



# A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF MENSTRUAL LEAVE POLICY FOR WORKING PEOPLE WITH REFERENCE TO ERNAKULAM DISTRICT

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## **Abstract**

Menstruation is a normal occurrence that happens in the female body which is accompanied by uncomfortable symptoms such as cramping, bloating and mood swings. A person who undergoes menstruation has to bear both physical and mental stress. Menstruation can pose various challenges for working people so that essential rest is necessary for them. Menstrual leave is a disputable matter that has been discussed for a long time with arguments both for and against its implementation. The study has been conducted to know the perception of implementation of menstrual leave policy among working people with reference to Ernakulam district to examine whether the introduction of such policy is required or not. A Descriptive Research including self-structured questionnaire are used to collect the information from the employees of Ernakulam district which include 233 female, 95 male and 2 transgenders. A greater part of the employees is supportive towards implementation of menstrual leave policy. A law mandating would ensure that every organisation is obliged to provide menstrual leave policy which can help to combat discrimination against women in workplace, reduce the stigma attached to menstruation and help to contribute to better employee retention.

## **Keywords**

Menstruation, Menstrual Leave policy, Working people, Workplaces.

## **Introduction**

Menstruation has always been enshrouded with misconceptions and social stigmas in India. Today women are surpassing in many fields and achieve their own milestones but menstruation act as a barrier in their career. By considering this notion of menstrual leave is discernible from the latter part of 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Menstrual leave policies also known as period leave policy allow the employees to recess from work for menstrual related symptoms such as cramps, heavy bleeding etc. These policies are designed to provide employees with a way to manage their menstrual health without having to use their existing sick leaves or vacation time. Japan, Indonesia, Taiwan and South Korea are some of the nations that has executed menstrual leave policies. None of the other Indian states have implemented a menstrual leave policy so far except Kerala and Bihar. There have been tries to propose bills to allow women to take leave during their menstrual cycle in parliament, and until now, none of these attempts have been fruitful or effective. Some companies like Zomato, Swiggy, Byjus, Mathrubumi, Culture Machines, Gozooop etc has initiated to provide leaves to their employees. However Supreme Court of India indicate that menstrual pain leave has various aspects and thus employers may be less likely to engage in hiring women if they were enforced to provide menstrual leave, as it may negatively affect their bottom line and thus rejected the PIL (Public Interest Litigation) regarding menstrual leave. So, in this context it is crucial to examine how working people perceive the execution of menstrual leave policies and understand the impact these policies may have on advocating for gender parity and bolstering woman's health. This paper delves into the different perspectives on working people may have regarding menstrual leave policies, emphasizing the need to create clear guidelines and reduce the misconception to ensure fairness and inclusivity in the work places.

## **Literature review**

In this section, we are intended to point out some of the reviews by the prominent researchers who direct us to identify this research problem. We have included 10 literature reviews from 2002 to 2022 in our study and this will help to identify the problems relating to menstrual leave so far.

Widyani, I. D. A. (2022) discuss about the menstrual leave policy between the genders and addresses that this is a kind of policy which protect the women especially in the workplaces and also highlight that it can be a policy which will lead to discrimination between the genders in a workplace. Hennegan J, et al (2022) has conducted a cross sectional study which focuses on working women from various fields. This study highlights a measurement gap which highlights a measurement gap that helps to improve the menstrual health among the adult working women in Uganda. A concept called MPNS is introduced in their study which is used to assess menstrual experiences of working women with the help of survey and figure out that un availed needs relating to menorrhoea management will automatically increase the appetite to dodge the work in their respective fields during menstruation. Zhu, X. (2022, Aug 11) highlights the impact of Dysmenorrhoea which is a menstrual related ill health which can happen between 15 to 50 years of age. The main aim of the study was to recognize the life experience of the working women during menses which is understood by conducting online survey. The study has also highlighted that majority of the companies are sometime unable to figure out the problems of the people during menstruation who became un competent due to reduced less productivity in the workplaces. Bhattacharya, A., Kumar, S., & Pattnaik, A. (2021) examines that majority people has trouble with physical as well as mental agony during menstrual period. It is an Exploratory Research which highlights the issues relating to catamenia period but also pointed out that no strategies have been implemented confront such a situation. Tanisha. (2021).addresses the crucial queries on the comprehensiveness of the women in an organisation during hormonal cycle. The researcher has highlighted their perspectives on traditional and modern view which points on the need for such policy in such a situation in workplaces. Raj P et al (2021) examines the first day period leave approach.

