Name of Study: Contraception Induced Menstrual Changes

Study component: Focus Group Discussion, Females

FGD ID#: CIMC 103

Date of FGD: 23 January 2025

Time FGD Began: 11:18

Time FGD Ended: 13:25

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.***
- ***Some of the participants were responsive and were willing to share their perceptions and experiences. However, participants number 1 and 2 were reserved and exhausted and less responsive. Participant number 7 was also less responsive because she did mention that she doesn't relate to some of the questions asked because of her experiences with her menstrual cycle. Therefore, there were 3 participants in total who were not responsive during the FGD unless the facilitator called them out to get responses.***
- ***Overall, all the participants seemed a bit tired due to the heat in the interview room. Cold water was provided, but the windows were closed during the FGD to ensure that there is no noise from outside that will cause distractions.***
- ***There were 7 females.***

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

F: Today's date is the 23rd of January 2025. Time is 11:18, focus group C103. I would like to greet you again. I welcome you to today's discussion. I hope that we are all comfortable. Before we start, I would like for us to be creative a bit, relax our minds. Because we mentioned earlier that we will not use our names when continuing with our discussion, we will use numbers. So, for us to get to know each other better, even though we don't know our names, I would like for us to play a brief game now. It is as follows: what animal do you most relate to, and why did you select this animal?

P3: A dog [participant speaking softly, not clear].

F: Number 3.

P3: Oh, my goodness sorry! [Participant apologizing for not saying her PID number]

[Chuckles]

F: Yes.

P3: It is a dog because//

F: //Sorry please raise your voice//

P3: // Eish I can't speak loudly; it is a dog because I can look after home. If I am a dog, I bite people who are there to do mischief. I will bite them, I will sit in front of the door and be a dog and say, "whoo! whoo! whoo"! [Participant is making barking sounds]

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Okay, thank you…

P6: I see myself as a monkey that is clever, yeah.

F: Okay, why did you choose a monkey?

P6: Because it is clever, it is smart.

F: Oh okay, thank you.

P2: A lion, because all the animals in the forest fear it. It is the one in charge. All the animals fear it.

F: Mhm [neutral].

P2: Mhm [Yes].

F: How does the lion relate to you?

P2: How does it relate to me?

F: Mhm [Yes].

P2: I am also feared.

[Chuckles by participants]

P2: I also am in charge.

F: People are also scared of you.

P2: Yes!

F: Oh okay, thank you.

P4: For me, it is an elephant, because it doesn't forget. You can do something to it now, it will remember.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Maybe 10 years or 5 years. I also don't forget.

F: Okay, thank you.

P5: For me, number 5, it is a cat.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: A cat, it is not easy for a cat to like – even if it is facing whatever it will succeed at the end. A cat doesn't die easily. It can hustle.

F: Mmh [Neutral], okay.

P1: It is a frog, it is stubborn [chuckles by participant].

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Okay, thank you. Would you say you are also stubborn?

P1: [Participant nodding yes]

[Chuckles by participants]

F: [chuckles] Okay…

P7: I would also choose a lion, because a lion is feared, and it gets easily annoyed and it is easily angered. I am also born in January; I am easily annoyed and get easily angered but have a beautiful heart.

F: Oh okay, thank you so much. Would you like to know me? [Chuckles]

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Okay, I will be brief. I would say I am a tiger. We all know that a tiger has stripes, so, the stripes of the tiger make it unique. So, I can say that I am unique. But what I like the most about the tiger is that it hunts and doesn't usually go with the crowd [when going to hunt]. So, I am also like that, I am a person who doesn't usually go with the crowd, and I love to – if there is something that I want in my life, I go after it no matter what. I make sure that what I want, I go after it until I get it. So, I am very glad to know all of you. It was interesting to get to know which animals you see yourselves as. I think that made us to know each other better between us. So, as we are continuing with our discussion, we will be talking about menstrual cycles, okay. Sometimes women and girls use different words when talking about menstrual cycles. We can also say it is the days of month when they are bleeding. Please tell me what are some of the words you use when talking about menstrual cycles or the days of the month when you are bleeding?

P6: I usually call them [menstrual periods] *amaPs* ["Ps" is a plural for the letter P]. I call them *amaPs* ["Ps" is a plural for the letter P]

F: Oh, *amaPs* ["Ps"]!

P6: Yes.

F: Okay, why do you call them *amaPs* ["Ps"]?

P6: Because it stems from [the word] periods, the "P" at the beginning [of the word periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yes.

[Participant raised her hand]

P2: I say, *ngisuke ngisesikhathini* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, "I am on time"]. Because it is time to go on [menstrual] periods.

F: Oh, the word, *"esikhathini"*, what does it mean from your knowledge?

P2: Time, it is when it is time for the [menstrual] period to maybe change, I am now going on [menstrual] periods.

F: Oh okay.

[Participant raised her hand]

P5: I usually say, "*ngiya-bleeder"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, I am bleeding]. Because it is when I am bleeding, I just say, *"ngiya-bleeder"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "I am bleeding"], yes.

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

[Participant raised her hand]

P4: I say, *"ngikuma-period"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "I am on periods"], because I know that it when you are on [menstrual] periods.

F: Mhm, okay, *ukuma-periods* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "you are on periods"].

P3: I say, *"ngiyopha"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, "I am bleeding"], because it is when I am bleeding.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Maybe if the partner wants [sex], I say, "*ngiyopha*" [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, "I am bleeding"].

F: Mhm [Neutral], so, it is like number 5 when she said she is bleeding. [Participant nodes yes] Okay, thank you.

P1: I usually say, "*ngikwi-season"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "I am in a season"] I am in a season.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: That's the word that I see is appropriate, no one will easily get it.

F: Oh okay, why do you say season. what does season mean to you?

P1: No, *Suzan*.

F: Oh, *Suzan*!

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Why do you call it *Suzan*?

P1: At home I grew up and they say that and there are boys at home.

F: The word *Suzan*, maybe how would you explain it? Why did you come up with it at home? You mentioned that there are boys, maybe it goes with a woman or?

P1: Yes, it goes with a woman [Meaning: the word Suzan is a name for females], and it is mindful of boys.

F: Oh okay, is there anyone else? [Slight silence] Okay, thank you so much. So, the words that you gave me, I noticed that it is words that are used during the days you are bleeding, right? But please can you tell me of other words that you have heard of or that you use when talking about a menstrual cycle. This includes where you are not yet on your menstrual periods, or you are on your menstrual periods or after you were on menstrual periods. It includes the whole menstrual cycle. Is there another word that you use?

P6: I have heard them saying, *"umuntu useJapan"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "a person is in Japan"].

F: Oh okay, what does it mean?

P6: It is that red dot [on the flag of Japan].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah, so, it means that.

F: Oh, what does the red dot mean? What does it stand for?

P6: Since the [menstrual] blood is red, the dot is also red. It goes together.

F: Oh okay…Is there anything else?

[Participant raised her hand]

P3: I have heard them say, *" uya-menstruator"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "you are menstruating"].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: *"Uya-menstruator"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "you are menstruating"]
[Chuckles by participants]

F: Oh okay…Alright…

[Participant raised her hand]

P5: If we are chatting at home, not at home, with friends, maybe someone is about to go on their menstrual periods//

F: // Mhm [Neutral]//

P5: //We say the day is coming, *"usezogxaza"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "I am about to bleed heavily"].

F: Oh, you call it *"ukugxaza"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "To bleed heavily"]?

P5: Because most of the time I go [on menstrual periods] a lot. Now I just say, "*sengizogxaza"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "I am about to bleed heavily"] .

F: You are about to?

P5: I am about to start, "*sengizogxaza"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "I am about to bleed heavily"]. Like something that is coming out a lot, it is flowing. I just say, "*sengizogxaza"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word directly translated as, "I am about to bleed heavily"].

F: Oh okay…So, the word *"ukugxaza"* means to bleed [menstrual blood] heavily?

P5: Yes. "*Gxaza"*, it is like when the water is coming out of the tap fast. I don't know how to explain it.

F: Oh, like when water is coming out of the tap a lot.

P5: Mhm [yes].

F: So, *ukugxaza*, it is like when water is coming out of the tap a lot and compared to menstruating heavily?

P5: Yes.

F: Oh okay, I understand. Thank you, thank you so much for the responses that you gave me. Please may I remind you that if there is still someone else talking, we raise our hands, so, that we don't end up clashing and try to raise our voices. So, the words that we mentioned now, we are allowed to use them during our discussion because they are words that you are used to using when you are talking about what we will be talking about today. So, please be comfortable to use them. We will then continue with our discussion. Women or girls, how do they keep track of their menstrual cycles? How do they keep track of when their menstrual periods might start?

[Participant raised her hand]

P2: I have "*islumo*" [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, "menstrual cramps"] for 3 days, then on the 4th day I start [menstrual periods].

F: Oh okay…

P2: Mhm [yes], I start by having "*islumo*" [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, "menstrual cramps"] for 3 days, then on the 4th [day] I will go on [menstrual periods].

F: Oh okay, what is *"islumo"*?

P2: *"Islumo"* is to have pain on your bladder [participant is referring to menstrual cramps].

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Oh okay. Thank you, number 2. Number 4.

P4: I have pimples on my face.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: I have pimples on my face, or my breasts get sore when I am about to go on my menstrual periods.

F: Oh okay…

P4: That's the time I can see that I am about to go [on menstrual periods].

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

P7: I would say, "*islumo"* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word directly translated as, "menstrual cramps"] is the one that starts. But if you are a person that is on the right time [Meaning: "right time" the participant means if an individual goes on their menstrual periods on their expected days], we usually go on [menstrual periods] on the same date.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Maybe if you go [on menstrual periods] every time on the 16th, you know that every time on the 16th you go on your [menstrual] periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay… Is that how it is with you also?

P7: It was like that.

