



Factors associated with media portrayal of menstruation and its effects on menstruating school girls in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

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Abstract

Menstruation is the periodic loss of the uterine lining that occurs naturally in female's who have attained puberty. Menstruation attached with it many taboos and restrictions. Mass media and other social institutions play a significant role in creating perceptions about menstruation in the society. It is necessary to understand the impact media created through its portrayal of menstruation among menstruating girls in particular and society at large. This study intends to identify factors associated with media portrayal of menstruation and its effects on menstruating schoolgirls in Coimbatore Tamilnadu. A cross sectional study was conducted. A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 menstruating school girls in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. The items were put to KMO test with the value of 0.69 and Cronbach test with the value of 0.74 using IBM SPSS and the construct was grouped into two factors namely Media portrayal of menstruation and effects of media portrayal on menstruating school girls with 6 items and 4 items respectively. This study is a part of ICMR funded project titled "Strategic Communication for Menstruation Health, Hygiene Management among school Girls in Tamilnadu".

Keywords: Factor analysis, Media Portrayal, Effects of Media Portrayal, Menstruation, Portrayal of Menstruation, school girls.

Introduction

Menstruation is the periodic loss of the uterine lining that occurs naturally in female's who have attained puberty. Menstruation attached with it many taboos and restrictions. Mass media and other social institutions play a significant role in creating opinions about menstruation in the society. It is necessary to understand the impact, media created through its portrayal of menstruation among menstruating girls in particular and society at large. In this digital era, people are able to access mass media and social media very easily. The portrayal of menstruation in media sets the agenda in the society. It plays a crucial role in creating opinion of the masses that directs the menstruating girls to follow certain rules and restrictions¹.

It is very much essential to understand how media portrays menses and what direct effects it has on the menstruating girls. Media portrays menses as debase, taboo, associated with evil spirits, stigma and unclean. Hence menstruating girls also feel inferior about themselves while they menstruate. They consider themselves impure, unclean, illness, curse of god and a stigma to show the menstrual blood to others. Forgetting the fact, it is their strength and nature's gift. Furthermore, portrayal of menstruation in media have a deeper impact on 'collective consciousness' of the society thereby it directs the menstruating girls to follow certain rules and regulations. This study intends to find out how media portrays menstruation and its direct effects on menstruating schoolgirls in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu.

It is the need of the hour to understand the factors associated with media portrayal of menstruation and its effects.

Review of literature: Many researchers have been done on the media portrayal of menstruation and its effects. Del Saz-Rubiobelieved the rhetorical ideas and social structures portrayed in media might occasionally appear to be "natural." But people believed it and accepted it and practiced the same in their day-to-day life².

Johnston-Robledo, viewed that in several culture menstruating women are viewed as social stigma and they attach negativity with it. They used this as a tool to suppress women. He also believed that menstrual blood was portrayed as a stigmatized material in mass media this in turn had negative interpretation on menstruation³. According to Oxley, media portrayal of menstrual blood and menstruation as stigma women were forced to hide the blood from public. Kowalski believed because of media portrayal of menstruation as stigma this made women feel uncomfortable and stigmatized while they menstruate⁴.

McMahon research found that numerous girls were pressured by society to keep menstruation a secret, since it was portrayed as shame by Mass media. He was of the opinion that females would be afraid of being teased by others if the blood stains are visible on their clothes while menstruate at schools and in other public places⁵.

The stereotype portrayal of menstruation in mass media had a negative impact on girls. It also creates a public opinion that menstruating women are impure and unclean⁶. Hence women were forced to follow the restrictions imposed on them by society and various other institutions that functions within the society.

Methodology

This study adopted quantitative research approach to examine the factors associated with media portrayal of menstruation and its effects on menstruating school girls in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. A cross sectional study was conducted and a structured questionnaire was administered to 100 menstruating school girls in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The structured questionnaire comprised of three sections the first section records the demographic details such as age, education, number of members in the family of the respondents. The second section tries to record the opinion of school girls about the portrayal of menses in mass media. And the third section records the menstruating school girl's acceptance of media portrayal of menses and their consecutive behavioural changes in line with portrayal of menses in mass media. The study sample consisted of 100 menstruating school girls in Coimbatore. Participants were given copies of the questionnaires both in English and Tamil and written consent forms were taken from the participants and their parents respectively. They were also informed in prior that their personal information will be used only for the study purpose. The questionnaire was presented before the ethical committee of 'PSG IMSR' and obtained their consent as well.

