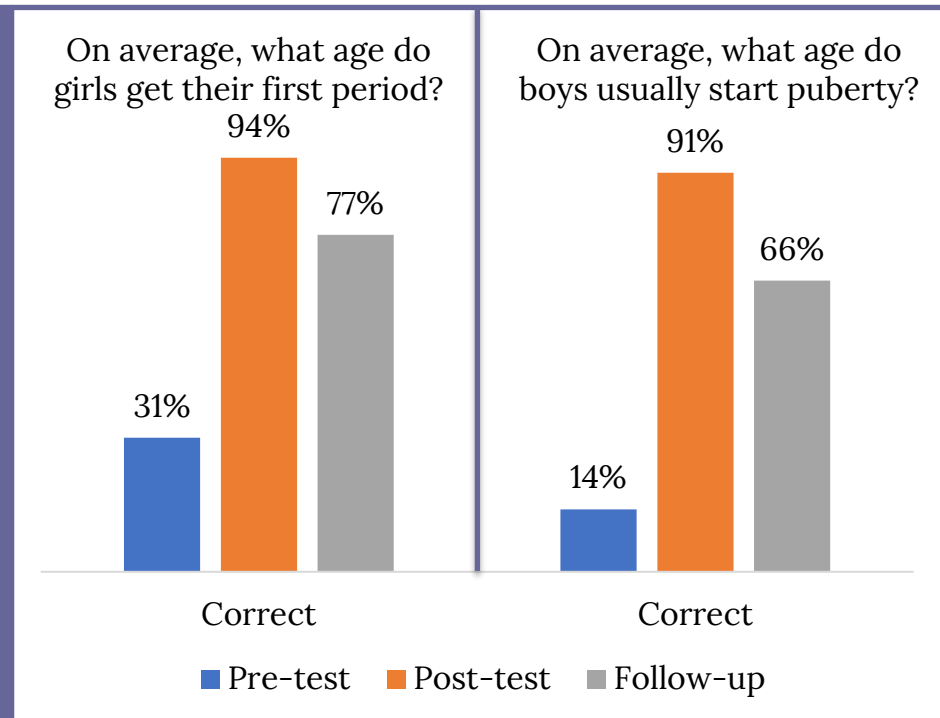
AVERAGE AGE THAT GIRLS AND BOYS START MENSTRUATION/PUBERTY

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

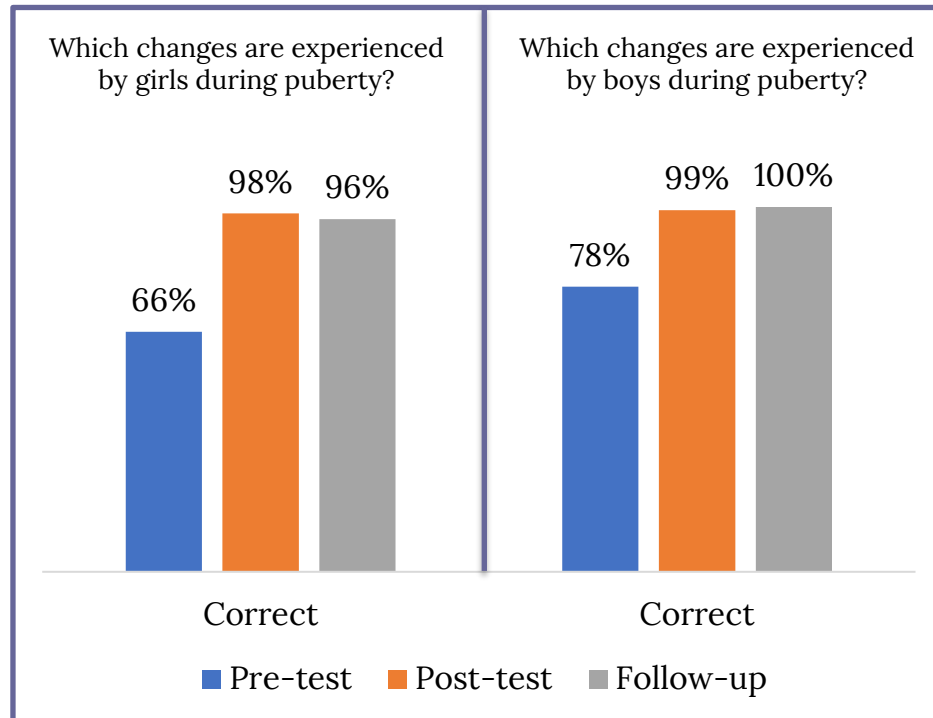


Before the training session, knowledge regarding the average age girls start **menstruation** and boys start **puberty** was **low (below 50%)** among both primary and secondary school students. However, this knowledge **significantly increased** to **over 80%** immediately after the training (post-test). Retention slightly **decreased** at the follow-up assessment, with knowledge dropping to **over 60%**.

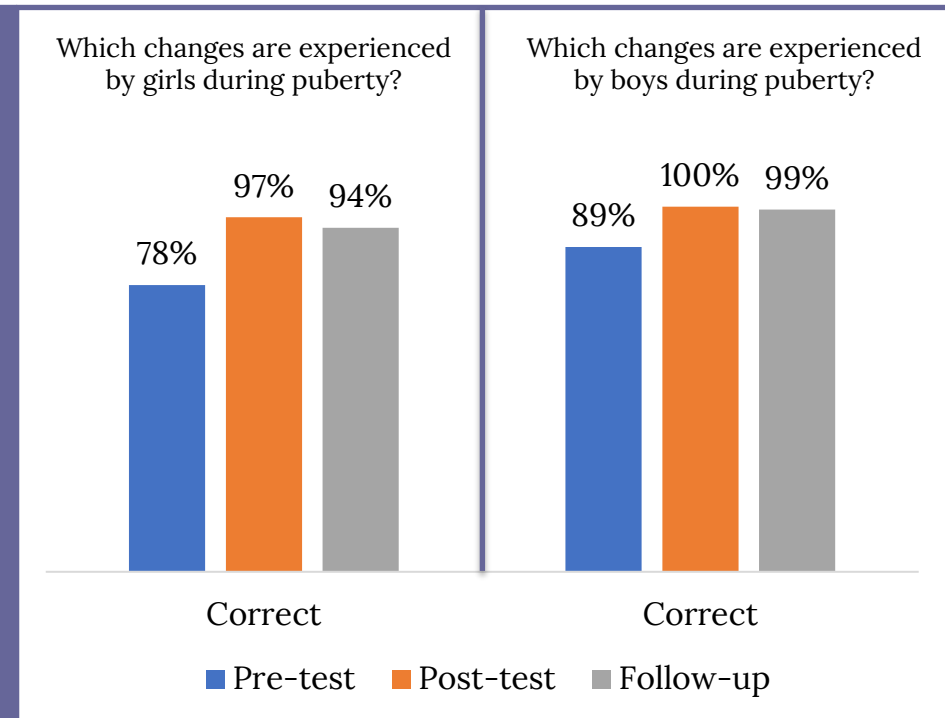
CHANGES THAT GIRLS & BOYS EXPERIENCE

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

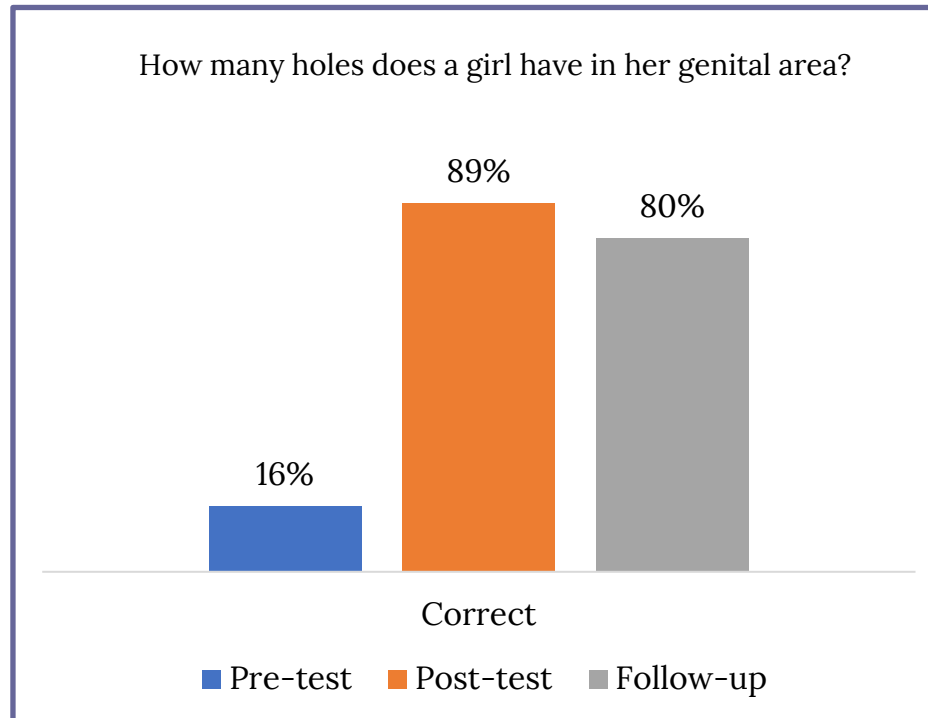


Prior to the intervention (pre-test), over 60% of primary school students and **over 70%** of secondary school students were **aware** of the **physical changes** that occur in girls and boys during puberty. This awareness **subsequently increased to over 90%** at both the post-test and follow-up assessments.

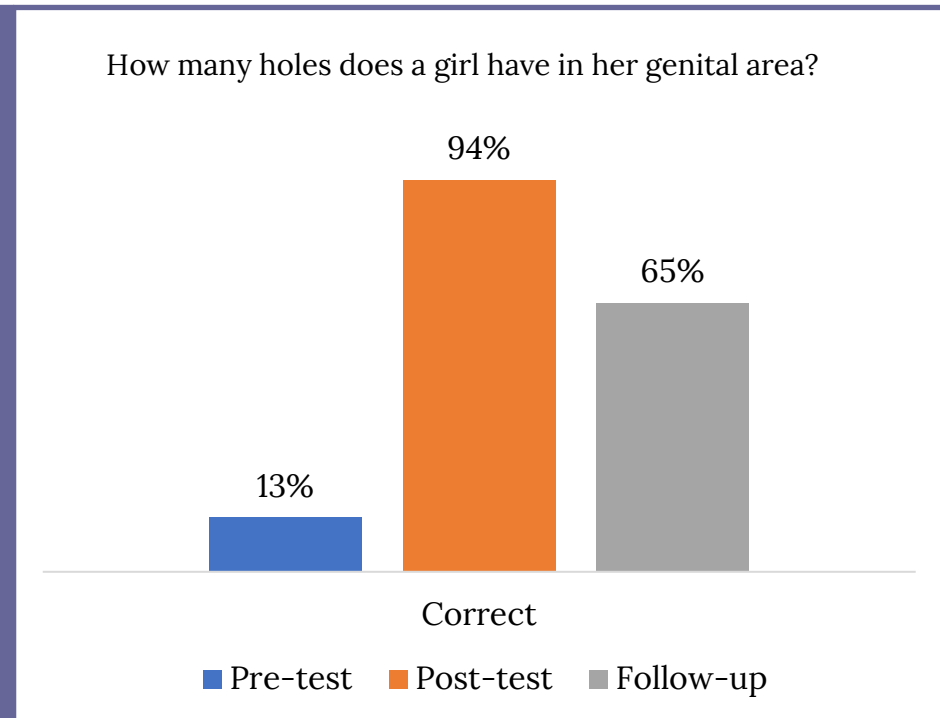
NUMBER OF HOLES A FEMALE HAS IN HER GENITAL

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL



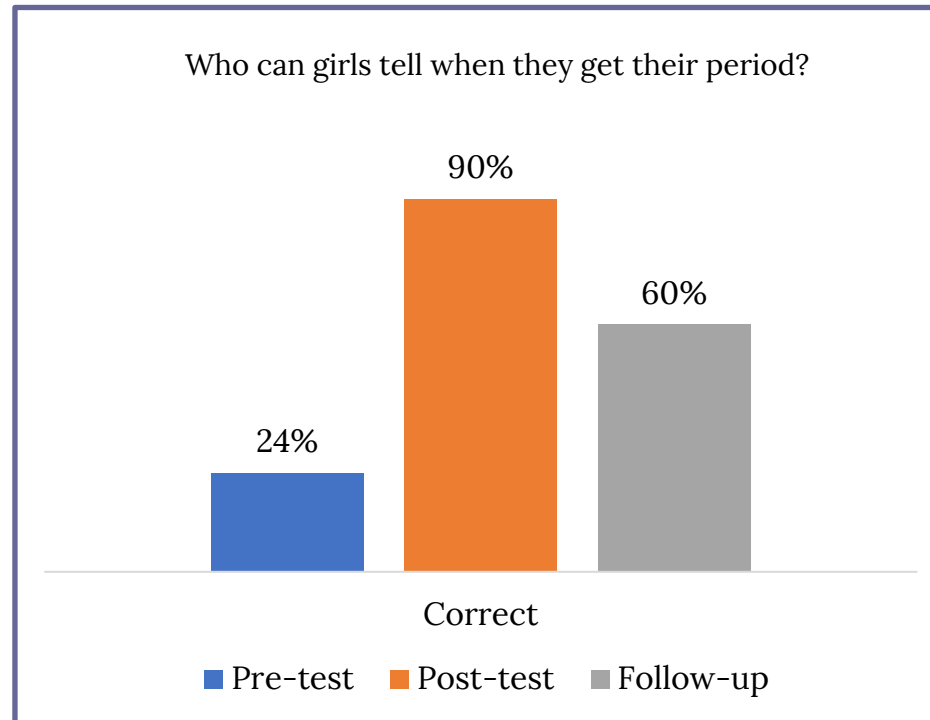
Prior to the intervention (pre-test), less than 20% of both primary and secondary school students were aware of the **number of external openings** a female has in her genital area. Knowledge **significantly increased** following the learning session:

- **Primary Students:** Awareness rose to **over 80%** at both the post-test and follow-up.
- **Secondary Students:** Awareness increased to **94%** at the post-test, though retention **decreased** to **65%** at the follow-up assessment.

