Name of Study: Contraception Induced Menstrual Changes

Study component: Focus Group Discussion, Females

FGD ID#: CIMC 106

Date of FGD: 28 February 2025

Time FGD Began: 10:53

Time FGD Ended: 12:54

Name of Facilitator: [redacted]

Name of Note taker 1: [redacted]

Name of Note taker 2: [redacted]

Location of FGD: Wits MRU board room

Name of Transcriber: [redacted]

Name of Translator: [redacted]

Name (s) of Reviewer (s): [redacted]

Observers: [redacted]

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

- ***This was an FGD with women between the ages 18-49 years.***
- ***The interview was conducted in a private interview room.***
- ***The participants were relaxed, laughing, responsive, and willing to share their perceptions and experiences. Overall, the FGD was fun, informative and we enjoyed it.***
- ***There were 6 females in total.***

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

F: Date is 28 February 2025. Time is 10:53. Focus group C106. I would like to welcome you again today. Thank you for being part of our focus group discussion. So, in our focus group discussion today, we will start our discussion with an activity that I would like for us to do just to ease our minds and relax. We will remember that we have numbers today, right//

//Yes// [Participants response]

F: //because we won't be using our names when continuing with our discussion. So, before we continue with our discussion, I would like for us to get to know each other better. So, there is an activity that we will start now that goes like this, what animal do you most relate to, and why do you choose this animal? So, I will start so that I can give you an example. I see myself as a tiger. We all know that a tiger has stripes, so its stripes are the ones that make it unique. So, I also see myself unique. But what I like the most about a tiger is that when a tiger wants food, it goes and hunts. It doesn't go usually go with the crowd, it usually goes alone when the other animals are sleeping, it goes and hunts and finds something. I am also like that; I don't usually go with the crowd. I am an in individual who most the time walks alone but at the same time I am an individual who when she wants something in life, goes after it. I make sure that I get it, I try to do my best to get what I want. Yeah, thank you. That's me [Chuckles].

P4: Number 4.

F: Yes.

P4: I am like a chicken. A chicken when it has given birth it protects the eggs – when it lays eggs, it protects the eggs for those certain days. Like me, I like to gather my family and stay together, even if there are circumstances in life, maybe at home, I like to make them sit like how we are sitting and be a family. When it [Meaning: Participant is referring to the chicken] has laid eggs and there are chicks, it also protects them. When a dog or a cat comes, it fights.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: I am a person like that, you can't touch my sister in my presence. No matter how wrong she is, if you are an outsider. Thank you.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Thank you, number 4. Number 6.

P6: I see myself or I wish to be a lion.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Why do I say that? A lion is an animal that fights, that doesn't want to get killed by other animals. So, if I am planning to do something, I don't rest without getting it. Like, I persevere until I get it. No matter how hard it is. I step back and regain strength and come back to fight.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Thank you, number 6. Yes, number 3.

P3: I wasn't expecting this question [Chuckles]

F: [Chuckles].

P3: But I would say I see myself more like a Chow Chow, which is a dog.

F: What is it called?

P3: Chow chow.

F: Oh okay…

P3: It is very aggressive, but it is also very loyal.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: And if it's owned by the right person it ends up being less aggressive and be more passionate if I can say that.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yeah.

F: Mhm [Neutral], so if you say if it is owned by the right person, it becomes less aggressive//

P3: [Chuckles] That's not what I mean, I mean if you are around the right crowd then you become more of yourself because like, I will say I am very sensitive, so I feel the need to protect myself. So, I can come across very aggressive at times//

F: //Mhm//

P3: //But if I am around the right people, I'm not going to be so aggressive.

F: Okay…

P3: Yeah.

F: Alright. Thank you, number 3. Number 2.

P2: Uhm, all I can say is that I see myself as an aunt.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Like, reason being an aunt works day and night. So, like I want to work hard to my way to success. Then when I have reached a certain goal, then I will rest.

F: Mhm [Neutral], thank you, number 2. Number 1. Yes, I have noted you, number 5 and number 7.

P1: I see myself as a lion, because a lion fights if wants something, like me, I fought when I wanted my matric. So, I repeated a class. So, since I am saying it is a lion, a lion can - if it wants something it works hard. [Participant is speaking softly]

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: I also work hard to get what I want. [Participant is speaking softly]

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Please may I remind you to raise your voices so that we can hear you on the recorders. Number 5, I have noted you, number 7.

P5: I see myself as a springbok, because I can see danger quickly. If I am in danger, I quickly remove myself from the danger. I run away. If I can see that the situation that I am facing at that time is beyond me, I can't face it, I can leave it like that and run away. I see myself like a springbok.

F: Okay, thank you, number 5. Yes, number 7.

P7: I see myself like a cat. A cat, when you own a cat, it doesn't runway. Even if you throw it away, the cat comes back [Chuckles]. The cat comes back, yes, it is important that where you were raised, no matter what happens, stay because they are your family. Even if you take it [Meaning: Participant is referring to the cat] while it is still small and made it stay in the house, the cat is troublesome, it is very playful, even if you throw it away but still it comes back. Even if you hit it, but still, it comes back. Yeah. Same with family, a family, no matter what happens, even if there are challenges in the family but you must stay, so that you can solve them.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Yes.

F: So, you are a person who can withstand all circumstances.

P7: Yes, circumstances…

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 7. I am very happy to get to know all of you. I think it was an interesting activity. We will continue with our discussion. We must relax, I can see that you are serious.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: No, let us all relax, talk and raise our voices. Okay, so, for the rest of our discussion today, we will talk about menstrual cycles. Sometimes women use different words when talking about menstrual cycle or the days of the month when they are bleeding. Which words do you usually use when you are talking about menstrual cycle?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 1. I have noted you, number 6.

P1: *Ukumensa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as menstruating].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: At home when I am on my periods, they say *ngiyamensa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as I am menstruating].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Yes.

F: Okay, the word *ukumensa*, is it a Zulu word or can you explain to us what does it mean?

P1: I also don't understand well, my grandmother always says that *ngiyamensa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as I am menstruating].

[Participants raised their hands]

F: *Uyamensa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as you are menstruating], okay. Alright, yes number 6, I have noted you, number 5 and number 7.

P6: I say *ngikuma-period* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as I am on periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: If I am on my periods, that is what I call it.

F: Okay, it is an English word.

P6: I think it is an English word, but we call it in isiZulu because I say ngiyakuma-periods [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as I am going on periods], you see.

F: Oh okay, so, you personally say *ngiyakuma-periods* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as I am going on periods].

P6: Yes.

F: Alright, yes number 5. I have noted you, number 7.

P5: We usually say *sisezinsukwini* [[Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as we are on our days. In this context the term, "days" means the days when an individual is on her menstrual periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: If an individual is on periods at home, they normally say so and so *usezinsukwini* [[Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as she is on her days. In this context the term, "days" means the days when an individual is on her menstrual periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: That is the way we speak at home, that so and so *usezinsukwini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as she is on her days. In this context the term, "days" means the days when an individual is on her menstrual periods], if she is on periods at that time.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much, number 5. Number 7, I have noted you, number 4.

P7: At home they say *uyeskhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as to go on menstrual periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Yes, that is the way we speak, if a person is on periods we call it *ukuya eskhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as to go on menstrual periods].

F: *Ukuya eskhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as to go on menstrual periods].

P7: Yes.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much, number 7. Yes, number 4.

P4: I say *kusuke kufike ama-visitor* [Meaning: It is a Zulu phrase that is directly translated as it is when visitors have arrived. In this context it means that menstrual periods occur unexpectedly just like a visitor that comes unannounced to visit]. [Chuckles]

F: Okay…

P4: Because sometimes, since I am getting an injection [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraception injection], periods just arrive when I don't expect them. A visitor arrives when you haven't invited it. A person comes knocking, you can't chase them away. [Chuckles]

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 4. Yes, number 3.

P3: I also say, *ngisuke ngiseskhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as I am on my menstrual periods].

F: *Eskhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as I am on my menstrual periods], okay. Alright, no, thank you so much. Which other words have you heard of that other women use, that you have heard of?

[Participant raised her hand]

P3: I know that they say, it's that time of the month.

F: It's that time of the month.

P3: Mhm [Neutral].

F: Oh okay. What do they mean?

P3: That they are on periods.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, alright. Yes, number 2, thank you, number 3.

P2: At home they say, *ukudabuka* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as to tear apart].

F: Okay.

P2: Based on that, isn't when you are on periods, I think I am not sure what wall tears until blood comes out.

F: What happens?

P2: Uhm, I think, I don't know the name of it, but there is a wall inside//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P2: //the vagina. They say it is when it is tearing apart//

P3: // The lining//

P2: //Yes. That's why they say, *uyadabuka* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as to tear apart].

F: Oh okay, and it means that you are on your periods?

P2: Yes.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, okay. Yes, number 6.

P6: It is these ones, *ukumensa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word that is directly translated as menstruating], *eskhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual periods], these ones that have been counted here, they are the only ones that I know.

F: Oh…

P6: Yeah, it depends on which one you are using.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay… Yes, number 1.

P1: Others say, *irobot livaliwe* [Meaning: It is a Zulu phrase which is slang, directly translated as the robot/traffic light is closed].

[Chuckles by participants]

F: The robot is closed.

P1: Yes.

F: Okay. What does it mean? Why do they compare it with the robot [Meaning: It is a word that means traffic lights]?

P1: Isn't when you are on your periods, the blood is red. So, a closed robot [Meaning: It is a word that means traffic lights] is red.

F: Oh okay…

P1: Mhm [Yes].

F: Thank you so much. Are there maybe other words that you have heard of, that don't talk about being menstrual periods but that talk about the whole menstrual cycle. This is before you go on your menstrual periods and after being on your menstrual periods. Are there any words that are used for your menstrual cycle?

P6: It is *ukuthomba* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as puberty] or it is something else. *Ukuthomba* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as puberty].

F: *Ukuthomba* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as puberty].

P6: Yes.

F: Yes, number 6. What happens when a person *ethomba*?

P6: From my understanding, *ukuthomba* is when it is your first time – like if you are a child, your first time menstruating.

F: Oh…

P6: They say *uyathomba*. I don't know if you have started and have dates each month if it is still *ukuthomba* or it is called that once off if you are starting.