F: Oh okay. So, you start off by having menstrual cramps?

P7: Yes.

F: That is before .you go on your [menstrual] periods?

P7: No, another individual might have menstrual cramps, another person knows when their date for their [menstrual] periods is.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 7. Number 5.

P5: I can tell by having pimples on my face. 2, I urinate frequently, every hour I urinate. I urinate frequently//

F: //Mhm//

P5: //So, that is when I can tell that I am about to…

F: You are about to start your [menstrual] periods.

P5: Mhm [Yes].

[Participants have their hands raised]

F: Okay. Number//

P6: //I, number 6//

F: //I will come back to you, number 3, I have noted you. Yes, number 6.

P6: My breasts become sore. Maybe for 2 days, 3 days. I have menstrual cramps, uhm I get hungry, I eat a lot. They [menstrual periods] are not the same. Sometimes I don't eat at all. I vomit when I am eating, I become nausea, I vomit, I vomit. Sometimes I eat, I eat and have an appetite. Yeah, it is that.

F: Okay, thank you, number 6. Number 3.

P3: I have pains here [participant pointing to her stomach] on my stomach. I get hungry a lot and feel like eating. But then become nausea and feel like I could vomit the things that I have ate.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. That happens before you start going on your [menstrual] periods.

P3: Yes, before I start.

P1: I have a runny tummy. I have stomach cramps, and my breasts become sore.

F: And that happens before you start [menstrual cramps].

P1: Just before I start, yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much for sharing your experiences. Maybe, have any of you heard of women or girls in the community who use other ways to track [menstrual] periods? Maybe it can be a calendar, maybe a reminder that they set on the phone or maybe there is an app that they use, you see things like that. Have any of you heard of such things?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: I have heard that there are those who set time on their phones to track their [menstrual] periods. Another individual knows – maybe last month she went on [menstrual periods] on the 29th, she knows that every time when it is the 29th, 30th, it is her days to go on her [menstrual] periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay. So, she sets an alarm on her phone?

P4: There is an app//

F: //Oh okay//

P4: //There is an app that some use.

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

P2: It is a calendar. Like she mentioned, maybe if this month she went on [menstrual periods] on the 25th, maybe the following month if she was able to count, she will be able to go [on menstrual periods] early or late. It depends on the date that she went on [menstrual periods].

F: Okay, thank you so much for sharing. Okay, so that we all have the same understanding for the rest of our discussion, when we are talking about a menstrual cycle, 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. Do we all understand what I have just said?

Yes! [Participants all agreed at once]

F: Are all of you still good?

Yes! [Participants all agreed at once. Participant are listening attentively and lively]

F: Okay, now I would like for you to think of how your own menstrual cycles have changed while you are using contraceptives, it can be changes that you liked or changes that you didn't like. There are questions that I am going to ask that goes with changes, it can be changes that you liked and changes that you have not liked. Before I ask you these questions, please may I make you aware that the questions will sound like they are similar. Please don't mind if it seems like I am asking the same questions. There are some of you that will respond and respond to upcoming questions yet some of you will not. That is why I ask the questions, for everyone to have an opportunity to respond to the questions that I ask. Do we all understand?

Yes! [Participants all agreed at once]

F: Okay, thank you so much. First, please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how often you have bleeding. So, please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how frequently you bleed.

P1: I can say that I go [on menstrual periods] for more days than before what used to happen before I started to go on contraception.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Let's look at before you started to be on contraception, which changes did you notice as compared to when you started to be on contraception. How was it before [using contraception]?

P1: I would go [on menstrual periods] for 5 days. I wasn't heavy a lot. It would be heavy for that 3 days and then the 2 days left would be light. Now, when I am on contraception I go [on menstrual periods] for 7 days and they are heavy.

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

P6: At first, I would go for 3 days, and it would be normal. Like day 2, it was heavy but not heavy, it would just be heavy [Meaning: "it would just be heavy" means that the periods were moderate]. I would then see that okay; I am on periods. Day 3, it would discontinue. Now, I go on [menstrual periods] a lot, more than 7 days, 8 days or 9 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yes, it becomes a heavy flow.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

[Participants raised their hands]

P6: Yeah, I even have a runny tummy. Yeah, it is that.

F: Okay, number 3. I have noted you, number 4.

P3: I would go on [menstrual periods] for 5 days at first. Now I go [on menstrual periods] for 3 days. It becomes very heavy during the 3 days and then during the 2 days, a small amount [of menstrual blood] comes out. And it becomes itchy underneath [participant referring to the vagina] when I am going on my menstrual periods.

F: Okay, yes number.

P4: Before I inserted the implant, I would go on [menstrual] periods and was able to tell when I will go [on menstrual periods]. Maybe if I go [on menstrual periods] on the 15th I know I would go [on menstrual periods] before or after the 15th, but close to it. I was able to tell. When I had inserted it [implant], 6 months finished without going on [menstrual] periods. I got worried and went to the clinic and got there and said, "I have inserted an implant and no longer going on [menstrual] periods" and the nurse said, "you should be happy because it [implant] means that it is working". I went back home and stayed and went on my [menstrual] periods, after a while. Maybe it was 7 months I had inserted it [implant]. Lately now it [implant] has changed, I go [on menstrual periods] twice in 1 month. The first time, maybe I won't go [on menstrual periods] for complete days//

F: //Mhm// [Neutral]

P4: //It would be like I am going [on menstrual periods], and even prepare myself that I am on periods. It will be 1 day maybe. Then again in the same month I will go [on menstrual periods] for 6 days. First 3 days it is heavy [Meaning: participant is referring to menstrual blood flow], and then it becomes lighter and lighter. But it might happen that I go [on menstrual periods] 2 days, the days have changed, they are more now.

F: Oh, so, when comparing, previously, they [menstrual periods days] were short but now they are more.

P4: Okay.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 7.

P7: I am a heavy bleeder. I used to bleed a lot before. I would bleed a lot. I used a 2 months injection, then it stopped completely. I didn't go on [menstrual] periods at all. So, now, it started recently, I think it was late last year, that it changed. I now go on [menstrual] periods and I bleed heavily. The pills that we get the clinics don't even work.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, number 5.

P5: Before, I would go [on menstrual periods] for 7 days. And I didn't start off by having menstrual cramps, I would just see [menstrual] blood and then the menstrual cramps start. Now, I have menstrual cramps maybe 2 days before I go on [menstrual] periods. And I go [on menstrual periods] for 5 days, I don't go for 7 days. And what has changed is that I now go [on menstrual periods], I skip 2 months and

go on the 3rd month [on menstrual periods]. I don't go for like every month and I don't have a date [for upcoming menstrual periods], no.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: This month it will be the 15th, the following [month] it will be the 25th.

F: Oh okay…So, you can say that you don't go [on menstrual periods] as often as before?

P5: Yes.

F: Okay, so, sometimes people's [referring to women and girls] bleeding stops for a time while they are using contraception. Uhm, is there anyone who had a similar experience?

[Participants raising their hands]

P2: Yes.

F: We will start with number 2. I have noted you, number 7. Yes, number 2.

P2: I used the 3 months injection for contraception when I came back from giving birth. I didn't go on my periods, it stopped for 10 years. Now, 4 months back I have started [menstrual periods], it [menstrual periods] is for 5 days, and it is heavy. But I discontinued [menstrual periods] for 10 years.

F: Okay, number 7.

P2: As I have mentioned, I started for 2 months [menstrual periods] and then it [menstrual periods] stopped. It [menstrual periods] stopped, but it is back now. It comes back anytime, and it is something that you can't track when it is coming [participant referring to menstrual periods].

F: Mhm…and then previously you were bleeding a little or you were bleeding a lot//

P2: //I was bleeding a lot; I was a heavy bleeder from high school.

F: Even now since it [menstrual periods] is back?

P2: Yes.

F: oh okay. Okay, thank you so much. Please tell me how contraception has changed how regularly you have bleeding. So, I know that there are some of us that had touched on that amongst us. Please don't mind as I had mentioned, there are questions that will sound like I am repeating them because you have touched on them. But I would like to know how regularly you have bleeding. Does it come when you expect it, or you bleed when you do not expect it?

P6: Before I used the implant, I was able to track myself, like 3 months would end and I would know that maybe on the 1st I go on [menstrual periods]. 3 months would end, maybe when we get to another 3 months it would change. I would go on [menstrual periods] maybe on the 30th or 25th. But now, I can't track that. I just feel my body changing, the breasts, menstrual cramps and then I know that okay, I am about to go on menstrual periods. But I don't have a date, I can't track them well.

F: Oh okay. So, in this question that says your bleeding [menstruation] comes when you don't expect it or it is bleeding [menstruation] that is regular, what would you say? How would you respond to it?

P6: It comes when I don't expect it.

F: Oh okay. So, which makes it harder for you to know when you will start to bleed and when will you finish?

P6: Yes, yes.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, thank you do much, number 6. Number 5.

P6: So, before it [menstrual periods] would just come. But now I can [track menstrual periods] because even though I don't have a specific date that it is on this date, but I can feel 2 days before that it [menstrual period] is coming. I urinate, I become easily annoyed, things like that.

F: Oh okay…

P5: And, as I had mentioned, before I went 7 days, now 5 [days] but it is still the same.

F: It is still the same.

P5: Yes, it is still the same.

F: Would you say it is more regular, your bleeding or it comes when you least expect it?

[Slight silence, participant thinking]

F: Is it regular or it comes when you don't expect it.

P5: It came when I didn't expect it before, now I am able to [track menstrual periods]. Because I can tell what will happen to me.

F: So, it is easier for you to tell that you are about to go on your menstrual periods.

P5: Yeah, it is easier now.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, number 4.

