

A Review of Research on Menstruation and Menstrual Leave

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Abstract: The trouble that menstruation brings to every woman has been an ongoing problem. As puberty begins, the problems associated with menstruation affect every woman all the time, and many of these problems are not solved. Ignorance of menstruation stigmatizes menstruation and exacerbates gender discrimination and women's shame around menstruation. Women need to bear the cost of expensive menstrual products every month, and this includes the high menstrual tax. Menstrual leave is not regulated by law around the world. Discomfort during menstruation also causes most women to experience problems such as low productivity or inability to complete work. This series of issues continue to plague most women and make women suffer from a lot of unfair treatment in society. This article helps people better understand menstruation and menstrual leave by introducing the inconvenience caused by menstruation, the stigmatization of menstruation and the laws proposed by different countries around the world on menstrual leave.

Keywords: PMS, menstruation, shame, price, menstrual leave

1. Introduction

Nowadays, with the gradual development of feminism and changes in society's perception of women's physiology, people can recognize more about the unfair treatment of women in the workplace and the impact of menstruation on women in the workplace and society. In this context, the idea of "menstrual leave" has been proposed on the basis of maternity leave. Some people believe that since women experience menstrual cramps, fatigue and back pain during menstruation, which can affect their work efficiency while they are not feeling well, menstruation leave should be provided to women on their physical condition to help them get through the physiological period in a better way. Others argue that many companies already refuse to take on female staff on the grounds that maternity leave leads to low productivity, that no one completes the work during maternity leave, and that menstruation leave may make it more difficult for women to work in the workplace.

This research will discuss the connection between menstruation and work in four ways. These are the negative impact of menstruation on work, how menstrual shame affects work, policies on menstrual leave, and people's attitudes and perceptions of menstrual leave. The negative impact of menstruation on work centers on low productivity due to menstrual exhaustion and the increasing cost of menstrual products such as pads and tampons, which are unaffordable for women. The negative impact of menstrual shame on work focuses on the inconvenience and harm that menstrual

shame causes to women, and the inequality in the workplace that menstrual shame and stigmatization bring. For menstrual leave, this research focused on how policies on menstrual leave vary from country to country. Different people have different views on menstrual leave. There are some people who believe that menstrual leave will better protect women's bodies and power, while others believe that menstrual leave will make the already tricky workplace even more difficult for women. This is the topic we need to discuss in this article.

2. How Menstruation Impacts Work

What is menstruation? Menstruation is divided into four cycles: the menstrual phase, the follicular phase, the ovulatory phase and the luteal phase. Moreover, before each cycle, many women experience premenstrual syndrome. Premenstrual syndrome can lead to anxiety and depression in women[1]. What is the menstrual period? The menstrual period refers to the shedding of the unfertilized uterine lining expelled from the vagina along with blood in response to a drop in progesterone and estrogen[1].

How does PMS affect work? A study shows that women often feel anxiety, irritability and anger before or during their periods. However, in reality, women's mood changes during menstruation are not much different than men's[1]. And for women, pain is more likely to be felt due to lower estrogen levels[1]. This phenomenon can also be found in Hardy's article. Through Hardy's article, it can be seen that women with moderate or more premenstrual syndrome are more likely to be absent[2]. However, in terms of performance at work, women with more than moderate PMS are no worse than men[2].

3. Expensive tampons

In addition to the inefficiencies associated with menstruation, expensive menstrual products are a major contributor to the increased burden on women. In Boyers' study, it was found that many women could not afford menstrual products such as pads and tampons, and that most of them chose to use socks or tissues instead[3]. Some women choose to steal or rob tampons from supermarkets because they cannot afford them[3]. Under such circumstances, there were also many unreasonable policies, such as the tampon tax. Under such circumstances, there were also many unreasonable policies, such as the tampon tax. The tampon tax is unreasonable and unequal. However, not many people in Cyprus are aware of the tampon tax, and many women are unable to fight against it even though they know it is unreasonable[4]. Although the tampon tax has been abolished in many developed countries, in other countries, it adds to the burden of women who cannot afford menstrual hygiene products.

For menstrual education is also one of the issues. In some non-developed countries, many women are not concerned about menstrual health and do not even know how to use tampons and sanitary pads. For example, in Tembo's survey, it was seen that many women in Zimbabwe were not aware that menstrual health needed attention and did not even know how to use tampons[5]. This was significantly improved after the MH intervention[5].

Women in Palestinian areas are also less knowledgeable about menstrual hygiene. Many women do not know how to use sanitary napkins. Through the survey, it was learned that women do not know to seek medical attention even if they have painful periods, usually use disposable pads instead of tampons, and lack knowledge about menstruation[6]. At the same time, the high cost of sanitary pads also contributes to women's low knowledge of menstruation in Palestinian areas.

4. Menstruation Shame

According to the article Men and Menstruation: A Qualitative Exploration of Beliefs, Attitudes and Experiences, we can see the male's view of menstruation. As a gender which does not need to

experience menstruation monthly, a lot of males do not have a concept of menstruation. As seen in the article, many times, women around men did not discuss menstruation in person. Most males learned about it through books or magazines[7]. And today, even though menstruation has been used as a topic that can be normally taken up and discussed, it is not something that is expected to be heard or learned about by men, and some males choose to avoid the topic[7]. Peranovic and as part of interpersonal interactions, some male will help their female partners with snacks, tampons, and hot water during menstruation[7] while others feel that women can be harsh and difficult to get along with during menstruation[7]. Through this article it can be understood that since men have never been taught specifics about menstruation and because men have never experienced menstruation, it is more of a vague concept for them.