F: Oh okay. Alright, thank you so much, number 6. Are there others who have other names?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: **Okay, how do women usually keep track of their periods, for them to know that they are about to start their periods?**

[Participants raised their hands]

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Yes, number 3. I have noted you, number 4, number 1 and number 7.

P3: Not for me, but my mom, she used to say that when she still had her periods, she would tell with a moon. So, every time when there is a full moon, she knew that she is about to go on her periods.

F: So, she would go outside and look at how is the moon?

P3: She says are periods went along with the moon.

F: Okay, thank you, number 3. Yes, number 4.

P4: I can feel it by having *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as menstrual cramps].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: It is a lot; it is very hard. It is like I am pregnant, maybe there is a baby. Like, I even crawl on my knees if I have it. I can't sleep. Then I would be like let me drink warm water, maybe it takes me even 5 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yeah.

F: The 5 days is before you start your periods.

P4: Yeah, it is before.

F: Okay…

P4: After that it [Meaning: Participant is referring to *islumo*, which is a Zulu word directly translated as menstrual cramps] becomes quiet and then the blood comes out.

F: Okay…Yes, number 1.

P1: I also feel *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, menstrual cramps]. I have pains, on my bladder and end up drinking Grandpa, 3 or 4. It happens 2 days before my periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay. Yes, number 7. I have noted you, number and number 3.

P7: Before I go on periods, I first have *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, menstrual cramps]. They start 3 days after. I don't know if it is a coincidence, there is this person that I don't like.

[Chuckles by participants]

P7: There is this person that I don't like, it is the always the one person, it is always my brother.

F: That's when you know that you are about to start periods.

P7: Yes.

F: Okay, alright, number 5. Yes, number 5.

P5: At home, they notice me by seeing me having moods at that time. Especially mom, she can see if I am about to start periods. She says, “no, these days you are unapproachable, you have moods, why? Are you about to start your periods”. Then 3 days would pass with those moods, then the periods start. We see from there.

F: Okay, thank you, number 5. Yes, number 3. I have noted you, number 6.

P3: My [menstrual] cramps are like 2 weeks before and then I have [menstrual] cramps during my periods. But it is never like a few days before I start periods.

F: Okay, number 3. Yes, number 6. I have noted you, number 2.

P6: Okay, mine is different if I am listening to others because things such as *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, menstrual cramps] and moods, I don’t know.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, what helps me is that I count for myself. Like, I know that my cycle is 28 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: If I start today to go on periods, it becomes day 1 for me, so, I will count like that until day 28 sure case the periods will come back again.

F: Oh okay, when you are counting, number 6 you use the calendar. What do you use?

P6: I can also use the calendar but since today it is the 28th//

F: //Mhm//

P6: //It is day 1.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, I can balance things out with the calendar or say 29, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 until 28 days is completed that I am counting with my hand.

F: Oh okay…

P6: Yeah.

F: Alright, okay thank you, number 6. Yes, number 2, I have noted you, number 7.

P2: I think since it is me, maybe I will have 2 pimples next to the cheek. Then maybe a week won’t finish without being on my menstrual periods. But when 1 day is left, then I will have *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, menstrual cramps] that day. Even then, it is not *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, menstrual cramps], really, it is more like a back pain.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Then when I am on my menstrual periods, no, I don’t have any back pains shame.

F: Okay, thank you so much , number 2. Yes, number 7.

P7: Please may I ask, speaker number 6.

F: Mhm [Yes].

P7: That she said she counts her cycle herself.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: It sometimes happens that your cycle changes, isn’t.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: So, how do you deal with that?

P6: That's why when she [Meaning: Participant is referring to the interviewer] said do I count using the calendar, I didn't want to agree. Because I won't say that since today it is the 28th, my periods are 28 days and next month it will be the 28th, because February has short days//

P7: //It has short days//

P6: //So, I count day by day, it [Meaning: Participant is referring to the month] will say the date of the 28th, when is it. I don't count dates, I count days. You see on the 28th, I will say day 1, 28, 29, if it is there, then 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and when it says 28, I will go and check on the calendar that which date will it be. The dates changes but it will always be 28 days, it doesn't change.

P7: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 7 and number 6. Yes, number 3.

P3: My periods are irregular.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Sometimes I get them twice a month, sometimes I don't get them at all. So, I even tried an app, Flo.

F: What is it called?

P3: Flo.

F: Flo, please spell it for me.

P3: F-l-o.

F: Oh okay…

P3: I was trying to track my periods. But it was not able to help me. So, I usually see with – its either it is cramps, or I will see with periods that okay I am on periods. If they are not there that month, it means I am not getting them.

F: Oh okay. So, the app was not able to help you because your periods are irregular.

P3: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, and then with the app it is just Flo and then there is nothing else, it is that word only.

P3: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 3 for the interesting information.

[Participant raise her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: Please may I comment on speaker number 3. I think since she mentioned that maybe it is twice a month. So, this is what I was talking about that we don't look at the month, you count the days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, since February was short, you might find that march will start early because a month has 28 plus, you find that you will start at the beginning of march. And then again, when march ends, I repeat because my 28 days are finished even though February was short.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: I think it is something like that dear, that I do.

F: Okay, thank you. Thank you so much, number 6. Thank you again for all your responses. So that we all have the same understanding for the rest of the discussion, when we are talking about menstrual cycle, when we are talking about the monthly cycles women usually have. This includes the days of the month when you are bleeding, the time just before you bleed, the time just after bleeding, and other times of the month in between. So, when we are talking about menstrual cycle, we are talking about that. Are we all still good?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: **Now, I would like you to think about how your own menstrual cycles have changed while using a contraceptive, the changes can be changes that you liked or changes that you didn't like. I will ask you questions now. There are questions that I will ask you that are about this. Okay, first, please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how often you have bleeding. Here we are looking at, for an example, is it bleeding that comes more often or less often than before using a contraceptive? How was your bleeding. So, we will look at that, did your bleeding come more often or less often than before using contraception? Maybe we can compare that before we used a contraception, it came more often or less often and after using a contraception, did it come more often or less often?**

[Participants raised their hands]

F: We will start with speaker, number 1. I have noted you, speaker number 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

P1: I, before I started getting injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection]. I would go for 3 days well, with periods that were well. They didn't come more often and didn't come less often. I started getting injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection], the injection for 3 months, I would not go on periods for one month and only go the second month. And even when I would go on periods the next month, I would go on periods for a long time. I would go on periods for the whole week. And even so, in that week, the 1st day they [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual blood] are a lot and on the last they day are small. Then it is drops. Then the following month, the 3rd one, I would not go on them [Meaning: Participant is referring to periods]. So, that's how it changed. Because it has changed, before, I would go on periods well for 3 days and now that I am getting injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection], I would go on periods for 7 days in the second month.

F: Okay, so, before you used something for contraception, were there days – let's say in month you would go on your periods for 3 days as you have mentioned right, did it happen that you would go on your periods for another 3 days on the same month or it was just 3 days for that month only?

P1: It was 3 days for that month only.

F: Oh okay. Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Yes, number 3.

P3: For me, before I started contraception, my periods lasted for 5 days. First and second day was a heavy flow and then on the other days it is just normal. Now, since I am – okay, so, I started off with the depo. The depo, I got injected with it, the first 2 months I spotted the whole time. And after that, when I was done with spotting, a brown discharge came out, it was like I completing my [menstrual] periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: For a very long time, I went to the clinic, and they said that's normal, it will discontinue itself. So, I went to [Name of store] , I brought cranberry supplements to drink, to clean. Uhm, then it stopped, I

didn't get my [menstrual] periods. And then I changed back to IUD because coming back every 2 months for an injection, it didn't make sense because it is not like I want a baby anytime soon. So, I inserted an IUD, the hormonal one.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Uhm, I inserted it in December 11. I have been spotting since, it is not stopping.

F: Okay, alright, thank you so much, number 3. So, in this question, just to remind you, we want to find out if your bleeding comes less often or more often. So, we are not looking at how much you bleed. Because if we are looking at how much you bleed, we are looking at the volume and how much blood comes out. But here, we are trying to find out if your periods come less often or more often, you see.

P3: Yes.

F: So, for some it happens that in a month, she would go on her menstrual periods twice. Which means she will be on her menstrual periods for 3 days and then again, the following week do another 3 days, you see that? We are looking at that now.

P3: Which means what I can say is that I don't go on my periods, I spot only.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: So, since I used a contraceptive, my periods are small.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yeah.

F: Oh okay. Before you started contraception, how many days were your periods?

P3: They were 5 days.

F: They were 5 days. After you had started contraception, then you didn't go on your [menstrual] periods?

P3: Mhm [Yes].

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much, number 3. Number 4.

P4: Before I was on contraception, my periods were 3 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: But they had blood clots.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: So, maybe on the 3rd day, they [Meaning: Participant is referring to blood clots] would come out a little bit. But 2 days, there are blood clots. When I started the injection [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection], maybe it might happen that on that month I bleed a little bit and the bleeding, on the first day I keep seeing drops, maybe on the panty and then change and bath and insert a pad. And I will insert it [Meaning: Participant is referring to the sanitary pad] the whole day. Then end up seeing a drop for that time. Maybe the following day it will then be quiet [Meaning: The participant won't have any menstrual periods or spotting] again. Maybe the following day it will start all over again.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: But not this way [Meaning: Participant meant that her periods flow wouldn't be the same as before].

F: Oh okay. Okay, then when you were using a contraceptive, before and after?

P4: Right now, since I am on contraception//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P4: //I do have [menstrual] periods. Right now, I am on periods//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P4: //But I can stay with the [sanitary] pad that I have inserted until I leave, get home and stay the whole day because it [Meaning: Participant is referring to the menstrual blood] is coming out a little bit.

F: Okay…

P4: Yes.

F: How many times do you spot in a month? Like, do you complete your days and spot again the following week or you complete those days only?

P4: It is only for those days. Maybe since I have started at midnight, maybe tomorrow it will discontinue.

F: Okay.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, speaker number 5.