P4: Before, I was able to track when I will go on [menstrual] periods. Now, I don't know. It just comes when I don't expect it. Even though I can feel my body [Meaning: participant is referring to body changes before menstrual periods start] but I can't track when I will go [on menstrual periods]. I would go every month before. Now, sometimes I go [on menstrual periods] for a month. Maybe I go twice in a month. Maybe I would skip it [a month] and go on [menstrual periods] the following month. Maybe I would go [on menstrual periods] consecutively. I am not sure how to track [menstrual periods].

F: Okay, is there anyone else that would like to share? Thank you, number 4.

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay, we shared that some of us know that we can tell when we will start to menstruate right? Can you tell when your menstruation will end, to those that said that they can see when they will

start [menstrual periods] during certain days. Are you then able to see when it will finish? Are they [menstrual periods] regular in that way?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: I can't tell, it is like they are getting less on the 3rd day, then on the 4th day they get back to normal. Like sometimes I will insert the [sanitary] pad until I take it out and nothing [no menstrual blood] comes out.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: Before I started using contraceptives, I knew that I would go [on menstrual periods] for 7 days or 5 days, maybe on the 7th day is the last one. I was able to see when I will start and finish. But now, ever since I started using different things [contraceptives], I can't see.

F: Okay, number 7, are you able to tell when you are about to start?

P7: No, I see it [menstrual periods] when it happens.

F: Is there anyone else who can tell when they are about to start [menstrual periods] and know that since they are about to start, on this day, they will finish on this day?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: I can count my days because I know that if go [on menstrual periods] for 5 days. I know that if I went [on menstrual periods] today, on a certain day I will be finished.

F: Oh okay…

P4: It is unusual for it [menstrual periods days] to exceed.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Please tell me which ways contraception has changed how long you have bleeding?

[Participant number 6 mumbling, inaudible]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: Please can you repeat the question.

F: Oh okay. Please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how long you have bleeding.

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Here we are looking at that maybe when you are bleeding, how many days does it last? Is it longer or shorter days as compared to before using contraception that you use?

P6: Before, I inserted the implant, I knew that I go [on menstrual periods] for 3 days. Now that I have inserted the implant, they [days on menstrual periods] are longer, they are many. Maybe they are 9…they are 8, 9, 10.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yes.

F: Okay, is there anyone else that would like to share.

P1: I can say that my days are longer than before.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay. How many were they before?

P1: They were 5 days [participant speaking softly].

F: They were?

P1: 5 days.

F: Now…

P1: 7.

F: 7 days, oh okay. Is there anyone else that would like to share.

P3: I first used 2 months [injection]; 2 months [injection] made me bleed a lot. Now I use the depo. Depo, maybe it is 5 days, it doesn't have me bleeding a lot.

F: It doesn't have you bleeding a lot?

P3: No.

F: Okay, so, the depo, before you used it, how many days was it [referring to the menstrual periods]?

P3: When was I using it at the beginning?

F: Mhm [Yes].

P3: Maybe it was for 2 [days], now it is 5 [days].

F: It is 5 days…

P3: Yes.

F: Okay, is there anyone else?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 4.

P4: I won't say that the days have changed. I would go [on menstrual periods] for 5 days before preventing [referring to contraception] and now I still go [on menstrual periods] for 5 days. The change was that I now go [on menstrual periods] after months//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P4: //Or go [on menstrual periods] twice in one month. To go [on menstrual periods] twice in a month is something recent. Maybe it was November last year or October.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: As I had mentioned, when I started to insert it, I stayed for 6 months without going [on menstrual periods], I then went [on menstrual periods]. I would go [on menstrual periods] maybe after 3 months, after 2 months and so forth. That is how it changed.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: But the days are still the same, that it [menstrual periods] is 5 days.

F: Okay, so, your days have not changed as compared to before you inserted it [referring to the contraception].

P4: Yes.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Oh okay. Number 5.

P5: The days have changed, before I would go [on menstrual periods] for 7 days. But now it is 5 [days]. But the problem is that for 2 days I first have menstrual cramps. It is like the 2 days has shifted to being menstrual cramps rather than [menstrual] periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yes.

F: Okay, okay. Thank you so much. Please may we go back briefly to the question that I had asked, 4.2. Some of you mentioned that you can't predict if your [menstrual] periods are about to start. Do you remember?

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

F: Okay, so, to those who said they can't predict their [menstrual] periods, is there something that they use to track when their [menstrual] periods will start?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: There is nothing that you use? [Participant nodding her head to say no] Number 3, I see that you are nodding your head.

P3: No, there isn't. [Chuckles by participant]

F: There isn't, okay, there is no problem. I just wanted to know. Is there anyone else?

[Participant nodding her head to say no]

F: Number 6, I see you also nodding your head.

P6: No…

F: There isn't…

P6: No, there isn't.

F: Oh, alright…//

P6: //There is no one that likes [menstrual] periods.

[Chuckles by participants]

P6: If we don't have them, we get happy.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: [Chuckles] Oh, you don't get worried?

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Okay, alright…When you have bleeding, how does contraception change how much you bleed during those days? [Slight silence by participants] So, how does contraception change how much you bleed during those days? [Slight silence by participants] Do you have more bleeding or less bleeding?

P6: Before I inserted the implant, I was bleeding moderately. It was normal, I was used to it. Now that I have inserted the implant, I bleed heavily.

F: Okay…

P6: I am sorry to say this but at the beginning, first 6 months I would come out blood clots like a liver.

F: Mhm [Neutral]

P6: But it [blood clot] was not big but they were the size of a hand or half of a hand. I would feel them [blood clots] saying bruh! bruh! bruh! [the sound of the blood clots coming out] . I would even want to see what is happening and take the brush to the toilet and saw that it [blood clot] is [like] a liver. It was like that. Uhm, they [menstrual periods] are heavy, they are very heavy.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah, it is that only.

F: Okay, is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 5.

P5: I would say that before I would go [on menstrual periods] a lot. Now, it is not the same. It is not like it has decreased a lot, but it is better than before because even at night I would change [sanitary pad] maybe 3 times. If I don't change [the sanitary pads], I will wake up the bed messed up [Meaning:

Participant is referring to the bed getting dirty because of menstrual blood]. If I don't want to change [the sanitary pads] I had to put the nappies for older people. Now, maybe I change [the sanitary pad] once, not like before and I use a [sanitary] pad. Before, if I was going to town, I would make sure that I carry a lot of them. Wherever I was I had to change [the sanitary pad], I can't insert the nappies for older people.

F: Okay, number 5 would you say that before they were heavy and then now, they are moderate?

P5: Yes.

P1: I would say previously they [menstrual periods] were normal and now they are heavy.

F: Mhm [Neutral] okay… Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay, thank you so much. What would you say about how your bleeding looks? Since you are using contraceptives, how has it changed how your bleeding looks? Number 5, sorry number 6 mentioned that her blood ended up having clots. So, maybe let's start with, number 6 since your blood has clots, how was it? Has its color changed? How was the color, yeah.

P6: How my blood looked was much darker than before.

F: Okay, before how was the color?

P6: It was red. Now it is dark red. It has changed.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, yes number 2.

P2: I also agree with her. Before, it was light, it was red. Now it is dark!

F: Mhm [Neutral] is it dark red?

P2: Yes…

F: Oh okay. Do you also have blood clots, or you don't have them?

P2: No, I don't have them.

F: Okay…

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: I can also say it [blood color] is strong now and I have clots. I initially had them [blood clots] but they are small now, they are unlike before.

F: Oh okay…

P5: And now it's like, if I am sitting like this, I won't have anything [referring to menstrual blood], the problem is when I go to urinate. Then when I come back, I don't have anything again.

F: You don't have anything, you don't //

P5: //It's like I am bleeding, but I am bleeding, but I bleed a lot. Once I go to urinate, it's like I urinate it [menstrual blood], then when I come back [from the rest room] it will be those drops, drops.

F: Oh okay…//

P5: //Yes.

F: When you are on your menstrual periods, how long does it happen for, that once you go to the toilet [rest room] how much you bleed decreases?

P5: It was not happening before I used the implant, now that I am using the implant it is happening. It's like I will insert it [sanitary pad] in the morning at 6.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I will stay and not feel like urinating and not have anything [no menstrual blood]. Then when I got to urinate maybe at 8 [in the morning], I will urinate it [menstrual blood]. After that I will start to have drops [of menstrual blood].

F: Oh…does it happen for 1 day or days?

P5: Like it is for 2, 3 days then after that the 2 days left for 5 days, I will then be normal.

F: And it [menstrual blood] will be coming out normal…

P5: Yes…

F: Okay. You mentioned that your blood is strong, when you say it is strong what is that color?

P5: It is dark.

F: Dark red?

P5: Yes, dark red.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Oh okay, thank you, number 5. Number 4.

P4: First 3 days when I am on [menstrual] periods, they are dark [referring to the color of the menstrual blood during first 3 days of menstrual periods] and there are also clots. When I continue because becomes less on the last 2 days, the blood becomes lighter, it doesn't become dark like when I am starting.

F: Oh okay, and when you say dark, you mean it becomes dark red//

P4: //Dark red.

F: Oh okay…

P4: Then when I am about to finish [menstrual periods], it becomes red that looks like it is normal…

F: That looks like it is normal…Okay, thank you, number 4. Is there anyone else?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay, so, when we are on our [menstrual] periods, have you noticed that there is this discharge that comes out that is not blood, it looks like it is clear [in color], there are many ways to describe it. Have any of you seen that discharge come out?

P3: Please may I.

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

P3: Yes, I have seen it [discharge] when I am maybe going to urinate, something comes out that says *bhaca* [Meaning: It is a Zulu sound of a fluid like thing that is falling, in this context it is the discharge that that falls which the participant is referring to].

F: What color is the discharge?

P3: It is dark!

F: It is dark.

P3: It is dark red, yes.

F: Oh okay…

P3: Yes, it is like that. It is a clot; I don't know if it is a clot or what, but it comes out and says, "*bhaca*" [Meaning: It is a Zulu sound of a fluid like thing that is falling, in this context it is the discharge that that falls which the participant is referring to].

