



[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

1 In 2 Girls Report Wanting To Skip School When Menstruating

Kotex Period Poverty and Stigma study reveals that 54% of girls feel uncomfortable about themselves when on their periods.

KUALA LUMPUR, 25 May 2022 - Findings from the inaugural Kotex Period Poverty and Stigma study revealed that more than 1 in 2 girls reported wanting to miss school when on their periods. This indicates that in this day and age, periods still pose a mental barrier in how a girl perceives herself as well as her willingness to participate in school and daily activities.

The study, conducted amongst close to 750 girls aged 10 to 24 nationwide, is part of Kotex®'s aim to better understand the state of period poverty and stigma in Malaysia as a means to take clear actionable measures to advance the lives of Malaysian women and ensure period never gets in the way of her progress. Findings were released via a roundtable event organized by Kotex in conjunction with Menstrual Hygiene Day and was participated by the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) and Women's Aid Organisation (WAO).

While more than 86% of respondents acknowledged that their period is a normal bodily function, only 32% stated that they are comfortable discussing periods openly, including with that of the opposite gender. **Martina Jezdikova, Marketing Director of Kimberly-Clark Malaysia** commented that this should not be the case. "These results indicate that periods have not truly been normalized and that there is a need to at least foster a safe environment for girls to discuss their struggles with periods or not be ashamed to ask for a pad if they needed one. Otherwise, we run the risk of women being afraid of seeking the help and support they need. We must remember, periods aren't just about the bleeding – it is our body's way of telling us about our reproductive system."

The study further indicates that 54% of girls feel uncomfortable about themselves when on their periods, and approximately 30% dislike menstruating despite understanding that it is merely a natural bodily process. The study also found that there was no notable difference in the introspection, outlook and experience for girls across age groups, be it those in primary, secondary or higher tertiary education institutions. This thereby suggests that despite being educated and having experienced various life stages, there has not been a shift in mindset and acceptance towards periods, as girls continue to struggle with themselves and their bodies, especially when menstruating.

Dr Wan Hilya Munira Binti Mustapha, Division of Human Reproduction of the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN) shared during the roundtable discussion that the study further confirmed the need for intervention at a national level. "LPPKN, under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, has formed an inter-governmental partnership with the Ministry of Education to run reproductive health education in secondary schools. Many studies have shown that if girls can see the correlation between period and reproductive health, they would likely



be more accepting of their bodies. It is also important that we have respectable figures like teachers to start discussing periods more openly to normalize periods amongst teens and show them that there is nothing to be ashamed of.”

Dr Hilya further added that LPPKN welcomes the efforts of all agencies, private sector and NGOs including this Kotex Period Poverty and Stigma roundtable and trendy marketing campaigns to shed more light on period and present in new and cool ways. “Without initiatives to reach out to the ground, many girls and women may not seek the medical help they need should they identify issues with their womb or if they experience excessive bleeding. Additionally, we do not want girls skipping school as this will result in more serious socio-economic issues down the line.”

Kotex has also been working with LPPKN and WAO to deliver menstrual hygiene and period management education to school-going girls through dedicated webinars as well as through the brand’s digital period education game, She Can Project.

Menstrual hygiene and period management education is one the key enablers in eradicating Period Poverty. Results from the Kotex Period Poverty and Stigma study found that only 26% of the respondents have heard of the term ‘Period Poverty’ and of which, only 76 of the 746 respondents truly understood what it meant. The term Period Poverty refers to the inadequate access to feminine hygiene products as well as lack of education on period management and menstrual waste management

On the topic of Period Poverty, **Gaayathrey Balakrishnan, Capacity Building Officer of Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO)** shared during the roundtable discussion, “When girls, women and menstruating persons cannot access safe and hygienic sanitary products and are unable to manage their periods with dignity, it is hazardous to their health. It can lead to severe health risks and reproductive infections. This situation, known as period poverty, also keeps young girls from achieving their full potential by restricting their access to education. Many young girls skip school when experiencing menstruation, which sometimes leads to them dropping out entirely due to the lack of access to sanitary products.”

Gaayathrey added, “We applaud LPPKN for implementing reproductive health education in-schools and urge that the Ministry of Education incorporates comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education into the Malaysian school curriculum. With the collective efforts of the Government, NGOs and brands like Kotex, we will normalize menstruation, eliminate the perpetuation of shame and stigma, and teach our young girls that they need not feel ashamed of their bodies’ biological processes. In short, we are returning dignity to girl’s bodies.”

5% of the respondents reported that they could not afford sanitary pads. When asked how they were managing their periods, they revealed that they have turned to batik, old cloth and newspaper. A number also reported skipping on average 1 to 3 days of school a month when they are menstruating.

Dr Hilya shared that using non-hygienic material to manage period may pose a risk of infection and irritation, if not washed and cleaned properly, apart from problems with leakage.



“The findings from our study reinforces the need to educate the community on menstrual hygiene and to empower girls with the tools to better understand period health. If left unattended, period poverty will hamper girls’ education, cause a dent in self-confidence and threaten their health and well-being. We started our empowerment work in Malaysia 20 years ago and have successfully supported approximately 1 million girls with education. The way we see it, the fact that over 86% of respondents recognize that their period is a normal bodily function, is a win to us. However, we need to double down on our efforts if we want to fully eradicate period poverty and stigma in Malaysia. We thank LPPKN and WAO for their partnership and look forward to doing more, both in terms of education as well as widening the supply of sanitary pads to Malaysian girls and women”, concluded Martina.

Log on to <https://www.kotex.com.my/> for more information about managing period or try your hands at the free menstrual hygiene education game by visiting Kotex #SheCan Project, at <https://www.kotexshecanproject.com/>. Educational contents are available both in English and Bahasa Malaysia. Follow Kotex®’s [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for more information.

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About Kotex

Our Kotex, U by Kotex and Intimus brands aim to ensure a period never gets in the way of any woman’s progress. Kimberly-Clark created the feminine care category with the launch of the Kotex brand 100 years ago, and today, its products are trusted by millions of women in more than 100 countries to provide outstanding protection and inspire confidence that period or not, she can.

About Kimberly-Clark

Kimberly-Clark (NYSE: KMB) and its trusted brands are an indispensable part of life for people in more than 175 countries. Fueled by ingenuity, creativity, and an understanding of people’s most essential needs, we create products that help individuals experience more of what’s important to them. Our portfolio of brands, including Huggies, Kleenex, Scott, Kotex, Cottonelle, Poise, Depend, Andrex, Pull-Ups, GoodNites, Intimus, Neve, Plenitud, Sweety, Softex, Viva and WypAll, hold the No. 1 or No. 2 share position in 80 countries. We use sustainable practices that support a healthy planet, build stronger communities, and ensure our business thrives for decades to come. To keep up with the latest news and to learn more about the company’s 150-year history of innovation, visit kimberly-clark.com.