P5: When I started going on my [menstrual] periods, I would go on periods for 3 days before I inserted the implant. I would go on menstrual periods for 3 days. Even then, I started my [menstrual] periods late. I started when I was 19 years, when I was old. So, I went on periods old, I would go on periods for 3 days, 3 days, 3 days. Then in 2021, I inserted an implant. Then things changed, I started going on menstrual periods for 7 days. I started to have a lot of blood.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yet my blood used to be a little bit. I would go on periods for that time, a little bit, even then for 3 days. It is just that the blood was little. I inserted an implant and that changed, I went on periods month after month. Sometimes I would not go on periods on other months. Maybe let 2 months pass, other months I would go on periods a lot [Meaning: The participant meant that she would bleed more days]. There would be a lot of blood. Maybe 14 days would pass while on periods. So, yeah that is how it changed for me. But I initially went on periods for 3 days and then I inserted an implant. That is how I would go on my periods until I removed it.

F: Okay…

P5: Yes.

F: Thank you so much, number 5. Are there any of you that have experienced something like number, 5 when they had started to use a contraception? Maybe you find that this month she will go on her periods and next month does not go on her periods and so forth.

Yes! [Participants responded and agreed]

F: Maybe//

[Participant raised her hand]

F: //Yes, number 1.

P1: It is me, just like I had explained initially that I would go on periods this month. I would go on periods for 7 days, the following month I wouldn't go on periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: I would go on periods again the following month. The time when I go on periods again, I will go on periods for 7 days and they won't flow a little bit, they would flow a lot.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, thank you. Yes, number 7.

P7: I, before I used the depo. I would go on periods for 3 days. I would be alright, have menstrual cramps, my menstrual cramps are not bad.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: And then ever since I used the depo, I would track when I have menstrual cramps that I am about to go on periods. It would happen that I would skip 2 months without going on periods and then when I go on periods I would go for 7 days and come out a lot of [menstrual] blood.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Yes…

F: Okay, so, your periods don't come more often after using a contraception.

P7: Yes.

F: Before you used a contraception, you would go on periods every month?

P7: I would go on periods every month, yes.

F: But this time around there are months that you go on periods and there are months that you don't go on periods.

P7: Yes.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: Before I inserted an implant, I would go on periods for 7 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, since I had mentioned earlier that I was able to count my thing that sure case on this day. After inserting an implant, it started to change. I continued to count the normal way, when the day came [Meaning: Participant is referring to the day to start periods], it was quiet [Meaning: Participant means that she didn't have periods]. So, I ended up forgetting. Maybe after 5 days after the day I had expected the discharge to come.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: When I expected that after a discharge periods will come out, it would be quiet [Meaning: Participant means that she didn't have periods] again for 2 days. After days, you find that I spot, you will have a blood drop that will say, *cho* [Meaning: It is a Zulu expression that is the sound of a drop any liquid. In this context the participant is referring to the blood drop]. You rush and go to insert a pad. You will end up taking it out [Meaning: Participant is referring to the sanitary pad] as she [Meaning: Participant is referring to the other participant] had mentioned.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, I first waited, that thing happened to me for 2 weeks, because I wanted to see what was going to happen. It was 2 weeks, after 2 weeks it finished and got normal. I stayed and waited to see when will the following ones [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] start. It went on and on and I was always on the lookout because I don't feel menstrual cramps, you see. I must wipe and look [Meaning: Participant doesn't experience menstrual cramps, therefore only sees if she has menstrual blood or doesn't, once she has wiped her vagina] .

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: This time around it came again. Until the 2 weeks finished again. I won't say it was 2 weeks per say, because it will be today, maybe skip 2 days and insert the pad. Then when you have not inserted the pad, because it is hot and you are relaxing, then there is blood again and you panic. So, we live painfully with this thing. Or if you must come out of the house, you insert a pad and maybe you insert it for nothing because you don't know when it [meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] will come. You must always stay waiting. So, they come less often than usual but for a longer time.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah.

F: Okay, when you say for a longer time, you mean your days increase.

P6: They are longer, since I used to go on periods for 7 days normally.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, this spotting took about 2 weeks. And I ended up not being able to keep count.

F: Oh okay…

P6: Yeah.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 6. Number 2.

P2: Before I got injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection] and used the contraceptive, I would go on my periods maybe 4 days and even then, it would be light. Like it would be light because I didn't use pads, I used pantyliners. Then when I was on contraception, I think I would go twice a month on periods. Sometimes I would go three times on periods, because there would be a difference with 3 days. That means that if I went on periods for 4 days, I would stay for the following 3 days, and nothing would happen. Then after 3 days it would start all over again. And it is the same, it becomes light, not that it will be heavy that much.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay. So, your volume is still the same, but the frequency has changed?

P2: Mhm [Yes].

F: Alright. Thank you so much, number 2. Is there someone who has maybe used a contraception and then stopped using it and then maybe the periods also stopped?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 3. I have noted you, number 6 and number 7.

P3: So, when I was using a depo, there was a time where I stopped using it. And my periods didn't come back.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: For quite some time, I think 6 months.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Because I was not in a relationship and then I got in a relationship again, I then decided to go and get injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: When I was getting injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection], I started all over again and spotted when I was getting injected when I was not getting my periods. I just got confused.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: So, yeah.

F: Alright, number 3. Yes, number 6.

P6: Yeah, I also tried the depo and the injection [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection] for 2 months. I am not sure what is it called.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, I did the same thing until I decided to stop it.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: And I heard that an injection [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection] stays in the blood. When I stopped it [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection], I got pregnant fast. But the periods were not back to being normal, it was just spotting. Something like that.

F: Okay…

P6: Yeah…

F: Okay, yes number 7.

P7: I first was on contraception with the 2 months injection.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: I didn't go on my periods at all after getting the 2 months injection, since 2023 November until last year.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: I didn't go on periods almost the whole year. So, I decided to discontinue it. I discontinued it, after that I went on periods from December.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Think December 5, until it was January on periods.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay.

P7: Yes.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 7. Yes, number 2.

P2: Before, I used to use an implant. So, it treated me well shame, because I seldomly went on my periods. Three months would finish, and it would be quiet [Meaning: Participant means that 3 months

would finish without having periods], you see. And I didn't complain. Then when I had taken it out when it was time//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P2: //Then I decided to pause a bit being on contraception to see if my blood will get back and it didn't. Then I decided to go on contraception with the injection for 3 months. Then it got back to normal.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 2. We will continue with our discussion. Please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how regularly you have bleeding.

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Here we are looking at if it is bleeding that comes when you expect it or it is bleeding that comes when you don't expect it.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 6. I have noted you, number 5 and 1.

P6: It comes anytime, we can't say we are expecting it. We just see with them [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] coming.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 6. Yes, number 5.

P5: I, my goodness I would just see with them [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] here, the periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Maybe after 3 months, I would see periods. You find that it was quiet and didn't go on them [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods]. I would see with them [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] showing up. I get confused as to where do they come from because they quiet. Then I will go on periods for 7 days or 14 days, and end up going to the clinic, you see. It becomes something like that.

F: Okay…

P5: Yeah.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 5. Yes, number 1.

P1: I also would just see the periods coming out of the blue. They start even when I am at [Name of the mall].

[Chuckles by participants]

F: They start even when you are where?

P1: They have started even at [Name of the mall] when I was sitting.

F: Where is [Name of the mall].

P1: At the mall, at [Name of place].

F: Oh okay.

P1: I would start periods unexpectedly. And even then, the flow is not small. They [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] come heavy and a lot.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Number 1, 5 and 6, I heard you mention that it is hard to predict when they will start because they start unexpectedly.

P6: Yes.

F: But when they have started, can you tell when they will stop?

P6: No, I can't anymore//

F: Yes, number 6. I have noted you, number 1 and number 5.

P6: I can't tell anymore when they will stop. As I have mentioned that one minute you are happy that they are finished, after two days they come back.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, you can't be comfortable at the end, you must always have a pad inserted since the girl [Meaning: Participant is referring to one of the participants] mentioned that they started at the mall.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, we live with pads since we - I have inserted an implant.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 6. Yes, number 5.

P5: For me, my goodness! Ay shame! The periods would just come randomly. Then when I have been on periods for a long time, I ended up going to the clinic. I lived by drinking the pills that are small to stop them [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] because the blood was not stopping at all. I didn't know what to do. I ended up going to the clinic, they gave me pills that are small that they say are for preventing pregnancy. They told me to drink 1, maybe it [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual blood] will stop. It would stop at that time, and it would start all over again. So, I ended up not knowing when my periods stop and when they start, you see.

F: Okay…

P5: Yeah.

F: So, did this continue to bother you even when you had used the pill [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraception pill]?

P5: They would stop, they would stop for maybe 2 weeks.

F: Okay, after drinking the pill?

P5: Yes, after drinking the pill. Maybe they would stop for 2 weeks and start all over again. When it starts all over again, it will be 3 days. After the 3 days, they stop straight and don't come anymore until 2 months passes by and then they come back again.

F: Okay, which color are the pills?

P5: They are white and then there is a red place, red buttons.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: They are small, they are the small white ones. They are the ones that they would give me, one packet.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Mhm [Yes], they also didn't tell me how to take the pills. I would take it anyhow.

F: Okay, I heard you mention red buttons, the red buttons are part of the pill, or it is the packing?

P5: They are on the side. You see, how do I put it, it is one package.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: They are on the side; they are next to each other and then the white ones are in the middle.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 5. Yes, number 1.

P1: For me, they happen for 7 days. They have never been more or been less. And they have never stopped. Once I have started, I have started. You know the red that is clear, yoh! [Meaning: It is an expression, which is used if someone is shocked or in disbelief]

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Then they look like they are black and then they are like green!

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: It was just something like that.

F: Okay, so, number 1 you can tell when they will stop.

P1: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much. We will continue with our next question. Please tell about any ways contraception has changed how long you have bleeding. For example, when you have bleeding, how many days does it last? Is it longer or shorter than before using contraception? So, here we are looking at before you used a contraception, how many days did you bleed and after using a contraception, how many days did you bleed. We are looking at that difference.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 7. I have noted you, number 6 and 1.

P7: Before I was on contraception, I would bleed for 3 days to 4 days. It wouldn't be more than that. When I was contraception, I would bleed for 7 days.

F: 7 days.