F: Okay, maybe would you say it is a discharge or would you say it is a clot that we were talking about?

P3: Yes…

F: It is a clot.

P3: Yes…

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: I have seen it, to me it is not dark red. It has a color that looks like it is – how can I say this – I don't know how to explain it, but it becomes light. Like, if you are going to urinate it will stay and you must wipe it with the tissue.

F: When you say it is light, do you mean it doesn't have a color or….

P5: No, it does have it, it is red, but it is not red like the clots.

F: Oh okay, maybe can you explain how it looks, maybe the texture.

P5: It is sticky.

F: What does it do?

P5: It is like it is sticky. I don't know how to put it; it is a discharge.

P7: It is slicky [participant is whispering and speaking softly].

F: Oh, number 7 says it is slicky.

P7: It is slippery.

F: It is slippery.

P5: It is slippery, yeah.

F: Oh okay. Do you also agree with her number 5?

P5: Yes.

F: Alright, thank you, number 5. Number 4.

P4: For me it is a question, when you are talking about *uketshezi* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that means a discharge] you mean as in like a discharge?

F: Yes…

P4: Okay…before contraception there was a brown discharge. It was light brown and slippery. It used to be there.

F: The brown discharge, would you say it was slippery like the one that they [number 5 and 4] were explaining?

P4: Yes.

F: When did you have it//

P4: //Before I started [menstrual] periods.

F: Oh…

P4: I would tell with it that I will be on [menstrual] periods and not go straight [on menstrual periods] and insert a [sanitary] pad and bleed.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes number 7.

P7: Please may I agree with number 3. This thing you can feel it even when it is coming out on its own. You can be on [menstrual] periods but when you have it you can feel it that is coming out.

[Number 2 is distracted; she keeps looking at her phone]

F: Oh okay. Thank you so much for the things that you have shared. Please may I ask that we put our cellphones in our pockets or in our bags to ensure that we don't get distracted.

[Participants placing their phones in their handbags]

F: Okay. Can you please tell me how contraception has changed your menstrual cramps?

P6: I, number 6//

F: //Mhm [Neutral], I have noted you, number 1. Yes, number 6.

P6: Before I inserted the implant, I would have a feeling that is *heh*! [Meaning: It is a sound in Zulu that is made by an individual if an individual is afraid in this context].

F: When you say, "*Heh*"! What does *heh* mean?

[Chuckles by participants]

P6: It was painful a little bit, it was painful a little bit. Now since I am sitting down, I have that discomfort. It is not only when I am going on [menstrual] periods, but also something that happens daily even when I am not on [menstrual] periods. I have those menstrual cramps, like it is a norm for me.

F: Okay…

P6: Yeah, that is what has changed…

F: Oh okay…Would you say that you would have menstrual cramps a little bit before you used contraception?

P6: Yes, I had them [menstrual cramps] a little. Now, it is every day.

[Participant raised her hand]

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

P1: I would say before I was on contraception I had menstrual cramps//

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Now, no I don't have them [menstrual cramps] anymore.

F: How does that make you feel that you don't have them [menstrual cramps] anymore?

P1: It makes me feel good. [Chuckles by participant]

F: [Chuckles] Okay, thank you, number 1. Number 5.

P5: Before, I had them [menstrual cramps] until 3 days. Now I have them [menstrual cramps] before I start [menstrual periods], then once I have started [menstrual periods] I become okay [participant doesn't have menstrual cramps once she has started menstrual periods].

F: Oh okay. Your [menstrual] cramps last you for 3 days?

P5: Before, they used to be 3 days, now maybe it is for 1 day before I start [menstrual periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral]…

P5: Once I have started, I don't have…

F: You don't have menstrual cramps.

P5: Yes…

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Oh okay, yes number 4.

P4: I didn't have menstrual cramps before contraception. I didn't know what it is. Then when I had started to use contraception, then I felt it and had pains here in front and at my back. As number 6 has mentioned, it has also become a norm to me. It happens that even if I am not going to go on [menstrual] periods but feel the pains of menstrual cramps even though I am not on [menstrual] periods. And it is when I have finished my [menstrual] periods, not that it will alert me that I will go on [menstrual] periods, no.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Number 4 and number 6, the menstrual cramps that you have even when you are not on your [menstrual] periods, would you say they are more painful as compared to before or they are not more painful?

P6: I would say that if I am on [menstrual] periods or about to go on [menstrual] periods since I have inserted the implant//

F: //Mhm//

P6: //They [menstrual cramps] are painful, they are unbearable. They are painful. But once I am finished, I can feel that I have [menstrual] cramps but they're not the same as when I am on my [menstrual] periods. But there is also discomfort, it is not right.

F: Oh okay. So, number 6, they are [menstrual cramps] are more painful when you are on your [menstrual] periods?

P6: Yes.

F: But when you are not on your [menstrual] periods, they continue but they are not painful that much?

P6: Yes, yes.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Thank you, number 6, number 4.

P4: They are [menstrual cramps] bearable if you are not on your [menstrual] periods. But if I am on my [menstrual] periods, it becomes painful, you feel like sleeping and try to ignore the pain. But they are bearable if you are not on [menstrual] periods.

F: Okay, thank you so much. [Participants seemed a bit exhausted] Alright, how do you feel? Are you alright?

We are alright! [All participants responded at once]

[Chuckles by participants, participants are lively]

F: Okay, in terms of what we have spoken about now, is there anything that maybe you think you would like to add or that you would like to share?

[Slight silence]

F: So, while we have been having our discussion, [Name of note taker 2] our note taker was writing while we were having our discussion [Note taker 2 and observer are finishing up to stick the charts on the wall]. Now I would like for us to look at this side where there are charts that she has written about the things that we were talking about. We will look at them and review them to check if we have not left out anything in terms of the charts. Okay, we will start with a question, the 1st one that we discussed. How often you bleed. Some of you said more often than before. Some of you said less often than before. Is there anything else that we would like to add? [Slight silence by participants, suggesting there is nothing that they would like to add]. Okay, and then how regularly do you bleed? Some of you said the date is unpredictable. Some of you said twice a month. Some of you said regular monthly. Some of you said every after 2 months it's unpredictable. Another one said it comes anytime, it can't be tracked, no date. Is there anything else that you would like to add here? [Slight silence by participants, suggesting there is nothing that they would like to add] Okay, how long you bleed? One said 5 days, shorter than before. Another said 8, 9, 10 days longer than before. Another said 5 days, nothing has changed as compared to before, it is the same dates. It is 5 days. Another said it is 7 days longer than before. Another said 5 days longer than before. Is everything right?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: Okay, how much you bleed. Some said less bleeding. Others said heavy bleeding. Is there anything that we would like to add here?

No [All participants responded at once].

F: Okay, how blood looks. Here some said it starts with dark red with clots, gets lighter towards the end of cycle. Others said darker red color. Less clots, lots of clots. Others said very light red color, slippery fluid. Is there anything that we would like to add there? [Participants slightly silent] Are we good?

Yes! [All participants responded at once].

F: Menstrual cramps, others said, experiences [menstrual cramps] everyday discomfort even when not on [menstrual] periods. Some said experiences cramps before her [menstrual] periods start. Other said experiences cramps, a lot of pain during her period. Is there anything that we would like to add here? When looking at it, there is nothing that we would like to add, we are all happy?

Yes. [All participants responded at once].

P5: Yes, we are alright.

F: Alright, thank you so much. We can continue with our discussion. Are there any other ways contraception has changed your menstrual cycle that we have not talked about yet and need to add to the wall? That concerns menstrual cycles. [Slight silence by participants] Are there any other ways contraception has changed your menstrual cycle that we can add on the wall?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes.

P4: It is the changes in your body.

F: Okay…

P4: Should I continue to explain?

F: Yes, you can continue and explain.

P4: Sometimes when you prevent [referring to contraception] you become fat, you gain weight.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yeah, it is that.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 4. I am glad that you added the body changes, we will move to the next question. The changes that we have discussed about menstrual cycles, how did they make your body feel? Please can number 2 share with us, number 2 is quiet… [Slight silence by participants] How have all these changes to your menstrual cycle made your body feel?

P2: My body is always exhausted. There is exhaustion or maybe when I am about to go on [menstrual periods] I have a headache.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Yeah.

F: Okay…

P6: Before I inserted the implant, my goodness I was size 36, 38. When I inserted the implant, I was 40, 42 [Chuckles by participant].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, it made me gain weight. I don't like it, it made me gain weight and the energy to have sex, my feelings have decreased. I don't have them [feelings] anymore. First 6 months, when a person was holding me, it felt like he is holding me forcefully. I would say oh my goodness! I don't have the energy anymore.

F: So, when you are talking about energy, are you talking about emotions, the energy to have sex or…

P6: It is the feelings for sex, the energy for sex and to crave for sex. It is not there anymore.

F: Okay…

P2: I agree with number 6, I run out of feelings. You just have sex forcefully but if it were up to you, you would say I can't.

F: Okay, number 2 and number 6, how does that make you feel.

P2: It makes me feel bad because it is as if I am doing something forcefully, when I don't like to because I don't have feelings for it.

P6: I also don't like it. The way I feel, I don't like it. It is not nice sitting with your partner enjoying yourselves and then it is as if he is abusing you. You were laughing and it was nice but when he touches you, you feel like running away and screaming. That is how it is.

F: Thank you for sharing. Is there anyone else that would like to share. Number 4, I heard you mention weight, that ever since you have used contraception you have gained weight. How does that make your body feel?

P4: My body is fat. I have gained because of using implant. But it is not like I gain daily. I gain weight and be able to have a size and know which size I wear. Not that because it [implant] is for a period of 3 years, I will gain throughout the period of 3 years. My body is not like before, it has gained.