In this study the intention of the researcher is to analyse the beliefs of the genders on menstruation in the workplaces. It also mention about various nations which caters related policies. Anandhi, S., & Selvam, S. (2021) study explores the perception of working women towards menstrual leave policy in India. The findings indicated that women were supportive of the policy, with most of them stating that it would help them to manage their menstrual symptoms and improve their overall well-being. Marathe, S. V., & Raj, J. P. (2020) has done research to analyse the different perception of Indian students on menstruation among the organisation and has figure out diversities in responses among the different genders in an organisation. Goyal, R. S., & Gayathri, S. (2020). This study examines the perceptions of working women towards menstrual leave policy. It found that most women believed that such policies would be beneficial for their physical and mental health, and that they would be more productive and efficient if given the option of taking menstrual leave. Thomas, j., & Augustine, A. (2018, april) has conducted a study to identify the beliefs and attitudes of menstruating women by conducting survey on 30 respondents. The detention of the study include that such concept alleviates the equality concepts in the organisations. Harnois, G., & Harnois, C. (2012)'s book discusses the biological basis of menstruation and menopause, providing a comprehensive overview of the menstrual cycle and its effects on women's health. It highlights the importance of menstrual leave policies in promoting gender equity in the workplace. Nohara, M., Momoeda, M., Kubota, T., & Nakabayashi, M. (2011) has conducted research that point out that stress Is one of the major elements relating to menstrual pain which greatly affects the female employees in Japan. Roberts, T. A. et al (2002) has argued that whenever menstrual condition reveals among their co-workers at a workplace, there involves a stigma and acknowledge them as incompetent in their work and think that they are unfitted in their workplaces.

### **Statement of the problem**

Menstrual leave policy has been used as a debatable theme for a long period of time in India. Many studies around the world have shown that it is not always possible for the women to work efficiently during the periods. Even though the Apex court of India dismissed a plea of Public Interest Litigation seeking menstrual leave for workers and students nationwide. The court held that granting menstrual leave would create seclusion and perpetuate stereotypes related to menstruation. The court felt that granting menstrual leave would not be an effective or practical solution to address issues related to menstruation. So, a study has been conducted to analyse the perception of the working employees of Ernakulam District on Menstrual Leave Policy and also to analyse the challenges facing by the working people during these days.

### **Objectives**

Based on the review of literature and the research gap, the following objectives are encompassed in the study.

1. To study the perception of menstrual leave between the genders
2. To analyse the challenges and measures to improve menstrual leave for working people.

### **Method of Research**

Descriptive Research has been used to conduct the study. Stratified Random Sampling is used in the study. Questionnaires are used to collect the information from the workers of Ernakulam District. For this purpose, literature and previous studies are studied from reliable journals, studies, reports, websites. Self -structured questionnaires which include both open ended and closed ended questions was used among the respondents from various job fields including IT sector, Medical Field, Teachers, Banking sector and others. The study was conducted on 330 respondents which include 233 female 95 male and 2 transgenders from Ernakulam District. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 50. Frequency, correlation, ANOVA and chi square tests has been used to conduct the study which shows a reliability of 0.763.

