

Learning from and with Menstrupedia: Towards Menstrual Health Education in India

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CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing** → *Interaction devices*.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: feminism, patriarchy, human computer interaction

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1 CRITICAL REVIEW

The paper initially talks about the various HCI initiatives pertaining to women's issues as it provides a landscape and scope of HCI research within this field [2]. It delves into the various taboos of the Indian society related to menstruation, among other issues, to provide a background to readers globally and help them better understand the Indian context. The authors also provide instances of policy changes, campaigns and media's role to paint a more balanced picture among readers. They draw from other contexts and highlight the importance of safe online spaces. The paper uses Menstrupedia as a case study, evaluating its upsides and downsides to draw upon broader insights for all ICT initiatives under the purview of MHE in India.

The authors employ the six feminist principles of the feminist HCI Lens proposed by Bardzell to analyse their findings critically [1]. I found 'advocacy' particularly peculiar regarding striking the right balance between advocacy and adoption and investigating the point where advocacy becomes culturally inappropriate and strays away potential users. Another aspect that I found interesting was 'pluralism', even though through depicting characters of different ages and in different phases of their menstrual cycle, they still belonged to a homogenous family as mentioned in the paper. To realise the objective of making the initiative more pluralistic, perhaps participation of more diverse characters in terms of locality, lingo, economic status, religion, caste, gender, sex, sexuality and disability could have been beneficial.

The use of the feminist HCI lens for this particular research scenario is exceptionally relevant, given that the menstrual health of women is such a suppressed topic in the predominantly patriarchal culture fostered in India. Women are also the primary stakeholders when it comes to experiencing menstruation. Instrumental case study is used to analyse the Menstrupedia platform, which helps categorise and reflect the information, in conjunction with thematic analysis, to analyse the contextual interviews semi-structured interviews taken from users. These research methods were justified because they provided rich qualitative insights for the selected user group.

One of the issues that I had with the study is the fact that perhaps the male subjects would not express themselves freely in front of the predominantly female interviewers. An aspect that I found missing within the research was that the user's were not really given the role of the observer, i.e. What if the user was one of the persons sitting in the

metro, observing someone reading Menstrupedia. The research could have been further strengthened using contextual inquiry for observing the interaction in its natural environment. A field study with an external actor acting as someone reading Menstrupedia could have also been employed. The study could have benefited from distinguishing between questions that may have been put by bots and real users during the classification of questions. Another shortcoming that I observed was that the paper does not provide evidence or discussion about why MHE is essential for other genders. Interviews from health care professionals such as gynaecologists to gauge the accuracy and description of content present in Menstrupedia could add a further dimension to the research at hand.

The study does well in very clearly highlighting its shortcomings in terms of sampling and how the results can not be generalised to a broader context. The paper stresses the importance of dissemination of MHE among people in India. The work is novel because it rightly aligns its focus to ICT-based interventions for MHE in India, draws broader, more generalisable insights, and offers recommendations to make these interventions more effective and adopt a more comprehensive array of users especially in a multi-diverse country like India.

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