P7: Yes.

F: Alright. Okay, thank you so much, number 7. Yes, number 6.

P6: I would say it takes a long time.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: But the blood flow is light. The difference is that normally the blood flow was moderate. I knew that if it is 3 days, maybe I will change pads 2 times a day. Now, the time is longer. I insert 1 pad per day. Maybe you find that I will spot once until I change it because I am going to sleep. I would wake up and it is clean. And then again it says, *"nqwambi"* [It is a Zulu word that describes the sound of a drop or something falling. In the context the participant is referring to the blood drops coming out] following day.

F: Okay…

P6: Yeah.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Thank you so much, number 6. Yes, number 1. I have noted you, number 3 and number 4.

P1: I, before I would go on menstrual periods for 3 days, periods that were well, they were light. Now, I go on menstrual periods for 7 days. Even at night, I sometimes wake up with blood all over the bed. I start all over again and wash.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: So, you see now, it has changed a lot.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Yes, number 3.

P3: I would go for 5 days, before, and then I got on contraception, I then spotted for almost 2 months, spotting.

F: Okay, how many days did you spot?

P3: It was constant.

F: Mmh [Pardon].

P3: It was constant, it didn't stop.

F: Oh okay. Okay, so, you couldn't keep track that you spot how many days.

[Participant nodded to say yes]

F: Okay. Alright, thank you so much, number 3, number 4.

P4: For me, before it would be 3 days. As I had explained earlier that it was 3 days with blood clots. I got injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection], I started to have spots. Even then, maybe it will be today and then tomorrow there is nothing. The following day it would start. But maybe in a month, maybe it is 3 times or twice.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Please may you have this in mind that, I know that these questions sound like they are repetitive//

P4: //Yes//

F: //And they are similar, you see. Please be patient with me. We want to make sure that we get all the information from each of you guys. Uhm, okay, so our next question is – okay, when you have bleeding, how does contraception change how much you bleed during those days? Okay, so, here we are looking at volume. We are looking at if you have more bleeding or less bleeding? And please may we look at that before you used a contraception, were you bleeding heavier and maybe after you used a contraception you were bleeding lighter. We want to get that; we are looking at the volume.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Right, we will start with speaker number 7. Number 6, number 5, number 3, number 2, and number 1, I have noted you.

P7: Before I was contraception, it was normal. It was 3 days, the first day you would bleed heavily and then it will decrease as the 3 days continued.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: That is normal. When I was laughing, I would bleed heavily.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Yeah, I would bleed heavily. I am not a person who has a lot of blood. So, when I was on contraception, I was a person who was bleeding a lot with blood clots until 7 days and then I would be alright.

F: Okay, yes number - sorry number 6. Number 7, would you say before you used a contraception, your periods were medium, their volume.

P7: Their volume.

F: And then after using a contraception, they were heavy.

P7: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 7. Yes, number 6.

P6: Mine have decreased.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Even though I don't know, because I say that the spotting is for 2 weeks, maybe it ends up covering the volume. But it has decreased because normally you will insert a pad in the morning, then it is full by this time, you are changing the pad.

F: Okay…

P6: Now, I change it late.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, it has decreased, it doesn't come heavily.

F: So, before you used a contraception, were they normal or?

P6: I think they were normal.

F: They were medium.

P6: Yeah.

F: Okay, after using a contraception//

P6: //They became less//

F: //They became light.

P6: Yeah. Yeah.

F: Thank you so much, number 6. Yes, number 5.

P5: Before, I would go for 3 days. Even then, 3 days wasn't a lot of blood. I told myself that maybe I have small blood, you see. The blood didn't fill the [sanitary] pad. It was blood that I could stay the whole day with it, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I wouldn't change the [sanitary] pad. Even then, I would go on periods, 3 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I then inserted the implant. But it first treated me well, I don't want to lie. Then as time went on, I started having a lot of blood. I would come out blood clots. I would wake up and the bed would be dirty.

F: Okay [Neutral]…

P5: You see, I couldn't even feel it when it is coming because I would see with my legs, if I am standing the blood would be full on the pad and running down my legs and so forth, you see. Which means that there was a lot of blood.

F: Okay, before you used a contraception, would you say they were medium?

P5: Yeah, I would say so.

F: Okay, and then after using a contraception they became heavy.

P5: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 5. Yes, number 3.

P3: Okay, so, before I was on contraception my periods were 5 days. And mine were heavy. But it happened that after an hour my pad would be full.

F: Okay [Neutral]…

P3: I must change it. Then I changed and used tampons.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: The tampons would hold the blood longer. So, I would say 2 hours on my first 2 days. And then the other days they are less, maybe I will use 2 tampons. And then now when I am on contraception, since I am spotting, I am using pantyliners.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Sometimes it has that I use 2 pantyliners and they would become full, from spotting that day or sometimes it is just one pantyliner.

F: So, your periods before you started contraception, they were heavy.

P3: Mhm [Yes].

F: After you started contraception, you were spotting, they were light.

P3: Yes.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 3. Yes, number 2.

P2: I think they are alike, because before I prevented, they were already light. They were that time, if they are 3 days, they are 3 days. After I prevented [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method], I think they are still light. But the difference would be that maybe it will take 2 weeks for them to finish.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Yes.

F: Okay. Alright, thank you so much, number 2. Yes, number 1.

P1: Mine before, I would say they were medium, they were well. Now when I am getting injected [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraceptive injection], they are heavy.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. We will move on to our next question. Looking at how your bleeding looks during your periods. How has contraception changed what your blood looks like?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 1. I have noted you, number 5.

P1: Mine, before it was red. It was red.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Now, it is red, the bright red that looks like it is black though.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Yes.

F: Oh okay. Did you have blood clots?

P1: Before, I didn't have them. Now I have them.

F: You have them, are they small blood clots or it is the big ones?

P1: It is the big ones, to such an extent that even when they come out, I can feel them.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: I become wet.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 1. Yes, number 5.

P5: I would say mine wasn't that much red. It was blood that was like it is weak.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: You see, when I was still going on periods for 3 days. But when I was preventing [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method], it changed, it had blood clots. It even changed the color, and it was like it is brownish sometimes.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Sometimes it would be very red, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: But it would be thick blood, it wasn't the same as before, you see. It was something like that.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 5. Yes, number 3. I have noted 4 and number 2.

P3: So, before I was on contraception, my periods were very red.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: And then since – and I used to have blood clots. Since I am on contraception, it is very light. Close to - you can say that they are close to pink, the way they are so light. Blood clots come out, but they are very small.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: And it is not all the time, it is seldomly.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 3. Yes, number 4.

P4: Mine, before they were red.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: The periods, but blood clots came out.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: They were like round and black.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Even then, when I go to the toilet, I see it that time, there is a clot, and I even think that maybe the stomach is coming out or what is happening.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: But now, it [Meaning: Participant is referring to the menstrual blood texture] is light, I don't see the blood clots anymore. But it is blood that is light.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes.

F: Okay. Alright, when you say the stomach is coming out, what does it mean?

P4: I don't know how it comes out; I would get frightened that the way it is happening//

F: //If you were to explain to an individual, how would you explain the stomach coming out.

P3: Miscarriage [Participant is whispering and speaking softly]

P4: Maybe an individual is having a miscarriage.

F: Oh okay, I hear you. Thank you so much, number 4. Yes, number 2. I have noted you, number 6.

P2: I think it is the same. I have never had blood clots come out. They are light, light, before and after, it is the same.

F: Oh okay. So, number 2, her periods were light. They were light red.

P2: Mhm [Neutral].

F: Before and after using a contraception.

P2: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 2. Yes, number 6. I have noted you, number 7.

P6: For me, before it was the normal red.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: And after inserting this thing for preventing [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method], it keeps changing. It happens that it becomes dark red, the strong one.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: And then it changes itself and becomes pinkish.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: And then it is like a brownish discharge. A lot of things happen at the same time.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: As I have mentioned that I spot, this comes, that comes, this comes.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay. Did you have clots?

P6: Sometimes.

F: You used to have them before using a contraception method?

P6: Yes.

F: Now you don't have them.

P6: No, it is just blood. It is just that it is strong [Meaning: Participant is referring to the color of the blood], but it is inconsistent.

F: Oh okay, when you say it is not inconsistent, what do you mean?

P6: It is not a clot.

F: Oh…

P6: It is strong, but a clot is something that you can hold like this. It is consistent but it is watery but thick.

F: Oh, it is thick…

P6: Yes.

F: Okay, and then the color of it is what kind of red?

P6: If it is going to be like that, it becomes dark red.

F: Alright.

P6: If it is not like that, it happens that it becomes pinkish.

F: Pinkish…

P6: Light, mhm [Yes].

F: And then before contraception.

P6: Before I used a contraception, since I am going on periods for 7 days, first 2 days was a discharge that was brownish and as it continued, then 4 days it becomes a blood that is normal, that is red.

F: Okay…

P6: Again, when I am about to finish, it becomes a discharge that is brown.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much, number 6. Yes, number 7.

P7: For me, it was the same. It was dark red.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: The difference is that the clots before I was on contraception, they were normal, the small ones**.**

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Now, they are big. They are a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Yes.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much, number 7. Please may I ask, you see when you are on your menstrual periods, besides the blood that you see, is there maybe a fluid that you have seen?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 6. I have noted you, number 5.

P6: Yes, it does happen that a discharge comes that is like yellow.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: It is like yellow. And then as it continues, it wants to be brown.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Mine is a lot, mine keeps changing.

F: Mhm [Neutral], the discharge that is yellow that you have mentioned, happens during your periods or before or after?

P6: When I was still having my periods normal, it would happen before. Now since I have inserted the implant, it happens in between since I mentioned that it is becoming on and off.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Maybe it comes first 2 days. And then it becomes blood that is normal.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: And then it goes back to the discharge.

F: And the discharge that is yellow, how is its texture?

P6: It is thick.

F: It is thick.

P6: Yes.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 6.

[Participant raised her hand, number 7]

F: Yes, number 5. I have noted you, number 7.

P5: For me, it would come out something like mucus. But they were not thick, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: They were like light, whitish. But they were not white, white, white, white! But it was like it is white, you see. It was like it is mucus. But it would come out after I have completed the periods. Mhm [Yes], it came out when I had completed periods.