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

P4: I don't have a problem with it.

F: You don't have a problem with it. Oh okay. Would you say it is a positive impact that your contraception had?

P4: Yes.

F: Okay, is there anyone else that would like to share. Number 5.

P5: Before I used implant, I tried the 3 months [injection] [participant is speaking softly]

F: Please can you raise your voice.

P5: Okay before I used the implant, I tried the 3 months [injection]//

F: Injection.

P5: Mhm [yes] injection.

F: Okay…

P5: My goodness! I would have fit in a box for match sticks [Meaning: participant means that she was very skinny that she could fit in a box for match sticks]. I am naturally small [in terms of weight], so I got skinny in such a way – so, now since I am using an implant I am back to my [normal] weight. It is right, you don't gain nor lose [weight], I am just me.

F: And how does that make you feel?

P5: I am alright. I don't want to be fat, and I don't want to be skinny. I am alright.

F: Okay, so, would you take that as a positive impact?

P5: Yes.

F: Okay, alright thank you. Is there anyone else that would like to share? Number 7.

P7: I agree with number 6. Most of the time I can't comment because most of the time I didn't go on my [menstrual] periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: So, some of the things that they are experiencing, I didn't experience them because I was not on my [menstrual] periods for so long. But the injection that I am using is right for me and for my body. The only thing that I don't like is the sex drive.

F: What does it do?

P7: Yoh! You feel like screaming when someone [male partner] place their hand on you. [Chuckles by participant]

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: It is like they are abusing you. You feel like not seeing him. You see the matter of sex guys! That's the only reason I would say, but my injection is treating me well and not going on [menstrual] periods, I am alright and happy because I don't like them anyways.

F: Okay, how does it make you feel that your sex drive is low? Is it a good thing for you or would you say it has a negative impact?

P7: Both.

F: Okay, how?

P7: Uhm, because it does happen that at that time I don't want to [have sex], you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: But I also must think for him, that you see…

[Chuckles by participants]

P7: There are things that I do even though I don't like them, but I am thinking about my partner who is next to me, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: So, by my side it is right. I am alright.

F: So, the person that you are worried about is your partner?

P7: Yeah...

F: Thank you so much, number 7. Finally, all these menstrual changes, how have they impact your day-to-day life?

P6: I am speaking with regards to the moods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Moods change, they just change. You get angry and sometimes be alright. Then it is like you have depression, you feel like locking yourself up and sit alone and not talk to anyone. The phone mustn't ring. It is like you could sit and read something. It has changed in that way in my life.

F: Okay, so, can you say that your moods made you less social?

P6: Yes, yes, very much.

F: Okay, did that not affect your relationship?

P6: It affected my relationship and my family.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: My family is active. Now when they say they are going somewhere, I am not going. It becomes, yeah it becomes like that.

F: Okay, when you say you are active, you mean you like going out?//

P6: Yes, yes, we like going out, we like talking. When it is time for dinner and time for watching tv, we talk, we talk. Now, it is like they could watch their soapies [Meaning: Soapies are serialized dramas, usually dealing with domestic themes and characterized by sentimentality, broadcast on television] and watch them the following day sitting alone.

F: Okay. Thank you, number 6. Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: I get annoyed easily and don't like talking. You see when I don't want to talk, I just shout at you. When you try to speak, I shout at you. I lose relationships.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. How did that affect you, maybe at home, in your relationship, at work…

P3: It saddens me, it is difficult.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: It is difficult.

[Number 2 is nodding as a sign of agreeing with what number 3 is saying]

F: Okay, number 2, I noticed that you agree with the number 3.

P2: I am always easily annoyed, and I don't like sitting with people. It is like you can always sit alone. You are always angry.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. How does that affect your relationship, in the family and so forth?

P2: It affects me at home because I can't sit with my friends and people. I am always shouting; I shout at everyone even if they have done nothing.

F: When that happens are you able to go back and//

P2: I can go back and see that I was wrong because I shout even when there is no need.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. Okay, is there anyone else that would like to share? Is there anyone who would say that these changes had an impact even with the chores that you do maybe at home or at home it affects you?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: It happens when I am about to go [on menstrual periods]. But it is not like it is something that always happens. When I am about to go on my [menstrual] periods, I become irritable. I don't eat, like for 2 days I don't eat. I will only drink liquids, I don't crave food.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I will be irritable. If a person talks, even if they are not wrong but I will see it wrong.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yes, it is something like that.

F: Then how does that affect your relationships?

P5: I would say with my friends and boyfriend – because like at home I live alone, I just sleep. So, when it is that time I don't go to any friends, I don't have time for a boyfriend.

F: My goodness, what do you do when your boyfriend wants to see you?

[Chuckles by participants]

P5: He also knows, he just says, "Oh, it is those days".

[Chuckles by participants]

F: He now understands! [Chuckles]

P5: He knows! [Chuckles by participant]

F: [Chuckles] Oh okay…

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 7.

P7: Please may I add to number 5. And the body fatigue. Because when I come back from getting an injected, in the 3 days or 2 days after coming back, you feel like you can always be sleeping and do nothing. You see, there is nothing that you enjoy more than siting alone because you know you are doing nothing. I don't know if I am going to say it is the things [contraceptives] that we are using that make our bodies very tired. You see if you woke up and ate//

P5: //You are done//

P7: // That's the only thing you can do the whole day.

P5: //Sometimes you are even lazy to//

P7: // And//

P5: //Sorry//

P7: // And we enjoy that we have peace if we are alone, because we don't talk to anyone. We don't sit with anyone. You are tired, you don't feel like doing anything.

F: Do they understand at home though?

P7: I am married, I live with my husband and children only.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: So, I will sleep when I want to sleep.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: What does your husband say?

P7: It is when he is not around, he is at work.

F: Oh okay…

P7: But you can feel the body that, "you see today" – but it is not a frequent thing. You see when I have just come from getting an injection, I can feel that I could sleep and do nothing. Just sleep the whole day.

F: Mhm [Neutral] Okay, number 5 you seemed like you wanted to say something.

P5: Oh, I was agreeing with number 7. Sometimes you are lazy to make something to eat. You get tired and want nothing, but you are hungry but want nothing. You are tired, it makes you lazy.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 1.

P1: I also wanted to say I agree with number 7 and 5. I am lazy to clean the house. You feel like sleeping and sit alone with your phone.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. Okay, thank you so much for sharing your experiences. [Name of note taker 2] has written what we were talking about. Please may we look at it, just like how we did before. So, we spoke about how changes make your body feel. We spoke about weight gain. Others mentioned that that had a positive impact and felt happy that they are gaining weight. Uhm, another individual said the [body] weight has been the same. It has never changed, so that is a positive impact, it makes her happy. She is okay with that. Another individual said, the weight gain has a negative impact, she doesn't like that she has gained. There is a few of you who said the low sex drive makes your feelings and energy change. So, that had a negative impact especially with their relationships. Others said they are tired all the time. Is there anything that we would like to add? Are we alright and happy with everything? [Participant silent] Do we agree with what is written?

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

F: Okay, how changes impact your daily life. That is the next thing that we discussed. Others said, "loss of appetite". Others said, "moody, less social, affected person life". Others said, "moody, always angry, shouts at others". Others said, "body feels tired, no energy to do anything or chores". Is there anything left? Are we all happy with what we have written there?

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

F: Are we all still good?

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

F: Alright. Uhm, we will continue with our discussion, but it will be slightly different, the section that we are about to move on to. If there is anyone who would like to drink water, they can drink them. Yeah, lets just relax. So, please can we look this side. There is an activity that we are going to do now called body mapping. We will notice that there are 2 charts where we are looking at the wall. There is chart on my left, the chart is showing the back of the woman. It is the back of a woman. And then the chart of my right is showing the front of a woman. We all can see it.

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

F: Okay. So, now we will do an activity together to show what we experience concerning menstrual cramps or other pains that we experience because of our menstrual periods while using contraceptives. So, we will talk about the pains that we experience and menstrual cramps during our menstrual periods while using contraceptives. Do we all understand?

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

F: We will give each of you stickers. If we look at this side, there are stickers where [Name of observer 1] there are stickers that are different colors. Okay, please can you stick on both posters, the front or back anywhere on the body where you have felt menstrual cramps or pain while using contraception during your menstrual periods. As I have mentioned, the stickers have different colors, I will call you according to each sticker. Then you will go and stick on 2 of the posters. Depending on where you would like to put it. Please may I emphasize that you are allowed to stick 2 stickers that are the same color, because we are talking about pains. Someone might talk about pains from menstrual cramps and maybe experience a headache, I am making an example. So, she will end up putting 2 stickers, do you see that? You are allowed to do that. So, first please may we have those who use pills or have used them in the past come and get yellow stickers. Are there any of that have used pills or are using pills.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1 is there anyone else? Okay, number 1 please place your sticker or yellow stickers anywhere on the body where you felt pain or menstrual cramps during your menstrual periods.

[Participant placed the yellow stickers]

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Okay, I can see that you have placed 2, there maybe other places [on the body]? Is only these 2 only?

P2: Yes.

F: Okay. Alright, please come and take green stickers if you use an injection. Or if you have used an injection.

P3: I have used an injection.

F: Yes. [Participants stood up and placed the stickers on the posters] Number 2, number 3 and number 7.

[Slight silence while participants are placing the stickers]

F: Okay, thank you so much. Please can those who have used implants go and place the stickers, blue. Number 6, number 4 and number 5.

[Slight silence while participants are placing the stickers]

F: Okay, has anyone used an IUD? [Slight silence by participants] There is no one between us?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay, is there anyone who has used another method that we didn't mention here?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: There is no one else?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay, now please can we take the sticker, which is a star, it is gold. Please can we place the sticker on the poster on one place on the body where the [menstrual] cramps or pains that you experience during menstrual periods that bothers you the most. So, it is the place on your body where you felt pain the most. Please can we take stars there and place them.

