Name of Study: Contraception Induced Menstrual Changes

Study component: Focus Group Discussion, Females

FGD ID#: CIMC 104

Date of FGD: 14 February 2025

Time FGD Began: 11:03

Time FGD Ended: 12:40

Name of Facilitator: [redacted]

Name of Note taker 1: [redacted]

Name of Note taker 2: [redacted]

Location of FGD: Wits MRU board room

Name of Transcriber: [redacted]

Name of Translator: [redacted]

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

Observers: [redacted]

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

- ***This was an FGD with women between the ages 18-49 years.***
- ***The interview was conducted in a private interview room.***
- ***The participants were relaxed, laughing, responsive, and willing to share their perceptions and experiences. However, participant number 6 seemed a bit distracted during the focus group discussion and left during the Quest view questions.***
- ***There were 6 females in total.***

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

F: Today's date is the 14 February 2025, time is 11h03, focus group C104. Thank you so much for joining us today in our discussion. We will start our discussion; I would like for us to be a bit creative and loosen up a bit. So, we will play a game briefly. I would like for you to tell me what animal do you most relate to, and why did you select this animal? So, I will start so that you can get an example. So, I see myself as a tiger. The reason for that is because – isn't we know how is a tiger? It has stripes. So, stripes make it unique. So, I believe that I am unique, and I am happy about that. And then a tiger hunts, if we take note of a tiger, it can go outside and get what it wants and get it. And it usually goes alone and doesn't go with a crowd. So, I am also that type of a person. I am a person who goes after what they want and gets it in every possible way. So, yeah. That's me.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: If I were to choose to be an animal, would have been Poly [Meaning: Poly is a bird]. I am not sure if you know Poly, the bird//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P5: //The smart one.

F: Yes.

P5: One thing I like about it is that it has a lot of colors, I love colors and what I have noticed about it is that I think it is clever to the point that I don't know if it speaks or what it does, but it is smart. And I am a kindhearted person, I don't like fighting with people most of the time. You will always find me humble in every possible way. So, I would be Poly.

F: You said what is Poly?

P5: It is smart.

F: What is it, is it a bird?

P5: Yeah, it's a bird.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Oh okay. Thank you so much, number 5. Number 4.

P4: Oh, if I were to choose an animal that I relate to, I would choose a lion [participant speaking softly].

F: You would choose?

P4: A lion.

F: A lion.

P4: Yes, a lion. Other animals treat it as a king. So, I also love to be treated as – that royal treatment. I love it.

F: Okay…

P4: Yes.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 4. Yes, number 1.

P1: I would like to be a cat.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Yes, because I love to be loved. A cat loves being taken care of; I am also a person like that. Where I am at, I like laughter and it must be nice, there mustn't be any quarrels and so forth.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay, thank you, number 1. Number 3.

P3: I love being a pigeon.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Because a pigeon is loving. I also love being loved.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: And wherever you find it, it is always with its partner.

[Chuckles by participants]

P3: [Chuckles] So, I also like walking around with my partner everywhere I go and support me in everything.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yeah. That's it, thank you.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Thank you, number 3. Number 6.

P6: I would like to be a dog.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: Okay…

P6: I would like to be a dog because I like protecting people that I love. A dog is an animal that protects, even if it is in the yard at home, we know that we are safe because there is a dog outside [the house].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: And a dog likes being touched. And I also love that. If I am next to a person, I feel like touching them or have them touch me.

F: Okay…

P6: So, yeah.

F: Okay, thank you, number 6.

[Participants raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: I like being an eagle.

F: An eagle…

P2: Yes, because I like seeing my life rising like an eagle, you see [participant is soft spoken and shy].

F: Yes, okay. Thank you, number 2. I would like to ask that before we continue with our discussion, we raise our voices just like how I am raising my voice so that it is easy for you to be audible and for us to understand each other as we continue with our discussion. So, now for the rest of our discussion today, we will talk about menstrual cycles or our menstrual periods. So, sometimes women or girls use different words when talking about menstrual cycles or the days of the month when they are bleeding. What are some of the words you use for explaining menstrual cycle.

[Participants raised their hands]

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

P3: *NgiyeJapan* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word with a direct translation, "I have gone to Japan"].

F: *NgiyeJapan* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word with a direct translation, "I have gone to Japan"].

P3: Yes.

F: Okay, what does that mean?

P3: It is a respectful word for being on [menstrual] periods for males to not understand. It is our language as women//

F: //Mhm//

P3: //We use Japan, Japan has a flag that has a red circle.

F: Okay…

P3: It shows that a woman at that time is bleeding [Meaning: participant referring to menstrual bleeding].

F: It is bleeding…

P3: Yes.

F: Okay. Thank you, number 3.

[Participant raised her hand]

P4: Oh, sometimes say that *"the robot is red"*.

F: The robot is red.

P4: Yes…

F: Okay…

P4: So, it is our language as women when talking, to hide it from the men, we say *"the robot is red"*.

F: Okay, why do you relate [menstrual] bleeding with *"the robot is red"*?

P4: It is because when *"the robot is red"* you can't cross the road.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes. So, with [menstrual] periods, you can't have sex.

F: Oh okay… Thank you, number 4. Number 5.

P5: It was going to be Japan due to its flag//

F: Yes…[Neutral].

P5: Because that is the word we use a lot nowadays that *umuntu uye eJapan* [Meaning: It is a Zulu slang word with a direct translation, "A person has gone to Japan"].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yeah. So, Japan.

F: Your explanation is the same as number 3 as to why you say it is Japan?

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: Alright, okay thank you so much. Are there different words that you have heard of from other people that they use to explain menstrual cycle?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Apart from the ones that you have mentioned.

P4: Please repeat the question.

F: Okay, are there other words used to explain menstrual cycle. Isn't we know that there is a difference between menstrual period and a menstrual cycle. [Menstrual] cycle is the whole month, how your cycle is structured. And then there are menstrual periods, that is when you are bleeding. Are there different words that explain that?

P4: No, it is cycle. It is only [menstrual] cycle.

F: Oh, the [menstrual] cycle you call it a menstrual cycle.

P4: Yes.

F: Okay... Alright, that you so much. Women or girls, how do they usually track when they are about to go on their menstrual period?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 4. I have noted you, number 5, number 3 and number 1.

P4: So, most of the time women when they are about to go on their menstrual periods, they don't usually go [on menstrual periods] the same time. Let's say maybe you go on the 15th and then go the following month on the 15th, that doesn't usually happen. So, they track by, "my breasts are sore today, you see. I have a pimple, like my breasts are big today, you see"//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P4: //So, that is how we track.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Others track that this side [Meaning: Participant is pointing to one side of her bladder], I don't know what it is called. It becomes painful when you are about to go on menstrual periods, you feel pain here [Meaning: Participant is pointing to the left and right side of her bladder].

F: Where are you pointing to?

P4: Here on the sides.

F: On the bladder?

P4: Yes, but it is painful this side [left] and this side [right]. Not the whole bladder.

F: Oh, on the left and the right of the bladder.

P4: Yes.

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

P5: If I am going to go on [menstrual] periods, the bladder becomes bloated. Then I have a runny tummy, that is when I know that yes, anytime from now – oh and my mood changes, even if when I wake up in the morning, I will wake up not in the mood of being hyper today. But I will wake up moderate, like I could frown the whole day. I can then feel that yes, I am approaching my [menstruation] days.

F: Okay… Number 1.

