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272 Exploring Period Poverty in English Schools: An Intersectional Feminist Lens of Health Inequities

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Period poverty is commonly defined as limited access to menstrual products due to financial constraints; however, it also concerns inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, and a lack of education about menstruation and reproductive health. Despite galvanising widespread sociocultural attention, research in the “Global North” remains scarce as it is not often recognised as a global public health crisis. Existing research mostly frames period poverty as an issue for the White working-class school girl, neglecting its impact on all who menstruate.

This PhD research explores young menstruators’ experiences of period poverty within an English educational setting, using an intersectional feminist framework to amplify marginalised voices. Institutional ethnography (IE) will critically examine how power dynamics and social relations within this institution shape lived experiences of period poverty from the standpoint of Year 8 and 9 students (age 12-14). A

secondary school in Derbyshire was chosen for its diversity of identity markers and plurality of overlapping identities to include those usually overlooked in critical menstruation research, such as students from migrant and ethnic minority communities.

The impact of gendered social hierarchies and their intersections with other economic, health and social inequalities will be analysed using 'the mosaic approach', combining traditional qualitative and participatory methods to create a 'living picture' of students' lives. This approach moves beyond a monetary- and product-focused conceptualisation of period poverty to better understand how it is a barrier to effective menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and menstrual health and hygiene (MHH).

As complementary research methods, IE and 'the mosaic approach' allow individuals' lived experiences to be situated within broader social structures and institutional practices. By connecting the micro- and macro-level, this research will answer calls for more rigorous evidence to inform period poverty policy in the "Global North" without downgrading the personal and the everyday.