[Slight silence while participants are placing the stickers]

F: You are allowed to place your stars on the back and front poster on the same spot [on the body]. You are allowed to do that.

[Slight silence while participants are placing the stickers]

F: Okay. So, when we look at this side, lets start with the back. This area, if we were to describe it on our bodies, what would we call it? Where we have placed stickers.

[Participants raised her hand]

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

P3: We call it *iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that means the lower back].

F: What do we call it?

P3*:* *Umqolo* or *iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that means the lower back, both words mean the same thing].

F: Okay, number 7.

P7: I also was going to say it is *iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that means the lower back].

F: *Iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that means the lower back]…Alright…is there anyone else that has a different explanation?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Then here at the front, what do we call this area?

P3: [Participant mumbling, whispering and inaudible]

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Pardon number 3. I have noted you, number 1, we will come back to you.

P3: [Chuckles] It is *phakathi kwamathanga* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means in between thighs].

F: *Phakathi kwamathanga* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means in between thighs].

P3: Yes.

F: Okay…

P1: I was also going to say *phakathi kwamathanga* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means in between thighs].

F: *Phakathi kwamathanga* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means in between thighs]…Okay, here?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: *Isesinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means it is the bladder].

F: *Isesinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means it is the bladder].

P4: Yes.

F: Okay, number 5 I can also see you, are you agreeing with number 4?

P5: Yes.

F: Okay, here?

P1: *Isekhanda* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means it is the head].

F: *Isekhanda* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means it is the head]. Okay, and then here?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: *Amabele* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word which means breasts].

F: *Amabele* [Meaning: it is a Zulu word which means breasts], okay. Alright, so, to those who placed stickers here, please describe the pain that you experience where you have placed stickers.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5. Maybe let's start by describing the pains.

P5: Here *esinyeni* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means by the bladder], in front, it is hot. It is like I have a stomachache. Here, then my stomach gets bloated and feel uncomfortable. You know when it is full of air?

F: Mhm [Yes].

P5: Yes, but it is also itchy and burning feeling.

F: Okay and then which word or words you would use to explain that?

P5: It is bloating of the stomach and the burning feeling on the bladder.

F: Oh okay. So, it is not [menstrual] cramps, it is the bloating of the stomach and the burning feeling of the bladder?

P5: It is burning painfully. Yeah, I would say that.

F: Oh okay. What else do you experience apart from what you have mentioned?

P6: I, number 6.

F: Please wait number 6, we will come back to you. Number 5.

P5: It is like something is cutting you, it is painful like the stomach is cutting. It is like something is tearing off, I don't know whether to say it is tearing off or cutting.

F: Mhm [Neutral], yes number 6. I have noted you, number 4.

P6: I have painful period pains.

F: Where had you said *esesinyeni*? [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means by the bladder]

P6: Yes.

F: Okay…

P6: It is like I am getting pulled [in the bladder].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: It is like I am getting cut [in the bladder]. It is also like that with me.

F: Okay. And then which word would you use to describe that pain? What would you call that?

P6: *Islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which describes period pains, specifically menstrual cramps].

F: Oh okay. What is *islumo*?

P6: Period pains.

F: Period pains…Thank you…Which experiences have you had that you would like to share concerning period pains? It can be anything that you wish to share.

P6: No, there isn't for now.

F: Okay, number 4. Thank you, number 6.

P4: I would say *imihelo yokusikwa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which describes labor pains].

F: Okay…

P4: Yes, that is how I would explain it.

F: The pain that is by the bladder.

P4: Yes.

F: What is *imihelo yokusikwa* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which describes labor pains].

P4: It is the pain that you feel when you are going to give birth. It becomes painful, it is like you are being cut here [pointing to the bladder]. *Izinseka*

F: *Izinseka*…

P4: Yes, that is what they call it. It is like you are being cut [in the bladder].

F: Okay, from your own understanding would you call it *imihlelo* or *izinseka* ?

P4: *Ngemihelo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which describes labor pains].

F: *Ngemihelo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which describes labor pains].

P4: Mhm [Yes].

F: Oh okay. If you were to describe the pain from here [referring to the bladder]?

P4: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 4. Okay, so, I can see that here there are stars that we have placed on the back and there are stars at the front. Please tell me why you feel that where you have placed the stars is the place where pain bothers you the most. We said it is where it is most painful. Why do you see it as the place that bothers you the most in terms of being painful? And I would like to know what kind of pain it is where you have placed stars. Let's start on the head.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: Every time in the morning when I wake up, I wake up my head – it is like I could sleep and not wake up. It is heavy. It is painful.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yes.

F: Oh okay. Do you feel the pain during your [menstrual] periods or before you start your [menstrual] periods?

P3: Once I go on my [menstrual] periods, I have a headache.

F: Mhm [Neutral], you have a headache.

P3: Yes.

F: Oh okay… That is the area [on the body] that you can say is most painful?

P3: Yes, it is the most painful, every time.

F: Alright, okay. Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Participant raised her hand]

P1: I agree with number 3. It is like you are dizzy. Like you can keep sleeping.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. Oh, number 1 you also placed a star on the head.

P1: Mhm [Yes], yes.

F: Why did you say it is the area that bothers the most on your body?

P1: It is painful, I have a headache.

F: Mhm [Neutral], is it the one that makes you sleep?

P1: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay. Alright. So, I can see that here we have placed our stickers in different parts of our bodies. There anyone that maybe would like to explain to here, I can see on the leg, it looks like a leg, here underneath there is a sticker. Maybe is there anyone who would like to share what is happening there?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 3 let's start with what is the word for this area on the body?

P3: I thought it is a foot and not a leg.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Because the foot aches and is painful. You then have *inkwashu* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means paresthesia in the limbs].

F: Okay, and your foot becomes painful and aches when you are on your [menstrual] periods.

P3: Yes and have *inkwashu* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word which means paresthesia in the limbs].

F: Oh okay. Alright, thank you so much. Is there anyone who can say she had less pain when using contraception? That says her pain was less as compared to before she used contraception.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1. I will come back to you number 5.

P1: I can say that menstrual cramps don't bother me at all.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Yes.

F: Oh okay. So, even here, you didn't place a sticker for menstrual cramps?

P1: Yes.

F: Oh okay, number 5.

P5: I won't say I don't have it [referring to menstrual cramps] anymore but I do have it [referring to menstrual cramps] before I start [menstrual periods]. But before I used an implant, I had it [menstrual cramps] until I finish [menstrual periods] like 2, 3 days before I finish. But now I am on [menstrual] periods straight and I don't have it [menstrual cramps], I have it before [menstrual periods]. But it is for just 1 day.

F: How does it make you feel that there is that change?

P5: I am happy because before I would have it [menstrual cramps] in such a way that I won't eat, I will vomit and will always be sleeping. Now I can go and do things.

F: Oh okay, thank you. Number 1 mentioned that she no longer has pains, and she is very happy about that change. So, thank you so much for sharing your experiences in this activity that we were doing now. We are going to move forward to the following questions. Are we still good?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: Oh okay. We can drink water if we would like to drink water.

[Slight silence, participant drinking water]

F: Okay, for the next few questions, let us look back; we will remember that we had charts, we spoke about different questions where we looked at bleeding, how much we bleed, we spoke about menstrual cramps, we spoke about how our blood looks and even spoke about that we have blood clots some of us. We spoke about changes that happen in terms of feelings that we have on our bodies. We spoke about how changes impact our daily lives. We then did an activity now where we spoke about pains that we experience during our menstrual cycle because of the contraceptives that we use. We explained that where do we feel pain on our bodies. All that we spoke about because of using contraceptive methods, the changes that we experience. We remember everything that we spoke about.

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: Okay. Please tell me what information you got from the clinic or healthcare provider about changes to your menstrual cycle before you started using contraception. What information did you get from the clinic or healthcare provider about changes to your menstrual cycle before you started using contraception.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Number 7 and you number 6, you had raised your hand. I have noted you and number 4, I have noted you. Yes, number 7.

P7: I will start by saying at the clinics, we don't get information as much as we want. Because most of the time you meet a nurse that doesn't have time. Maybe like me, like how I should be going if I am on [menstrual] periods, but I don't go. Maybe I must go and get those pills, but you meet a person and find that even if I have a question that I want to ask about my [menstrual] periods, I end up not getting that information because she doesn't have time and the way they respond, sometimes they become rude.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: So, the information about things that we need, most of the time we don't have them. We don't get them.

F: Okay. So, would you say it was helpful or it was not helpful?

P7: To do what?

F: The information they gave you.

P7: I would say it is helpful sometimes because maybe at that time she tells you what she wants to tell you. And then you will see when you get home how you get out of this situation. But I don't know, but sometimes it doesn't help that much.

F: Oh okay…Maybe with regards to what he explained to you, is there something that you experienced and noticed that he had said it will happen?

P7: No, there isn't. So far there isn't.

F: Okay, so, you can say maybe it was not helpful. Or it was helpful?

P7: I haven't noticed but maybe it is still going to happen. But I had not seen change.

F: Okay, thank you number 7. Thank you for sharing. Number 6.

P6: Before I inserted the implant the nurse didn't explain to me. She only explained to me that there are methods for contraception. It is the 3 months injection, the 2 months, it is pills and the implant for 3 years. I jumped for the 3 years [implant] and took 3 years [implant], but I also didn't ask.

F: What made you take 3 years [implant]?

P6: It is because I don't like going to the clinic frequently. I just took 3 years [implant] to stay with it and have it in my body. She didn't explain to me which changes I will face. When I realized that my goodness – *ngagugula* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word for googled] and got information. As I had mentioned, us who insert the implant go through such things. They were explained in google.

F: When you say *wagugula* does that mean? What is to *gugula*?