P1: When I am about to go on [menstrual] periods, I can feel my breasts sore. And if you are going to go on [menstrual] periods, your vagina becomes – I don't know how to explain how it becomes – it becomes loose, it doesn't become tight. It has that thing you see//

F: //Mhm [Neutral].//

P1: //You see, it [vagina] doesn't become tight, it becomes loose. That is when you know that something is coming [Meaning: Participant is referring to menstrual periods] and maybe have pimples. Then maybe one [pimple] will be painful. Others start off by having period pains before their [menstrual] period days. Just like me, I have 3 days where I will have period pains but then again not on [menstrual] periods.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Okay, so, thank you so much for your responses. Maybe what we are looking at now that I would like for us to look at when talking about tracking, uhm are there other people that you have heard of, that there are things that they use to track if they are going to be on their [menstrual] periods? An example, is an alarm maybe or there is an app that they are using or a calendar?

[Participants raised her hands]

F: Yes, number 5 and then number 4.

P5: Yeah, there is this app called *Flow* if I am not mistaken. If you don't know of *Flow*, you insert when your [menstruation] days start. If you go 5 days on [menstrual] periods, it will count the 5 days in that month and it will then tell you when you will go on your [menstrual] periods again during the month. So, it is called a *Flow*. A period flow.

F: Oh okay. So, period *Flow* is period and then it is *F-l-o-w*//

P5: It is *Flow*, you will type *Flow* and then you will put your dates [Meaning: Participant is referring to the dates that you go on menstrual periods on]. Then for the following months it will count for you, if

your cycle will happen after 28 days or after 35 days if I am not mistaken. Then it will keep doing that for you. Even if there are changes, it will tell you that there are changes now.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, thank you, number 5 for that interesting information. Yes, number 4.

P4: Oh, I was going to talk about the same thing as number 5.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: There is a friend of mine who uses this app. It tells you if you are late or if you are late for your [menstrual] periods, it tells you that you are late. You are supposed to be on your [menstrual] periods.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much. So, we all have the same understanding for the rest of our discussion, when talking about menstrual cycle, we are talking about the monthly cycles women usually have. So, 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. I hope that we all understand.

Mhm [Yes] [Response by participants]

F: Another thing that I would like to emphasize on is that there are words that I asked you about that you usually use when explaining about going on menstrual periods, if you are comfortable, you can use those words when continuing with our discussion because they are words that you usually use.

Mhm [Yes] [Response by participants]

F: We will move on to the following question in our discussion. I would like for us to think about how your own menstrual cycles have changed while using contraceptive, it can be changes that you have liked and changes that you have not liked. There are questions that I will ask you which is about this. Okay, so, first, please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how often you have bleeding. So, here we are looking at bleeding that comes more often or less often, before using contraception. Do we all understand?

Yes! [Participants agreeing]

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay. Yes number 4, number 3, number 1, number 2, number 6, yes number 4.

P4: Alright, before I used contraception, my [menstrual] periods were for 3 days. They were normal and alright.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: So, after using contraception it happened that I spotted after [menstrual] periods. There was blood that was coming out a little. Like it was a brown discharge before [menstrual] periods. That brown

discharge would take 3 days and another 3 days will be [menstrual] periods. And this happens – [menstrual] periods – I go twice a month. In January I went twice [on menstrual periods] at the beginning and at the end of the month. Another thing, I have [blood] clots, you see//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P4: //That come out.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes…

F: Okay…

P3: My [menstrual] periods changed, like before I used contraception, they were normal. I would go [on menstrual periods] 5 days.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Then when I had started to use contraception, I bleed heavily. Maybe it was 14 days, and I would come out blood clots. It would be sore on the bladder. So, when I had finished the following month, I didn't go [on menstrual periods] at all.

F: Okay. So, your [menstrual] periods, there was a time where they stopped and then continued?

P3: Yes.

F: Okay. Alright, yes number 1.

P1: I encountered a lot of problems when I was getting the injection. I use the implant; it has been a year since I have had. I have used it before, it treated me well before. I am an individual that doesn't have a lot of blood. So, initially when I had inserted it [implant], I would go for 3 days [on menstrual periods] well as usual. But now I took it [implant] out and inserted another one, it has been a year now. I have inserted it and completed a year in January but now there are a lot of changes and in a bad way. Because I experienced bleeding in such a way that I don't understand. I even thought that maybe I have a miscarriage because there were a lot of blood clots. I know that if I am urinating when on [menstrual] periods, I am not a person that urinates, and it shows that I am on [menstrual] periods. My urine didn't show that I am on [menstrual] periods. But now when I am urinating, my urine shows that I am on [menstrual] periods, they don't stop. I go to the clinic, and they give me those pills to treat it, it becomes better for a while when I am taking the pills. After that it starts again. So, yeah that is the problem that I have encountered, and I can see that I will end up losing my male partner because I am always on [menstrual] periods.

F: Okay, so, before you used the contraception method that you use, you were never on your [menstrual] periods frequently.

P1: No, I didn't go frequently on them [menstrual periods], I would go 2 days 3 days and that's it. But now it is too much.

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

P2: Since I have started using the injection, I don't go on [menstrual] periods. But there is always a discharge, I can't not bath. It [discharge] is brown. Now that is what I am facing. Now I can't do things. [Chuckles by participant, she is shy]

F: What are the things that you can't do?

P2: Playful things.

F: Okay, when you are saying playful things, what are you referring to?

P2: Playing as adults.

[Chuckles by participants]

F: What is playing as adults?

P1: You can't have sex [participant is whispering].

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: I think she means she can't have sex because she is embarrassed//

P2: //Yes, because now even when I am doing it [sex], bleeding becomes worse. So, that's why.

[Participant is shy and seems uncomfortable]

F: Okay, thank you, number 2. Okay, so, we will continue with our next question. Please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how regularly you have bleeding. How regularly you bleed.

[Participant raised her hand]

P4: I have mentioned that I go [on menstrual periods] twice a month since I started contraception. So, before I was on contraception I would go [on menstrual periods] once. Since I am on contraception I go twice and my days [of menstrual periods] are increasing. They are no longer 3, they are 6.

F: Okay…

P4: Yes…

F: So, number 4, do you find it easier or harder to know when you will start bleeding?

P4: Easier.

F: It is easier now to tell.

P4: Yeah.

F: Prior, was it hard to tell?

P4: It was hard because I would just see myself bleeding. I would just see the blood. But when I started to be on contraception, I would then start off with the brown discharge. I know that after 3 days I will go on [menstrual] periods.

F: Oh okay…

P4: Yes.

F: So, your bleeding is more regular now?

P4: Yes.

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

P3: As I had mentioned that I don't go [on menstrual periods] at all, on [menstrual] periods. So, that worries me, that I can see other woman go on [menstrual] periods, yet I don't go [on menstrual periods]. I ask myself that this blood, where does it go. So, what I do is that I go and donate [blood] to make sure that this blood comes out because blood must come out of a woman. It is nature that it [blood] must come out each and every month. So, since I don't go [on menstrual periods] I ask myself where the blood in body goes because it must come out.

F: Okay…

P3: So, I end up going to donate [blood], maybe the blood will be right I don't know if I am doing the right thing or wrong thing.

F: Would you say before you used contraception it was easier or was it hard for you to see if you are about to start. Were your [menstrual] periods regular or they were not regular?

P3: Yeah, it was just easy.

F: Oh, they were regular.

P3: Yes.

