

Thesis: Socioeconomic and Cultural Ideas of Endometriosis in Low and Middle-Income Countries: A Narrative Literature Review

Editor's note:

Emily Santora defended her thesis titled "Socioeconomic and Cultural Ideas of Endometriosis in Low and Middle-Income Countries: A Narrative Literature Review," in May 2019 in front of committee members Jane Maienschein, Carolina Abboud, and Ashley Hagaman, earning her a Bachelor's degree from Barrett, the Honors College. <https://repository.asu.edu/items/52679>

Abstract:

Endometriosis is a condition characterized by the growth of the endometrium, or the tissue that lines the uterus, outside of the uterus, and it is diagnosed through the presence of endometriotic lesions in the pelvic region. The disease is most often associated with abnormal and painful vaginal bleeding. Currently, minimal literature exists concerning the management of endometriosis in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), which may influence the lack of a cultural competent understanding of menstruation in LMICs and, therefore, a lack of evidence-based policies concerning menstruation.

Social and cultural barriers influencing endometriosis reporting and management in LMICs were examined through a systematic literature review. Online databases yielded a list of relevant studies. Then, use of MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software program, helped to extract and code specific text segments from each study that pertain to the research topic. In-context analysis of coded segments revealed the most common trends, which were organized into broader themes.

Findings demonstrated that social and cultural ideas regarding vaginal bleeding influenced the lack of disease reporting and management of endometriosis in LMICs. Socioeconomic challenges include a lack of hygiene and sanitation measures and education regarding menstruation and vaginal bleeding. Also, many diseases associated with the abnormal vaginal bleeding are often disregarded and not prioritized in clinical settings. It also became clear that cultural taboos regarding menstruation and vaginal bleeding often create feelings of anxiety and fear in women and girls throughout communities in LMICs. However, further research is needed to examine the ways in which women in those communities treat symptoms of irregular vaginal bleeding related to endometriosis. Socioeconomic, gender, and sex-related factors may influence the ways in which endometriosis is reported and treated and may affect the way the related diseases are understood. Evidence-based policies using a culturally competent understanding of abnormal vaginal bleeding in LMICs may help positively affect the reproductive health of women and girls in such areas.