P6: I made research on the phone.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: That if you have inserted [the implant] which things you might discover, the changes that might happen on your body. Then I discovered that you have a headache, sore breasts, menstrual cramps, which is exactly what is happening on my body. I found that on the phone.

F: Okay, so, would you say talking to the healthcare provider didn't help you?

P6: It didn't.

F: Okay…

P6: Yes, it didn't.

F: Okay, uhm number 4.

P4: I also didn't get information on how it will treat me.

F: What did they say?

P4: They asked me what I want to prevent with.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Then I asked for an implant. Then they inserted it. The information I only got when I saw for a long time not going on [menstrual] periods. I went to the clinic and asked why I inserted an implant because I was getting worried, it was a long time. The nurse said, "if you don't go on [menstrual] periods that shows that what you are using is working. It works for you". That is what she said.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Then I got to be at ease.

F: The information that you got at that time when you went to ask, was it helpful?

P4: Yes.

F: How was it helpful?

P4: It helped me to be able to not worry a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Mhm [Yes], to not get worried a lot.

F: Okay, thank you. I have noted you number 2. And number 5 are you raising your hand? Okay and number 5. Please may I ask number 4 and number 6 and number 7, there is something in common that you have, which is that they [healthcare providers] didn't explain anything. Then my question is why you didn't ask and chose to use the contraception that you used.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 7.

P7: Unfortunately, I started using my injection for 2 years in the ward after giving birth. I noticed when I was at home that it is [2 years injection] is treating me well, I don't have a problem with it.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P7: So, it became something that I continue with.

F: When you chose to use it after giving birth, did you see the need to ask what will the side effects be and all of that?

P7: I didn't ask because the nurse said, "here is the injection for preventing, so that you don't get another baby". You see, so, and I continued to use it because it treated me well on my body. I became alright. So, you know when you have just given birth, you are dizzy, to ask a lot of questions is not something on your mind. I noticed the way it was treating and then I continued with it.

F: Okay, thank you, number 7. Number 6.

P6: I didn't ask. The reason for that is because at the clinic you find that it is full. So, I didn't want to take my time. And the nurse that was helping me was not welcoming.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: She just explained to me that there is an injection which is this and this, which one do I choose? Then I chose, she inserted me, she inserted me well I don't want to lie. I didn't have time to ask.

F: Okay. Yes, number 4.

P6: The implant, I was told by my friend that had inserted it. Then I liked how she explained that it is 3 years. So, I won't have time to run to the clinic, compared to other contraceptives, like 2 months [injection], after 2 months you must go and get injected. 3 months [injection]. I liked it [3 months injection] because at least I will insert this thing once, stay for 3 years and take it out after some time. That is what I liked. To ask, I didn't see the need because she [participant's friend] had explained that she is alright. Even though I knew that our bodies are not the same, but I liked what she told me.

F: Oh okay, you went to the clinic//

P6: When I already knew what I was going to get injected with.

F: Okay, alright. Thank you so much, number 4. Please can we go back to number 2. Then we will go to number 5.

P2: I got there, and they explained to me that if you are getting an injection//

F: At the clinic?

P2: At the clinic. If you are going to get an injection, there is the 2 months one and the 3 months [injection]. The 3 months one – okay – you must make sure that if you are going to get an injection, you go on your [set] date. You must delay by a week and then come for an injection because maybe you will get there pregnant. That's why some people say they fell pregnant while on an injection. You must make sure that you go on your [set] date.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: And you must make sure that if you were getting an injection, your date was today, stay 7 days without having sex. Because it might happen that were getting an injection today and then have sex and it happens that you conceive. The injection must get in you for 7 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Yeah, that's how she explained it to me. She mentioned that there is also an implant, you insert the implant, and it stays in you for 3 years. There is also one [implant] for 5 years. She explained everything, I went along with the injection.

F: Okay, would you say that information was helpful.

P2: It was very helpful because I am going to have a baby that is going to turn 11 [years], I have never had another baby since I go [to the clinic] on the dates set at the clinic.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: And not skip my date [set at the clinic].

F: Did she explain to you that you will experience side effects that you have noticed and experienced while using contraception?

P2: Mhm [yes] , she explained to me that the injection makes you wet underneath [Meaning: participant referring to the vagina when saying "underneath"]. You are always wet underneath, I experienced that.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: Yeah.

F: Mhm [Neutral] Okay. Would you say your nurse was welcoming, interacting and alright?

P2: She was alright. I got the information, she was alright.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 2. Number 5.

P5: I got the information – maybe it is because I got there carrying a card for 3 months injection and asked to change to an implant. Then they asked me that I have gone [on menstrual periods] twice or 3 times. I told them that I have a problem I bleed, I come back to the clinic, and they give me pills but it is the same I bleed. So, she explained to me that there is this and that. She explained everything. That an implant works like this, and pills like this and that. So, I chose an implant because I had already heard about it before. Other information – I kept on – because with the implant when I started it troubled me. Because I kept going back to the clinic, going back to the clinic. She kept trying different ways. There was a time where she wrote a letter and said I must go to [Name of hospital] at hospital because there are tests that I need to do, because the problem is my blood and stuff. So, I went but it didn't happen because there are pills that they gave me and there was a specific way that I had to take them. Maybe at the clinic they didn't have them or maybe they didn't have information I don't know. But I ended up being okay.

F: Is there anything else that you have used apart from the implant?

P5: I used 3 months [injection] before.

F: Okay, lets start with the 3 months [injection] that you used. Did you go to the clinic, and they explained to you about it?

P5: I used 3 months [injection] – no – I went only when I had a problem. But before I got it when I had given birth.

F: Oh…

P5: Because the nurse said here is an injection.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yes.

F: So, they didn't explain to you//

P5: No, they didn't explain to me about it.

F: Okay, alright. And then the implant, they didn't explain to you about it?

P5: With the implant they explained to me.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yes, because they explained to me then I inserted it [implant].

F: Mhm [Netural].

P5: Yes.

F: So, the information that they gave you about the implant, was it helpful?

P5: Yes, I can say so. Because they told me that I will get hungry. It makes you hungry. If I won't be able to control the way I eat, I will end up gaining weight. They said I might bleed but it is for while then it stops. If it doesn't stop, I can come back [to the clinic]. I might have something on my face, a rash or something. They explained a lot of things.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay...

P5: Yes.

F: Did you experience all the things [side effects] that they explained to you.

P5: Yes…

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Some of it, but not all of it.

F: Not all of it.

P5: Yes.

F: But when you experience them [side effects], from your perspective did the information help you to deal with them [side effects] since you were already informed about it?

P5: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Thank you for sharing. Now, think of all the things we have talked about today. What do you wish they had told you more about the changes to your menstrual cycle before you started using a contraception?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 1.

P1: Please repeat the question.

F: If you think of all the things we have talked about today. What do you wish they had told you more about the changes to your menstrual cycle before you started using a contraception?

P1: It is that how will they [contraception pills] treat me.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Okay, because I took pills, they were supposed to say they are taken at the same time and so forth.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: I didn't get information at the clinic. I only got it at home.

F: Oh okay.

P1: And the changes on the body.

F: Mhm [Neutral]

P1: Yes.

F: Which information would you say would have made your experience of using this contraception better if they had informed you about it.

[Slight silence by participant]

F: What would have made it better to use the contraception, if they had told you the information?

P1: There is nothing.

F: There is nothing. Okay…Thank you, number 1. Number 6.

P6: I wish they would have told me that I mustn't eat a lot because I will gain weight. Yeah. [Chuckles by participant] And that I will have period pains for a long time.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yeah…Because those are the things that I don't like.

F: Okay. What information would have made your experience with contraceptives better?

P6: It is for them to give me information.

F: Which information would have preferred that they told you when you experienced the side effects, and thought to yourself it would have been better if//

P6: //It would have been better if they had told me that I must not eat a lot.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yes, because I will gain weight.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you. What is the most important information you would want a friend to know about these changes before starting to use contraception?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 2.

P2: If you are using an injection, when you are starting you will not go on [menstrual] periods. But you will eventually go on them [menstrual periods] as time goes by you will go [on menstrual periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral]. Okay, is there anyone else that would like to share? [Slight silence by participants] Okay, we are about to finish our discussion. I would like for all of us to stand up.

[Movements of participants standing up]

F: For this last activity, we will talk about two questions healthcare providers or researchers sometimes ask people [women or girls] about their menstrual cycle. I will ask you each question, and we will take a few minutes. Are we all still good?

Yes. [All participants responded at once, they sounded exhausted]

F: When you last had a period, would you describe it as: light, moderate, or heavy? Okay, please raise your hand if you would say it, was light. Your blood flow was light. It was light, anyone who said says it was light.

[No response from participants, indicating that there were no light menstrual periods].

F: Okay, please raise your hand if you say it was heavy. Number 6, number 4, number 3, number 1, number 7. Here we are talking about your last period, right.

Mhm. [Yes] [All participants responded at once]

F: All of you that say it was heavy, please go that side.

[Participants stood up and went to the side of the room allocated to them]

F: Those of you who say it was moderate, please raise your hand. Please stand this side. Let's start this side, number 2 and number 5 that said it was moderate. How did you decide on your answer?

P2: How did I decide?

F: Mhm [Yes], how did you decide that your last period was moderate?

[Participant 2 still thinking, participant 5 raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: I could tell from the pads that I was using; I know how many I use in day or how many pads I use until I finish [menstrual periods].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: I usually use 3 packets in five days. This time around I used 2 [packets], on the 3rd packet I took out 2 [pads] only.

F: Okay, thank you number 5. Let's come this side. How did you decide on your answer. Anyone can respond.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 7.

P7: I decided based on that [menstrual] periods is not something that I go on frequently. So, by the time they come, they come very heavy.

F: They [menstrual periods] come very heavy… Okay, is there a difference between the quantity if pads that you use?

P7: Yes, there is.

F: What is the difference?