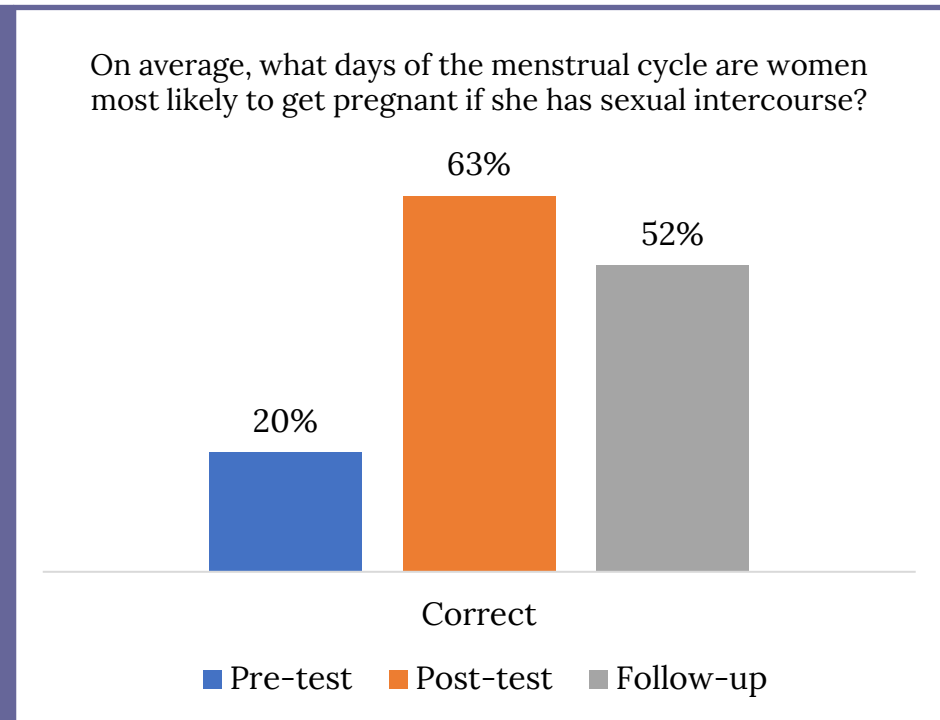
PEOPLE GIRLS CAN TELL & AVERAGE MENSTRUAL CYCLE DURATION

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

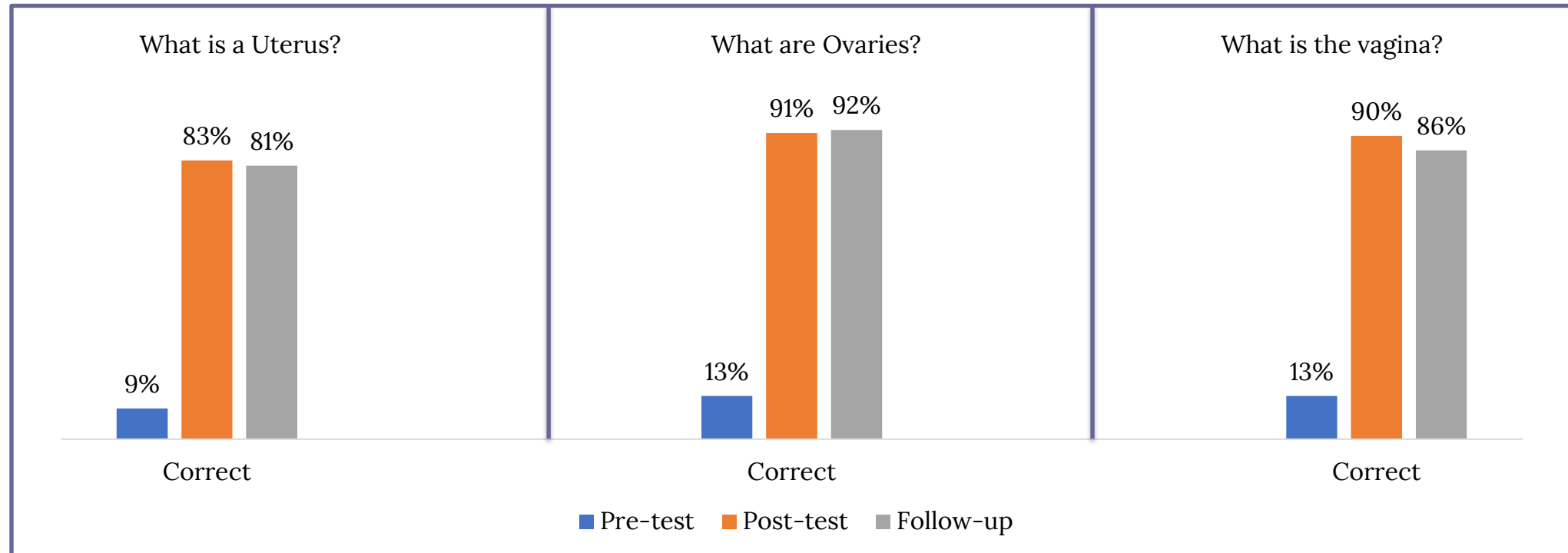


- **Primary students** showed very low initial awareness (24%) that a girl has the choice to disclose her menstruation to whomever she wishes. This awareness **dramatically increased** to 90% post-test but saw retention decrease to 60% at the follow-up assessment.
- **Secondary students** similarly had low pre-test knowledge (**less than 20%**) regarding the menstrual cycle's fertile window (days 10–17). While this knowledge **improved to 63%** at post-test, it only **marginally decreased** to 52% at the follow-up, suggesting better retention of this specific factual knowledge than the primary students showed for the choice-based knowledge.

DEFINITIONS

Based: Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL



Prior to the intervention (pre-test), less than 15% of secondary school students were aware of the definitions of key reproductive organs, specifically the **uterus, ovaries, and vagina**. This knowledge showed a **significant and sustained increase**, rising to **over 80%** at both the post-test and follow-up assessments.

SUMMARY OF KNOWLEDGE

The learning intervention resulted in **significant knowledge improvements** across puberty and menstrual health lesson for both primary and secondary school students. While secondary students generally demonstrated higher baseline knowledge, both groups showed major post-test gains, with varying degrees of knowledge retention at follow-up. Key improvements:

1. Meaning of Puberty and Menstruation

- **Primary Students (Low Baseline):** Pre-test awareness was **low (41%** for puberty, **37%** for menstruation). This **increased dramatically** post-intervention, reaching **87%** (puberty) and **87-91%** (menstruation) at post-test and follow-up.
- **Secondary Students (High Baseline):** Pre-test awareness was already **over 60%**. This peaked at **over 90%** post-test, dropping slightly but remaining **over 80%** at follow-up.

2. Physical Changes During Puberty

- Both groups showed **high pre-test awareness** regarding the physical changes in girls and boys (**over 60%** for primary, **over 70%** for secondary).
- This knowledge **improved to over 90%** for both groups at both post-test and follow-up, indicating excellent retention.

3. Average Age of Onset (Puberty/Menstruation)

- Knowledge was **low (below 50%)** for this specific factual topic among **both** primary and secondary students at pre-test.
- It **significantly increased** to **over 80%** post-test, but retention was a concern, dropping back to **over 60%** at follow-up for both groups.

4. Reproductive Anatomy

- **Definitions (Uterus, Ovaries, Vagina) - Secondary Students:** Pre-test awareness was **less than 15%**. This showed a **significant and sustained increase**, rising to **over 80%** at both post-test and follow-up.
- **External Openings (Female Genitalia) - Both Groups (Very Low Baseline):** Pre-test awareness was **less than 20%** for both groups.
- **Primary Students** maintained high retention (**over 80%** at follow-up).
- **Secondary Students** peaked at **94%** post-test but saw a sharp drop in retention to **65%** at follow-up.

5. Rights and Factual Sexual Health

- **Disclosure Choice (Primary Students):** Initial awareness that a girl has the **choice** to disclose her menstruation was **very low (24%)**. It **dramatically increased (90%)** post-test but saw retention **decrease to 60%** at follow-up.
- **Fertile Window (Secondary Students):** Initial awareness of the days 10-17 fertile window was **low (less than 20%)**. It **improved to 63%** post-test and saw a marginal decrease to **52%** at follow-up.

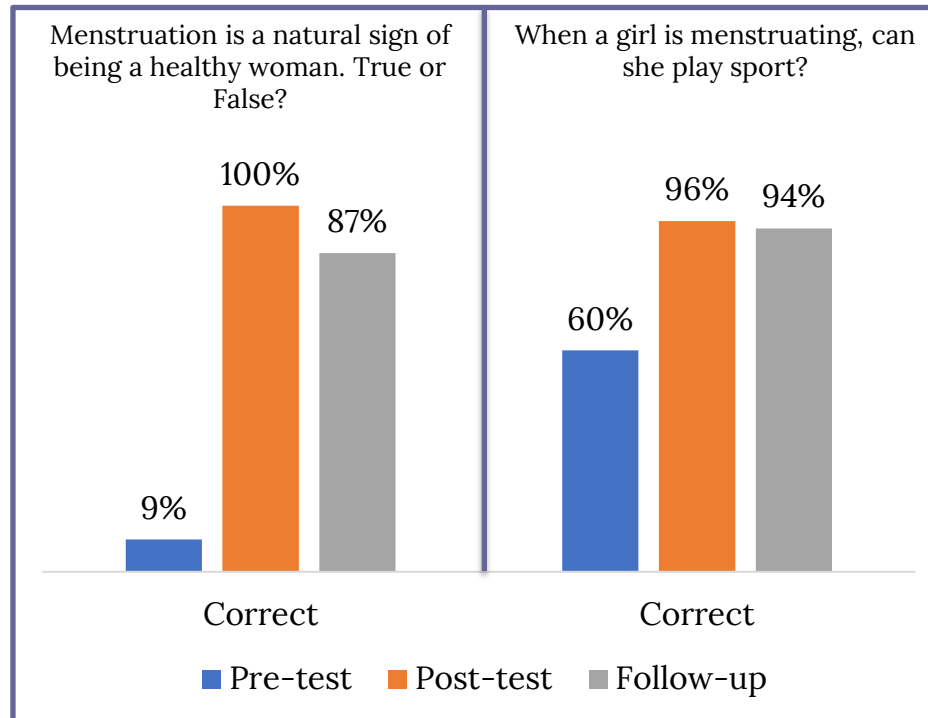
PERCEPTION & ATTITUDES



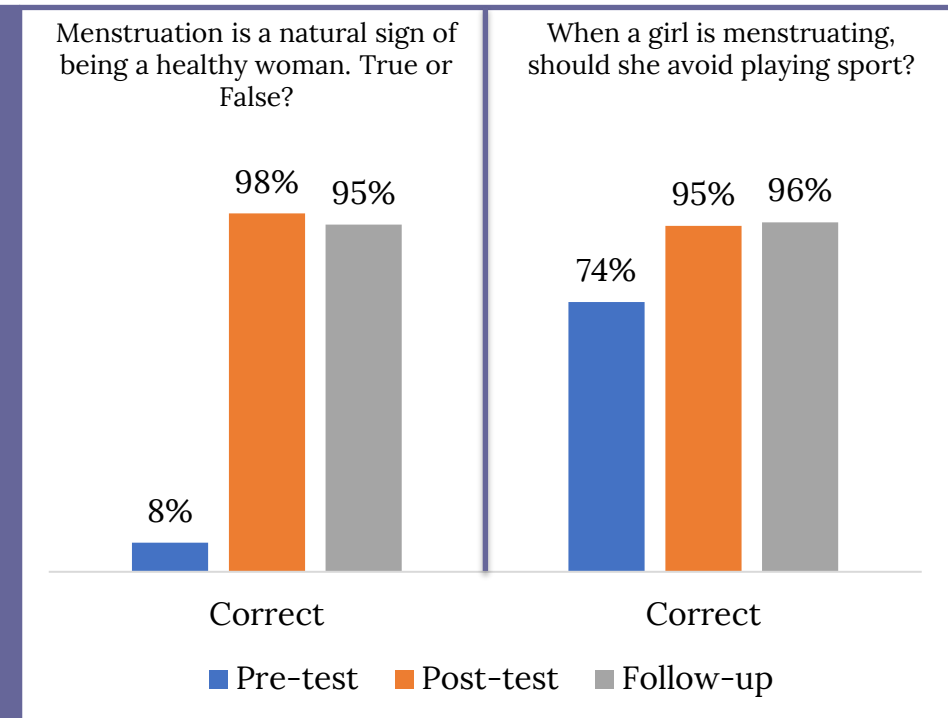
PERCEPTION & ATTITUDE

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

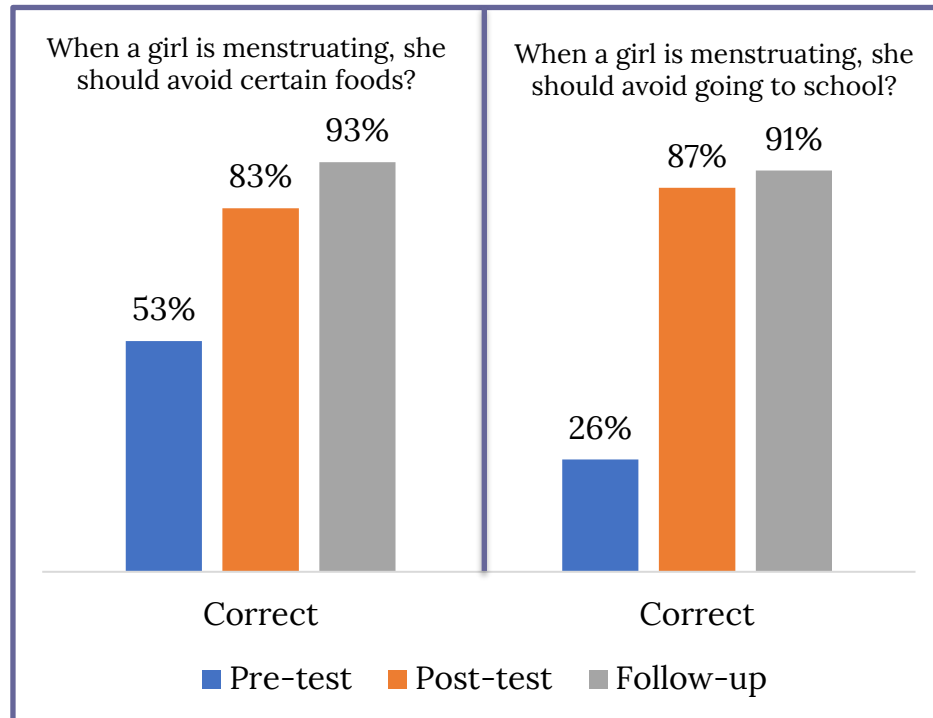


- **Initial belief** that **menstruation is a natural sign of being a healthy woman** was **very low** across both groups (**less than 10%** at pre-test). The training was highly effective in changing this perception, resulting in **near-universal acceptance** post-test (**100%** for primary students, **98%** for secondary students). **Retention** of this belief remained **high** at the follow-up assessment, with acceptance levels falling slightly to **94%** for primary students and **95%** for secondary students.
- The belief that a girl can **participate in sports** while menstruating was **already high** at pre-test (**60%** for primary students and **74%** for secondary students). This belief **significantly increased** and was **sustainably retained**, rising to **over 90%** for both primary and secondary students at both the post-test and follow-up assessments.