**Data Analysis**

**H1- There is a significant Differences between Occupation and necessity for the Menstrual Leave Policy.**

**TABLE 1**

		occupation	menstrual leave policy is necessary
occupation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.156**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	330	330
menstrual leave policy is necessary	Pearson Correlation	-.156**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	330	330

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of correlation on occupation and menstrual leave policy necessity is displayed in the table 1. The P value is recorded .004 which is less than 0.05. So, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Out of 330 responses,234 of the respondents are extremely supporting the menstrual Leave Policy. Because 133 of the response reflects that sometimes Menstruation affects the working Hours of the employees and 285 respondents believe that Menstrual Leave would have a positive impact on workplace productivity and employee wellbeing as well as many of the working people are facing health issues during their Menstrual period.

**H1: There is significant differences between the Genders and the implementation, acceptance and organization offering Menstrual Leave Policy.**

**TABLE 2**

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
implementation	Between Groups	2.182	2	1.091	5.047	.007
	Within Groups	70.670	327	.216		
	Total	72.852	329			
menstrual benefit bill,2017	Between Groups	6.663	2	3.332	3.987	.019
	Within Groups	273.228	327	.836		
	Total	279.891	329			
	Between Groups	5.402	2	2.701	11.969	.000

organization offering menstrual leave policy	Within Groups	73.798	327	.226		
	Total	79.200	329			

The result on genders and implementation of Menstrual Leave is displayed on the table 2. The P value is recorded 0.007 which is less than 0.05. So, the Alternative Hypothesis is accepted. Out of 330 responds, 267 of the respondents are supportive to the implementation of Menstrual Leave Policy because as per the gender perception most of the working people have painful period for about 2 days and many of the organizations are not providing sufficient facilities for the working people. The above table 2 reveals the acceptance of Menstrual Benefit Bill,2017. The P value is recorded 0.019 which is less than 0.05. So, the Alternative Hypothesis is accepted.123 respondents are strongly agreeing with the Menstrual Benefit Bill, 2017 as the respondents thinks that the norms in the bill are relevant. In case of the result on genders and Organization offering Menstrual Leave Policy, which has been displayed on the table 2, the P value is recorded 0.000 which is less than 0.05. So, the Alternative Hypothesis is accepted.198 respondent's organization are not offering Menstrual Leave Policy.