Objective: This study intended to identify the factors associated with media portrayal of menstruation and its effects on menstruating schoolgirls in Coimbatore Tamilnadu.

Results and Discussion

Criterion validity: After reviewing the relevant studies, the most appropriate metrics for measuring the portrayal of menstruation in media and its effects on school going menstruating girls were selected. The chosen items were assessed by the subject matter expert, and the instrument was created in response to their feedback.

The item pool: The instrument was designed with 10-items with five-point measuring Likert scale, to identify the factors associated with the media portrayal of menstruation and its effects on menstruating school girls in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. The values of the Likert scale flow as (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree).

Content relevance: The expert panel reviewed the construct used in the study. Based On the expert's opinion, language and structural changes were made to make it understandable by the

respondents. After thorough scrutiny, each item was made concise and specific to the research objective.

Reliability: A questionnaire was administered to 100 respondents who were menstruating girls from the age group of 13 – 15 studying in various schools in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. A Cronbach's alpha was performed with the collected data and the output value is 0.741. Test and retest were performed to prove the reliability of the questionnaire. All statistical analysis was carried using IBM SPSS Statistical Software. The Media Portrayal of Menstruation and its effect on menstruating schoolgirls has a reliability value of $r = 0.741$.

Analysis by principal components: An attempt was made to identify the factors associated with the media portrayal of menstruation and its effects on menstruating school girls in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu using a principal axis factor analysis to identify the latent variables.

Table-1: KMO and Bartlett's Test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.684
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	406.046
df	45
Sig.	.000
The value of KMO and Bartlett's Test = .684.	

Table-2: Rotated Component Matrix.

Rotated Component Matrix	Component	
	1	2
Concealment of menses blood in Media portrayal makes me believe menses is impure and unclean	-	.887
Concealment of menses blood before others in Media portrayal makes me believe menses is a stigma	-	.732
Concealment of menses blood before others in Media portrayal makes me believe menses is a stigma	-	.732
Media portrays menses as a decease	.949	-
Media portrays menses is linked with spirits	.990	-
Media portrays menses as taboo	1.089	-
Media portrays menses as a restricted movement	.988	-
I believe, accept and follow what media portrays about menstruation	-	.844
I feel menstruation is a natural phenomenon of reproductive health of a female	-	.642
I feel menstruation is an illness of a female	-	.693
I feel menstruation is a curse of God	-	.759

Construct validity (0.741) was also assessed using exploratory factor analysis (KMO=0.69) with varimax rotation. The 10 items were categorized into two factors one with 6 items and second with 4 items respectively. And they were labeled as,

Factor-1: Media Portrayal.
Factor-2: Effects of Media Portrayal on Menstruating Girls.

The following flow diagram indicates the Factors identified and the items respectively.

