

Media menstrual attitude and self-compassion affected menstrual suppression willingness

BACKGROUND

Menstrual suppression has been used as a treatment for 20 years and it's also been an increasingly common choice of lifestyle. Past research revealed that different attitudes towards menstruation may have different impact on willingness to choose menstrual suppression (Johnston-Robledo et al., 2003; Rose et al., 2008). Media content such as commercials and magazine articles has been influential in shaping people's attitudes towards menstruation, especially enhancing negative attitudes and stigma (e.g., Coutts and Berg, 1993). Thus, it's important to investigate how media content may influence menstrual suppression tendency. Additionally, people differ widely in their responses to adverse experiences such as negative aspects of menstruation. For example, people with higher self-compassion tend to be more nonjudgmental and kinder to themselves in hard times, and they are less likely to be affected by social influences such as objectification and sexual stigma (e.g., Liss & Erchull, 2015). Building on these, the current research aims at examining the effect of media attitudes on menstrual suppression willingness and how self-compassion may buffer the effect.

METHOD

250 female students (75.5% Caucasian; $M_{AGE} = 19.27$; $SD_{AGE} = 1.32$) with menstrual experiences from TCU completed:

Individual differences scales:

- *Self-Objectification Questionnaire*. 10 (5 appearance-focused, e.g., weight; 5 competence-focused, e.g., physical coordination; Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). 1 = least important, 9 = very much important.
- *Menstruation Attitude Questionnaire*. 35 items, 5 Subscales: menstruating as a debilitating event, bothersome event, natural event, predictability, and denial of any effect of menstruation. (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1980).
- *Menstrual Symptom Questionnaire*. 24 items to measure the frequency participants experienced menstruation-related symptoms on a 5 point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always; Chesney & Tasto, 1975).

Manipulations

- *Menstrual Attitude Prime*.
 - Menstruation as a bothersome experience (e.g., "I'm still completely stunned with how horrible my PMS is, and how much I hate having my period month after month"; Meraki Lane, n.d.)
 - Menstruation as a healthy and natural experience (e.g., "I view menstruation as a sacred time when we can invite in slowing down, nurturing, and love."; Hurray Kimmay, 2019).

Women who are more critical of themselves are more likely to suppress menstruation when they see media describing it as a positive thing, whereas women who have more self-love are not affected by the media's description of menstruation.