P7: The difference is that I see with how many I use, at that time when I have them.

F: Oh, you use a lot?

P7: Yes.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much. Okay, when you responded to the question that I asked you at the beginning, that when you last had your period, would you describe it as: light, moderate or heavy? Okay, when did your [menstrual] periods take place? Was it last month or 2 months, please raise your hand if it was last month or 2 months ago?

[Participant raised her hand]]

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: Last month.

F: Last month.

P2: Yes.

F: Okay, those who say it was 3 to 6 months ago.

[No response from participants, indicating that no one had menstrual periods between 3 to 6 months ago].

F: Those who say more than 6 months ago.

[No response from participants, indicating that no one had menstrual periods more than 6 months ago].

F: Okay, those who didn't raise their hands, when last did they have their [menstrual] periods? Their last period.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4. I will come to you, number 5.

P4: Mine was last week.

F: Oh, last week…

P4: Yes.

F: Okay. Yes, number 5.

P5: The last one was this month on the 2nd.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay. Yes, number 6.

P6: The last was one was yesterday.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, yes number 1.

P1: The last one was at the beginning of the month.

F: Okay. Alright, thank you. Was there anything about this first question that made it difficult to answer?

P1: No.

F: No?

P1: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay. Thank you. We will move on to the 2nd question. On the heaviest day of your last period, how many menstrual pads, tampons, or other materials did you need to use for [menstrual] periods?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: I usually use baby pampers. The ones that are 10 inside [a pack]. I usually buy them.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Yes, and it can be more then 10.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Please can we raise our hands if there anyone who used 1.

[No participant raised her hand]

F: Is there anyone who used 2 or 3 or 4? Okay number 4, number 5, have you also raised your hand?

P5: Please may I ask.

F: Yes.

P5: If you say anyone who used 1, like 1 pack or packets until you finish. I don't understand.

F: You can explain in your own way. If you say you used 1 pad or I packet [of sanitary pads], but it must be//

P5: Oh okay…

F: Yes, so, how many say they used 1.

[No participant raised her hand]

F: How many say they used 2, 3, or 4.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Okay, so, number 7, number… Please can you raise your hands so that I can see you. Number 7, number 4, number 3, number 1, number 5, number 2 and number 6. So, all of you are between 2 -4?

Yes [All participants agreed at once]

F: Okay, this was on your last period.

Yes [All participants agreed at once]

F: Okay. So, let's start with the heavy group. All of you said you are between 2-4 if I am not mistaken. Maybe let's take number 1 and number 3, please can you explain how many you used?

P1: I used 2 packets until I finished.

F: You used 2 packets, until you finished. Okay, number 3.

P3: I used 3 packets until I finished.

F: Okay and you, number 4.

P4: I usually use 1 packet and the other one but not finish the 2nd one. But this time I used both packets and they finished and added the 3rd one but it didn't finish.

F: Okay, what were you using?

P4: Pads.

F: And the others were using pads, number 1 and number//

P3: //Number 3, yes.

P1: Yes, pads.

F: Okay, number 6.

P6: I usually use baby pampers. So, in a packet there are 10 inside. The small ones. I usually use 2 packets of those. But maybe 2 or 1 will be left. Then I use towards the end of my [menstrual] periods, I use pads.

F: Mhm. [Neutral]

P6: Yes, pads or tampons.

F: So, on your last period, how many did you use?

P6: Let's say mmh 15, 16.

F: Okay…

P6: Yes, then I used pads, let's say maybe 5.

F: What was 15?

P6: It is the baby pampers.

F: Oh okay. And it was pads//

P6: //And then it was pads, maybe 5.

F: Okay. Which means that with the question I asked previously, it was more then 2 or 4. You used more than 15//

P6: // I was explaining the packets//

F: //Oh, it is the packets…

P6: Yes, yes.

F: Okay, I understand. Number 7.

P7: I use 2 packets. If it is the long ones. But night ones, the long ones. And then if it is the small ones, it is maybe 3 or 3 and a half because I must change every time as a heavy bleeder.

F: Okay, lets come to the moderate. Number 5 and number 2. How many did you use number 2?

P2: 1 packet.

F: Okay, what were you using?

P2: *Always* [always is a sanitary pad brand], pads.

F: Okay.

P5: I used 2, then in the 3rd pack. I took out 2 pads. Yes.

F: So, we can see in 2 of the groups there is a difference with the numbers. Let's come back to the group that is heavy. There are differences with our numbers. Some use 2, 3, 2 15, 5, 2…What do you think caused the difference with your numbers. Yet you are in 1 group of people who are heaviest?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: Maybe we don't use the same pads.

F: Oh, it is the type of pads that you use.

P1: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, maybe can you explain in depth that when you say they are not the same, in what way?

P1: Some use the small ones [in size], the ones that make you change frequently. Some use the long ones; you can stay with them [sanitary pads] a little bit.

F: Oh okay, thank you number 1. Is there anyone else that would like to share.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 4.

P4: Maybe I can say that compared to before, as I mentioned before I used 1 packet, and I didn't finish the 2nd one. This time around I used 2 complete packets and then used some of the 3rd one. That's why I am considering it as being heavy this time around.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes.

F: Okay. Why do you think there is a difference with your numbers, amongst you from your perspective? What caused the difference?

P4: Maybe it is the things we use for preventing [referring to contraception].

F: Okay, oh okay. How does it affect you?

P4: Going on [menstrual] periods?

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: It affects us with the changes in the [menstrual] periods, how long you go on them.

F: Oh okay, because of the things that you use for contraception, the number of days you go on your [menstrual] periods change.

P4: Yes.

F: Would you say that?

P4: Yes.

F: Oh okay, thank you number 4.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: I was going to say what has been said by number 4.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: So, I agree with her.

F: Okay. Thank you. Let's come to the moderate, I can see there is a difference. One said she uses 1 and one said she uses 2. Why do you think there is a difference, yet you are in one group?

[Participant raised her hand]

P2: It is the ways of contraception; I use an injection, and she uses an implant. It could be that.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Was there anything difficult about the 2nd question that made it difficult to answer?

No. [All participants responded at once]

F: Okay, how do you think another person would have responded to this question if using another material apart from [sanitary] pads or tampons? Apart from pads, since you are using pads. How would another person have answered who doesn't use [sanitary] pads. Maybe a person who uses tampons or uses something else.

P5: I think she would have said there was a difference because maybe what she is using is stronger than pads.

F: What if she was using maybe a toilet paper or using a cloth. How do you think she would have felt, how would she have answered this question?

P3: She would have responded well because we are all girls. I don't think I would be scared to say I insert a cloth if I insert a cloth if I am bleeding a lot. Because if you are bleeding a lot, it happens that you take the cloth and use the cloth because it absorbs bleeding heavily.

F: Okay. Number 3, how do you think another person would have answered this question if they often do not have enough pads, tampons or anything?

P3: She would have responded…Because we are not the same. We come from different homes. Maybe I don't have money to buy [sanitary] pads. I can use a cloth, and I can use a toilet paper, the hard one, not the soft one.

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

P7: I would say she would have answered [the question] but she wouldn't have answered it well like we are able to count how many packets of pads we used. She won't be able to count that with the tissue. Because every time when you go to urine you know that you must change it [sanitary pad]. We know that okay, I am using 2 going on my 3rd one. So, her response won't be the same as ours using cloths and tissues.

F: Okay, thank you, number 7. Sometimes people have very small amount of bleeding, and they may need to use any menstrual pad, tampon, 'panty liner', or other materials. What words would you use to describe to describe this very small amount of bleeding?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes number 5.

P5: Maybe we can say you have drops. Like I don't know.

F: Okay, they are drops, alright. [slight silence by participants] What does the word spotting mean?

P7: It is what you are saying.

F: Mmh [Pardon]. Yes, number 7.

P7: [Chuckles] We had forgotten it, we now remember since you are saying it.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: What does the word spotting mean?

P7: It is to bleed a little bit; it is just drops.

F: Oh okay. How do you know if you have that kind of bleeding?

P7: You know because it always happens when you are on your [menstrual] periods.

F: Oh, is it when you about to go on your [menstrual] periods or when you have started? Is it something that happens when you are on your [menstrual] periods?

P7: It is something that happens when you are about to complete your periods.

F: Oh okay…

P7: It also happens that another might go on [menstrual] periods and when they are about to finish, they spot to show that they are about to finish.

F: Okay and how do you choose whether you use a pad or tampons or anything else if you have this kind of bleeding?

P7: It depends on how much you bleed. If you know that you don't bleed a lot, you are a light bleeder, you can use a pantyliner when spotting. So, since we know we are heavy bleeders, we are always afraid that anytime I will use a pantyliner, yet it is getting messy.

F: Oh okay. Thank you. We have reached our last question. When you have this very small amount of bleeding, how would you answer the 2nd question? The second question is on your last period, how many materials did you use on the day you were bleeding the heaviest. So, if you have this very small amount of bleeding that we are talking about, how would you answer this question?

[Slight silence by participants. Participants are tired and not showing interest]

F: Okay… Should I ask again?

Mhm [Yes]. [All participants responded at once]

F: If you have this very small amount of bleeding, spotting. How would you respond to this question, on your last period, how many materials did you use on the day you were bleeding the heaviest?

[Slight silence]

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: Let's say you are spotting; you would use 2 [sanitary pads].

F: 2.

P4: Yes. If you are spotting.

F: Okay, number 6.

P6: Maybe if she is a person who uses pantyliners, maybe she would say she used pads. Yeah.

F: Okay. Thank you so much, we can come back and sit down. Thank you so much for answers. Before we conclude our discussion, is another thing that you think we need to know that you wish to add. Are we all alright?

Yes, we are alright [All participants responded at once].

F: Thank you for sharing. Thank you for being patient with me and for being part of our discussion today. The date for today is 23 January 2025. Time is 13:25, focus group C103.