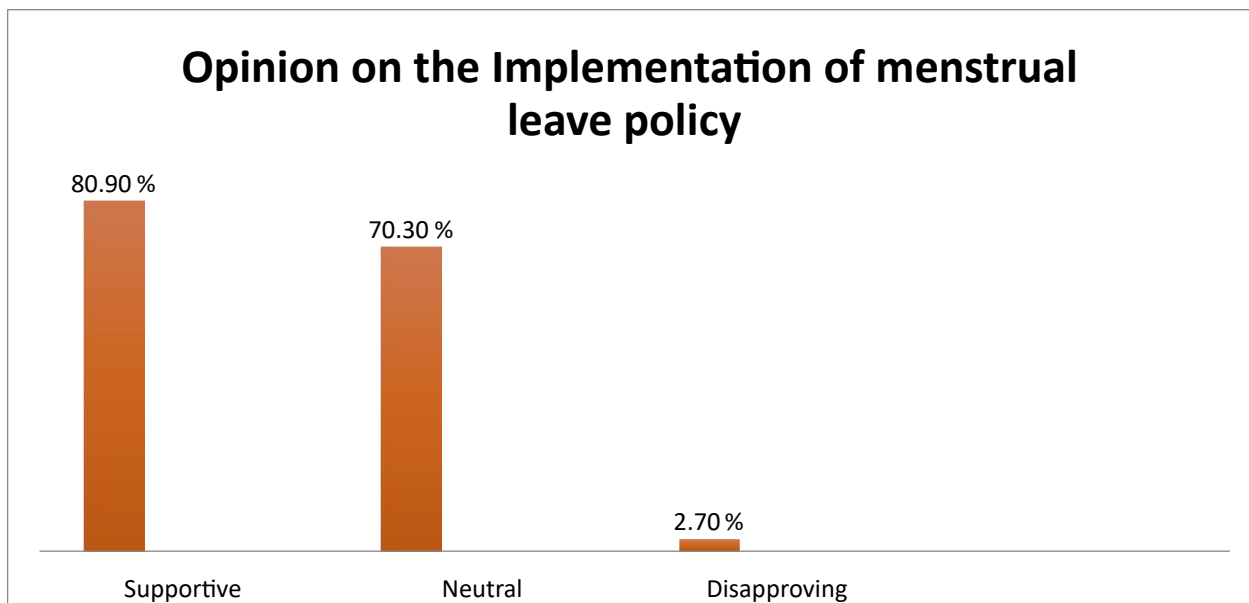
## Findings

It is intended to access the perception of Menstrual Leave Policy in workplaces to identify the acceptance of this policy among the employees of Ernakulam District.