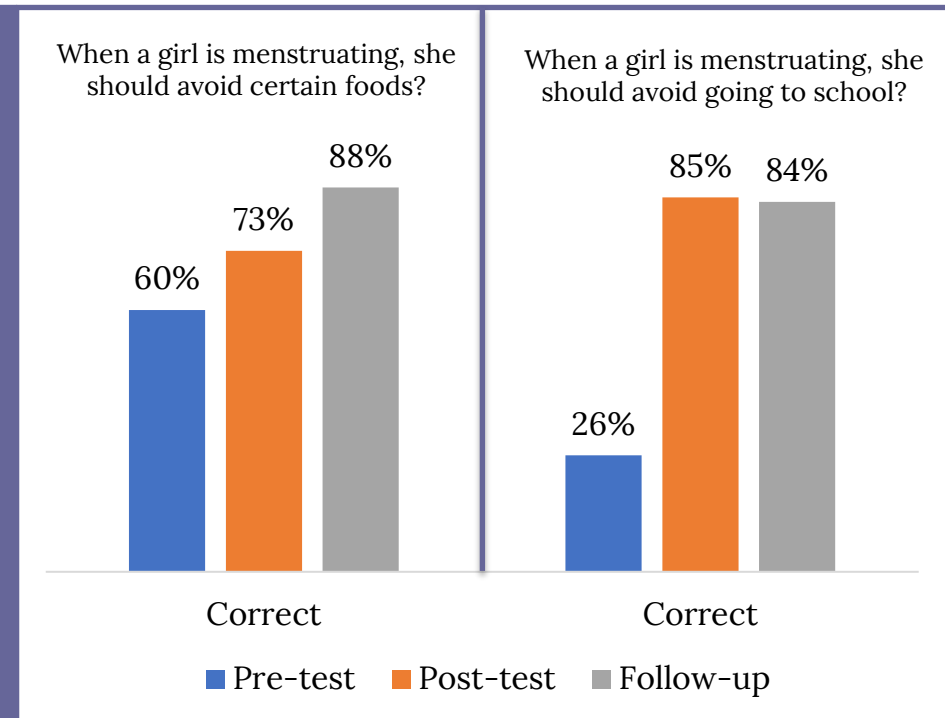
PERCEPTION & ATTITUDE (CON'T)

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

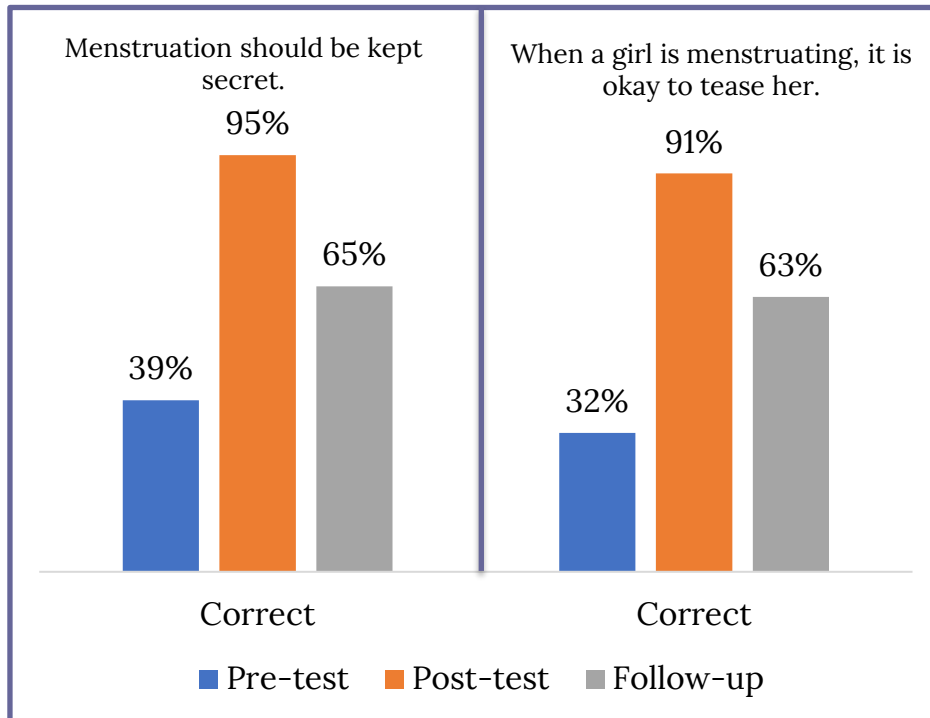


- **Beliefs regarding diet during menstruation** started at a moderate level (53% primary, 60% secondary) and **consistently improved** following the training. Primary students showed the greatest gain and retention, reaching 83% post-test and 93% at follow-up, while secondary students reached 73% post-test and 88% at follow-up.
- In contrast, the **belief that girls should attend school** during menstruation was initially **low (26%)**. This perception **significantly improved** across both groups, stabilizing at high levels in the range of 87%-91% for primary students and 84%-85% for secondary students at both post-test and follow-up assessments.

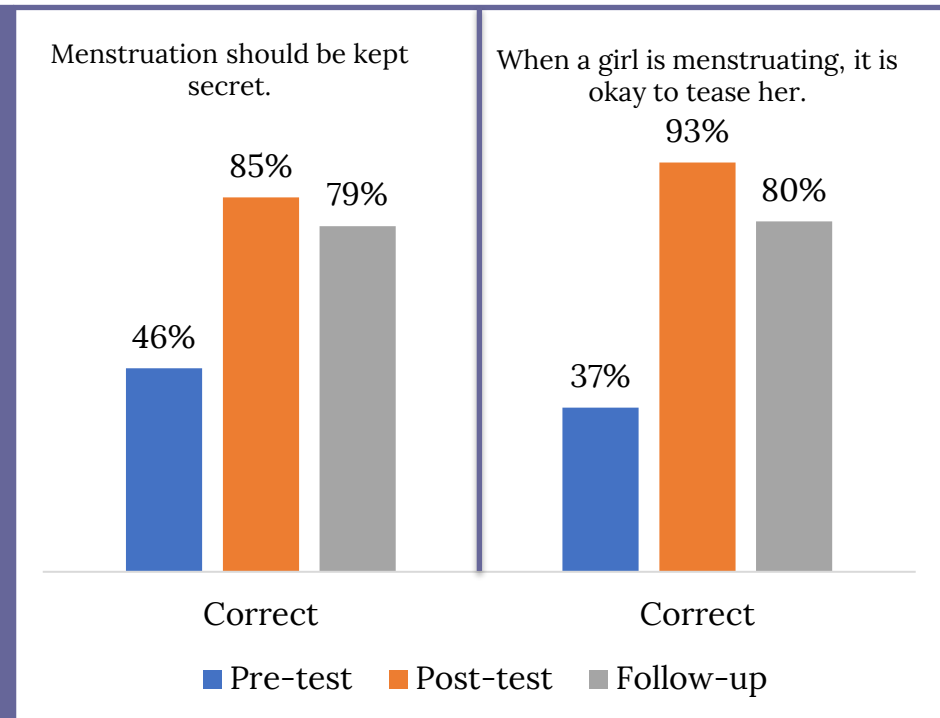
PERCEPTION & ATTITUDE (CON'T)

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL



- The learning intervention resulted in a **significant positive shift** in attitudes and beliefs regarding menstruation, although retention proved challenging for primary students. For both primary and secondary schools, the initial negative belief that **menstruation should be kept secret** was prevalent (**39%** primary, **46%** secondary). This negative attitude was largely overcome immediately following the intervention, with **95%** (primary) and **85%** (secondary) correctly rejecting the secrecy belief at post-test.
- Similarly, the negative attitude that **it is okay to tease** a menstruating girl was initially held by **32%** of primary students and **37%** of secondary students; this was also nearly eliminated post-test, reaching **91%** and **93%** correct understanding, respectively. However, **retention significantly deteriorated** for primary students at follow-up, with the correct understanding dropping sharply to **65%** for the secrecy belief and **63%** for the teasing belief. Secondary students showed better retention, with correct understanding remaining at **79%** for the secrecy belief and **80%** for the anti-teasing belief at follow-up.

SUMMARY OF PERCEPTION & ATTITUDES

The intervention generally resulted in **significant positive changes** in students' beliefs and attitudes about menstruation, though the degree of initial belief and follow-up retention varied by topic and student group.

Beliefs Showing High Success and Retention

Menstruation as Natural/Healthy: This belief started **very low** (10%) but saw a **near-universal change** post-test (98%), with retention remaining **excellent** at follow-up (94%).

Participation in Sports: The belief that a girl can participate in sports started **high** (60%) and was **sustainably retained** at **over 90%** for both groups through the follow-up.

School Attendance: The belief that girls should attend school started **low** (26%) but **significantly improved** and stabilized at a **high level** (in the 84%–91% range) for both groups at follow-up.

Beliefs Showing Moderate Gain and Retention

Dietary Freedom: The belief that a girl can eat anything during menstruation started at a **moderate level** (53%) and **consistently improved**. Primary students showed the best long-term retention (93% at follow-up), while secondary students reached 88%.

Attitudes Showing Low Retention (Especially Primary Students)

Attitudes related to social stigma showed the largest retention challenges:

Menstruation Secrecy: The negative belief that menstruation should be kept secret was initially prevalent (39%). While largely overcome post-test (correct understanding 85%), primary students' retention **deteriorated sharply** (65% correct at follow-up), compared to secondary students (79% correct).

Teasing: The negative attitude that it is okay to tease a menstruating girl was initially held by 32%. Post-test results were strong (correct understanding 91%), but primary students again showed a **sharp drop** in retention (63% correct at follow-up), whereas secondary students maintained better retention (80% correct).

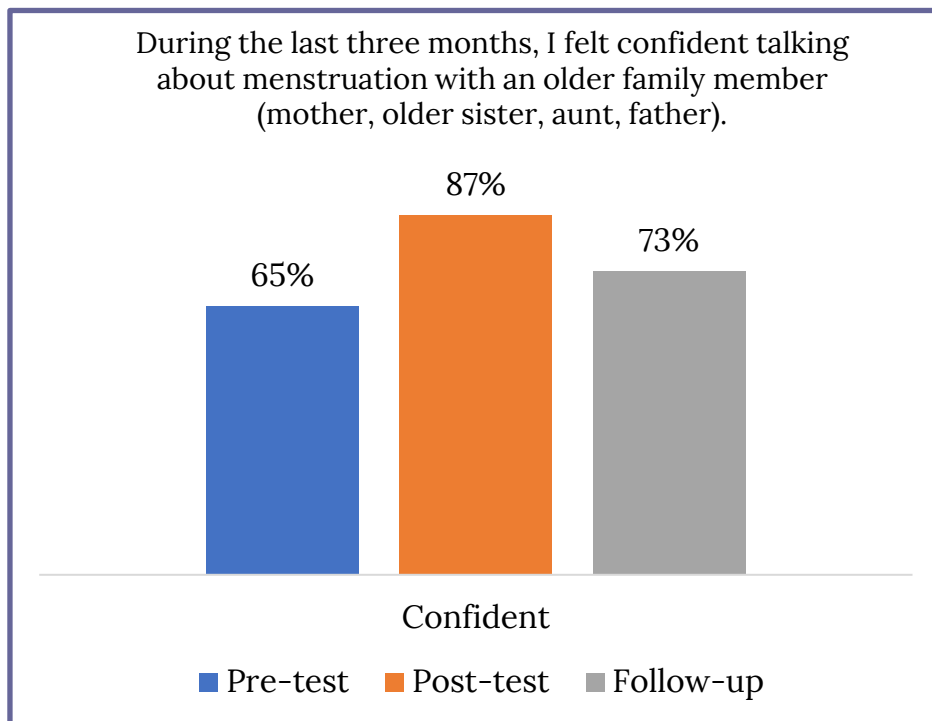
CONFIDENCE



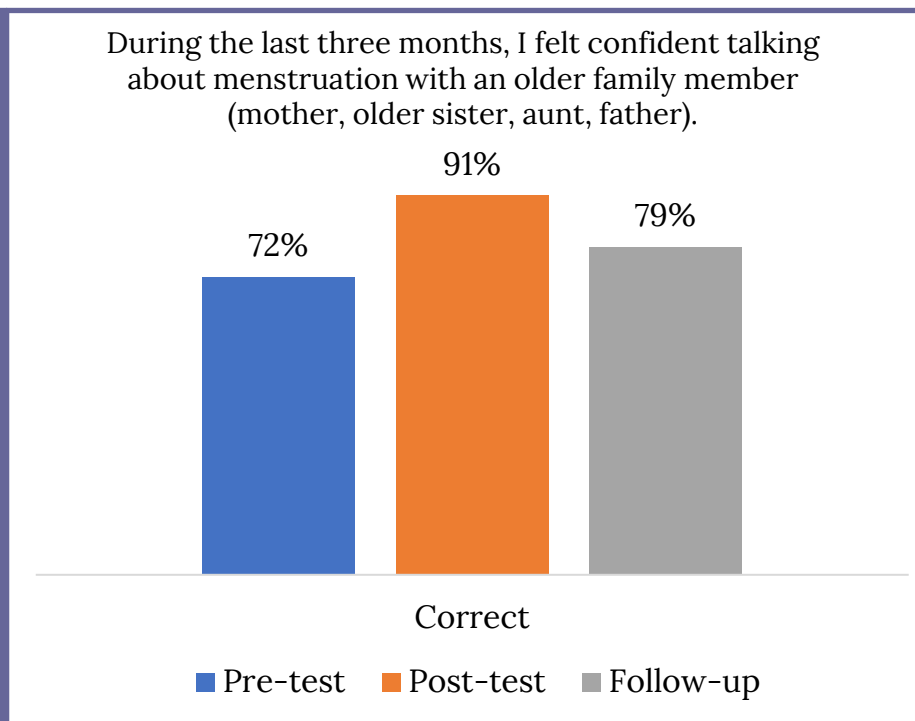
CONFIDENCE: FAMILY

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

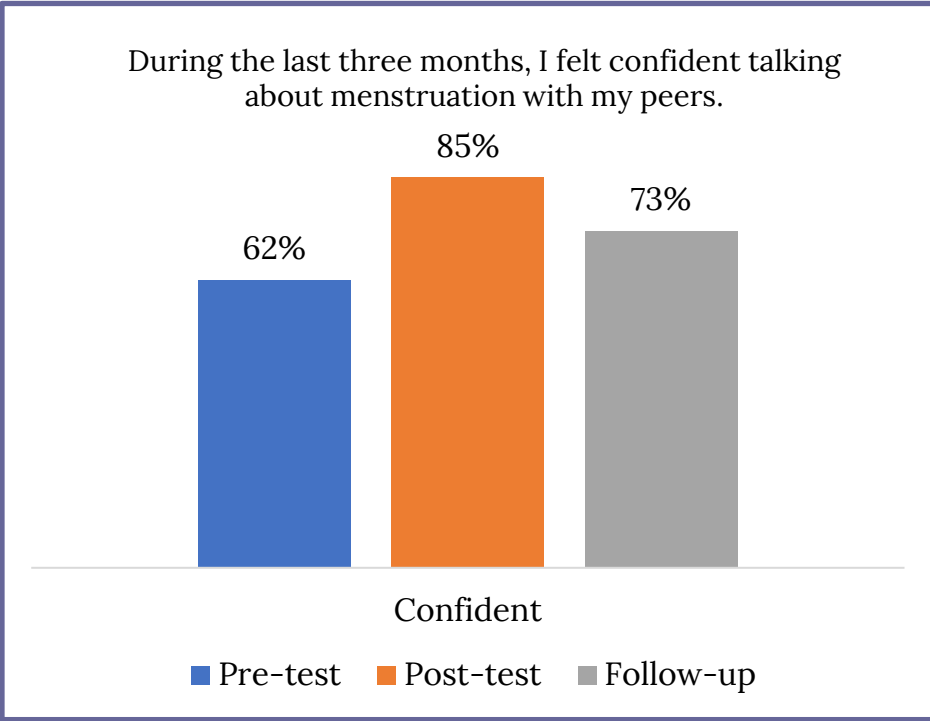


Students showed relatively **high initial confidence** in discussing menstruation with **older family members** (65% for primary students and 72% for secondary students). This confidence **increased post-training**, reaching 87% (primary) and 91% (secondary) at post-test. Retention at follow-up remained good, stabilizing at 73% for primary students and 79% for secondary students.