F: Alright, okay, thank you so much, number 5.

[Participant raised her hand, number 3]

Yes, number 7, I have noted you, number 3.

P7: My discharge was brown.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: It is the same as the white one. It is normal like, it is normal, but the difference is that it is brown after being on periods.

F: Okay, when you say it is normal, what makes you say it is normal even though it is brown?

P7: I mean it doesn't become thick.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Yes.

F: Oh okay. How is it?

P7: It becomes [Chuckles, participant mumbling and inaudible], like it doesn't become thick. If it is not thick, how it is it, I don't know.

P6: It is also not runny like water.

P7: Mhm [Yes], it is just.

F: I heard number 6 say it is not runny like water. So, it is not thick, and it is not like water, it is moderate.

P7: Mhm [Yes], it is moderate.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 7. Yes, number 3.

P3: So, mine changes whenever it feels like. It becomes thick and brown. Sometimes it is like it is water, but it is brown. Like light brown. So, those are the discharges that I get.

F: Okay, so, since you are saying it happens that it comes out like it is water and it is brownish//

P3: //Mhm//

F: //Is it something that happens before or after your periods?

P3: I don't get periods. So, I was spotting for 2 months, then I stopped spotting. This charge, when I look at it, I think I am meant to be on periods but then my body doesn't go on my period and then it takes out a discharge.

F: Okay, alright. Thank you so much, we will move on to our next question. Can you please tell me how contraception has changed your menstrual cramps. So, before you used a contraception method, how were the menstrual cramps and then after having started to use the contraception method, how were the menstrual cramps.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 2. I have noted you, number 3, number 5 and number 4.

P2: I think with me they are the same, because I have lower back only for like a day and then the following day I go on my menstrual periods. It is still the same with me till now.

F: So, before you used a contraception method, you would have a lower back pain and after you had started//

P2: //Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 2. Yes, number 3.

P3: My crumps were very painful to a point that I would sleep on the bed. And I had the lower back pain before I was on contraception. And then since I am on contraception, I have cramps randomly. But then again, they are not as bad as before I was on contraception.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: I can tolerate them. And they don't last that long. Maybe it is a few seconds then they stop.

F: Okay, alright. Thank you so much, number 3. Yes, number 5.

P5: I had *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps], I would have it and sleep the whole day. It would be painful even the lower back, I would be nausea. I wouldn't be able to do anything for a long time. Maybe 2 days or 3 days, before I start periods. Yet, at the beginning, before I inserted the contraceptive, I didn't feel *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] at all, I would see with periods and being moody, that's all.

F: Okay. Alright, thank you so much, number 5.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 4. I have noted you, number 7 and number 6 and number 1.

P4: Before, I got injected, *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] affected me a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: As I had mentioned, I even crawl on my knees and can't sleep.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: The way it is so painful on my lower back.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: But now, it is not bad. It is not bad.

F: What is the difference? Would you say that there is a difference with the amount of pain, it is not painful a lot anymore?

P4: It is there but it is not as painful as before.

F: Oh okay.

P4: Because you would even wish to vomit, before. Now it is better.

F: It is better.

P4: Yes.

F: *Islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] at the beginning, did you experience it a lot more days?

P4: Yes, they were a lot.

F: Now have they decreased.

P4: Yes, they have decreased a lot.

F: Okay, thank you a lot, number 4. Yes, number 7.

P7: Before I was on contraception, I would experience *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] for a few days since I also would go on periods for a short period. After, no, it is a long time, I experience *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] for a long time. It does happen that I even experience it even when I am done with periods.

F: And then before, since you experienced them for a few days, how painful were they as compared to now?

P7: The pain is the same.

F: They are the same.

P7: Yes, they are the same for me.

F: Alright, thank you, number 7. Yes, number 6.

P6: For me, *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps], I didn't have it before and even now I don't have it. I think that affects me because now I only see with blood, yet before, before I prevented [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method], I was able to count my thing [Meaning: Participant is referring to her menstrual cycle].

F: Alright…How do you feel about not having *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps]?

P6: I don't know if I am normal

[Chuckles by everyone]

P6: You see what they [Meaning: Participant is referring to the rest of the participants] are saying, I don't know it. Now I am asking myself why me.

F: Okay, alright thank you, number 6. Yes, number 1.

P1: Before contraception, I would experience *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] the whole day. I couldn't eat, I would even get annoyed.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: But now, I just see periods, I don't have *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps]. I just see them starting.

F: Oh, you don't have *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] now?

P1: No.

F: But before you used to experience it for one day.

P1: It was one day but it would be the whole day until I went to sleep.

F: Alright. Okay, in this question, I would like to ask number 3 and number 5, that *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] – let's start with maybe, number 3. Would you say the days of having *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] are shorter or longer when you compare before and after?

P3: So, before they were long and then after they were short.

F: Oh okay. Alright, is there a difference with the pains?

P3: Mhm [Yes], before they were painful a lot and now, they are better.

F: Alright. Okay, thank you so much, number 3. Number 5.

P5: Before, I never used to have *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] at all.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I would see with periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: But after, *islumo* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps]started. I would have a bladder that is painful, the lower back, nausea, all that, it would be a lot.

F: Alright. Okay, thank you so much. Are you still good?

Yes! [Participants agreed all at once]

F: Alright, anyone who would like to drink water can drink it, be comfortable. So, while we were continuing with our discussion, our note taker [Name of note taker number 2] was writing notes on the cards. Please can we turn and look at our cards, let us look at the things we were talking about now. Okay, we started that side and said, "how often you bleed". We said, "less often than before". We said, "experiences no bleeding". We said, "more often than before". We went on and said, "how regularly we bleed". We said, "irregular cycle". We said, "unpredictable cycle". Is it all still good?

Yes! [Participants agreed all at once]

F: We then said, "how long you bleed. 5 days", other said, "consistent spotting", others said, "3 days, consistent spotting", others said, "3 days before / after. 2 to 3 times a month, irregular bleeding". Others said, "before it was 3 days and then after 7 it was 7 days". Others said, "before it was 3 – 4 days", others said, "it is 7 days". Is there anything that we left out?

Mhm [No] [Participants response]

F: Okay, we looked at how you bleed. Others said, "before it was medium flow", others said, "after it was heavy flow". Others said, "before it was light flow and then after it was constant spotting". And than others said, "before it was heavy flow and then after it was spotting or light". And another one said, "before it was light flow, after it was heavy flow". Another one said, "before it was medium, normal flow. After it was light flow". Another one said, "before it was medium, normal flow. After it was heavy flow". Is there anything that we have left out?

No! [Participants response]

F: Okay, we then looked at how your blood looks. Others said, "it was dark red, pink, brownish". Others said, "light red, almost pink". Others said, "brownish color, bright red". Others said, "bright red, almost black color". Others said, "clots". Others said, "light red". Others said, "yellow to brownish discharge". Uhm, others then said, "slippery, white fluid". Is there anything that we have left out?

Mhm [No] [Participants response]

F: Okay, then we looked at menstrual cramps. We said, "experiences no cramps, cramps got better, less pain". Others said, "cramps stayed the same". Others then said, "cramps got worse". Is there anything that we have left out, or everything is right?

It is right. [Participants response]

F: Alright. Are there any other ways contraception has changed your menstrual cycle that we have not spoken about yet?

[Slight silence from participants as a form of saying no]

F: Have we spoken about all of it?

Yes [Participants response]

F: Okay, now all these menstrual changes, how have they made your body feel?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: I lost weight.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I was fat.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I prevented [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method] and lost weight.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I lost weight almost 3 years because I had inserted it [Meaning: Participant is referring to an implant] for 3 years.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: So, during my 3 years whilst I had inserted the implant, my body wasn't the same as before. I was a slender and people were asking me what happened because I was fat. But you won't explain to people what you are facing at that time.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Mhm [Yes], I can now say that the body is getting back but it hasn't gotten back to shape properly.

F: Mhm [neutral].

P5: Yeah.

F: Okay, number 5. How does that make you feel?

P5: It made me feel bad because people asked what is eating me. Why is my body not the same as before? Why I am I not fat anymore? But then again, I was happy that I am no longer fat.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Because other people are mean when you have a big body.

F: Mmh [Neutral],

P5: So, I can say it made me feel bad but at the same time it was right, my body isn't big anymore, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Mhm [Yes], it is not heavy.

F: Alright. Thank you so much. Thank you for sharing, number 5. Yes, number 2. I have noted you, number 1.

P2: I think before I was a slender, like really. Now I am fat.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Mhm [Yes], because I don't have a figure.

F: How does that make you feel?

P2: Bad.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Yeah, but if you look at it on another side it is right, you see.

F: Why do you say so?

P2: Just, I have gained. Like, change of clothes, everything.

[Chuckles by everyone]

F: Okay…

P2: Mhm [Neutral].

F: Alright. Okay and then the energy, has there been any changes in terms of your energy from your observations.

P2: No, I am still lazy, even now.

[Chuckles by everyone]

F: So, before you used a contraception you were lazy.

P2: Yes.

F: And after.

P2: Even now.

[Chuckles by everyone]

F: Alright, thank you so much. Yes, number 1.

P1: Before, I was a slender my goodness. Now I can see that I am gaining weight. And that doesn't make me feel good because by my home they think I am pregnant and the problem is that 9 months finishes and I don't have a baby.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: That saddens me.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: But then again, I am alright.

F: Alright, okay, thank you so much, number 5. I have noted you, number 7 and number 3. Sorry, number 1. Thank you, number 5, there is a question that I would like to ask you. Earlier on you spoke about that when you are about to start , your mom can see that you have moods and so forth, maybe can you say that periods or the contraception that you are using makes you have moods and makes changes in terms of your emotions and all of that?

P5: No, now it is not like before.

F: It is not the same.

P5: No, it is not the same. I don't have moods. You can't tell – even though I don't live with my mother anymore because she was the one who noticed that thing. I can say that I see myself normal.

F: Okay…

P5: I wouldn't know with the people that I live with now//

F: //Yes…[Neutral]//

P5: //That how do they see me if I am about to go on my periods. But my mother was able to see me, because I was living with her.

F: Okay, while you were still living with your mother, did you use contraceptives?

