

Beyond Bleeding: The Impact of Menstrual Concern and Self-Consciousness on Scent-Altering Product Selection

Abstract:

Introduction: Scent-altering menstrual and intimate-care products are widely used despite being medically unnecessary and may contribute to exposure to chemicals of concern. However, less is known about the psychological and symptom-related factors associated with their use. This study examined whether menstrual health-related quality of life (HRQL) was associated with scent-altering product use.

Methods: Cross-sectional baseline data from the FORGE study were analyzed among 146 reproductive-aged participants with complete data. HRQL was assessed using the UFS-QOL Concern and Self-consciousness subscales, transformed to a 0–100 scale, with lower scores indicating greater psychological burden. Logistic regression models estimated associations between HRQL scores and product use, with odds ratios (ORs) reported per 10-point increase in score. Models were sequentially adjusted for age, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment.

Results: Participants using general scent-altering products had lower Concern scores than non-users (28.61 vs. 43.97, $p < 0.001$). Each 10-point increase in Concern score was associated with 12% lower odds of general scent-altering product use (adjusted OR [aOR] = 0.881, 95% CI: 0.780–0.995), corresponding to approximately 14% higher odds per 10-point decrease in Concern. Concern was also associated with vaginal wipe use (aOR = 0.864, 95% CI: 0.751–0.993), corresponding to approximately 16% higher odds per 10-point decrease. Race/ethnicity was a significant covariate. Self-consciousness was not significantly associated with any product-use outcome after adjustment.

Discussion: Greater symptom-related Concern was associated with greater odds of scent-altering product use, particularly vaginal wipes. These findings suggest that symptom-related HRQL may influence intimate-care behaviors.

Conclusion: Understanding how symptom-related psychological burden influences scent-altering product use may help identify motivations for potentially unnecessary product exposure and inform future research on menstrual health behaviors.