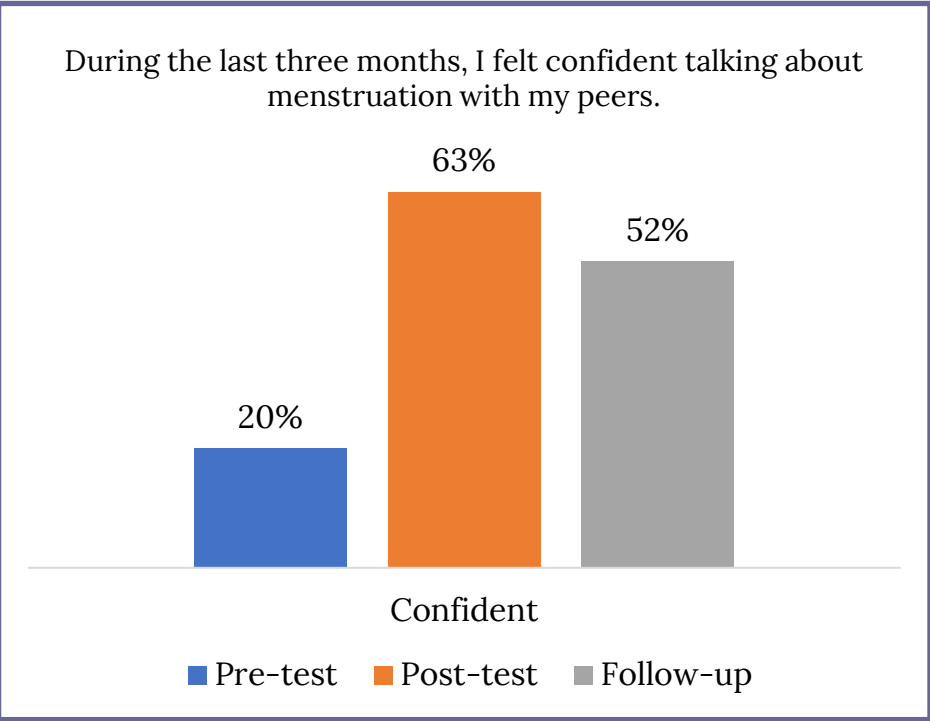
CONFIDENCE: PEERS

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

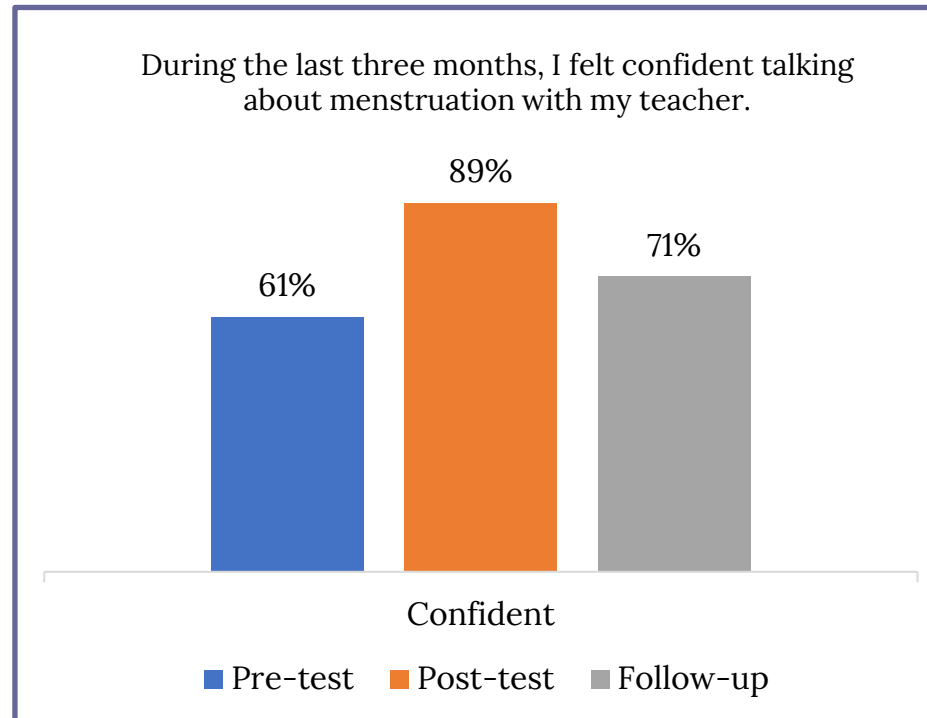


However, confidence to discuss the topic with **peers** showed a marked contrast: primary students began with high confidence (**62%**), which peaked at **85%** before stabilizing at **73%**. Secondary students started very low (**20%**), improved to **63%** post-test, but retained less well, dropping to **52%** at follow-up.

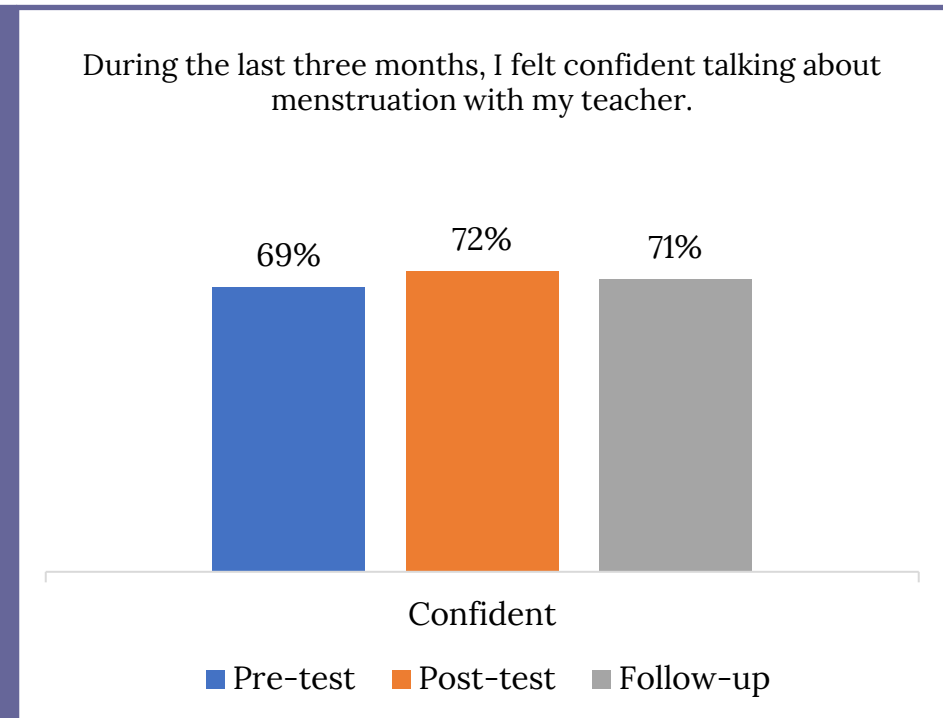
CONFIDENCE: TEACHERS

Based: Primary school student (n215), Secondary school student (n1,287), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL



Over 60% of both primary and secondary students felt confident discussing menstruation with their **teachers** at pre-test. This confidence **continued to rise** after the learning session, remaining consistently **over 70%** at both post-test and follow-up.

SUMMARY OF CONFIDENCE

The intervention generally **increased student confidence** in discussing menstruation across various social groups, though pre-test levels and post-test retention varied significantly, particularly concerning peers.

- **Older Family Members (High Confidence):** Confidence to speak with **older family members** was **high initially** (65% pre-test) and saw consistent gains, peaking at 87% post-test. Retention remained **good** at follow-up, stabilizing at 73% for primary students and 79% for secondary students.
- **Teachers (Moderate and Sustained Confidence):** Confidence in speaking with **teachers** was **moderate** pre-test (60%) and showed **sustained improvement** post-training, remaining consistently **over 70%** for both groups at follow-up.
- **Peers (Contrasting Confidence):** Confidence to discuss menstruation with **peers** showed a **marked contrast** between groups:
 - **Primary Students** started with high confidence (62%), peaked at 85%, and maintained **good retention** (73%).
 - **Secondary Students** started **very low** (20%), showed the largest relative gain (to 63% post-test), but had the **low retention** at follow-up (52%).

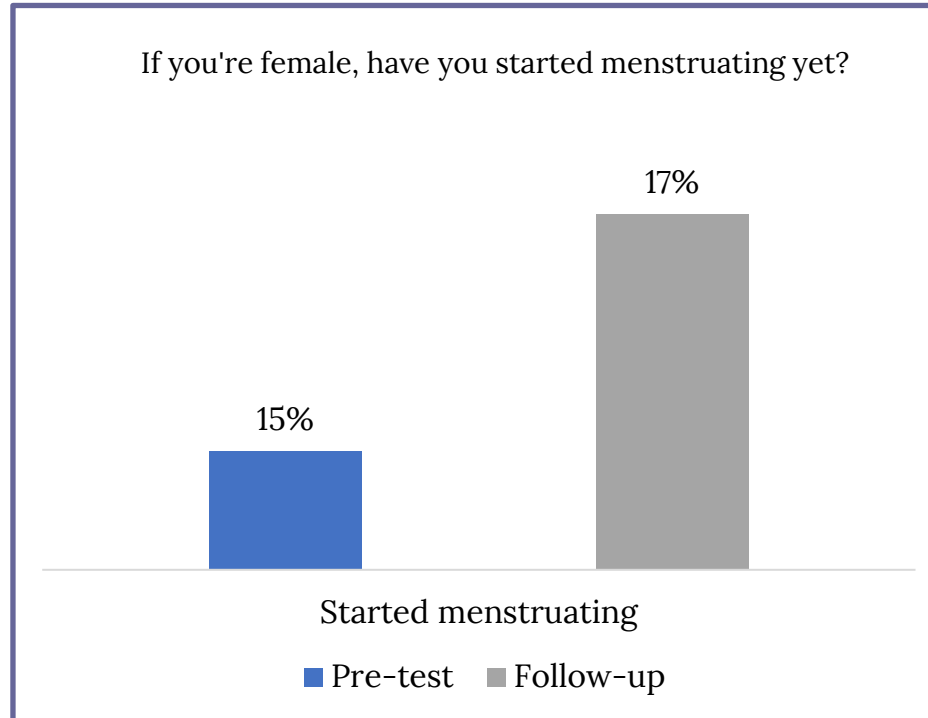
MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS & EXPERIENCES



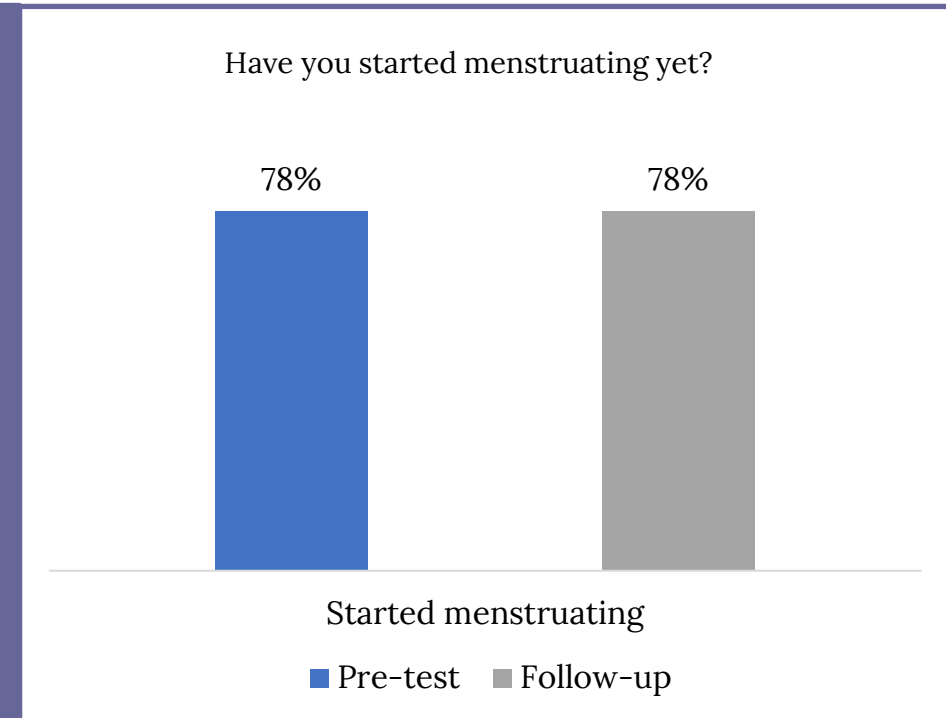
STARTED MENSTRUATION

Based: Primary school student: Pre-test (n114) and follow-up (n95), Secondary school student: Pre-test (n782) and follow-up (n615), in %

PRIMARY SCHOOL



SECONDARY SCHOOL

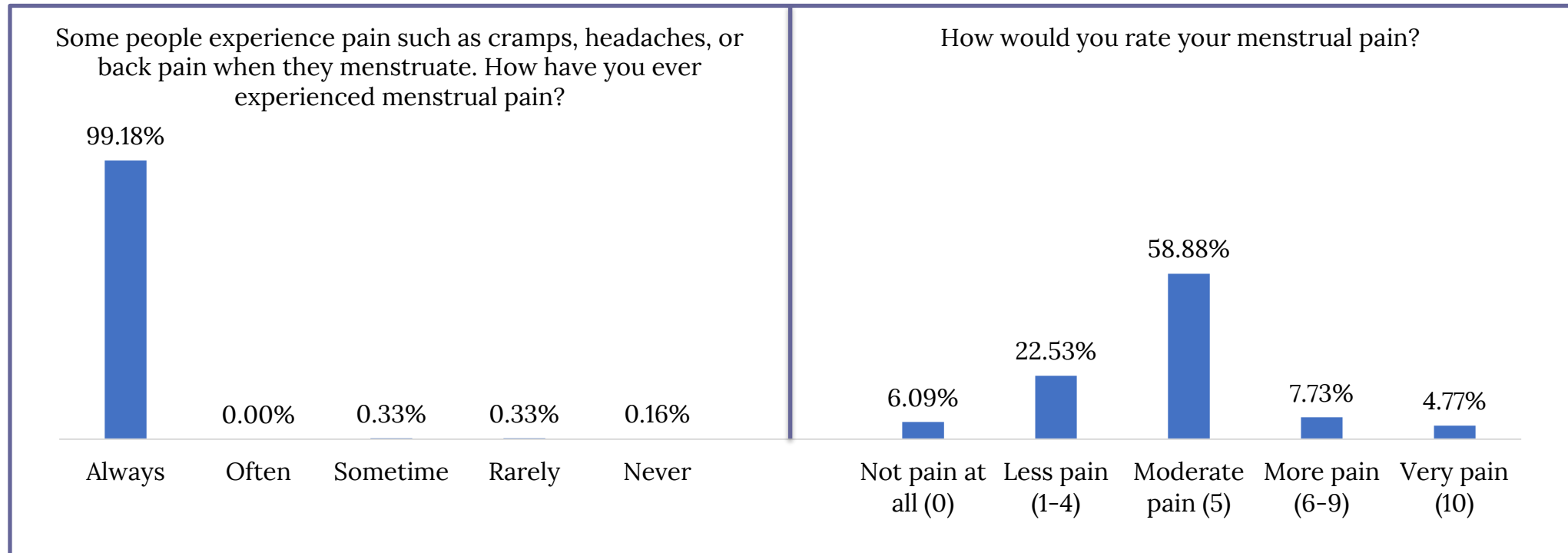


Only a small number of primary school girls had started menstruating, with a slight increase in the follow-up, meaning some girls begin needing menstrual health support at a young age. Most secondary school girls had already started menstruating at both pre-test and follow-up, showing that menstrual health is an important issue for this age group. These findings highlight the need to introduce menstrual health education early and continue supporting girls as they grow older.

