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THE ROLE OF MENSTRUAL CYCLE TRACKING APPS IN WOMEN OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Introduction

The rise of digital health technologies has revolutionized the way people perceive and participate in their physiological experiences. Among these technologies is the menstrual tracking app (MTA), which is an essential feature for women to be able to predict their menstrual periods and gain further knowledge about their health. Although these technologies have been designed to help women develop a sense of agency and understanding about their health, referred to as "empowerment," recent anecdotal and empirical evidence points towards the fact that these technologies may also be leading women to develop anxiety and obsessive behavior. This duality of the role that these technologies play may be further understood if examined in relation to the concept of generations [1].

While menstruation has been largely absent in technology, the past 5 years have witnessed the sharp rise of FemTech. Menstrual tracking apps are a key area of personal informatics, with the potential to empower users and challenge oppressive social structures while enabling individual-level and population-level insights [1]. Period tracking apps allow some users to feel empowered in a neoliberal context that is frustrating and dissatisfying, whether around mainstream healthcare and professional medical science or labor pressures to self-optimize and be resilient [2, 3].

Goal

To evaluate the impact of applications that monitor menstrual function on the psychological comfort of women.

Materials and methods of research

An online survey was conducted and the data were collected via a structured self-administered questionnaire.60 participants were distributed among the following 10 countries: Sri Lanka – 37 (61.7%), India – 10 (16.6%), Belarus – 3 (5%), Maldives – 2 (3.3%), Nigeria – 2 (3.3%), Pakistan – 2 (3.3%), United Kingdom – 1 (1.7%), Canada – 1 (1.7%), Italy – 1 (1.7%), Bangladesh – 1 (1.7%). Many other well-known sources like WHO Foundation, ScienceDirect and ResearchGate articles were also utilized.

The results of the research and their discussion

The majority of participants of this study, (60%, n=36) were aged 21–29, followed by those aged 14–20 (21.7%, n=13) and 30–45 (13.3%, n=8). Respondents over 46 represented less than 5% (n=3) of the sample. This distribution provides adequate representation for comparing younger (ages 14–29, n=49) and older (ages 30–55, n=11) users. Among respondents, Flo emerged as the most frequently used menstrual tracking application, preferred by 31.7% (n=19) of participants. A personal calendar was the second most common, utilized by 23.3% (n=14), followed by Flo

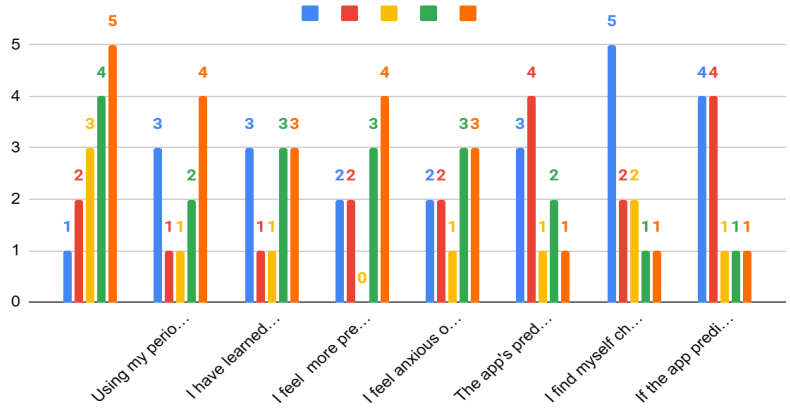
at 16.7% (n=10) and 13.3% (n=8) indicated that they do not use any apps. A small proportion of respondents (15%, n=9) reported using other applications such as “Period & Cycle Tracker, My Period calendar, Clue, Cycles, PC, Ptracker, Maya and Femometer.

Table 1 represents the results of the duration of consumption of MTAs between Older and Younger generations with a ($p=0.535$; $\chi^2=0.386$).

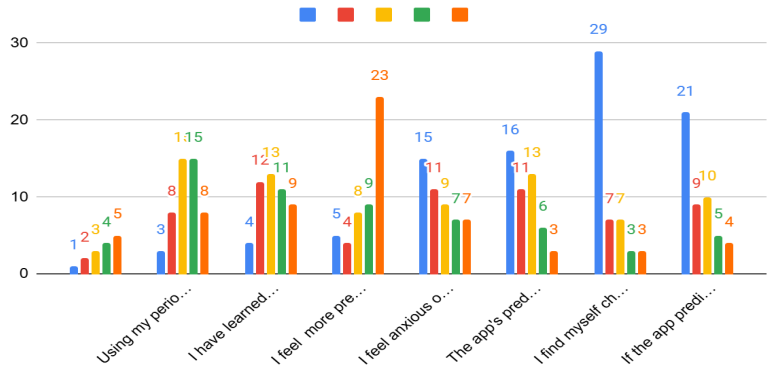
Table 1 – Results of the duration of consumption of MTAs

Duration of consumption of MTAs	Older Generations	Younger Generations
Less than 2 years	(45%)5	(65%)32
More than 2 years	(55%)6	(35%) 17

Based on the results shown in Figure 1a, on the psychological impact of a predictive MTAs on older generations, the highest negative response was “I feel anxious or worried if my period is even one day ‘late’ according to the app”, while the highest positive was “I feel more prepared for my period because of the app’s predictions”. The results shown in Figure 1b, on the psychological impact of predictive MTAs on younger generations indicate that the highest positive was also “I feel more prepared for my period because of the app’s predictions”. The highest negative was “If the app predicts my fertile window or period incorrectly, it negatively affects my mood.”



a



b

Figure 1 – Responses towards psychological opinions: a – of the Older responders; b – of the younger responders (1 – Using my period app helps me feel more in control of my health. ; 2 – I have learned something new about my body or my cycle that I didn’t know before because of the app ;3 – I feel more prepared for my period (e.g., carrying supplies, planning events) because of the app’s predictions; 4 – I feel anxious or worried if my period is even one day ‘late’ according to the app; 5 – The app’s predictions sometimes cause me unnecessary stress ; 6 – I find myself checking the app obsessively, multiple times a day ;7 – If the app predicts my fertile window or period incorrectly, it negatively affects my mood)

Conclusions

This cross-sectional study found that while menstrual tracking apps empower both generations by fostering a greater sense of preparedness, they also provoke distinct forms of anxiety. These findings suggest that although MTAs successfully provide a sense of control, the psychological trade-off varies by age, with anxiety manifesting differently based on the specific life stage and priorities of the user.

The use of a period tracker app empowers women by helping them gain a better understanding of their bodies, ultimately enhancing their social, academic, and health-related lives.

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