F: Alright. Now they [menstrual periods] have stopped?

P3: They have stopped, ever since I started [contraception], they [menstrual periods] have stopped.

F: Okay. Thank you so much, number 3. We will move on to our next question, please tell me about any ways contraception has changed how long you have bleeding. [Slight silence by participants] Maybe an example, if you are bleeding, how many days do you bleed compared to before you started using contraception.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 5, number 1 and number 6.

P5: Before I used the injection for preventing, I would go for 5 normal days and was able to count my days. But after the injection, I go [on menstrual periods] for 14 days as it is. Worse part, now I can't tell if I am about to go [on menstrual periods] now. I will notice when I have started [menstrual periods] and urinating and say, "oh my goodness"! You see. I don't usually feel it if I am about to go on [menstrual] periods. It has really affected me a lot.

F: Okay… Yes, number 1.

P1: The injection has also changed my [menstrual] periods. I don't know when I go [on menstrual periods] and how. I just see them [menstrual periods]. I used to go menstrual periods for 3 days but when I started getting the injection I went for 5 days. But now I can say it is more than 5 days. I can say it is 2 weeks. I only stop once I drink the pills that they gave me. Once they flush out of the body, I start all over again.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: For me to stop my [menstrual] periods I must drink pills. For me to stop [menstrual periods]. So, while I have pills in my body, that is when I get to rest during [menstrual] periods. But once they get finished or I discontinue those pills, I start all over again.

F: Okay, thank you, number 1. Which pills are you talking about?

P1: I don't know their name, the pills, but it is the small white pills that I was given at the clinic. They for stopping the blood.

F: Okay, alright. Thank you so much. Number 6.

P6: When I started the injection, it disturbed the days that I go on [menstrual] periods. Before the injection I would go [on menstrual periods] for 7 days. Now since I am getting injected, I go whenever on [menstrual] periods. In a month I go twice. I only see when I notice the blood. You will find that I am sitting like this, when I stand up there is blood. I don't have menstrual cramps, I have nothing. I just see the blood, maybe it is for 3 days bleeding. It stops and then it starts again. I don't know when I start [menstrual periods]. It sometimes happens that a month will finish, and I haven't gone on [menstrual] periods. Then the following month, maybe I go twice [on menstrual periods]. Maybe I go on menstrual periods 3 days, 5 days, the days are not the same length.

F: Oh okay. So, after you had started to use the contraception, you couldn't tell how many days exactly do you go on menstrual periods?

P6: Yes. I can't tell.

F: So, it is between//

P6: //It can be 3 days//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P6: //It can also be 5 days. And I bleed a lot. I have also used the pills to stop menstrual blood flow. I ended up noticing that they are not right because it stops menstrual blood flow at that time particular time when you have taken it. And you will take it [pill] today, you are bleeding a lot, it won't discontinue the menstrual blood flow today. It will discontinue it tomorrow, maybe for 1 day. The following day it starts again. So, it is better to let the [menstruation] blood to come out itself until it stops on its own.

F: Okay, the pills that you mentioned are the ones that were described by number 1?

P6: Yes.

F: They are also white and small?

P6: Yes, they are white. They are with the ones for contraception [Meaning: participant meant that the white contraceptive pills are taken from the contraceptive pills pack which consists of other pills which are different colors] , the ones for contraception includes the red, yellow and white ones. So, they cut them and give us only the white ones.

F: The white ones only…

P6: Yes.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 6. Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay, we will move forward to the questions that follow. When you have bleeding, how does contraception change how much you bleed during those days? Maybe do you have more bleeding or less bleeding since you started using the contraceptive method.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: Before I started contraception, I would bleed in the afternoon until the night, it would be the same [Meaning: Participant meant the volume of the blood that she was bleeding was the same].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: So, since I am on contraception now, in the afternoon the blood comes out a little bit.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Drops, drops come out. At night, it becomes something that I don't know.

F: How is it at night?

P4: I can change [sanitary] pads 3 times at night. They fill up quickly. There are blood clots.

F: Oh, you bleed heavily…

P4: I bleed heavily, and there are blood clots inside.

F: Oh okay//

P4: //Yes.

F: Then before you used contraception it was well, when you say it was well, how did you bleed? Were you bleeding heavily, moderate or it was light?

P4: It was moderate.

F: Oh okay…

P4: Yes, it was normal, moderate.

F: Oh okay… Thank you so much, number 4. Number 1.

P1: My [menstrual] periods before I was on contraception, they were right. I wasn't even using a [sanitary] pad, I used tampons. Even before using a tampon, I used a pantyliner because I am not a person with a lot of blood. But now, it happens that I insert a tampon and a [sanitary] pad, both of it because when it [menstrual blood] comes, it comes heavily. And it does happen that if in the afternoon it [menstrual blood] is not there, at night it will be there. I would assume that I am done [with menstrual periods] yet no, at night it [menstrual blood] comes back. Or if it is not there at night, in the morning it will come back.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: It is something like that and it has made a lot of changes…

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay. Thank you, number 1. Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Slight silence by participants].

F: Okay, we will move on to the next question. What about how your bleeding looks? When we are talking about how your bleeding looks, we are talking about the color of your blood. Since you are using your contraception, what color is your blood? Is there a difference between the color it was before and after using contraception? And are there any blood clots that you noticed before and after. Those are the things we are looking at.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 2, 4, 5 and 1.

P2: I can see a difference because before it was red. Now when I am on my [menstrual] periods it looks like it is dark, it is black, and it has blood clots that are black. It [menstrual blood] is not red, it is not like before.

F: Okay. Thank you so much, number 2. Number 4.

P4: I can say that the difference – okay before I had blood that was red, the red that is normal. When I was on contraception, my blood is brownish, it is strong and includes blood clots.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes.

F: Okay…Number 5.

P5: Before, it was normal. The blood was red, but after I was on contraception, it became brown. I didn't understand it, it wasn't the red – the normal red that came out at first. It just changes and it [menstrual blood] smells ugly. Because even the smell of it [menstrual blood] differs. The other one was smelling well, it showed that I am on moderate periods. Even when I was bathing, you could tell that it is [menstrual] blood. Now when I bath, it is like I am bathing something that smells bad. It has changed a lot, shame.

F: And the blood clots//

P5: //Mhm [Yes], they were also coming out. They were coming out before but moderate but now they come out brown, they smell and all of that. So, yeah.

F: Okay, now the blood clots come out heavily or they come out the way they came out previously.

P5: When I start [menstrual] periods, since I am on contraception, it [menstrual blood] comes out a lot. And then it [menstrual blood] becomes less until I insert a pantyliner. Once I insert a pantyliner it [menstrual blood] becomes worse. You end up not knowing whether you insert a pad or a pantyliner because you assume that it [menstrual blood] is getting less yet it is not less.

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

P1: Mine have also changed. I have never had blood clots before, it [menstrual blood] would be red and normal but now I have blood clots that make me ask myself what is happening. I even think that maybe there is meat [Meaning: participant is referring to muscle] that is coming out of me. But it is not the same and blood is black. It is black, it is not the usual [color of menstrual] blood.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 1. Thank you for sharing your experiences. There is something that I would like for us to talk about. Do you know of the discharge that is – I don't know how one can explain it – maybe you can describe it to me but there is this discharge that comes out of the vagina apart from blood. It is not blood, can you explain to me what is that discharge, how it looks, have any of you noticed that discharge?

Yes! [Participants agreeing]

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: I would describe as it is very white.