MENSTRUAL CRAMP EXPERIENCES

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

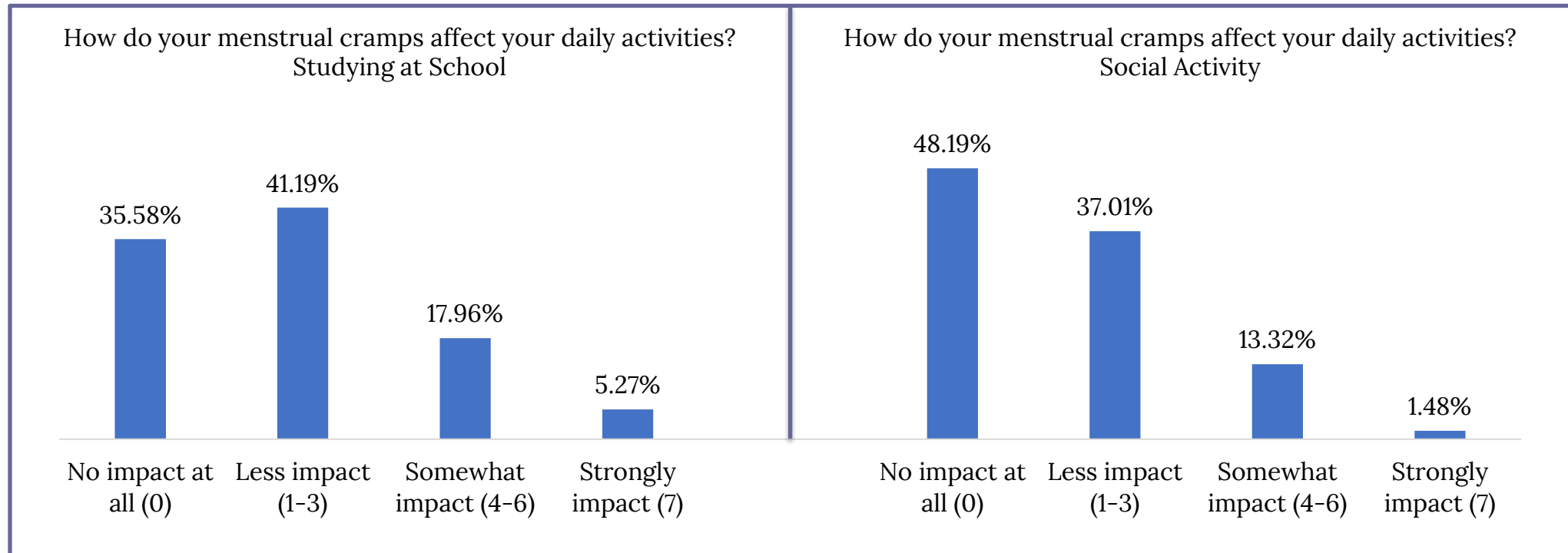


Almost all secondary school students (**99.18%**) report that they **always** experience menstrual pain (cramps, headaches, or back pain), with virtually no students reporting pain less frequently. When rating the intensity of this constant pain, the majority (**58.88%**) classify their pain as "**Moderate pain (5)**". A significant portion (**22.53%**) reported "Less pain (1-4)," while a smaller, but notable, percentage (**12.50%**) rated their pain as higher, falling between "More pain (6-9)" and "Very pain (10)."

MENSTRUAL CRAMP EXPERIENCES

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

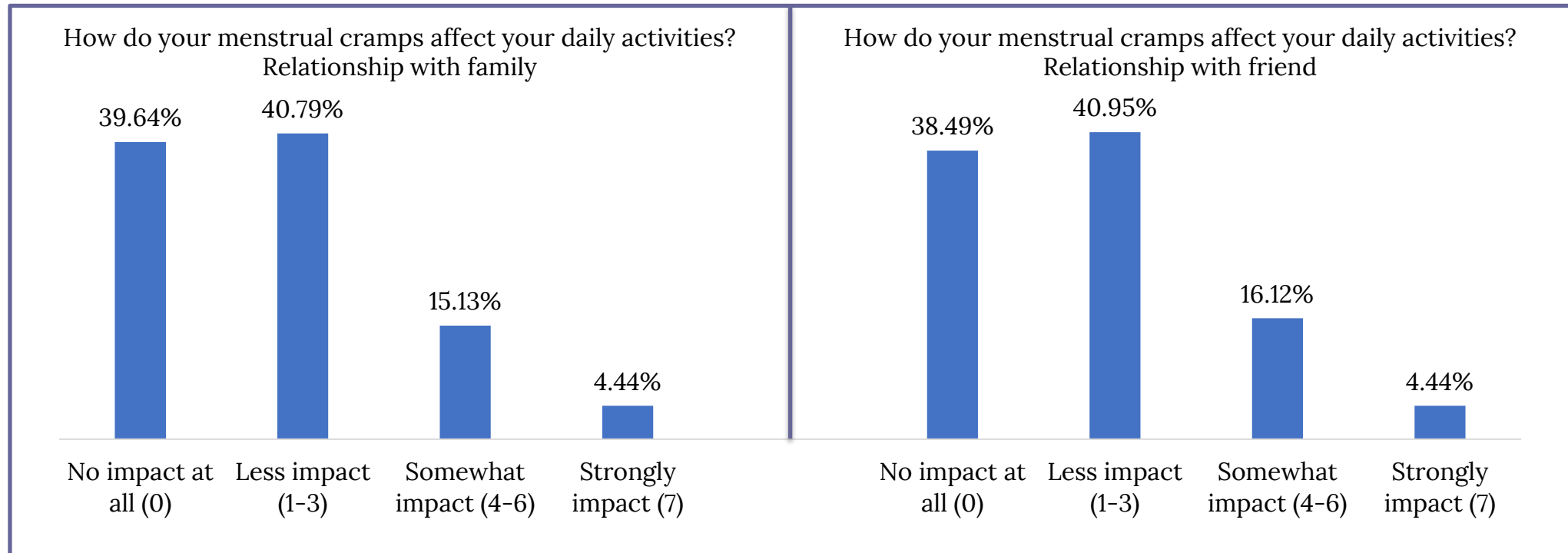


Menstrual cramps generally have a **greater disruptive effect on studying at school** than on social activities among secondary school students. For studying, the majority reported some degree of impact, with **41.19%** noting a "less impact" and a significant **23.23%** reporting a "somewhat" or "strongly" negative effect, though **35.58%** felt "no impact at all." In contrast, students were less affected socially, with the largest share at **48.19%** reporting "**no impact at all**" on their social activities, and only a small minority (**13.32%**) reporting a moderate to strong impact.

MENSTRUAL CRAMP EXPERIENCES

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

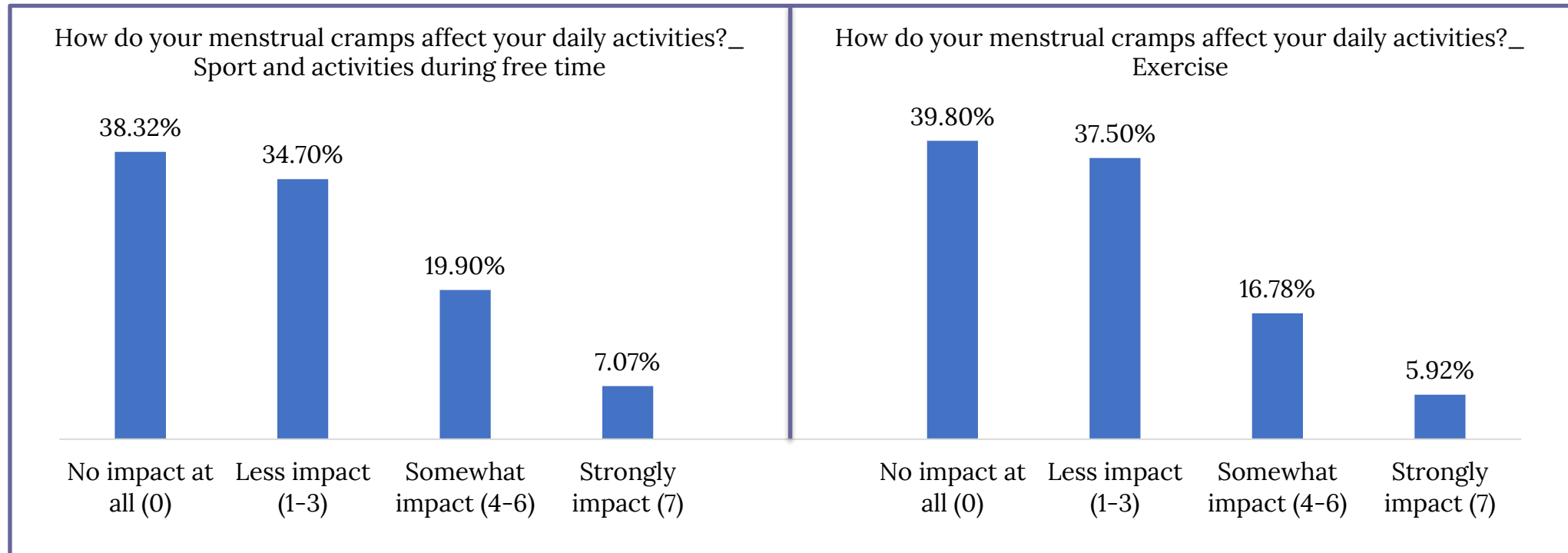


Menstrual cramps affect secondary school students' relationships with family and friends similarly, with the majority reporting little to no impact. For **relationships with family**, **39.64%** of students reported "no impact at all," while the largest share, **40.79%**, reported "less impact (1-3)." Only a minority reported a more significant effect, with **15.13%** noting a "somewhat impact" and **4.44%** reporting a "strongly impact." Similarly, the effect on **relationships with friends** was low, with **38.49%** reporting "no impact at all" and **40.95%** reporting "less impact." The proportion reporting a stronger effect was nearly identical to the family relationships, with **16.12%** noting a "somewhat impact" and **4.44%** reporting a "strongly impact." Overall, the combined data shows that **only 19% of students reported a moderate or strong impact** on their relationships, suggesting cramps have minimal severe disruptive effects on social bonds.

MENSTRUAL CRAMP EXPERIENCES

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

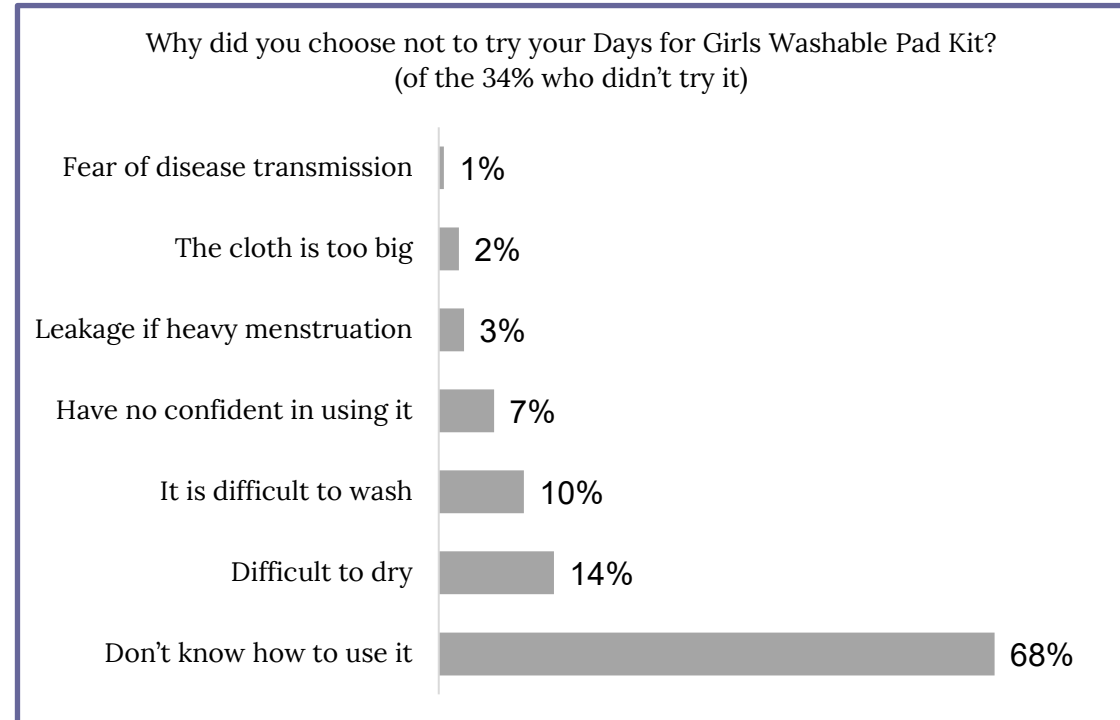
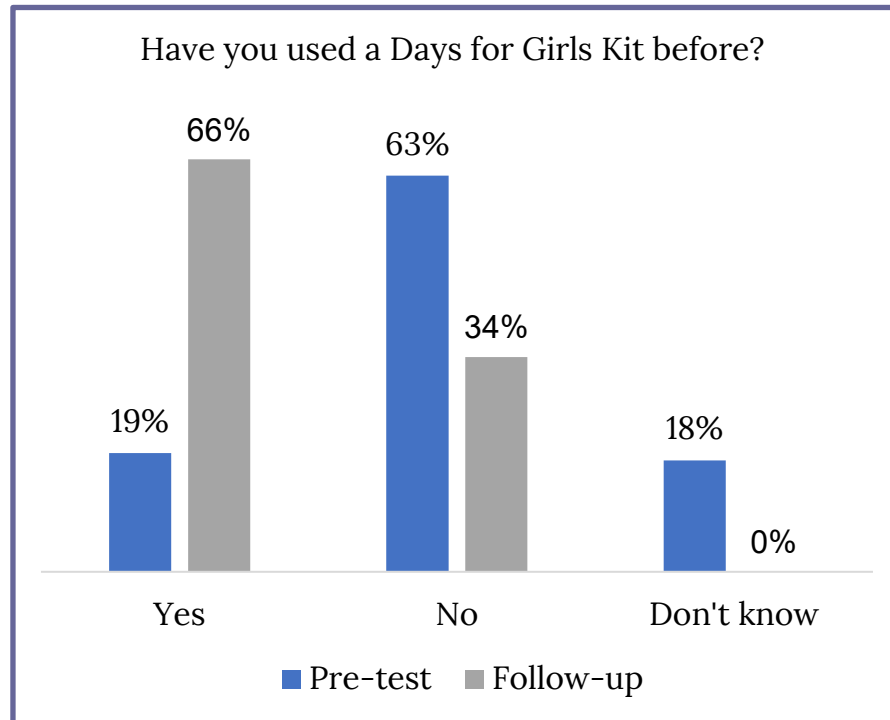


Menstrual cramps impact secondary school students' engagement in dedicated **Exercise** and **Sport and activities during free time** at nearly identical rates, with the majority reporting minimal or no disruption. For **Exercise**, **39.80%** reported "no impact at all" and **37.50%** reported "less impact," meaning **over three-quarters** of students were not significantly hindered. The remaining **22.70%** reported a moderate to strong effect. The trend for **Sport and activities during free time** was very similar, with **38.32%** reporting "no impact at all" and **35%** reporting "less impact." A slightly higher percentage, **26.97%**, reported a moderate to strong impact in this category, showing that while both activities are largely unaffected, free time activities suffer marginally more disruption than dedicated exercise.