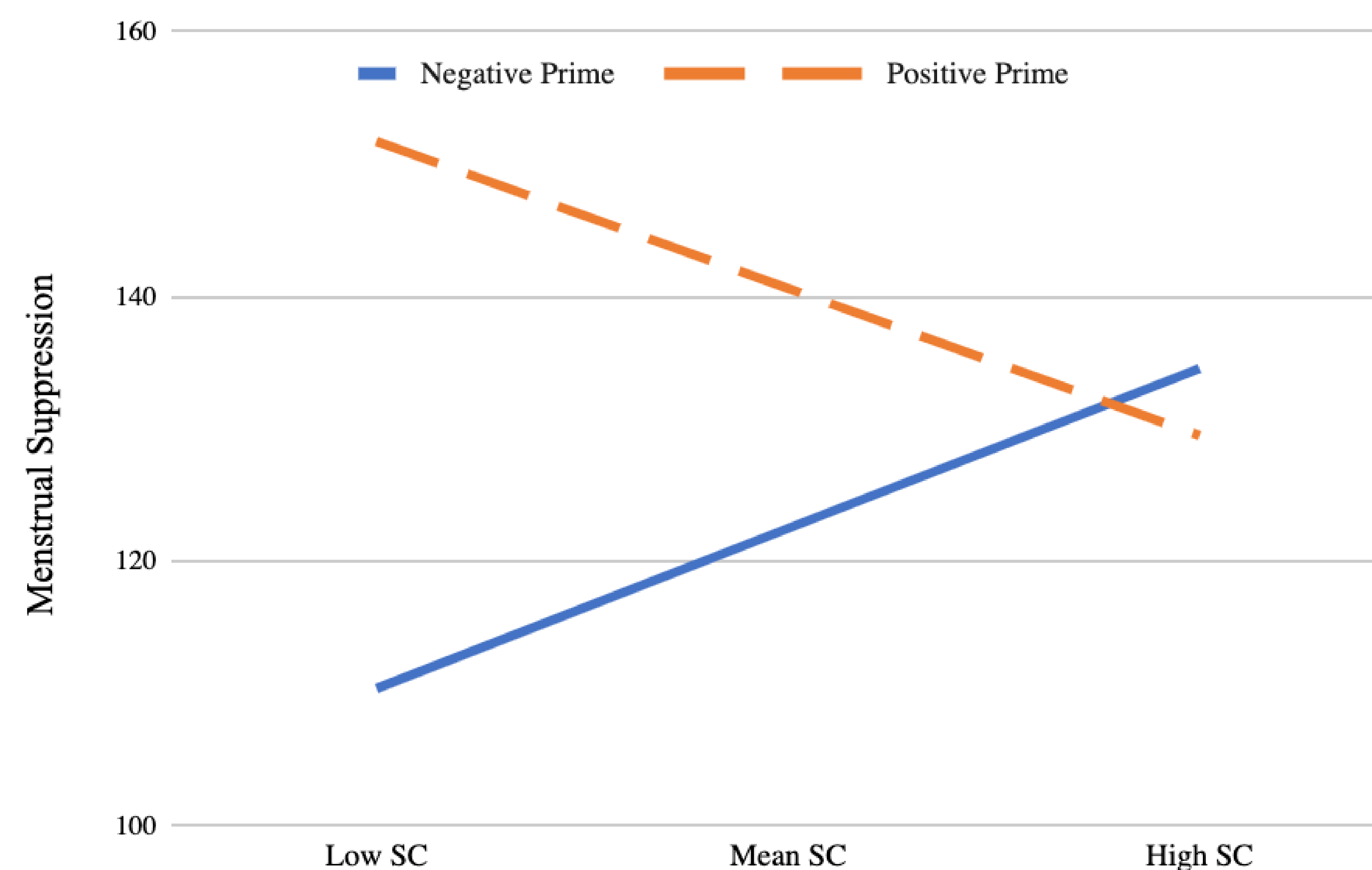
Dependent Variable

- *Menstrual Suppression Scale*. 7 items on attitudes towards menstrual suppression, willingness to suppress their own menstruation, and how much they would like to know more about menstrual suppression on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; Johnston-Robledo et al., 2003).

Moderator

- *Self-Compassion Scale*. 26 items using a 1-5 Likert scale (1 = almost never, 5 = almost always) with higher score indicating higher self-compassion (Neff, 2003; e.g., "I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain").

Figure 1. 2-way interaction between menstrual attitude primes and self-compassion on menstrual suppression.



RESULTS

- Significant 2-way moderated regression examining the interaction between the media menstrual attitudes prime and self-compassion on menstrual suppression tendency ($b = -.1.69$ ($SE = .79$), $t = -2.12$, $p = .03$, $R^2 = .03$).
- At low level of self-compassion, participants showed significantly higher tendency to suppress their menstruation after being primed with a passage embracing and praising menstruation, while participants being primed with a passage showing dismissive attitude towards menstruation had lower menstrual suppression willingness, ($b = 41.32$ ($SE = 15.39$), $t = 2.69$, $p = .008$).

DISCUSSION

Females who had lower self-compassion showed significantly higher tendency to suppress their menstruation after being primed with an online media passage depicting menstruation as a healthy and creative event, whereas they had lower menstrual suppression willingness following reading a negatively toned passage describing menstruation as messy and debilitating. Participants with medium or high self-compassion were not affected by either type of passage. More research is needed to further elucidate the role of menstrual suppression in low-self-compassion people's response to media depiction of menstruation.

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