F: Oh, it is white?

P4: Mhm [Yes] and it is jelly like. It is not weak, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: If you look at it carefully, it is white. What can I call that thing. [Participant thinking] What can I call it… [Participant thinking] There are white things on it, very white. It [discharge] is very different inside.

F: Okay…Does it come out during your [menstrual] periods, do you see it during your [menstrual] periods or, when do you see it?

P4: I see it before.

F: Before [menstrual] periods…

P4: Yes…

F: Before you start [menstrual] periods.

P4: Before I start [menstrual] periods, yes…

F: Alright, number 4 thank you. Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Others have not noticed any fluid.

[Slight silence by participants]

F: It can be even during [menstrual] periods, besides the blood.

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay, can you please tell me how contraception has changed your menstrual cramps? Have your menstrual cramps gotten better or worse with contraception?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 2. I have noted you, number 1 and number 4.

P2: Mine got better because I experienced *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word that is directly translated as menstrual cramps] when I went on my [menstrual] periods. Now it is better. Since I don't go on [menstrual] periods, I can feel that there is some pain, it is small pain. It is not like before.

F: What is *islumo*?

P2: It is period pains.

F: Oh, it is period cramps.

P2: Yes.

F: Oh okay. Thank you so much, number 2. Number 1.

P1: Mine has changed a lot I can't feel them [menstrual cramps] anymore. Since I started contraception, I don't have them anymore, yet I used to have them 3 days before I went on [menstrual] periods. So now I don't have period pains anymore.

F: Oh okay, thank you so much. Number 4.

P4: I also want to add to what the ladies have said. I used to have period pains that were painful, that included vomiting. So, ever since I started contraception, I am alright. I go on my [menstrual] periods without pains.

F: Alright, thank you so much, number 4. Are we still good though?

Yes! [All participants agreed at once]

F: Okay. So, while you have been sharing your experiences, our notetaker [Notetaker name] was writing on the cards to help remind us of what we were talking about. Please can we review what we have said so far. We will start off by looking that side, please can we turn and look at the cards. So, we spoke about how often you bleed. There were some who said less often than before, and others said more often than before. Is there anything that we left out that we can add?

Mhm! [No] [All participants responded]

F: Okay. Then we looked at how regularly you bleed. Others said they experience more bleeding. Others said unpredictable bleeding. Others said regular or predictable bleeding. Other said irregular bleeding or unpredictable. Is everything right?

Yes! [All participants responded]

F: We looked at how long you bleed. Others said 3-5 days. Others said 6 days. Others said 14 days. Is everything right?

Yes! [All participants responded]

F: We looked at how much you bleed. Others said heavy bleeding. Others said clots. Others said spotting. Is everything right?

Yes! [All participants responded]

F: How your blood looks. Others said dark red, almost black. Brownish color, it smells bad. Others said has a black dark color. Is everything right?

Yes! [All participants responded]

F: Is there anything that we would like to add?

No! [All participants responded]

F: Okay. Then we looked at menstrual cramps. Others said cramps got better, no pains. Is there anything else that we would like to add?

[Slight silence by participants, meaning there is nothing that they would like to add]

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

Mhm [No] [All participants responded]

F: Okay, can we please look this side. So, are there any of you that can share any delays that you had in your [menstrual] period, after discontinuing contraception? Someone did share between us but are there others who would like to share, if there are any of you who had delays after discontinuing contraception. When I say delays, I mean I your [menstrual] periods get delayed.

[Slight silence by participants, meaning there is nothing that they would like to add]

F: Alright, thank you so much. So, we have looked at all the changes that we have in our menstrual cycles that make us have changes because of the contraception that we use. We will now look at how have all these changes to your menstrual cycle made your body feel?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6. Number 5 and number 3 I have noted you. And number 4.

P6: The change that I had with regards to starting to prevent [Meaning: To prevent means to use contraception]. Please repeat the question.

F: Okay, the question says all the changes that you had, how did they make your body feel?

P6: Okay. The change that I have is that I am losing weight.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: Since I have started the injection, since I don't know when I go on my [menstrual] periods. It now happens that I go twice in a month.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P6: That makes me lose weight on my body, because I bleed a lot. I am a heavy bleeder; my blood comes out heavily. So, that makes me unsure about my body scale because I lose weight. If I haven't been on my [menstrual] periods or went on [menstrual] periods and blood didn't come out heavily, I become alright and can that my body is still in a right condition. But if I am going to keep on being on [menstrual] periods, I lose weight on my body.

F: Okay. So, apart from losing weight, was there changes in terms of your energy or your emotions or it is just losing weight only?

P6: No, it is just losing weight only.

F: Thank you so much, number 6. Number 3.

P3: Since I have mentioned that I no longer go on [menstrual] periods at all//

F: // Mhm//

P3: // I have gained a lot of weight. Number 2, I no longer have the energy to yearn for – I am not sure if it is part of what we are talking about. Can I mention it?

F: Yes, you may mention it.

P3: [Chuckles by participant, the participant seems shy]

F: No, relax…

P3: When we make ourselves happy with my partner, I no longer yearn to- you see//

F: // When you say when you make each other happy, what does it mean when you say when you make each other happy?

P3: Like when we are together…You see… I don't have those feelings of wanting to have sex. I don't have the interest, ever since I started [contraception], my feelings for having sex are not the same as before. Before it was right, everything was normal. Since I have inserted the injection, I don't crave for anything.

F: So, you can say it affected your emotions.

P3: Yes. They have changed a lot.

F: Is that a good thing or a bad thing that you no longer have interest//

P3: //I think it is a bad thing.

F: It is a bad thing?

P3: Yeah.

F: Why?

P3: My goodness! This thing is nature, we must… [Chuckles by participant].

F: What must happen?

P3: We must do it.

F: Do what?

P4: Sex [Participant whispering].

P3: [Chuckles by participant] Make ourselves happy.

P5: Sex [Participant whispering, chuckles by participant].

F: Relax, you can say the word, what do you do?

P3: [Chuckles by participant]

F: Don't be afraid, we all do this thing.

P3: Yes, that thing!

[Chuckles by participants]

F: What is that thing?

P3: The one you are implying.

F: Okay, so you are saying sex.

P3: Yes.

F: Alright, I hear you. Thank you so much, number 3 for sharing.

[Chuckles by participants]

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Number 4 and number 1.

P4: I would say what has changed on my body, since I go twice [on menstrual periods] a month I lose weight. Secondly, my body gets tired.

F: Your body gets tired?

P4: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay…

P4: Sometimes I wake up and feel like I could sleep again. My body is tired.

F: Okay, how does it make you feel that you have lost weight?

P4: It makes me happy because it is what I want.

F: Oh, you are happy about that.

P4: Yes.

F: Okay…Thank you so much, number 4. Number 1.

P1: I am always tired…I am always tired. I have lost weight, there are kilos that I have lost. I don't like that; I like my body that I knew [Meaning: Participant means she loves her previous body weight]. And I no longer have emotions when we are having sex, I no longer can touch him first. It must be him, and even then, it will take time because even when he holds me, there is nothing that attracts me. So, I end up doing it [participant referring to having sex] just for him. Which is wrong. I have even gone to the clinic before, and they told me what to do but that didn't help me.

F: Mmh [Neutral].

P1: It doesn't help me. In fact, this injection that I am using is not working for me because it has changed my life a lot.

F: How does that make you feel?

