

The Issue of Menstrual Leave

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Abstract: The short article deals with the issue of Menstrual Leave in broad sense focusing on the process of its dissemination among the masses. It builds on the stakeholders at all the levels. The complex issue is dealt in a simple way where all the related issues to the menstrual leave are touched upon. It deals with the issue at individual level Vs the mass level among the women folks. The broad take home lesson is that it deals with a complex issue where the lens of right and wrong approach cannot be applied. It would be better not to accelerate the stigma related to the menstrual leave.

Keywords: Menstrual Leave, Rights, Gender Ecology, Equality.

INTRODUCTION

Global Menstrual Hygiene (MH) Day was officially initiated by the German-based NGO WASH United in 2013 and observed globally for the first time on 28th May 2014. The movement began as a 28-day social media campaign in May 2013 to raise awareness about menstruation. Due to highly positive engagement, it was established as an annual day of action on May 28, representing the typical 28-day cycle and average 5-day duration of menstruation [1].

Following that, the concept of gender ecology came into focus in which the issue of menstrual leave got attention. All stakeholders related to work places where women work started to prioritize the issue of menstrual leave at global, regional, national, state, district, block & village level [2].

In 2023, Spain became the first European nation to grant women the right to paid menstrual leave & it was followed by Sweden. In India, the nation does not have a central law for paid menstrual leave. However, states like

Karnataka, Bihar, Odisha & Keralam have paid menstrual leaves. These states have independently adopted such a policy on women's health & well-being [2].

Among the private sectors, in 2025, Larsen & Toubro introduced 12-day menstrual leave for the women employees. Other organizations such as AU Small Finance Bank, Orient Electric (CK Birla Group), Swiggy & Zomato have adopted such policies. At the national level, a proposed bill addressing women's rights to menstrual leave & free menstrual products awaits enactment [2].

Biologically, studies have cited that 50-90% of females experience painful symptoms that are related to menstruation. The adopted menstrual leave will help the females to rest properly and seek medical help without facing any issue related to workplace. Article 21 & the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 are the laws that relate to menstrual leave in India [3,4,5].

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REFLECTION

It facilitates biological differences & supports workplace inclusivity. It could unintentionally reinforce gender biases. Employers might hesitate to hire or promote women in roles requiring continuous availability fearing additional leave requirements like maternity leaves. This sets back workplace equality rather than advancing work place equality [2,6,7].

Rights, equality, gender ecology, work place balance, stigma are the phrases that are related to menstrual leave. All these complexities surrounding menstrual leave have shown that where ever the laws are reinforced, women workforce is not using the benefits because of these complexities. The phenomena seem to influence the policy makers, academicians, managers more than the masses. It has become a top to down approach rather than a bottom to top approach. That's why it is not keeping pace with the beneficiaries at large even though privileges are being offered at various levels [2,6,7].

CONCLUSION

The issue of menstrual leave seems to be a personal issue as women want to be de-stigmatized & not the other way. The other crucial aspect is the link between Menstruation and pregnancy which are the two sides of the coin. One physiology stops & the other physiology begin. The average duration of both these physiologies differ wildly. The benefits that are attributed to pregnancy and maternity leaves cannot be attributed at the same scale for the menstrual leave.

It would be better if the stakeholders leave the monthly 5-day issue to the masses so that the masses including the male folks do not give extra focus on the physiology and rather help the women folks to deal with this physiology. The process would lead to work places where gender equality is practiced.

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Declaration

The lead author declares that the contents in the article are suggestive in nature.

Conflict of Interest

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