P5: No.

F: Oh okay, how does that make you feel, that you don't have moods since you are using this contraceptive?

P5: Uhm, it makes me happy because they would say, "oh she has started to be on her periods, don't pay attention to her".

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: You see, they would say, "oh she has started, don't pay attention to her". So, now I am alright, I don't have any moods. So, everyone understands me. In the beginning there was that. Especially with me since I am born with boys [Meaning: Participant is referring to her brothers]. They didn't understand that they must leave me alone just because I am on my periods. They didn't know that. It was my mother that understood something like, and would say, "let her be, she is on her periods, that's why she is like this, you see".

F: Yes [Neutral]…

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 5. Yes, number 3 and number 7. Please may we start with number 7 and then go back to number 3.

P7: Ever since I used the depo, I eat and sleep.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: The day doesn't end without me sleeping, once I eat, I sleep. I must go to bed.

F: Okay…

P7: This saddens me because at home they will think I am pregnant and say, "every time you eat and sleep".

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you, number 7. Yes, number 3.

P3: It also gave me a lot of appetite and I am gaining weight. My mother recently asked me why my breasts are this big.

[Chuckles by participants]

P3: You have gained weight, why. Until a certain time finished and she saw that there is no pregnancy. She even told me that she thought I am pregnant, but she can see that it is because I am gaining weight.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yeah, so, gaining weight, I like it, but I don't like it because I have love handles now. I have a stomach [Meaning: Participant means that she now has doesn't have a flat stomach since she has gained].

F: What are love handles?

P3: It is the fat that you have here on the sides [Participant pointed to the left and right sides of her stomach].

[Chuckles and mumbling by participants]

F: Okay…Alright, what made your mom think that you are pregnant, was it the weight gain?

P3: It was the weight gain.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. Alright, thank you so much, number 3. Yes, number 6.

P6: For me, it has not changed a lot, but I feel like I am pregnant. Have you heard of pregnancy cravings? It is like I could eat a certain thing.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: And then I try to avoid them, because I am sure if I am going to entertain hunger, this thing makes you hungry and obviously I will gain weight. So, I live by water. I try to eat normally 3 times a day. But if you really entertain this thing, it says, "take out meat in the fridge and fry it".

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Now, do you really take out the meat?

P6: No, if that was the case then how big would I have been?

[Chuckles by participants]

F: [Chuckles] Thank you, number 6. Yes, number 2.

[Participant is nodding to say no, she has not raised her hand]

F: I thought you had raised your hand.

P2: No…

F: Alright, is there anyone else that would like share before we continue?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Alright, thank you so much. How have all these menstrual changes impacted your day – to - day life?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: What I can say is that since I started contraception, I'd say my sex drive is lower.

F: Yeah [Neutral].

P3: Yeah [Yes], that's the only thing I have noticed.

F: Okay, and does that affect your relationship?

P3: [Chuckles] Yeah, it does.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: *Hawu* [Meaning: It is a Zulu expression for being surprised or shocked].

P3: Why are you saying *hawu*? [Meaning: It is a Zulu expression for being surprised or shocked] [Chuckles] It does, because my partner feels like I am less attracted to him as compared to before because I used to want sex a lot then I do now.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: So, it does.

F: Mhm [Neutral] and how does that make you feel?

P3: Well, it doesn't make me feel good because I must reassure him that I still feel the same way even though I am just not in the mood. So, sometimes to be in the mood even if he is not expecting it just to make him know that I still feel the same way.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: So, it doesn't make me feel good.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, thank you, number 3. Yes, number 5.

P5: I thought that my feelings aren't there anymore.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: What made you tell yourself that?

P5: If I am sitting with my partner, I couldn't be on [Meaning: To be "on" is a slang saying which means to be horny"] that way.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Even if he is touching me, my body didn't respond.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: There was a difference that was there, others even recommended certain things because they thought that it is because maybe my feelings aren't there anymore, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I would even say that I am not frequent on things that pertain sex and all of that, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Then it was that he understands that maybe it is because I am preventing [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method]. I am also trying for the body to get used to it, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: For it to try and adjust from everything.

F: Okay. So, it affects you in your relationship.

P5: Yeah, a lot.

F: How?

P5: He didn't understand, he thought that maybe I don't like him anymore. And he thought that maybe I am in another relationship, that there is someone better that I feel better than him, you see.

F: Yeah [Neutral].

P5: Yeah [Yes].

F: Thank you so much, number 5. Is there someone else that would like to share?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: I would like to add to this thing of feelings. Feelings get finished, shame. So, you end up doing it, doing it for the partner, the sex.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: But you don't enjoy anything really, it is just for him to at least be happy. But you are not in that space.

F: How did that affect you in your relationship?

P6: We wouldn't know, maybe people have gone outside [Meaning: Participant means that maybe her partner has gone out to find another partner outside of their relationship] because now [Chuckles].

[Chuckles by everyone]

P6: It is like you really don't like the person and stuff, as I have said, you end up pretending trying to hold your partner to not go outside while you are there.

F: Okay, to those who said it doesn't make them feel well because it is as if they don't like their partners and all of that. Have they told you that they don't feel well about not doing sex the way it used to be done, or they don't say anything?

[Participant mumbling and inaudible]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: I just feel guilty and assume that he will end up seeing other people, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Since my body doesn't react if he touches me, you see. So, now I think he can see but he won't say anything, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: Alright, number 5, yes number 3.

P3: My partner has said that my sex drive – well I don't get horny as I used to.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: So, it was a matter of – he felt like there is something that he is doing wrong, or I am not feeling him the same, my feelings have changed. So, it is those concerns.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yeah [Yes].

F: Alright, okay thank you. Apart from relationships, have your periods affected you in terms of at home or chores that you do at home or at work or maybe in terms of costs to maintain your mental health, you know. Things like that.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: yes, number 1.

P1: At home, they thought I had terminated a pregnancy because my periods came heavy. Clots would come out and when I showed my mother, she would say, "are you not terminating a pregnancy since you are bleeding". I would tell her that no, maybe it is just growing up. I would sometimes lie to her if there were people.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you, so, while we were having our discussion, our note taker [Meaning: Note taker number 2] was writing the things that we were talking about. Please can we look at them. We spoke about how changes make your body feel. We said, "low sex drive". Others said, "gained weight". Others said, "lost weight". Others said, "body feels tired, always sleeping". Others said, "experiences cravings". Is there anything that we left out?

No! [Participants response]

P3: Is it not gained appetite.

F: Mmh [Pardon].

P3: Appetite, like you gained more appetite.

F: Okay, we can add that. That you gained more appetite, we will add it. Thank you, number 3.

[Note taker added the card]

F: Then we looked at how changes impact your daily life, right. We then said, "uncomfortable questions from people when they see her". We said, "pregnancy speculations make her feel bad". We said, "low sex drive affects her relationship". Is there anything else that we have left out?

No [Participants response]

F: Okay. Right, so, thank you so much. Are you still good?

Yes! [Participants response]

F: Alright. Okay, so, there is an activity that we are going to do now. Please can we be comfortable, if we would like to drink water, we may drink them. We will do an activity called body mapping. If we turn and look there, we can see that there is a body. There is a front of the body of a woman. There is a front and the back. Right, the activity that we will be doing together, we will be doing it to show the things we encountered with regards to menstrual cramps and any pain that we experienced while using a contraception method. I will give each of you stickers and ask you to place the stickers on the poster, anywhere on the body where you felt menstrual cramps or any pains that you have felt while you were using a contraception method during your menstrual cycle. Stickers have different colors, each for different methods of contraception. Okay//

[Participant raised her hand]

F: //Yes, number 3.

P3: On how the changes make your body feel, I forgot to mention that there was a time where my breasts were heavy.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: For like a very long time. Like, before I was on contraception, it was a sign that I will go on my menstrual periods. It will be for maybe one 1 day. And then after that they would be heavy even for the whole week.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: It [Meaning: Participant is referring to the whole week] would finish, and my breasts would be heavy.

F: Okay, we can add that the breasts were heavy. Just right before you started your periods, right?

P3: Mhm [Yes].

[Note taker, number 2 added the card]

F: Alright. Oaky, thank you so much, number 3. So, in our activity that we are doing now, an individual will get a sticker and paste it. There are questions that I will ask you and then direct you as to how we will do this activity. Okay, please can is anyone who has used pills or is using pills for contraception to stand up or raise their hands. Let me see them first.

P5: Please may I ask, the pills that I have spoken about.

F: The contraceptive pills,

P5: Yes, I am asking about them.

F: You were using them to//

P5: //to stop//

F: //to stop the periods but you were not using them for//

P5: //For preventing [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method]//

F: //For contraception, right.

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, so, no one used contraceptive pills?

[Participants are silent, meaning the response is no]

F: We will move forward, please can anyone who uses the injection raise her hand.

P3: Before or currently?

F: Before and currently.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Okay, we will start with number 1. I have noted you, number 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. We will stand up as you go and place the sticker in front. When she comes back, another one will stand and place it and so forth.

[Movements of participants placing the stickers on the poster]

F: You are allowed to place the sticker in front and at the back.

P3: You said this is during contraception?

F: Yes.

P3: Okay.

[Movements of participants placing the stickers on the poster]

F: For the pains, when placing our stickers, we place them where it is painful. It can be menstrual cramps or any other pains that you experience while you are on your periods due to the contraceptive method you are using or that you have used.

[Movements of participants placing the stickers on the poster]

P6: Me, my goodness, I haven't felt anything.

[Chuckles by everyone]

F: [Chuckles] Number 6!

P6: I would be lying.

[Movements of participants placing the stickers on the poster]

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much. We will continue, is there anyone who is using an implant or who has used the injection?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 2, number 5 and number 6.

[Movements of participants placing the stickers on the poster]

F: Okay, we are still placing the stickers where we experienced pain because of using an implant.

[Movements of participants placing the stickers on the poster]

F: Okay, thank you so much. Oh, number 6, you have used an implant but there is no pain that you have experienced.