P1: It makes me very sad, because all the changes that it has made, it is changes that are not right. It is changes that I don't agree with. It is changes that I don't agree with, that make everything of mine difficult.

F: Okay…Thank you. Thank you for sharing your experiences, even the sensitive ones. Thank you so much. All these menstrual changes, how did they impact your day-to-day life?

[Participants raised their hands]

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

P3: Please repeat the question.

F: Okay, the question is, how have all these menstrual changes impacted your day-to-day life? So, when we are talking about this, we are referring to your personal life, your workplace, at home, others have mentioned that in their relationships they are affected. So, we are looking at all of that. I am aware that our questions sound like they are a repetition, but maybe if there are any of you that have not shared, please may they respond.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes number 5, and number 4.

P5: The injection made me gain [weight], that is the first thing. Two, gaining has affected my self-esteem and confidence. There are clothes that I can no longer wear. For instance, tight clothes, I don't like wearing them. I feel like they will show my body structure, or I first judge myself, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: So, it is not going well.

F: Okay, so, all these things that you have mentioned are things that talk about your body, how your body feels. I would like for you to let me know of changes that you had in terms of your day-to-day life. Like how it has affected you, maybe at work or at home, the chores you do. Your relationships…

P5: I can say in my relationship…

F: Okay…

P5: I am also one of those people who no longer have interest in having sex.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Because I feel like since I have gained, even when a *woman on top* [Meaning: It is a phrase used to describe a sex position whereby the male partner lays down and faces up and female partner goes on top of him during sex.] is being done, I just say no, we would rather not do it. You see, because I don't have that confidence like before.

F: Mhm [Neutral]. What is a *woman on top*?

P5: [Chuckles] It is when your partner lays down and faces up and then you [woman] go on top of him during sex.

F: Oh…you are the one who is on top of him.

P5: Yeah.

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

P4: As I had mentioned, the injection makes me tired. I wake up from sleeping and sleep again. So, at work most of the time I work on the computer, you see. I sometimes feel like sleeping, I get sleepy while working because I am tired. I use things, I use energy drinks which are not good for my health, the energy drink.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes…

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

P3: The problem I am facing. Since I had mentioned that I no longer yearn to have *tlof – tlof* [Meaning: It is a slang word that means sex] //

F: // What is *tlof – tlof*?

[Chuckles by participants]

F: I don't know the word; can you explain what it means?

P3: It is to have sex.

F: Oh okay…

P3: So, my partner has the tendency of thinking that I am cheating on him and stuff, because it is not like before because before it was just like, yeah.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: P3: Yeah, so, now when we have sex, he can see that I am getting bored, you see because I no longer feel this thing [referring to sex]. Before I was very active [during sex] but now it is not going well.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much. Thank you for sharing. We have a look again, since we were having our discussion, our note taker was writing down the things that we were discussing. So, we will have a look at them. Please may we turn and look at the things that we discussed.

[Participants turned to look at the notes on the cards]

F: So, we looked how changes make your body feel. Other said they lost weight. Others said they gained a lot of weight. Others said loss of sexual appetite. Others said body feels tired or gets tired. Others said self-esteem and self-confidence decreased. Is everything right?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: Is there anything that we would like to add?

No. [All participants responded at once]

F: Okay, then we looked at how changes impact your daily life. Others said low sexual drive has created trust issues with partner. Others said always sleepy at work. Others said has affected her sexual relationship. Is there anything else that we would like to add?

No. [All participants responded at once]

F: Alright thank you so much. We can turn back to this side. How do we feel, are we good?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: Alright, we can drink water if we would like to drink water.

[Participants drinking water]

F: Okay, let me give you a chance to drink water.

[Movements of participants drinking water]

F: Alright, so, we will now do an activity together so you can show us about your experiences with menstrual cramping and other pain that we experience when on menstrual periods. What we will do, we will give an individual a sticker and ask you to insert it on the poster anywhere on the body. So, if we turn, we will see that there is a body.

[Participants turned at looked that the body mapping charts]

F: On our left, we are looking at the front. And then on our right, we are looking at the back. So, it is one body, there is a front and a back. So, I will give you each a sticker where you will insert them. Whether you can insert them at the back or in front, it is up to you. You are allowed to use a sticker that is the same color but insert it in different places because we are discussing menstrual cramps that you have experienced and pain that you experience during your menstrual period. Do we all understand?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: So, we will start, please can we have everyone who uses pills, if there is anyone who uses pills as a contraception, please raise your hand.

[No participants raised their hands]

F: There is none?

No. [All participants responded at once]

F: Okay, we will move forward. May everyone who is using an injection raise their hands.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: So, those using an injection, we have number 2, number 3, number 4, number 5 and number 6. Please can number 2 go and place there [Facilitator referring to the body charts] her stickers where you can feel pain. It can be menstrual cramps or another type of pain that you experience if you are on menstrual periods because of using an injection.

[Movements of participant going to place the stickers]

F: Thank you, number 2.

[Movements of participant going to place the stickers]

F: Number 3, thank you, number 3.

[Movements of participant going to place the stickers]

F: Number 4.

[Movements of participant going to place the stickers]

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 4. Number 5. You are allowed to insert your stickers if there is pain that you can feel at the back. You can also insert stickers at the back. Number 6.

[Movements of participant going to place the stickers]

F: Thank you so much. Is there anyone who has used an implant or is using an implant.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

[Movements of participant going to place the stickers]

F: Okay. Thank you so much. Has anyone used an IUD?

[Slight silence from the participant, no response was an indication that no one has used the contraception method]

F: Alright. Thank you so much. Please may we take a sticker that is gold, that is a star. Please may take the sticker and put it anywhere on the body, in the one place on the body where the pain or menstrual cramping bothers you the most. So, right now we were able to put the stickers where we feel any type of pain if we are on menstrual periods because of using a contraception. Please

may we now take a sticker that is gold and put it where we feel pain the most, one place where the pain bothers you the most. We can all stand.

[Movements of participants going to place the stickers]

F: Okay, thank you so much. Okay, here I can see that we have stickers that are green and blue. So, please explain to me – let's start here at the top. The place where you have placed the stickers that you have placed, including the gold ones, what do you call this area. If we were to explain this area, what do we call it?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 6.

P6: I say it is *ikhanda* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as a head].

F: It is *ikhanda* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as a head]. Okay, thank you. What do we call this part on the body?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 3.

P3: They are nipples [participant is speaking softly].

F: Please raise your voice, number 3.

P3: They are *amabele* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as breasts].

F: They are *amabele*, [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as a breasts] okay. So, is it also breasts here?

P3: It is a nipple [participant speaking softly].

F: Is it a nipple?

P3: Yes.

F: Okay, so here at the lower part of the breast it is called a nipple. And then the other part is called a breast. Okay, then bellow the breasts, what do you call this area on the body?

P3: It is *isisu* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as a stomach].

F: It is *isisu* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as a stomach]. This area is called a stomach.

P3: Yes.

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

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: It is *isinye* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as a bladder].

F: It is *isinye* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as a bladder]. Alright, okay and then when we look at the back, what do we call this area?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: It is *iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as the lower back].

F: And then what do we call this area?

P3: I think it is the spinal cord.

F: Spinal cord, do we agree with number 3?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.
P1: I think it is still *iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as the lower back] here above the buttocks.

F: Oh, it is still *iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as the lower back] also there?

P1: Yes

F: Oh, all this area here at the back is *iqolo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as the lower back]?

P1: Yes.