Figure 1

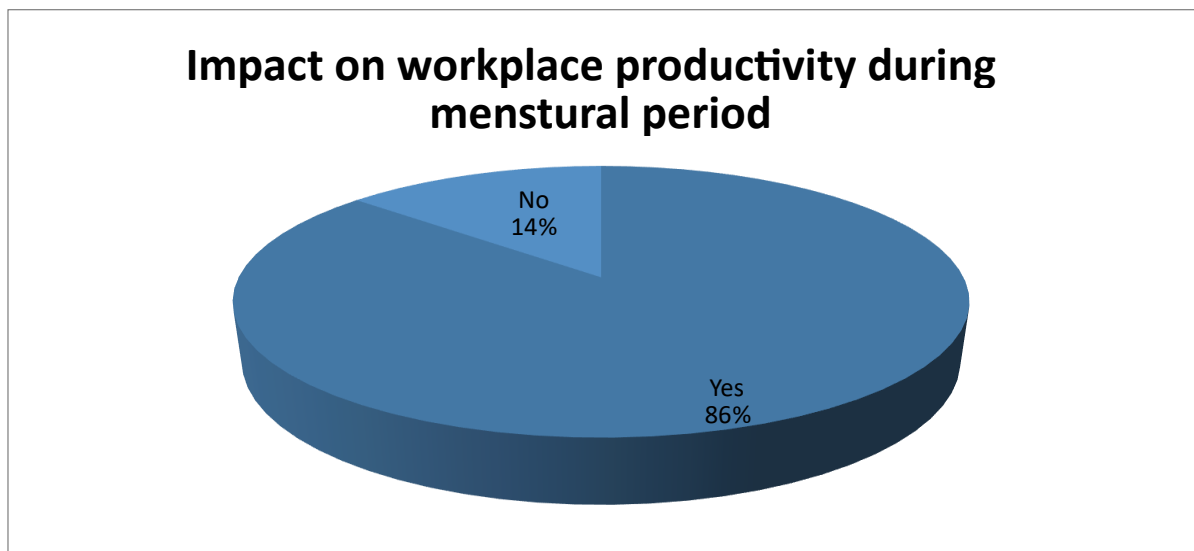


Figure 2



70.6% of the respondents are females because there is a stereotype that menstrual concept is concerned only for women. Age category chosen for the study is between 18 -50 in which 52.1% of the respondents are freshers. 22.1% of the respondents are from teaching field, 21.8% are from banking sector and 21.5% are from IT sectors and least response have been received from medical field (13%). The study has response from employees between the age category of 18 to 50 in which 52.1% are freshers and 33.9% are between 25 to 35 years because they are much progressive to break the stigma of menstrual concept. 80.9% of the respondents were supportive towards this policy because they believe that menstrual leave policies are put in place to assist women in coping with the physical and emotional symptoms that come with menstruation such as pain, cramps and fatigue and it aims to promote the overall menstrual health of women in the workplace. 10.3 % of the respondents are still are not willing to help their colleagues when they are on their periods because those people consider menstruation as a stigma to address it in the public. 66% of the respondents have an opinion that Menstrual leave should be provided for 1 to 3 days. Paid leaves are mostly preferred by 66.8% of the respondents. 60% of the respondent's organisation is not offering Menstrual Leave Policy because organisation have lately started to implement the practice of providing Menstrual Leave and the Indian government has not yet made it a legal requirement or addressed this issue in any laws or policies. 48.8% of the organisation does not provide menstrual hygiene awareness campaign as many of the employees are aware of the concept and hygiene process through various social media platforms and other sources. 40.6% respondents prefer to work from home instead of taking leave but 33.3% have a neutral opinion regarding this because some professions like banking, medical field etc need physical presence in their work. Menstrual pain varies from women to women. As per 52.4% of the respondent's point of view, menstruation is a barrier in the career of a women. 32.1% of the respondents have an opinion that Menstrual pain have a very large impact among the working people. Respondents have a neutral opinion regarding the effectiveness of menstrual leave policy in Kerala. 40.3 % of the respondents have an opinion that sometimes menstruation affects the efficiency of the employees in their working hours as compared to other days because some of the women have severe symptoms like menstrual cramps, mood swings, back pain, fatigue etc. Menstrual pain varies from one person to another and in each of the time pain experience of the employees may differ. So, 35.8% of the respondents thinks that women will use this policy occasionally depending upon the discomfort. Even though people are aware of menstruation and its related health issues, 25.8% of the respondent's organisation are not providing sufficient facilities like sick rooms, waste disposal bin, hygiene toilets etc. 86.4% of respondents believes that menstrual leave would have a positive impact on workplace productivity and employee wellbeing. The respondent's view on the implementation of menstrual leave policy is to take it compulsory by the government (65.9%).

Figure 3



### Limitations of the study

1. Since the topic undertaken for the research are a topic of debate, sufficient information is not available.
2. Time period for the study was limited.
3. The data was collected only through online mode.

### Conclusion

Menstrual Leave is a policy that allows women to take time off work during their menstrual cycle without facing any negative consequences such as loss of pay, or being penalised for taking time off. The study has been conducted among 330 respondents in Ernakulam district which include male, females and transgenders between the age group of 18 to 50. Women are facing practical difficulties during their menstrual period. And it is important to take rest during these days. So that they can work efficiently on the remaining days. Though we are progressive towards many aspects people feel stigmatised to address the concept of menstruation in public space. This survey-based study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitude and beliefs of working people towards menstrual leave and to contribute to the ongoing discussions about this important issue. Menstrual leave should not be seen as a privilege or a disadvantage for one gender but rather as a recognition of a common health issue and a way to accommodate diverse needs and perspective. Gender equality is not just a matter of women's right but a shared responsibility and interest for all the members of the society. So, for the success of this policy, it requires the collective effort and open mindedness from all the genders. Most of the respondents are supportive towards this policy and have an opinion to take initiative by the government to pass the menstrual benefit bill,2017.

### Recommendations

Menstrual leave policy should be considered seriously by the government across all the workplaces. Menstruation should be communicated among the colleagues so that it will improve the wellbeing and minimise any impact on productivity and attendance. Menstrual awareness campaigns should be conducted in the workplaces. This initiative can help to normalise menstruation and combat the stigma associated with it. This, in turn, can help to create a more supportive and inclusive workplace culture for women. Sufficient facilities like sickrooms, hygiene toilets, waste disposal bin should be provided by the organisations. Menstrual leave policies are important to support individual's health challenges, it is crucial not to misuse them. Employees need to take responsibility and use such policy judiciously and truthfully while employers need to monitor the policy's effectiveness and ensure their employees remain productive. Proper break should be provided to working people which increases productivity and can provide relief and also it helps to maintain their mental health.

## Future Research Directions

A study among a particular gender can be taken as a factor to make research in the future. Considering the geographical location, study can be taken by taking the whole state or a particular place by taking into consideration various working sectors. The future researchers can concentrate on the economic impact of menstrual leave policies in various organisations and the wider economy. Research can investigate the effectiveness of menstrual leave policy on reducing absenteeism and increase the productivity in the organisation. Future research can delve into the impact of menstrual leave policies on gender equality and women's rights in the workplace. Research can explore the legal frameworks and regulations that govern menstrual leave policies in different countries.

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