P6: No, I have had a headache, but I won't say it is due to the implant. I think it was a normal headache, that anyone can experience because it was for a short while and then I was alright.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 6. Is there anyone who has experienced any kind of pain during their menstrual periods because of using an IUD?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3

[Movement of participant placing a sticker on the poster]

F: Okay, is there anyone who has used anything that we haven't spoken about now?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay. Alright, thank you so much. Please can we take the gold stickers, the stars there, right. We will place it on one spot anywhere on the body where you experience the utmost pain, where you can say it is the spot that bothers you the most on the body when you are on your periods due to a contraception method that you are using.

[Movements of participant placing the stickers on the poster]

F: Okay, thank you so much. Number 4, I can see that you didn't stand up, why?

P4: It is not too painful and don't have pains a lot since I am on the injection, it has decreased a lot.

F: Oh…

P4: Yes, because my periods are short.

F: Okay. Thank you so much, number 4. Okay, so, I can see there that there are stickers that we have placed on the body parts here on the body. Let's start here at the top, which word would you use to describe this place, to the one who placed a sticker here, what do we call this area of the body?

Ikhanda! [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as it is the head] [Participants response].

F: Please may we raise our hands.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: *Ikhanda* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as it is the head].

F: Okay, and then here, what do you call this place on the body.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: Breasts, *amabele* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as breasts].

F: Okay, breasts, *amabele*. What do you call this place here?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: *Isinye* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as it is a bladder].

F: *Isinye*. Everyone who placed stickers here, do they agree with number 3 that it is *isinye*?

Yes! [Participants response]

F: Alright okay, thank you. What do we call this place on the body? We are at the back of the body now. What do we call this place on the body?

[Participant raised her hand]

P2: *Ingalo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as it is an arm] [Participant speaking softly].

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: *Ingalo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as it is an arm].

F: *Ingalo*, okay. Thank you, number 2. What do you call this place, this one on the body?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: *Iqolo* [It is a Zulu word directly translated as it is the lower back].

F: *Iqolo*, please may I ask that the ones who placed stickers here, are all the stickers here for *iqolo* or maybe they differ?

P1: No, *iqolo* [It is a Zulu word directly translated as it is the lower back] [Participant speaking softly].

F: Pardon, please may we raise our hands.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: It is *iqolo*, the whole of it [Meaning: Participant means that the whole area that had stickers is *iqolo*].

F: Do we agree with number 1?

Yes [Participants response]

F: Alright, okay. Thank you. So, when you placed the sticker here, can you explain which pains did you experience, what was happening?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: The implant, I had inserted it on my left.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: So, when I inserted it on the left, I experienced something like the muscle is tense or pulling, especially when I am about to go on my periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: It is like it has a cramp.

F: Oh okay, and then the one who placed a sticker here.

P5: I have a headache when I am about to go on periods, a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I have a headache.

F: Okay. Yes, I saw that number 5 you have also placed a sticker here also.

P5: The breasts were getting swollen, a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: They get full, it is like I am breastfeeding, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: But nothing would come out, liquid didn't come out.

F: Okay and the breasts were painful when you were on your periods.

P5: Yeah [Yes].

F: Okay, and a headache.

P5: Yeah [Yes].

F: Okay. Here, *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the bladder], please explain which words you would use to explain menstrual cramps.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: It becomes like there is something pulling.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Or there is something tearing apart inside.

F: Okay, alright. Thank you so much, number 3.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: It feels like you could just be sick and not wake up and just be sick.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Because when you wake up, it is like the waist is pulling.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay. Yes, number 5.

P5: It is like you are cutting.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: It is like the muscles are pulling.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: The muscles don't become right.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yes.

F: Okay. Thank you. All of you have explained your experiences when you have menstrual cramps. Are there any words that you know of that explain menstrual cramps that you have heard of?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: If you want to explain that you have menstrual cramps, which words do you usually use?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: I have heard them say *islumo* [It is a Zulu word directly translated as menstrual cramps].

F: *Islumo*.

P6: Yes.

F: Oh okay, the word *islumo*, what does it mean? What happens?

P6: I think that you are aching as they have mentioned. And what they are [Meaning: Participant is referring to what the other participants who spoke earlier] explaining, I feel if – like it is labor pains so I am getting confused that they are always feeling such things.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah, it means you ache, have a pulling experience, it is like you could keep bending.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: You see.

F: Alright. Okay, thank you so much, number 6. All of us know of the word, *islumo* only?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: Alright, I can see here, the stars *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the bladder], please can I have an individual that will explain why she says it is the part that is most troublesome here *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the bladder].

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: For me, that is the place that is most troublesome, my bladder. So much so even if I sleep, I feel like bending my feet and not straighten them. It just becomes painful, I get pulled *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the bladder], it gets hard.

F: Okay, here at the back? Thank you, number 1. Here at the back, there is a star, maybe can the one who placed the star explain what are the reasons for them to say it is the place that is most troublesome?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: I think that if I have a back pain, I can even be absent at school and not attend.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Like, you get irritated even when a person is trying to talk to you. It becomes painful that much, like you have a burning sensation *eqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the lower back].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: It is something like that.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much, number 2. Maybe let us go back to the ones who placed stickers here *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the bladder], who have menstrual cramps. What do you use if you are experiencing this pain?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: What helps me is a hot water bottle.

F: Hot water bottle, what do you do with it?

P3: I place *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the bladder].

F: And then how does it help you?

P3: I don't know, but the heat of it makes my cramps better.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much. Yes, number 5. I have noted you, number 1 and number 4.

P5: I soothe with hot water.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I also drink, pain killers.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: It becomes better, it slows down.

F: Oh okay, where do you soothe with hot water on the body?

P5: I soothe *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as at the bladder].

F: Okay…

P5: Mhm [Yes], and then it becomes better shame.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 5. Yes, number 1 and number 4.

P1: I drink *Grandpa* [Meaning: It is the name of the brand for the painkillers]. The *Grandpa* [Meaning: It is the name of the brand for the painkillers] I drink maybe 4 of them until I am alright.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: If I drink one it is like I am playing.

F: Okay, what is it called that you are drinking? What is it?

P1: A *Grandpa* is a painkiller.

F: Mhm [Neutral], painkiller. Yes, number 4.

P4: I drink painkillers.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Or boil *amanzi abebtukuntuku* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as lukewarm water] and then drink them.

F: What is *amanzi antukuntuku*?

P4: It is warm water.

F: It is warm water.

P4: Yes.

F: Okay…

P4: It lessens then, slowly, slowly.

F: Mhm [Neutral], the painkillers that you drink, what are they called?

P4: *Painblok*.

F: What are they?

P4: They are *Painblok*.

F: They are *Painblok*. Thank you so much. I heard that whilst we were continuing with our discussion, that some mentioned that when they were using a contraception method the menstrual cramps decreased, right.

Mhm [Response by participants].

F: Can one person share their experience about that, amongst us.

P5: Please repeat the question.

F: As we continued with our discussion, some of you mentioned that because of method that you are using for contraception, the menstrual cramps decreased. The pains decreased, the days for having menstrual cramps decreased. So, please can we share, can one person share her experience.

P4: It is me.

F: Okay, yes, number 4.

P4: It helped me a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: The pains that I had; they were bad.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Before, it was very hard.

F: Yeah.

P4: I see it better now.

F: Okay…

P4: Yes…

F: Alright, how has that helped you in your life, for you to have this change?

P4: A lot. It helped me a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. How so, maybe?

P4: I don't know what to say [Chuckles].

F: [Chuckles] Alright. Thank you, number 4. Are we all still good?

Yes [Participants response, participants sound fatigue]

F: You sound like you are exhausted. Are you still, right?

Yes [Participants response]

F: Alright. For the next few questions, let us look back at all the ways contraception has changed your menstrual cycles. So, today we looked at our body mapping, there. We spoke about menstrual cramps and the pains that we experience. We did cards, cards activity there. We spoke about how often we bleed, how long we bleed. We looked at our blood, how it has changed the way it looks. We spoke about how changes make your body feel. We shared that some of us have lost weight. Some of us have gained weight and all of those things. We looked at how changes impact your daily life. Okay, so, we've discussed all those things that we face when using contraception methods during our menstrual periods, right. So, now, what information did you get from the clinic or healthcare provider about changes to your menstrual cycle before you started being on contraception? What information did you get?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: So, since I was using a depo, when I discontinued it, I didn't want something with hormones, because of the discharge and not going on periods. I felt like it is not right for my body. So, I went to ask for an IUD, the copper IUD and then because I am anemic, she said I won't be able to get an IUD that is copper because I will bleed a lot and that is not going to be good for me. So, they said I must get the hormonal IUD.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yeah [Yes].

F: Okay, and when she explained to you, did she explain to you about it?

P3: What?

F: The hormonal IUD.

P3: Mhm [Yes], she explained to me about it. That it is like depo.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: It is just that it releases 52 grams of – I have forgotten the name of the hormone.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: In my uterus only.

F: Okay. And the information that you received, was it helpful?

P3: Well, it was helpful because she explained that I won't be able to get copper IUD. Even though I was not happy that I can't get copper because I just wanted to go back to the normal cycle.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: So, to get something hormonal I didn't like but then I wanted to prevent [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method], so I didn't have a choice.

F: Oh okay. And these things, did she speak about maybe which side effects will you experience?

P3: She gave me a pamphlet, a small pamphlet, it had side effects.

F: Oh okay, and did you experience the things that were written on the pamphlet?

P3: Yes. Which are mood changes and then it is spotting. Those are the only ones that I experienced. But like there are a lot because there is also like depression, and I don't experience that.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay, thank you so much, number 3. Are there others who would like to share which knowledge they gained from the clinic?

[Participant raised her hand]

F:Yes, number 6.

P6: I feel like they robbed me at the clinic because they didn't explain anything. The nurse said, "why don't you take an implant because you will come back after 3 years, instead of inserting a depo, you will keep coming back".

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Then I took that advice, and I inserted the implant. When I had side effects, they became mine.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah.

F: So, they had not told you about side effects?

P6: No, they didn't explain. And I asked and said, "I have heard that thing causes heavy bleeding for others". Then she said, "no if you are bleeding you will come back to us".

F: Yeah.

P6: Yeah, it is that.

F: Have you been to them when you were bleeding? Have you been to them?

P6: Yes, I went on Monday.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: They gave me pills that I also think are for preventing [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, I started them on Monday. I saw it quiet yesterday and today. But I am not sure yet because this thing skips days, I am continuing with it. I will see what is happening.