F: Do we all agree with number 1? To the ones who put stickers here at the back?

Yes! [Participants agreed]

F: Alright, thank you so much. Which words would you use to explain menstrual cramps?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes number 4 and number 1.

P4: *Islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as menstrual cramps].

F: *Islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as menstrual cramps].

P4: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, is there another word?

P1: I also know that it is *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as menstrual cramps].

F: You also know of *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as menstrual cramps], okay. Please can those who placed their stickers to explain menstrual cramps to share their experiences with their menstrual cramps.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: The [menstrual] cramps that I have are [menstrual] cramps before I go on [menstrual] periods. They are [menstrual] cramps here on left and right.

F: Okay…

P4: Yes…

F: Okay and how is it when you have them?

P4: It's like there is something like there are balls on both sides, you see. It wants to come out and it is forcing. That's how it is.

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

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: I don't know if I can call it *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as menstrual cramps] because it is not like *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as menstrual cramps], it is different now. I am used to it.

F: Okay.

P1: It is the pains that number 4 mentioned, here on the side but I can feel when I bend it feels like I can always bend like this. But I can feel when there is something touching me, when I touch myself here, I can feel them [menstrual cramps] same time. But if I am sleeping, I don't feel pain like when I feel *islumo* [Meaning: It is a Zulu word, directly translated as menstrual cramps].

F: Mhm [Neutral]. Okay, thank you. So, we have placed our stars here, why do we say this is the area on our body that is most bothersome, what happens here?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: I think that since the eggs are there, so all the process is done there. That's why the pain is there.

F: Oh okay…

P4: Mhm [Neutral].

F: Oh okay, what happens to you that makes you say that it is the most bothersome area then the other areas on your body?

P4: Like I have mentioned, there are two balls, left and right. It is like they are pushing; it is like they want to come out of the meat [muscle], you see.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 4. Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Alright, here I can see a star by the head. Why do we say it is the most bothersome spot. To the one who placed the star on the head, what happens?

P2: The headache is the most bothersome.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P2: I even go to the clinic, the way it is bothersome.

F: The headache bothers you when you have started or when we have not started your [menstrual] periods.

P2: When I have not started.

F: Oh okay. And then here there are stars, here at the back of the body. What happens where you say it is most bothersome.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: The reason I said it is the place that is most bothersome, even though it doesn't relate that much to [menstrual] periods, but I once had a c section, so, every day I am complaining about the lower back, everything including the spinal cord. So, that is why I have placed a star.

F: Okay, and what do you do to help yourself when you have those pains?

P5: I would be lying; I haven't used anything. Besides sleeping on my stomach only.

F: Oh, that also helps you.

P5: It becomes better, it becomes better. And sitting down makes it better.

F: Okay, when number 2 has a headache, what helps her?

P2: I drink pills.

F: Which pills do you drink?

P2: I drink *Brufen*. I usually have *Brufen* and *Panado*.

F: Okay, what do others use when they are experiencing pain? Here at the front [of the poster], I can see you have placed stars underneath. What do you use?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 1 and number 4.

P1: What helps me with pains, even if it is anywhere, it is *Brufen*. It is the one that works best for me?

F: What is *brufen*? Is it also pills?

P1: Yes, it is pink pills.

F: Okay, yes number 4.

P4: I have period pains underneath [on the poster], what I use is this other cream. It is called period pain cream. So, I apply it on my bladder. It is like it has mint; it is the one that works for me.

F: Okay, number 6.

P6: If I have pains on the bladder, I usually place warm water.

F: Okay…

P6: That helps me to decrease the pain on the bladder.

F: Alright, okay. Thank you so much. I would like to know if there are any of you who ever since they used a contraception, they have less menstrual pain?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: They are less, there aren't many pains since I use an injection.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay… Yes, number 4.

P4: I can also say it is not the same as before. Before, I would go on periods, I would have painful period pains and had to sleep. When I started the injection, I have period pains before [menstrual periods] and they are less. And they are bearable.

F: Alright, thank you. Thank you so much for doing this activity well. We will continue with our discussion. For the next few questions, let us look back at all the ways contraception has changed your menstrual cycles. So, we have done the body mapping, we did our charts, we spoke about how often we bleed, we spoke about the changes that we experienced, we spoke about menstrual cramps, we spoke about how the changes have made the body feel and how the changes have impacted your daily life. We have looked at all those things. We looked at what impact these things have even in our lives. All the ways that we have been affected, we have spoken about it now. So, I would like for us, when continuing with our discussion, talk about what information did you get from the clinic or healthcare provider about changes to your menstrual cycle before you started the method you are using now?

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Is there any information that you gained?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: If I remember correctly, it was long time. It is from last year. The nurse had told me that there will changes for my [menstrual] periods. And that there will be changes on my body. The implant I am using causes weight loss for others, for others it makes them gain. So, that is the information I was told.

F: Would you say that the information that she gave you helped you?

P1: It helped me, because the things that she mentioned are things that are taking place, but I didn't expect them to happen the way they occurred.

F: Oh okay. Maybe would you like to share?

P1: Yes, it is too much. I thought that maybe when she said my [menstrual] periods will change, I thought that she is maybe talk about the fact that days won't be the same. Maybe if I go on menstrual periods on the 15th, maybe it will happen that I go on menstrual periods on the 30th and so forth. But that is not what is happening. I can say that it is the scale, they come more often and more days.

F: Mhm [Neutral], okay. So, the information that you received, would you say you have experienced it?

P1: Yes.

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

[Slight silence by participants]

F: Okay. Now, I would like for us to think about 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 to use the contraception method.

[Participant raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 3, 5 and 4.

P3: I wish they had told me that since I will be taking this injection it will happen that I don't go on menstrual periods at all.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Yes.

F: Okay.

P3: Yeah, that is what I wish they had informed me about. They told me about the advantage, that if I take an injection, I won't fall pregnant. It will prevent me from falling pregnant. But the disadvantage, they didn't tell me that I will gain weight and not go on [menstrual] periods at all.

F: Okay…

P3: Yeah.

F: Maybe if they had told you, how would it have helped you?

P3: Maybe it would have helped me to choose maybe another method.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: Because I get injected with a depo [Meaning: It is an injection, DMPA contraception]. Isn't there is also an implant. There is also the one for 2 months, I don't know it's [participant referring to the injection] name, the loop and so forth. Maybe I could have chosen from other methods.

F: Okay…

P3: Maybe if they had explained to me before.

F: Thank you, number 3. Number 5, and number 1 I have noted you.

P5: I wish they told me step by step that these are the disadvantages that will happen. It is possible to gain and possible to lose weight. There are a lot of changes that you should expect. It might happen that you don't go on your [menstrual] periods at all. It might happen that you go on menstrual periods for many days then what you initially did. And if they had given me the choice to explain about everything, then I would have had a choice to choose whether I continue with taking a depo, you see.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yeah.

F: Okay, what information would have made your experience with the contraceptive method better?

P5: I would say, they could have explained more about the [menstrual] periods, that you will go on them [menstrual periods] more or less. If they had explained that part, that it will happen you go on menstrual periods less or more. That's the part.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yeah.

F: How would have that made your experience better?

P5: It would have been better because I would have known what to expect.

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

P4: I wish they had explained to me that my [menstrual] periods will increase, because I am used to 3 days. Now they have increased to 6 days. If they had explained before, I would have been mentally prepared that at least my [menstrual periods] days are going to increase.