Days for Girls Kit Usage

Based: Female Secondary school student Pre-test (n608) and Follow-up (n479), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

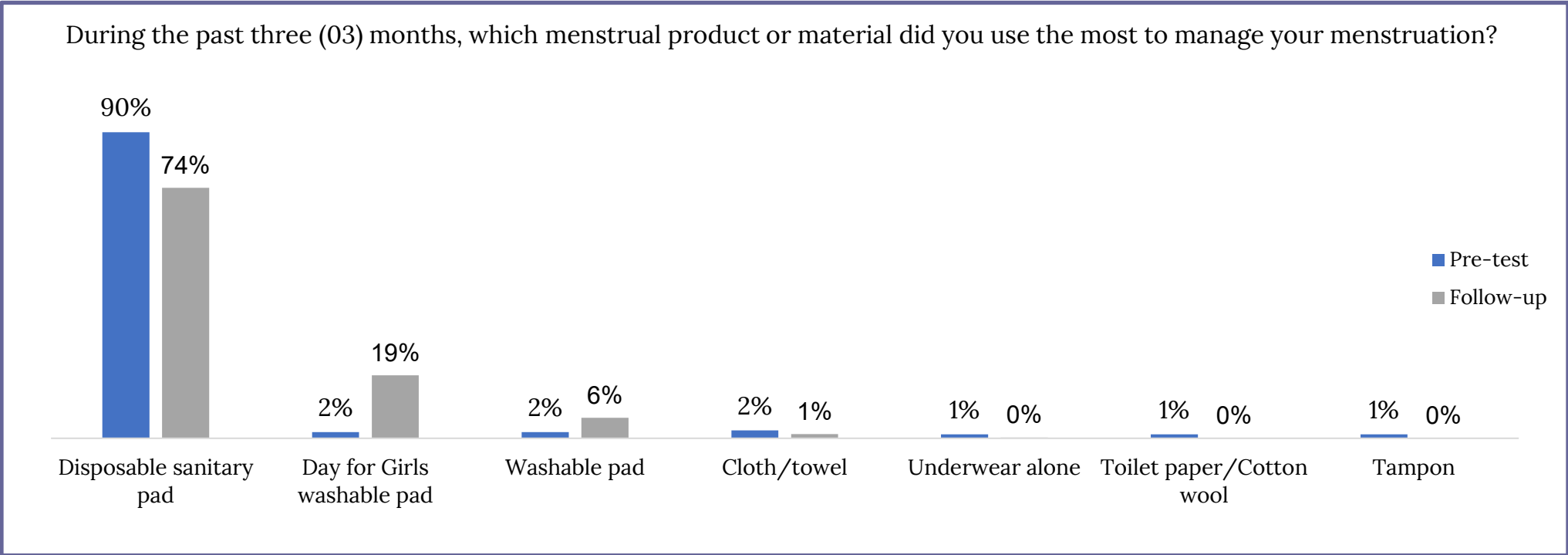


At pre-test, only 115 (19%) of the 608 participants had tried a DfG washable pad kit, compared to 315 (66%) of the 479 participants by post-test, indicating a substantial increase in uptake. This rise in kit usage suggests that girls were open to trying washable pads. At follow-up, among the 164 participants (34%) who had not tried the kit, the most common reason was lack of knowledge on how to use it, cited by 111 participants (68%). Although pad usage was covered in lessons, some students may require more time, repetition, or increased hands-on practice to feel confident using the kits independently at home. Additional challenges, such as limited access to water, concerns about privacy, and hesitation in trying reusable products for the first time, may also influence use. Continued support is therefore important to help students feel comfortable and confident using diverse menstrual health products while encouraging product choice.

MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS USAGE

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

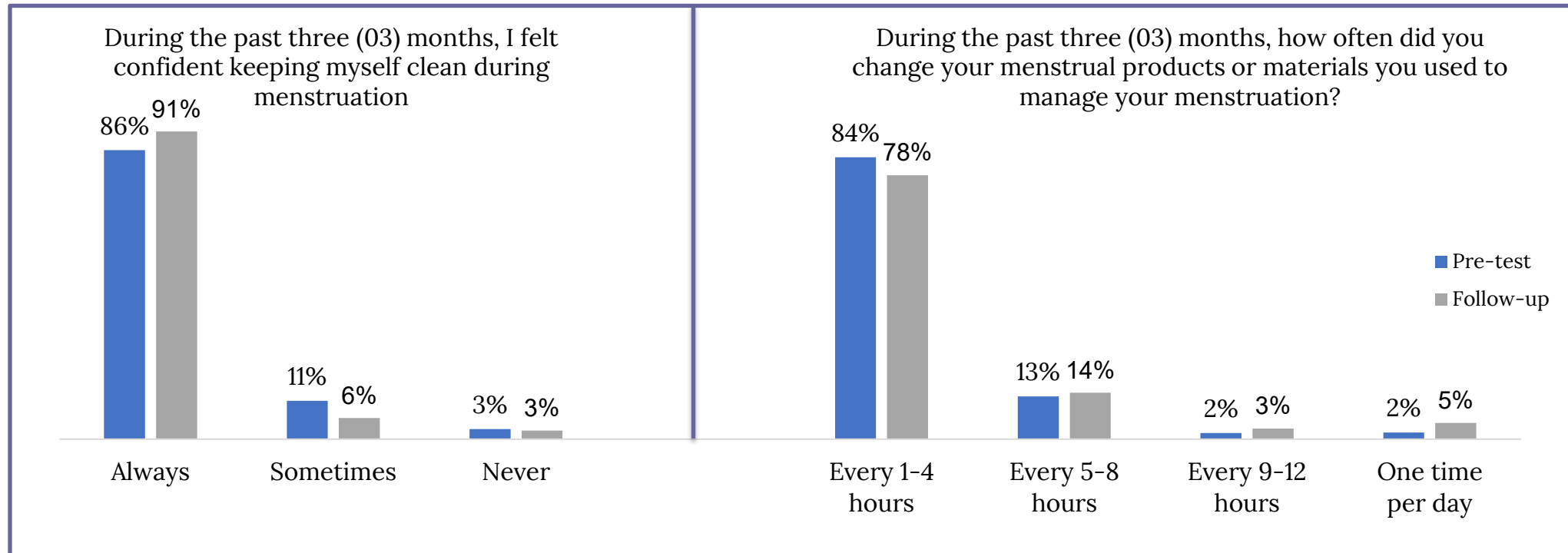


Disposable sanitary pads remain the most commonly used menstrual product among secondary school girls (their primary preference), although their use decreased from 90% at pre-test to 74% at follow-up. Meanwhile, the use of Days for Girls washable pads increased from 2% to 19%, and washable pads usage also grew from 2% to 6% (there is a likelihood that these washable pads are also DfG washable pads). These increases indicate a positive shift toward more sustainable menstrual products, suggesting that the intervention is encouraging some students to explore and adopt reusable options. Continued support and education can help further normalize and expand the use of washable pads as a practical and environmentally friendly alternative.

GIRLS FELT CONFIDENT KEEPING THEMSELVES CLEAN DURING MENSTRUATION & FREQUENCY OF CHANGING MENSTRUAL PRODUCT

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

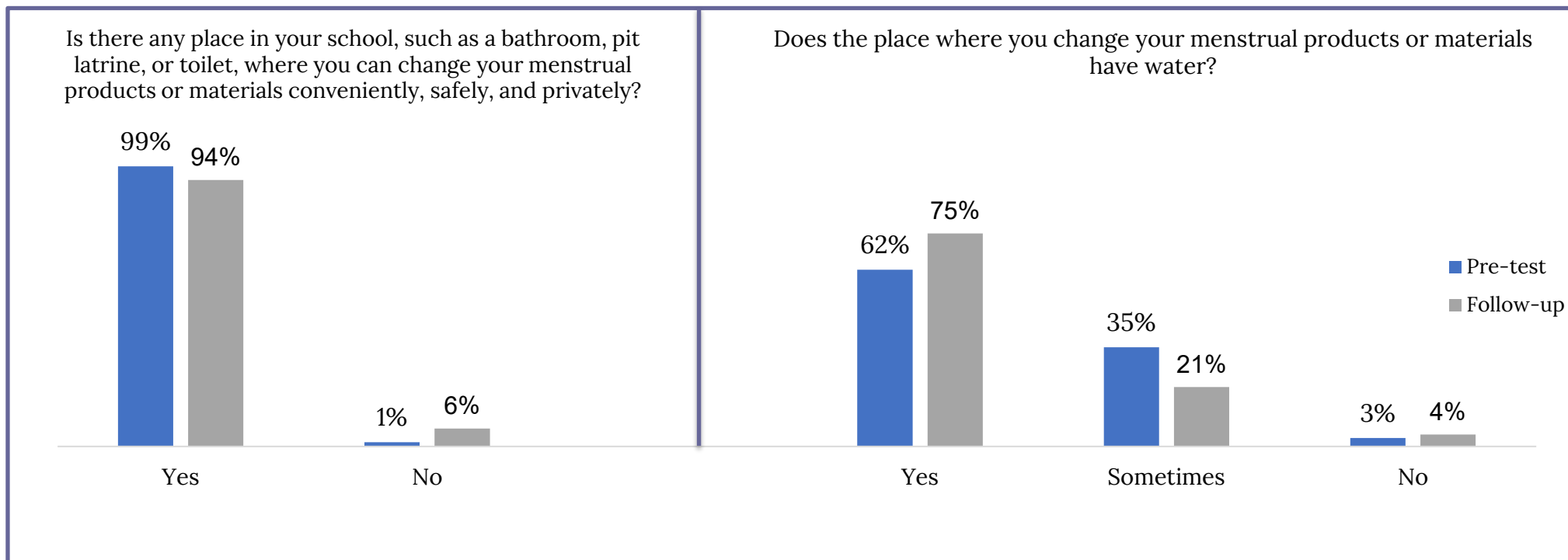


While student **confidence in keeping clean is nearly universal (91% post-test)**, there is a small concerning trend regarding actual hygiene behavior: the percentage of students adhering to the optimal product changing schedule (**Every 1-4 hours**) **decreased by 6 percentage points** post-intervention, with a corresponding slight rise in less frequent changing intervals. This suggests that while knowledge or confidence may have increased, actual practice for a minority is less hygienic.

PLACE IN SCHOOL TO CHANGE MENSTRUAL PRODUCT & WATER ACCESSIBILITY

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

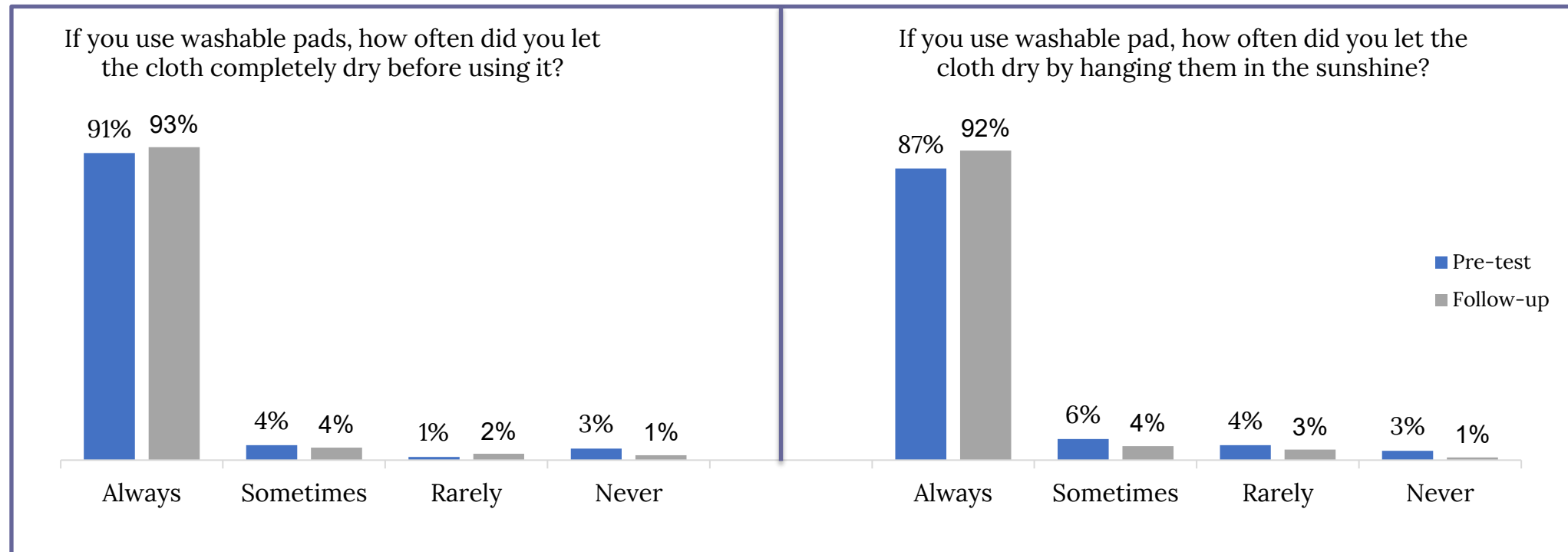


Secondary students enjoy near-universal access to **private and convenient changing spaces** (94-99%). However, the consistency of access to **water** in these facilities, a critical hygiene component, is less certain. The notable shift from "**Sometimes**" having water to "**Yes**" having water suggests positive changes in water provision or reliability occurred during the course of the intervention period.

COMPLETELY DRY WASHABLE PADS

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL



Secondary school students demonstrate **excellent self-reported hygiene behavior** regarding washable pads, as nearly all students **always** ensure the pad is completely dry before use (93% post-test) and almost all **always** utilize sunshine for drying (92% post-test). The post-test results show a minor, positive reinforcement of these already highly prevalent hygienic practices.