F: Okay, when you went there to get help, this time around did they explain well what are the pills that they gave you, are for?

P6: Yeah, shame. The one I found there was right because she told me that it's a normal side effect. She also checked if there is no infection, she said it does happen that you have an infection. She said everything is right, I must take pills.

F: Okay, thank you, number 6 for sharing. Okay, is there anyone else that would like to share.

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Now, can we please think about all the things we have talked about today. What do you wish they has told you about the changes to your menstrual cycle before you started the method?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: I wish they could tell us what kind of side effects to expect, and this is what you must use. If you get this, then you must use this. Not for us to see ourselves and then go back to the clinic and say, "I have this problem, what must I do".

F: Yeah [Neutral], what information do you think would have made your experience of using these contraceptives that you are using, better? Maybe if they had given you that information, which information do you wish they had given you.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: I think it is right to get into something fully aware that you are expecting 1, 2 and 3 instead of seeing things happening like you had mentioned dear [Meaning: Participant is referring to participant number 3]. You must go back to the clinic now. At the end we are shying away from going frequently every 3 months, we now come before the 3 months end because of what this [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraception method] is doing to us.

F: Yeah [Neutral]. Okay, yes number 7. Which information.

P7: I don't have anything to say, what I had wanted to say, they have already said it.

F: Oh okay.

P7: Yes.

F: What is the most important information you would want a friend to know about these changes before starting contraception?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: I wish for her to know that her periods will change my goodness.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: They won't be as normal.

F: Mhm [Neutral], alright, okay. What do others say.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 5. I have noted you, number 3.

P5: I wish that there could be a way that if the people have not started to prevent [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method], first be told and shown how the things for preventing [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method] treat you. Get into something informed, informed that okay if I use an implant, it will treat me like this and this. The injection [Meaning: Participant is referring to the contraception injection], if I use it, it will treat me like this. It mustn't just be a case where they say, "here is an implant, here is an injection". You get involved and you don't know anything. You are getting caught up in a mess, you get there and already you don't know, you then get sad, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I wish that there could be a way for people to tell us first before a person involves themselves in that thing.

F: Okay, what would you tell your friend with regards to the contraception that you are using? What information do you think is important for her to know about?

P5: I would tell that – the problem is that the bodies are different. I would tell her that maybe the implant will treat her like me, yet it might not treat her the way it treated me. I will tell her that friend go and prevent [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method] but know that there are side effects that are like this and this, but I don't know how your body will respond to that thing at that time.

F: Okay, thank you, number 5. Yes, number 3.

P3: I was going to say the same thing, that I will tell her how my side effects are and that her body might react differently than to mine. And if she gets to the clinic, she must ask as much questions as she can.

F: Okay, thank you so much. So, we have reached our last activity. Are we still good?

Yes! [Participants response]

F: Alright. So, in our last activity, we will talk about two questions healthcare providers or researchers sometimes ask people about their menstrual cycle. I will ask you each question, and we will take a few minutes to discuss the answers. Okay, please can we all stand.

[Movements of participants standing up]

F: Okay. So, when you last had a period, right. When you last had a period, would you describe your periods as: Light, moderate, or heavy? Those who say it was light, their last period that they had, meaning the last time you menstruated, the days that you menstruated on, was it light, moderate or heavy? Those who say it was light, please raise your hand.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Okay, number 2, number 3//

P: Sorry, please may I ask, is it light for now when using things for preventing [Meaning: Participant is referring to preventing pregnancy, using a contraception method]?

F: It is for your last period.

P: Oh okay.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Number 2, number 3, number 4 and number 6. Please go that side to that lady.

[Movements of participants going to stand on one side as the light group]

F: Okay and then the ones that say, they were medium. Their last period, their last period that they had was medium, please raise your hands.

[No participants raised their hands]

F: Those who say they were heavy, please raise your hands.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Okay, number 1, 5 and 7, please stand this side.

[Movements of participants going to stand on one side as the heavy group]

F: Let's start with our light group, how did you decide that your last periods were light? Choose one person who will answer.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: I don't understand.

F: How did you decide on you answer, that your last periods were light? How did you know that they were light?

P4: I saw them.

F: Mhm [Neutral], how were they?

P4: There are spots, they are not very red, it is light. As I had explained before, even now I am periods. I noticed at midnight.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you, number 4. Let's come here, our heavy group. How did you decide on you answer, that your last periods were heavy?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: I saw by having big clots coming out then the ones before. The ones for now were very big. It [Meaning: The participant is referring to menstrual blood] was black.

F: What was black?

P1: It is the color of the blood.

F: Oh okay.

P1: It was the strong red.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: And 7 days lasted; it [Meaning: Participant is referring to blood] was coming out excessively.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. So, when you had your last period that we are talking about, how long ago was it? Was it last month or 2 months ago. Those who say it was last month or 2 months ago, please raise your hands.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Okay, number 2, 3, 1, 5 and 7 say that the last period that they had was last month or 2 months, right.

Yes [Participants response]

F: Okay, those who say their periods were 3 to 6 months ago.

[No one raised their hands]

F: Those who say their periods were more than 6 months ago.

[No one raised their hands]

F: Those who say they recently had their periods, or they are on periods now.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Number 4 and number 6. Number 4 had mentioned that she is on her periods now. Number 6?

P6: Mine, they were the day before yesterday.

F: Okay. Alright, we are all alright. We have answered.

Yes [Participants response, participants sound tired and are speaking softly]

Okay, is there anything that you found difficult about answering the questions that I asked now?

No! [Participants responses]

F: Alright, we are now asking our last question. Okay, on your last periods that we are talking about, the last ones that you had, on the heaviest day of your last period, how many menstrual materials did you need use? We want to get that one your last period, on the heaviest day where you were bleeding heavy, how many menstrual materials did you use? Okay, I will say the numbers, if you say you used 1, you will raise your hand and so forth. So, anyone who used 1 material, it can be pads, tampons or whichever material that you used, anyone who says they used 1 please raise your hand.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Okay, number 3 and number 6. Those one who say they used 2, 3 or 4, please raise your hand.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Number 5, 1 and 7. Those one who say they used 5, 6 and 7.

[No participants raised their hands]

F: Those who say they used 8, 9 and 10.

[No participants raised their hands]

F: Alright, here on the group for the heavy, did all of you raise your hands

Yes. [Participants response]

F: And all of you here raised your hands?

Yes. [Participants response]

F: So, when I look here, especially in this group that is heavy, there was a difference with your numbers. Why do you think there was a difference with the number of things that you used?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 7.

P7: It is because before, I used to go on periods each month, now I end up seeing for myself [Meaning: Participant meant that unlike before, her periods are irregular now and just sees when she has started her periods that she has periods but can't tell anymore when they will start and finish]. So, there were other months that I didn't go on periods. So, they would take a long time.

F: Okay, maybe why do you think amongst you the numbers are not the same of the things that you are using?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: Maybe our blood flow is not the same.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Mhm [Yes], because I used maybe 5, the way they were flowing. I kept on bathing and inserting a [sanitary] pad, bathing and inserting a pad.

F: Okay, it can be that the volume of the blood is not the same.

P1: Yes.

F: So, the materials that you use are//

P5: //they are not the same//

P1: //they are not the same.

F: Okay, this side, was there a difference?

P6: Ay I don't think so.

F: Alright, why do you think there was no difference?

[Chuckles by participants]

P4: We have the same problem.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: [Chuckles] I think this is the first group that didn't have differences, it is interesting that all of you used only one pad on that day. Okay, we can go back and sit down.

[Movements of participants going back to their seats]

F: Is there anything that you found difficult about the question that I asked you?

No! [Participants response]

F: Okay, sometimes people have a very small amount of bleeding, and they may not even need to use any menstrual pad, tampon, pantyliner or other material. What words would use to describe this very small amount of bleeding.

P3: Spotting [Participant is speaking softly].

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: Spotting.

F: Spotting. Okay, what does the word spotting mean to you?

P3: When you find small spots of blood.

F: Okay, and is it during or before periods or after periods?

P3: I don't get periods, so spotting is my period, I could say that.

F: Okay. So, is there anyone else that has something different about spotting? Does it happen that you spot before you go on your menstrual periods, or you spot when you are on your periods only?

[Slight silence by participants]

P7: [Participant mumbling, inaudible].

F: Yes, number 7.

P7: Yes, I spot when I am on my periods only.

F: When you are on your periods only.

P7: Yes.

F: How do you know if you are spotting? How do you tell if you are spotting?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: It is when you see blood coming once and then it comes back again after hours.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: It is not the same as being on periods where it [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual blood] will keep coming and won't stop.

F: Thank you so much, number 6. When you have this spotting, which material would you use, is it pads, tampons, how do you choose which material you will use?

P3: Judging from the experience I have had with previous spotting, because the first time I spotted I inserted a [sanitary] pad and saw that okay I have inserted a [sanitary] pad but like the [sanitary] pad is not getting full.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: So, I can use a pantyliner and be alright. So, that is how I decided that I can use a pantyliner for spotting.

F: Okay, is there anyone else that has something different?

P3: No. [Participant speaking softly, participants are quiet and exhausted]

F: Okay. Our last question, when you have the small amount of bleeding, so, if you are spotting, how would you have answered the question that says, on the heaviest day of your last period, how many pads or tampons or any other materials did you use? How would you have answered this question if you were spotting.

P3: I will answer it and say it is one.

F: It is one.

P3: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, is there anyone who has something different?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: Yeah, it is one, even though the one doesn't get full. So, maybe it is a pantyliner and the pantyliner doesn't get full.

F: Oh okay, thank you so much, number 6. Number 3, you are also using a pantyliner?

P3: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay. Alright, thank you so much, we have reached the end of our discussion. Thank you for joining our discussion today. It was very pleasant to be with you in this discussion, we have learnt a lot from you. Thank you for sharing your experiences, we understand that some of the things that we shared here were personal and very sensitive. Thank you for trusting me and be able to talk to me about things that are important to you. If there is anyone who would like to see the nurse, please let us know once we have stopped our recording. Okay, time is 12:54, date 28 February 2025, FGD C106, thank you.