F: Okay, and how would have that information made your experience better with the contraceptive method?

P4: I would have been mentally prepared that now I am going to go on menstrual periods for 6 days. I wouldn't have gotten surprises. Now I am learning that oh this what the injection does. They didn't explain to me. So, I am the one who learnt by herself that the injection makes me go on menstrual periods for 6 days.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright, number 1.

P1: I wish that they had told me that since I am taking an implant, I won't be able to take it out anytime even if it is making me ill. Because I have been to the clinic 3 times, to explain that it is making me ill. I would say it is making me ill, because of the way things are happening. I would say that. If they had informed me that you can't take it out anytime, they will first treat me 3 times and then take it out from there because it is the same now. I treat it but still, it is continuing, what they treated me for. So, if maybe they had told me that you can't take it out if the 3 years is not complete, maybe I would have chosen another method.

F: Okay. Thank you so much for sharing. What is the most important information you would want a friend to know about these changes before starting contraception?

[Participants raised their hands]

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

P3: It is that – for instance - to the ones that bleed heavily, they must explain to them that there will be changes. They will bleed heavily or light. To the ones that bleed heavily, they must be aware that they must buy [sanitary] pads, maybe they must be a bit more. For the one that said she used to go on menstrual periods 3 days, maybe she used to buy 1 pack of pads and then now she goes on menstrual periods more days, she now must buy a lot more sanitary pad.

F: Thank you, number 3. Number 4.

P4: What I would warn her about is that they will go on [menstrual periods] for more days or less or not go on [menstrual periods] at all.

F: Okay…

P4: Secondly, it is that it will affect your energy and your weight.

F: Okay… Why do you think that's the most important information? How will it help her?

P4: It is the one for [menstrual] periods. That her [menstrual] periods will either increase or decrease. It will help her to remain prepared that there are changes that will happen with her [menstrual] periods. She mustn't panic and think she is sick.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you so much, number 4. Thank so much guys for your responses. Our discussion is going very well. Are we still good though?

Yes! [All participants responded once]

F: Okay, we will continue with our discussion. Please may we all stand up.

[Movements of participants standing up]

F: We are now doing our last activity. We will talk about two questions healthcare providers or researchers sometimes ask people about their menstrual cycle. I will ask you each a question, and

we will take a few minutes. So, our first question says, when you last had a period, would you describe it as: light, moderate, or heavy. On your last period, would you describe your period as light, moderate or heavy. Those who say their periods were light, praise raise your hand. Please may we go this side number 5 and number 1.

[Movements of participants moving to one side]

F: Those who say their periods were moderate, please raise your hands.

[No participants raised their hands]

F: Okay. Those who say their periods were heavy, please raise your hands. Number 2, number 3 and number 4, please can we stand this side.

[Movements of participants moving to one side]

F: Alright. Okay, we will start with our group, light. Please tell me how did you decide that your last period was light?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 5.

P5: Mine were light because I was not using the entire pack. I was using pantyliners and they were not getting full. So, yeah, they were not that bad.

F: Okay, when you say, it was not getting full, what was not getting full?

P5: The pantyliner [the participant was speaking softly].

F: Pardon.

P5: The pantyliner was not getting full [of menstrual blood]. So, I wasn't using pads this time. I was using pantyliners. The pantyliner was not getting full.

F: Of blood…

P5: Yes.

F: Oh, alright. Thank you, number 5. I noticed that number 1 moved from the group, light. She is now in the group of the heavy.

P5: Uhm, I didn't hear the question properly, I thought you were asking if they were light before. But I heard that you said the last period. So, heavy ones, I am currently on them. I must insert a tampon and a pad so that I can go on with the day and stay for that time until I am in a place that I can change. So, they are heavy. They have clots.

F: Thank you so much, number 1. Please explain to me number 5 from the light group, how long ago was the period you were thinking about when you answered the question? If it was last month or 2 months ago, please may we raise our hands.

[Participant number 5 raised her hand]

F: Number 5.

P5: They were last month.

F: Oh, it was last month.

P5: Yes.

F: Okay, thank you. If it was three months to six months ago? Please may we raise our hands.

[Participant 2 raised her hand]

F: I can see number 2 raised her hand. If it was more than six months ago. Please may we raise our hands.

[Participant number 3 raised her hand]

F: I can see number 3, raised her hands. Okay, number 4 and number 1 didn't raise their hands. Why?

P4: I didn't hear the question, uhm.

F: The question is, the decision that you took, that your last period was heavy//

P4: //Yes//

F: //When was your last period?

P4: Last week.

F: Last week.

P4: Yes.

F: Okay, number 1.

P1: This week, I am still on my periods. Which means it is something current.

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

P2: Yes.

F: What was hard?

P2: We are confused that are talking about before we started the injection or when we have started. That is where there was a misunderstanding.

F: Oh okay. The question, as I had mentioned before, it is talking about, since you are using your contraceptive method currently. Okay, on your last period, was it light, medium or heavy? We then moved on and asked when your last period was. Okay, thank you so much, number 2. We are now moving on to the next question. On the heaviest day, we have number 5 who is in the light group and then we have the rest of you guys in the heavy group. On the heaviest day, we are talking about 1 day, on the heaviest day of your last period, using the contraception that you are

using, how many menstrual pads, tampons, or any materials did you use? We will start with the light group.

P5: If I remember correctly, I changed the pad 4 times because it leaked when sleeping and ended up getting dirty.

F: So, on that day//

P5: //On that day//

F: //Were your periods the heaviest?

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: You changed your [sanitary] pads 4 times.

P5: Mhm [Yes].

F: Alright. Thank you so much, let's come to our group that is heavy.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 1.

P1: On that day I used a whole pack, because I double them [pads], because I wanted it to be long on both sides. So, I can say I used a whole pack because they were very heavy.

F: What was the pack for?

P1: It was a pack of [sanitary] pads.

F: Oh, it is a pack of [sanitary] pads.

P1: [Sanitary] Pads.

F: How many [sanitary] pads maybe.

P1: Ten inside.

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

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Number 2.

P2: I use heavy flow [Meaning: Participant means the type of sanitary pads that she uses is heavy flow pads] for pads. So, I usually use 3 in a day.

F: So, on your last period, where you were bleeding the heaviest. How many did you use?

P2: I used 4, because I used 2 in the afternoon, because it is the long ones, the heavy flow [sanitary] pads. So, I used 2 in the afternoon and 2 in the evening.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Alright. Number 3.

P3: I think, uhm, how many were they. They were 6, because even blood clots came out.

F: They were 6.

P6: Yes.

F: What were you using?

P6: Pads, *Always* [Meaning: Always is the brand of sanitary pads].

F: Oh okay. So, on that specific day, where they were the heaviest, you used 6 [sanitary] pads.

P6: Yes.

F: Okay. Number 4.

P4: I buy 8 inside. So, I used all 8 of them, because I double them. I insert 2 in the evening.

F: Alright.

P4: Mhm [Yes].

F: Alright, thank you so much. We can come back and sit down.

[Movements of participants moving to sit down]

F: So, we noticed that there was difference, uhm unfortunately in the other group, the light group there was only one person. But in the other group, the group that included people who are heavy, there was a difference with the number of the materials that you use when you are on your [menstrual] periods. What do you think caused that?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 3 and number 5.

P3: When we bleed, we don't bleed the same way.

F: Okay…

P3: I think it is that.

F: Oh okay…Alright, number 5.