CONFIDENCE USING MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS/ DAYS FOR GIRLS KITS

Girls who tried the Days for Girls kit reported having a positive experience using it

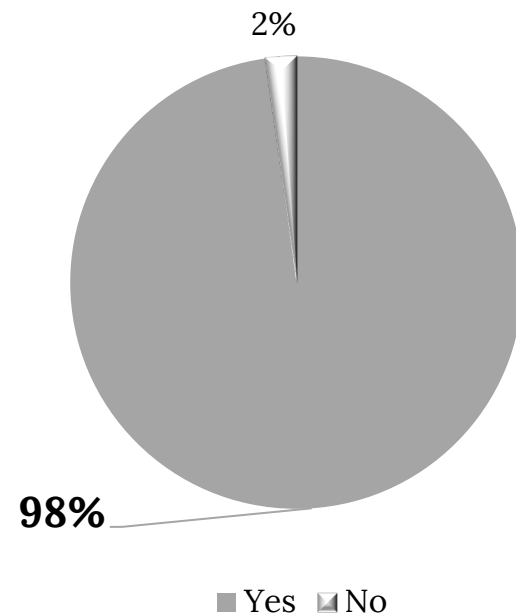
CONFIDENT	MENSTRUAL PRODUCT (Pre-Test)	DAYS FOR GIRLS KIT
The menstrual products or materials I use to manage my menstruation are comfortable./When I use my DfG Washable Pad Kit I feel comfortable	77%	86%
I feel confident that period blood will not leak onto my clothes when I use the menstrual product or material, I use to manage my menstruation./When I use my DfG Washable Pad Kit I feel confident that period blood will not leak onto my clothes.	68%	82%
I feel confident that there will not be a bad smell when I use the menstrual products or materials, I use to manage my menstruation./When I use my DfG Washable Pad Kit I feel confident that there will not be a bad smell .	67%	74%
I feel comfortable and confident about being at school when I have my period when I use the menstrual products or materials, I use to manage my menstruation./When I use my DfG Washable Pad Kit I feel comfortable and confident about being at school when I have my period.	74%	77%
I feel confident doing all the activities I normally do when I am not menstruating (attending school; participating in class; playing sport, going to work; going to the market,) when I have my period./When I use my DfG Washable Pad Kit I feel confident doing all the activities I normally do when I am not menstruating (attending school; participating in class; playing sport, going to work; going to the market,) when I have my period.	54%	74%

ENJOY & LIKE THE MENSTRUAL HEALTH LESSON

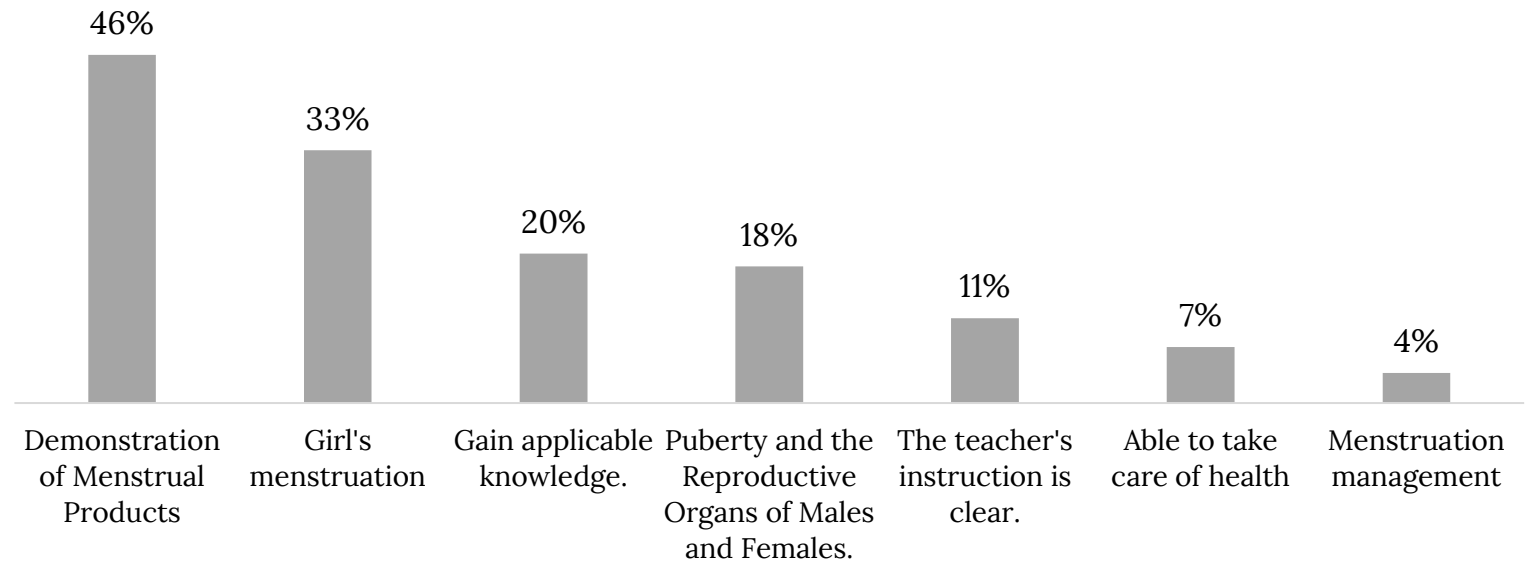
Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Did you enjoy the menstrual health lesson?



What did you like about the menstrual health lessons?

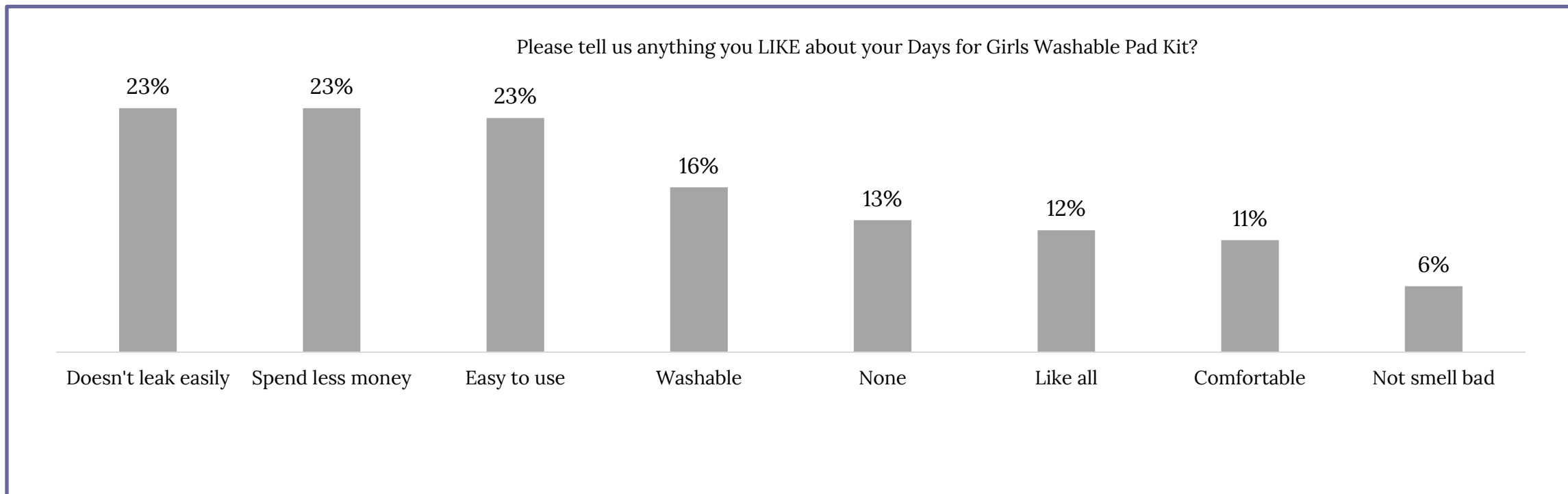


The lesson achieved exceptional engagement, with **98%** of secondary students reporting enjoyment. The feedback clearly prioritizes **practical and skill-based learning**, with the **demonstration of menstrual products** being the single most appreciated element, followed closely by the acquisition of **core knowledge** about the menstrual process itself.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK ON DAYS FOR GIRLS KIT

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL



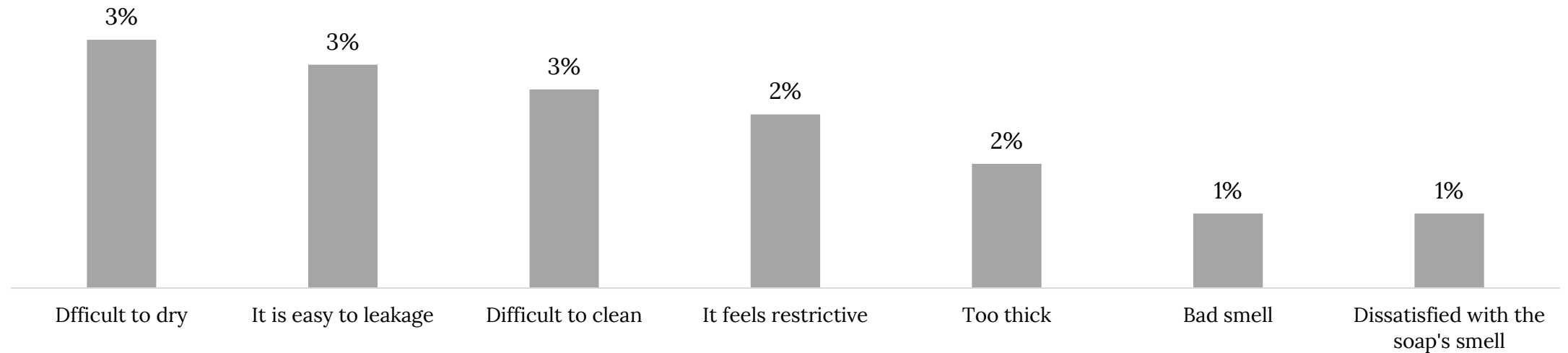
The analysis of secondary students' preferences for the Days for Girls Washable Pad Kit highlights three equally dominant factors: **functionality, cost-effectiveness, and ease of use**. The top three attributes were all rated at **23%**, indicating that **reliability and security** ("Doesn't leak easily"), **affordability and financial savings** ("Spend less money"), and **convenience** ("Easy to use") are the primary criteria students prioritize. Secondary attributes included **washability** (16%), which aligns with the cost-saving benefit, and personal factors like **comfort** (11%) and odor control (6%). Overall, students prioritize **practical function** and **financial considerations** above other features when evaluating menstrual products.

FEEDBACK ON DAYS FOR GIRLS KIT

Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Is there anything you DO NOT LIKE about your Days for Girls Washable Pad Kit? Is there anything else that you think should be included in the Days for Girls Washable Pad Kit?



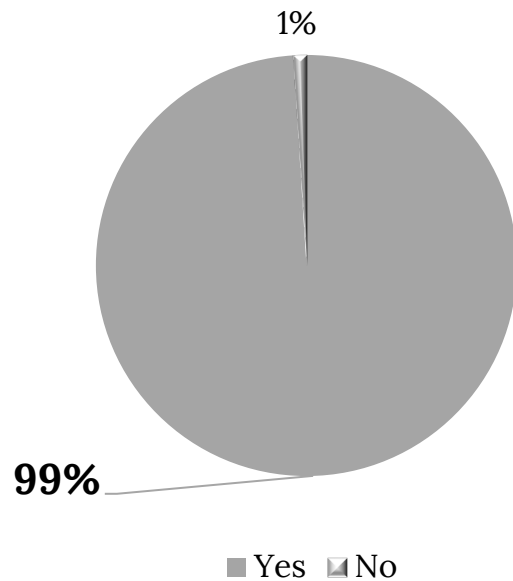
While the overall usage and positive reception of the kit were high (as seen in prior data), the students' few specific criticisms center on **functionality** (leakage, cleaning) and **logistics** (drying time). Given the low percentages, these are not widespread issues but represent targeted areas for product improvement.

USEFUL OF THE MENSTRUAL HEALTH LESSON & SUGGESTION

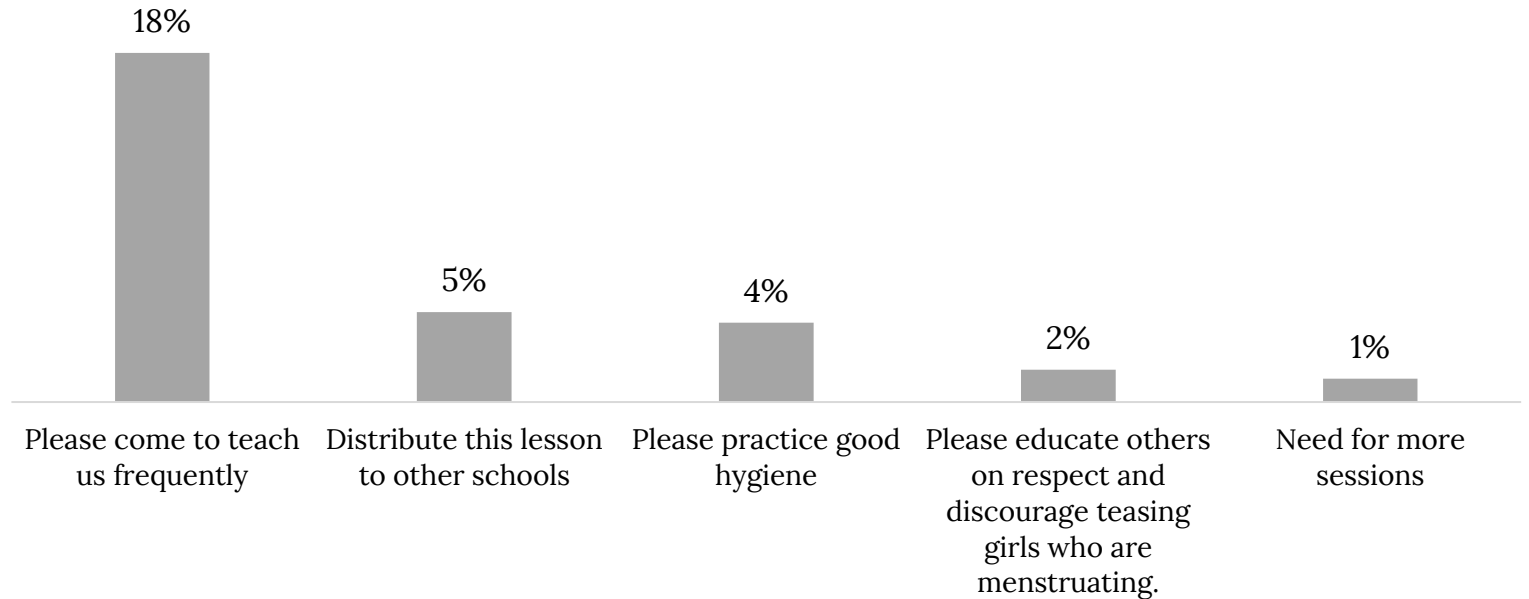
Based: Female Secondary school student (n608), in %

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Does the menstrual health lessons help you in your life?



What did you like about the menstrual health lessons?



The menstrual health lesson was a resounding success, with **99% of secondary students reporting a positive impact** on their lives. Their primary recommendation is the **institutionalization and frequent repetition** of the lesson, followed by a desire to **expand the program** to benefit students in other schools.

SUMMARY OF MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS & EXPERIENCES

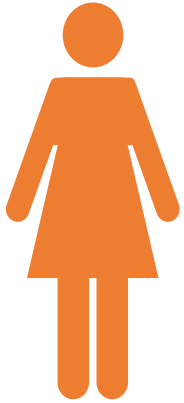
Menstrual Products and Experiences:

- A higher proportion of secondary school female students (94%) had started menstruating compared to primary school female students (~20%).
- Among menstruating secondary school students, 82% used Days for Girls (DfG) washable pads. The primary reason for not using DfG pads was a lack of knowledge on how to use them (90%), indicating a lack of familiarity. Some students reported difficulty using them (4%), while others reported health issues (3%). The rainy season also discouraged some girls from using washable pads due to drying difficulties.
- Despite the high usage, DfG washable pads remained the second choice for many female students.
- After the intervention, more girls changed their menstrual management products every 1-4 hours (80% at pre-test and 86% at follow-up). Notably, while almost 100% of girls initially reported having a place at school to change their products, this figure dropped to 91% at the follow-up. This decrease may be related to the use of washable pads and the potential difficulty in finding suitable changing places at school.
- At the follow-up, 98% of girls using washable pads reported always drying them completely. However, only 95% reported drying them completely in the sun, possibly due to the rainy season.
- Girls expressed greater confidence in using the DfG kit compared to other menstrual products. For example, 52% of girls felt confident doing their normal activities while using other products, compared to 80% when using the DfG kit.
- The DfG kit received positive feedback, including ease of use (26%), no leaking (25%), comfort (10%), and cost savings (8%). However, some negative feedback included difficulty washing the pads and concerns about size or discomfort.