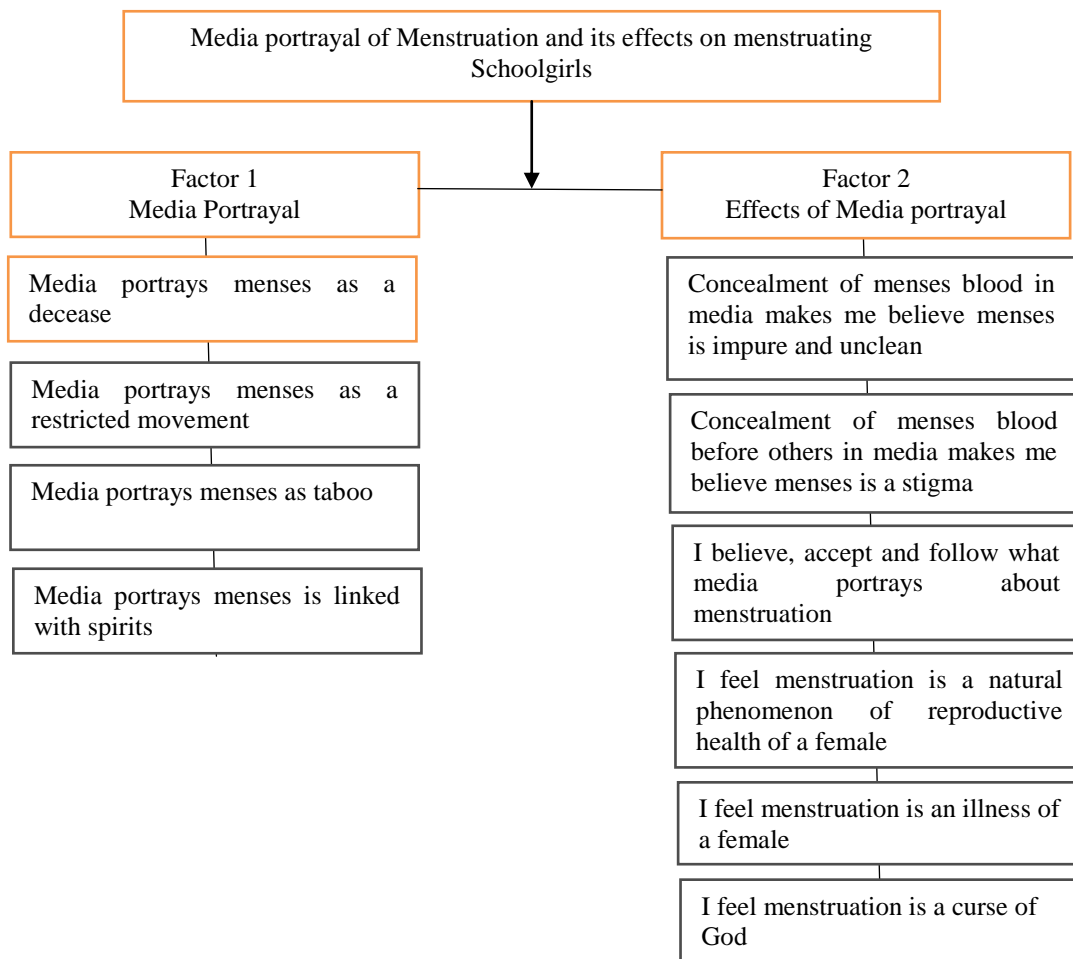


Figure-1: Flow diagram of Factors identified.

Table-3: Factors Loading.

Items	Factors Loading	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
Media portrays menses as a decease	.949	
Media portrays menses is linked with spirits	.990	
Media portrays menses as taboo	1.089	
Media portrays menses as a restricted movement	.988	
Concealment of menses blood in Media portrayal makes me believe menses is impure and unclean		.887
Concealment of menses blood before others in Media portrayal makes me believe menses is a stigma		.732
I believe, accept and follow what media portrays about menstruation		.844
I feel menstruation is a natural phenomenon of reproductive health of a female		.642
I feel menstruation is an illness of a female		.693
I feel menstruation is a curse of God		.759

Conclusion

A reliable and valid questionnaire was used to record the factors associated with media portrayal of menstruation and its effects on menstruating schoolgirls in Coimbatore Tamilnadu. Explanatory factor analysis yielded a statistically significant two-factors model. The two factors were labeled as the media portrayal (cause) and the effects on menstruating female's (effects). A KMO and Bartlett's Test proves significant value of 0.69 and Cronbach's alpha coefficients proves significant value of 0.74. The instrument used to measure the factors associated with media portrayal of menstruation and its effect on menstruating schoolgirls were made with internal consistency. The results from test and retest method found satisfactory for all items. This study establishes the fact that the media portrayal of menses has a deeper effect socially, economically, psychological and also physiologically on menstruating school girls in Coimbatore. Media portrays menses as disease, insisted restricted movement, taboo and linked with spirits which caused the effects on the menstruating school girls in Coimbatore Tamilnadu that made them believe menses as impure, unclean, stigma, illness and curse of God. The study establishes the fact that media plays an important role in constructing public opinion and has deeper effects on the society. In order to remove stigma from menstruation positive projection of menses in media is essential.

Limitations: The samples are restricted to Coimbatore district. The Participants were shy in answering the questions related to menstruation. The respondents for the study were selected only from Coimbatore district. The research setting can be expanded across Tamilnadu to make it more reliable.

Scope for future study: Many researchers feel menstruation as a taboo subject to be discussed. Hence a dark silence prevailed about doing research on this topic. In order to identify the problems associated with reproductive health of women more researches have to be done in this domain.

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