Reviewer’s report

Title: Soiling, soap, and support. A qualitative understanding of the effects of reusable sanitary pads and puberty education: Implications for future research and practice.

Version: 0 Date: 03 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Ina Jurga

Reviewer’s report:

The paper accompanies quantitative findings from the “Cycle of poverty trial” in Uganda, which is already published. While the article with the quantitative findings are of real importance/exceptional because it covered missing research, this paper is a bit of lesser importance, also due to it’s small size.

The challenge of this paper, in my opinion, was that it could not decide if it wanted to triangulate the quantitative finding, provide more recommendations for research tools and interventions or provide some general findings (yet, some findings could have also been research more are baseline, and are showing general challenges how to manage menstruation.

Some of the recommendations regarding more precise research questions are interesting and useful, especially on absenteeism, pain killer usage, soap usage), that MHM requires in-depth understanding of girls (women's) situation, needs and emotional & physiology and social context.

Overall; I would accept the paper with minor revisions. These are the following:

- Page 3 line 9 is an incomplete sentence.

- Explanation of sampling: the quantitative study was across 8 schools involving 1124 (respectively 1008) girls. This paper only includes 4 schools with 27 girls. (which makes 6,75 girls per school (?).

- Participants characteristics, such as age, (time of) participation in the trial

- Some missing clarifications: did socio-demographic factors play a role? did age of the respondents play a role? sometimes unclear if "many/most" girls were related to one of the 4 arms

- Missing a critical reflection regarding the choice of Afripads vs commercial pads, or content/length of the curriculum applied (1,25 h only with sessions including other aspects of adolescents)
- The broad interview topic guide is very confusing, while final thematic framework was precise (were open questions used... same questionnaire for all 27 girls?)

- the background quantitative study identified as secondary outcomes: "There were no significant differences in the psychosocial outcomes assessed across conditions at follow-up." this contradiction to this was, in my opinion, not reflected

To make the paper really good, I would recommend the authors to reflect again on the purpose, if they want

a) to put quantitative results into perspective: then need more information and discussions on those results (where there any conflicting or supportive findings?)

or b) to reflect on research tools: then more information on tools is needed

or c) to present general qualitative findings on MHM challenges, and reflect/discuss these more with other available research

This would require some more revisions, but I would also accept with minor revisions outlined above.

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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