P5: I think our bodies are not the same and the way they will react is not the same.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yeah.

F: Okay, thank you so much. Is there anything that you found difficult about the second question?

No [Participants response, participants sounded exhausted]

F: Okay. How do you think someone would have answered this question if they used something other than [sanitary] pads? The question that I asked you, how would they have answered it.

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 1 and number 4.

P4: The ones that are using tampons//

F: //Number 1//

P4: //Oh, sorry [Chuckles].

P1: I am a person who uses tampons, so I can say that I can answer that question because I ended up – if maybe it was another person who doesn't used pads, who uses maybe tampons, my goodness they [tampons] they don't work! They didn't work for me during that time, on the day when I had heavy periods. They didn't work for me; it was like I didn't insert anything. There was a leakage a lot. So, that is why I ended up using [sanitary] pads or maybe if I am going to town, I insert both of it. I insert a tampon and insert a pad, because it [tampon] was not working.

F: Okay. Let's say it is not tampons, let's say maybe it is a toilet paper or menstrual cup, do you think she would have been able to answer this question? She would have been comfortable?

P1: I don't think she would have been able to answer the question.

F: Why?

P1: Because maybe if she was responding to someone that she is used to, or maybe that she lives with and knows her situation and why she inserted a tissue. Because a tissue, I don't think it is something right to use when on periods. So, I don't think it would have been easy to answer that question.

F: Okay, please may I come to you number 4, number 2 I have noted you. How do you think someone would have answered this question if they often do not have enough pads, tampons, or other materials? How do you think she would have answered this question?

P4: I think she was not going to be comfortable to answer it.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Because the only thing that we use for periods, it is tampons or pads.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: So, the other things like toilet papers and period [menstrual] cups are things that we are not used to using.

F: Okay, do you think that if she usually doesn't enough have at all, what would she have done?

P4: She would have been shy and say that she didn't have.

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

P4: Yes.

F: Yes, number 2.

P2: I think it would have been hard to come forth about what I use and don't use the usual, that everyone is using.

F: What is the usual?

P2: It is pads, tampons and so forth. The things you buy.

F: Okay. Alright, thank you so much. So, sometimes women or girls have a very small amount bleeding, and they may not even need to use any menstrual pad. Maybe they might not need to use tampons or pantyliners or other material. What words would you use to describe this very small amount of bleeding?

P4: Spotting.

F: Spotting!

P4: Yes.

F: Okay. What does the word spotting mean to you?

P4: I think it is to go on [menstrual] periods with drops [of menstrual blood].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: It comes as drops; the pad doesn't become full. It has a small drop of blood.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: Mhm [Yes].

F: Okay, is there anyone else who can describe this very small amount of bleeding? [Slight silence by participants] Is there anyone else that has a different definition for spotting? Do we all know spotting?

Yes [Participants speaking softly]

F: Pardon.

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: Okay, we all agree with number 4's description?

Yes [Participants responded softly and seem exhausted]

P1: I agree with her.

F: Okay. How do you know if it is this type of bleeding, number 3? How do you know if it is spotting?

P3: I think you can see; your [menstrual] pad. It is not the same [participant is speaking softly].

F: Please raise your voice.

P3: You can see on your [menstrual] pad that there are spots.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P3: There isn't a lot of blood or full of blood on the pad.

F: Okay…

P3: Yeah.

F: Okay. Is there anyone else that would like to share how you know if you are spotting?

P5: What I have experienced is that when I spot sometimes the blood comes out, but it doesn't get to the pantyliner if I inserted it. When you go to urinate, when you are standing up, you see it [menstrual blood].

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yeah, that is how I would explain it.

F: Oh okay. You don't need a pantyliner?

P5: You need it but sometimes it happens that it [blood] ends up not coming. You find that it [blood] was not a lot to such an extent that comes on the pantyliner. When you go to urinate, because we like wiping [the vagina], and then you see blood.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yeah.

F: Oh okay…How do you choose whether you use a pad or a tampon with this type of bleeding, when spotting.

P5: When spotting?

F: Mhm [Yes].

P5: I usually see when – I started by inserting a pantyliner and see that how I much I will bleed. If the pantyliner gets full, it is an indication that I must at least insert a pad because more blood is still going to come out.

F: Okay…Is there anyone else that would like to share?

[Slight silence by participants, participants are exhausted]

F: Okay, when you have this very small amount of bleeding, since we are talking about spotting, how would you have answered the second question that we discussed? The second question says, on your last period, how many materials did you use on your heaviest day of your last period. Do you remember that we spoke about that?

Yes! [All participants responded at once]

F: So, if you were spotting, how would you have answered this question?

[Participants raised their hands]

F: Yes, number 4 and number 1.

P4: So, how I would have responded is, isn't now I am bleeding a small amount//

F: //Mhm [Neutral]//

P4: //I would have said I didn't insert a pad at all.

F: What did you insert?

P4: I just wore an underwear.

F: An underwear.

P4: Yes.

F: Oh okay… Okay, number 1.

P1: I was going to use 1 tampon, because that is what I did. That is how it was.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P1: Maybe you find that I will be in town the whole day. I know that I have inserted a tampon. When I remove it and see that it is not full. One side has blood, and the other side is still clean. So, if it was before, that is how it would have happened. Since it is now time for this injection, no.

F: Thank you so much. Before we end, is there anything else you think we should know about your experiences with your menstrual cycle while taking contraception that we didn't talk about? Is there anything that we haven't spoken about today, that you would like share?

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Yes, number 4.

P4: It didn't happen to me, but I would like to share.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: There is someone who didn't go on her [menstrual] periods, she used an injection.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P4: And then one day the blood came out through the mouth.

F: Okay…

P4: Yes.

F: Oh okay…What did she do when the blood came out through the mouth?

P4: She went to the clinic and the clinic referred her to hospital. They told her to change the injection that she is using.

F: Oh okay, which injection was she using?

P4: I think she was using the 3 months.

[Participant raised her hand]

F: Okay. Alright, thank you, number 4. Thank you for sharing. Number 5.

P5: I don't know the name of the 2 months injection, but the 2 months injection has a lot of side effects. If I remember correctly, if I urinated a drop of blood would come out. That is what I experienced when I was still studying at college. It would be also painful, even when urinating it would be painful. When you go to the clinic to explain, they ask you which injection you use and tell them it is the 2 months, then they will tell that is its side effect. It has side effects that are not right, the 2 months injection. It is worse than the 3 months one. I even thought it is UTI, if you know the UTI for treating an infection, I though it was that. But the 2 months injection has side effects that are not right.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yeah.

F: Okay, is there someone that you know that experienced a similar situation as the one mentioned by number.

P5: Mhm [No].

F: Oh okay…

P5: It is the one that is close to a UTI that I experienced personally; they told me it is an injection for 2 months.

F: Mhm [Neutral].

P5: Yes.

F: What is a UTI?

P5: It is Urinary Tract Infection.

F: Okay…

P5: When they describe it, because I also googled it, when they describe it – maybe since we use public toilets or anywhere//

F: //Mhm//

P5: An individual catches bacteria easily. Even if you don't sit on the seat but you catch [bacteria] easily. The wind on its own if you are not dressed. So, yeah that is how they explained it to me. I am not sure, but yeah.

F: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you for joining our discussion today. You have been amazing! Thank you so much for sharing your information and thoughts. The information you shared today is going to be very helpful to our study. I will stop the recording now. Today is 14 February 2025. The time is 12:40, focus group C104.