QUALITATIVE

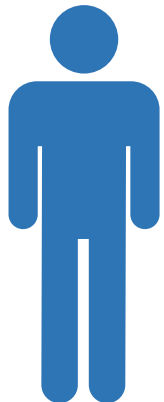


PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS



Ratanakiri

- Number of participants/group=8
- Number of group=3
- Age: 12 – 16 years old
- Grade: 7-9



Ratanakiri

- Number of participants/group=8
- Number of group=3
- Age: 12 – 17 years old
- Grade: 7-9

A total of 48 students participated in the focus group discussion with equal separate between male groups (3) and female groups (3).

LEARNED ABOUT MENSTRUAL HEALTH IN THE PAST (BEFORE THE DFG)



Most students reported having little to no prior knowledge about menstrual health before the DfG lessons. Out of six respondents, four stated *they had not learned about it previously*. The only sources of information mentioned were school-based lessons: one female student learned about *puberty and menstruation* in a **Grade 7** health education course, and one male student noted that two students had learned about *menstruation and related topics* in a **Grade 6** science class. No students cited parents, peers, or media as sources. This indicates that menstrual health education was limited, occurred relatively late in schooling, and was not widely accessible, highlighting the need for earlier and more inclusive education for both girls and boys.



QUOTE LEARNED ABOUT MENSTRUAL HEALTH

“

“I liked the topic of menstruation because it taught me how to take care of my health during menstruation, and I can practice it when I’m on my period.”

Female student, Ou Yadav

”



“

“Only two students learned about menstruation, puberty, the duration of menstruation, and the age girls typically stop menstruating during their grade 6 science class at school.”

Male student, Ekapheap



FAVORITE THING ABOUT THE DfG LESSONS



Students *overwhelmingly appreciated* the *DfG lessons* for their comprehensive and practical approach to menstrual health and puberty education. Female students highlighted gaining *clear understanding* of the uterus, menstrual cycle, pregnancy prevention, and hygiene practices, with some expressing interest in learning how to use menstrual products. Male students *valued learning* about puberty in both genders, reproductive organs, and menstrual cycle calculations, and one noted the product demonstration as particularly useful.

Overall, the *favorite aspects* centered on increased knowledge, *practical demonstrations*, and the ability to apply what they learned to *real-life* situations, indicating that the lessons were both informative and engaging for all participants.



QUOTE ABOUT THE DFG LESSONS

“I like everything. I now know about the changes boys and girls experience during puberty.”

Female Student ,Borkeo



“I liked the menstruation product demonstration, as it was practical for us to practice.”

Male student ,Ekapheap



ANY CHANGE OR ADD TO THE LESSONS TAUGHT



Most students *expressed satisfaction with the lessons*, saying there was *nothing to change or add*. However, a few highlighted gaps: one female student asked about using body lotion during menstruation, showing curiosity and possible misconceptions; another wanted more information on maintaining hygiene; and a **male student requested guidance on what boys should do during puberty**.

Additionally, one student hoped that external organizations like Days for Girls could teach all students, indicating interest in broader access to resources. Overall, the lessons were detailed and well-received, and could be further strengthened with additional guidance on hygiene, puberty, and myth-busting.



QUOTE ABOUT CHANGE OR ADD TO THE LESSONS

“

I want to know more about how to maintain hygiene.”

Female student, Kajon

”



“

“I want to know more what boys should do during puberty.”

Male student, Ekapheap



REDUCED STIGMA, SHAME, AND LIMITATIONS



Before the lessons, most students felt **shy**, **embarrassed**, and avoided discussing puberty or menstruation, especially in public or with peers of the opposite gender. They often considered it a private or “girls-only” topic and lacked confidence to answer related questions. *After participating* in the lessons, students **reported feeling more comfortable** and **open to discussing these subjects**, attributing the change to increased knowledge and understanding. The lessons helped normalize conversations, reduce stigma, and even encouraged supportive behaviors, such as **boys sharing information with sisters and neighbors**. Overall, the program effectively reduced shame and promoted confidence, openness, and empathy among both male and female students.

QUOTE OF STIGMA, SHAME, AND LIMITATIONS

“

“After learning the lesson, I am braver and have gained more knowledge about menstruation.”

Female student, Borkeo

”



“

“Before the lesson, I didn't dare to talk about menstruation. Now, I feel comfortable discussing it. I understand menstruation, know how to maintain hygiene during a period, and believe we shouldn't discriminate against girls when they are menstruating.”

Male student, Ekapheap



IMPROVE MENSTRUAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE

Before the lessons, students had limited and often inaccurate knowledge about menstruation, pregnancy, and hygiene, with many misconceptions rooted in cultural beliefs.

After the lessons, they reported significant improvements in understanding, including **how pregnancy occurs, how to calculate ovulation, and proper use of menstrual products.** They also learned that common taboos, such as avoiding certain foods or physical activities, are myths, and gained clarity on anatomy and puberty changes for both genders.



Several students expressed surprise at learning that **menstruation involves only a small amount of blood.** Overall, the lessons replaced misinformation with accurate, practical knowledge, and periods may indicate health issues rather than leaving students feeling more confident and informed about menstrual health.

QUOTE OF STIGMA, SHAME, AND LIMITATIONS

“

“Before learning, I did not know how to use disposal or washable pad, but now I know how to use it properly. I know how to keep myself hygiene during menstruation.”

Female student, Borkeo

”



“

“I used to hear that girls weren't allowed to eat cold water, spicy food, or canned food during their period. However, after learning more, I now know that it's perfectly fine for girls to eat these foods, as they don't impact menstruation.”

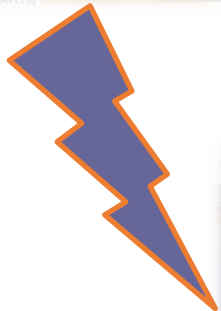
Male student, Ekapheap



CHANGED PERCEPTIONS & ATTITUDES & GENDER EQUALITY



Before the lessons, many students felt **scared, embarrassed, or held misconceptions about puberty and menstruation**, such as thinking menstruation meant pregnancy or that puberty started at age 18. Girls often avoided telling their parents about their first period, and boys sometimes teased girls or viewed menstruation negatively. **After the lessons**, perceptions shifted significantly: **students now understand menstruation as a natural and healthy process, feel confident managing it, and recognize puberty as a normal stage of growth**. Attitudes among peers improved, with more open discussions and mutual support. **Boys** became more **empathetic and helpful**, offering discreet assistance and **even buying sanitary pads when needed**, while teasing and stigma largely disappeared. Overall, the lessons fostered gender equality, reduced shame, and encouraged respectful, supportive behaviors among both boys and girls.



QUOTE OF CHANGED PERCEPTIONS & ATTITUDES & GENDER EQUALITY

“

“Before, the boys would tease the girls when they were on their period, but since learning about it, they’ve changed their behavior; they don’t tease the girls anymore. Now, the boys support the girls so much that a boy will even offer his shirt to help cover a blood stain on a girl’s skirt.”

Female student, Kajon

”



“

“Before the lesson, whenever I heard that a girl was menstruating, I thought she was pregnant. After learning, I realized that menstruation is a normal part of a girl’s puberty. I had previously thought that menstruation was bad for girls, but now I know that it is a natural sign that a girl is healthy.”

Male Student, Lomphat



IMPROVED MENSTRUAL MANAGEMENT

After the lessons, students reported **significant improvements** in how they manage menstruation. They learned **proper pad usage, hygiene practices, and when to seek medical advice for issues like severe pain or irregular cycles**. Some students switched from disposable pads to washable pads, appreciating their comfort, durability, and cost-saving benefits, while others continued using disposable pads but shared reusable kits with family members. Feedback on the **DfG kits** was **largely positive**, with students noting they are **soft, absorbent, easy to wash, and help save money**, though a few mentioned challenges with washing due to time constraints. Overall, the lessons enhanced menstrual health management, encouraged sustainable product use, and promoted informed health-seeking behaviors.



QUOTES IMPROVED MENSTRUAL MANAGEMENT



"I've switched to using washable pads after learning about them, and they are easy to use, stay in place, and absorb blood well. They're also easy to wash and can be used for a long time."

Female student, Ou Yadav

"I like it because it is easy to wash and dry, saves money, and doesn't leak."

Female student, Ekapheap

IMPROVED ACCESS TO EDUCATION & SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION



The responses indicate that menstrual health education and access to menstrual products have **significantly improved** female students' **confidence and participation** in school and social activities. Before the lessons, some girls avoided school due to pain, fear of leakage, odor, or embarrassment, which affected their ability to concentrate and engage in class. After receiving education and learning how to use menstrual products properly, they reported feeling more confident, attending school regularly, and participating in activities like sports. One student also highlighted the **economic and environmental** benefits of using the **DfG Kit**. However, male student responses are missing, suggesting a gap in data or engagement that could be explored further. Overall, the intervention has positively impacted girls' educational and social inclusion.





“Before the lessons, during my period, I sometimes did not go to school because I had abdominal pain. Sometimes, I had a heavy period, so I was afraid that it would leak, and I was scared my friends would see it. After learning, I know how to use the pad properly (not leak), which helps to reduce my absence from school.”

Female student, Kajon

“Before the lesson, I thought I couldn't go to school because I was afraid of smelling bad or that someone would see a blood stain on my skirt and laugh or tease me, making me feel ashamed. However, after learning, I feel more confident attending school and participating in class activities because I understand menstruation well and know how to use menstrual products properly.”

Female student, Ou Yadav

IMPROVED CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY

The menstrual health lessons have significantly improved students' *confidence and self-efficacy*. Female students reported feeling more in control of their menstrual health, with increased ability to manage their periods using both washable and disposable products and to track their cycles to prevent leaks. Many expressed a marked rise in self-confidence after gaining practical knowledge. Male students also showed progress, shifting from feelings of shame and hesitation to openness and empathy, recognizing menstruation as a natural process and feeling more comfortable discussing it. The lessons empowered both genders to speak up and support others, with students feeling more confident to ask for help or offer assistance. Importantly, many students expressed a strong desire to share what they learned with family, friends, and future children, indicating a broader impact beyond the classroom and a potential for long-term cultural change in attitudes toward menstrual health.



QUOTES OF IMPROVED CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY

“

“After learning, I feel about 90% more confident taking care of myself during my period because I now understand how to properly use both disposable and washable pads.”

Female student, Kajon

”



“

“Before the lesson, I didn't dare to talk about menstruation because I was afraid others would laugh at me... Now, after learning, I dare to talk and am no longer ashamed because it's a natural process for girls, and everyone knows about it.”

Male student, Ekapheap



04 Recommendations and Summary of Findings

**RECOMMENDATIONS
&
SUMMARY OF
FINDINGS**

SUMMARY OF FINDING

The menstrual health intervention achieved significant success in improving knowledge, positively shifting key attitudes, and boosting product confidence among secondary school students, particularly concerning the Days for Girls (DfG) washable pad.

Key Areas of Success:

- **Knowledge Acquisition & Product Usage:** The intervention was highly effective in imparting factual knowledge (e.g., anatomy) and practical skills. DfG Kit usage increased substantially (from 19% to 66%), demonstrating a notable shift away from disposable pads. This success is directly tied to the lesson's popularity, where students overwhelmingly enjoyed (98%) and valued the demonstration of menstrual products (46%).
- **Attitude Change:** Beliefs that menstruation is natural and healthy and that girls should attend school saw near-universal acceptance post-test (94% retention).
- **Confidence Boost:** Confidence in using the DfG Kit, managing leakage, and participating in school activities saw strong increases (e.g., confidence in doing all normal activities rose from 54% to 74%).
- **Facility Improvement:** Access to water in changing facilities improved significantly (75% reporting "Yes" post-test), suggesting positive environmental changes during the study period.

Key Challenges and Areas for Follow-up:

- **Retention of Attitudes (Primary Students):** While initial post-test gains were strong, Primary students showed a severe drop in retention regarding the social stigma of secrecy and teasing (correct responses fell sharply to the mid-60% range), indicating that reinforcement is crucial for younger students.
- **Barriers to DfG Kit Adoption:** The primary hurdle for non-users is a knowledge gap—"Don't know how to use it" (68%), underscoring the need for mandatory, explicit instruction on use, cleaning, and drying.
- **Hygiene Behavior:** Despite high confidence, a small but concerning trend showed a decrease (6 percentage points) in students changing products at the optimal frequency (Every 1-4 hours) post-test, requiring further investigation and targeted messaging on hygienic practices.
- **Menstrual Pain:** Menstrual pain is a universal experience (99% of secondary students), rated mostly as moderate, but it disproportionately impacts studying at school (with 64% reporting some impact) more than social or physical activities.

In conclusion, the menstrual health lessons were a critical success in education and product uptake. Future efforts should continue focusing on sustaining attitudinal change through repeated sessions, explicitly addressing the functional and logistical barriers to washable pad use, and investigating the reasons behind the slight negative shift in product changing frequency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a Sustained and Tiered Educational Program

To address the challenges of attitude retention and knowledge gaps, the intervention needs to shift from a one-off session to a structured, reinforcing program.

- **Primary School Focus (Retention):** Implement **booster sessions** for primary students 3-6 months after the initial lesson, specifically targeting the social stigma areas (secrecy, teasing). These sessions should use **interactive, age-appropriate methods** like role-playing and storytelling to reinforce positive attitudes.
- **Mandatory Practical Instruction:** Make **explicit, hands-on demonstration** of the Days for Girls (DfG) washable pad's use, cleaning, and drying a **mandatory component** of the lesson for all students. This directly addresses the "Don't know how to use it" barrier (68%).
- **Peer-to-Peer Model:** Train older, confident secondary students (who are already successful DfG users) as **Menstrual Health Ambassadors** to mentor younger students. This provides ongoing, relatable support and reinforcement.

2. Targeted Messaging for Optimal Hygiene Practices

Address the concerning drop in optimal product changing frequency (Every 1-4 hours) with focused, clear communication.

- **Investigate the Drop:** Conduct a brief follow-up survey or focus groups to understand *why* students changed products less frequently after the intervention. Potential reasons could include confidence in the DfG pad's absorbency leading to over-reliance, or logistical barriers (like lack of privacy/time).
- **Develop "Optimal Use" Messaging:** Create posters, wallet cards, or simple visual aids clearly outlining the **maximum safe wearing time** for the DfG pad and the importance of hygienic changing frequency. Emphasize that while DfG pads are durable, **hygiene is critical** for health.

3. Address Menstrual Pain as a Barrier to School Attendance

Acknowledge that menstrual pain (reported by 99% and impacting studying for 64%) is a major barrier to participation that current lessons do not fully address.

- **Integrate Pain Management:** Add a dedicated module on **menstrual pain management** to the curriculum. This should cover non-pharmacological methods (e.g., heat packs, light exercise) and when/how to safely use simple analgesics, clearly stating resources for help.
- **Advocacy for School Policy:** Recommend the establishment of a **confidential, accessible pain relief system** (e.g., basic pain relievers held by the school nurse or a designated female staff member) and a discreet area for students to rest briefly if pain is severe.

4. Ensure Sustainable Facility Quality

Leverage the reported success in facility improvement (75% access to water) by institutionalizing maintenance.

- **Formalize Maintenance:** Collaborate with school administrators to create a **standardized maintenance schedule** for changing facilities, ensuring reliable access to **clean water, soap, and privacy** for product changing and cleaning. This is crucial for sustaining the DfG Kit adoption, as proper cleaning requires consistent access to water.
- **Checkpoints:** Establish student-led **facility monitoring committees** to provide regular feedback to the school on the functionality and cleanliness of changing areas.



THANK YOU!



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