Stereotypes about menstruation go beyond this. As written in Teachers' reflections on menstrual management among urban and rural schoolgirls in South Africa, many teachers (especially male teachers) will assume that female students are using menstruation to push back and that this annoys them[8]. Many male teachers feel uncomfortable, avoid and are not patient enough to deal with the menstrual problems experienced by their female students.

This can lead to another set of problems; for example, in the face of male teachers who avoid the issue of menstruation, many female students, for fear of being discriminated against or reprimanded, choose to hide some of the difficulties they experience because of menstruation[8]. In addition to this, some schools do not have clean women's restrooms and bathrooms, and they do not provide tampons and pads[8]. Contrary to men's beliefs, it was found that many female teachers are more willing to help their female students and encourage them to speak out about the difficulties they face during menstruation[8]. As women who are also experiencing or have experienced menstruation, female teachers will have more empathy and know how to help the girls.

As mentioned earlier, young girls are afraid and ashamed to talk about menstruation when the male superior holds the power of voice and avoids talking about menstruation. This is not a sudden consciousness. Menstrual shame is slowly cultivated by society. In the article Menstruation in India: Ideology, politics, and capitalism, The article mentions that if it was a male who was menstruating then people would not be ashamed of menstruation. And there are also a series of customs and myths in India that reinforce the shame of menstruation, such as women who are menstruating not being allowed to enter temples[9]. The article mentions that if it was a male who was menstruating then people would not be ashamed of menstruation. There are also a series of customs and myths in India that reinforce the shame of menstruation, such as women who are menstruating not being allowed to enter temples[9]. Through *Comprehending the Bleeding Body: Epistemological Violence and (Un)Tabooing Menstruation in Selective Media Texts in India* it is possible to know that as a country ruled by a heterosexual group of males country, menstruation is an excuse that can marginalize women. The notion that menstruation is shameful and dirty is set up for all through customs and legends, etc., and women's shame of menstruation is reinforced in everyday life by the use of black bags for sanitary napkins, etc. Although it began to promote that women should not be ashamed of menstruation, more often than not, the media will also create a male image that helps women get rid of menstrual shame and provides convenience to women[10]

In addition to this, menstrual shame has always plagued some lower-income sex workers. In the article *Feminism, Sexuality, Gender, Labour: Invisible Stigma of Sex Work and Menstrual Labour in India*, it is mentioned that apart from the stigmatization of menstruation in Indian religions, which is considered to be contamination, the red light districts, as a place prone to ambiguous violation of the place where many women would be forced to carry and even give birth. The problem of menstruation for women in red light districts is compounded by the fact that no one cares about hygiene and the stigmatization of red light districts double stigmatizes sex workers for their menstruation[11]. The prolonged use of unofficial contraceptives to delay menstruation or contraception in private causes

irreversible damage to sex workers' bodies, leading to menstrual disorders and even amenorrhea[11]. And these are the effects of the stigmatization of menstruation.

In addition to religion, statements such as women being emotionally irritable during menstruation stigmatize menstruation. As stated earlier, women experience the same emotional changes during menstruation as men[1]. This stigmatization makes women more susceptible to discrimination in the workplace, and women are more likely to be promoted because of the impression that comes with the stigma of menstruation.

5. Policy of Menstruation

Indonesian law allows for menstrual leave. Through discussion and continuous improvement, the labor law was amended in 2003 to stipulate that "workers who feel pain during menstruation and notify the entrepreneur are not obliged to go to work on the first and second day of menstruation"[12]. This has given more options to female workers, many of whom, as stated in the text, are engaged in the lowest paid labor. In this case, female workers can receive additional allowances if they choose to work overtime during their menstrual leave. The policy on menstrual leave is more of a negotiation between the entrepreneurs and the workers. Hence, there are cases where some entrepreneurs do not fulfill the policy properly[12].

Menstrual leave varies from place to place, and policies on menstrual leave were introduced one after another in many countries during the period 1922-1931, starting with the Soviet Union. This series of policies guaranteed female employees the right to take leave during pregnancy, childbirth and menstruation. Nevertheless, there were many obstacles to the enactment of menstrual leave. For example, the Japanese government considers menstruation to be a "preparation for pregnancy and childbirth" and therefore does not allow menstrual leave[13]. However, nowadays, except for some countries that have legislated and implemented menstrual leave, it is still controversial in many countries. Some believe that it is unfair to men, while others believe that menstrual leave reduces productivity[13]. And this is what people think about menstrual leave.

6. People's views on menstrual leave

As mentioned above, through social indoctrination and the avoidance of male superiors, many people will have a bad impression of menstruation and even be ashamed of it. Girls will be ashamed of it without saying anything, which leads to a series of difficulties during menstruation[8]. As for whether menstruation affects productivity, Argha did mention that there is no scientific way to prove that menstruation affects productivity, but it is more a matter of getting people to accept him by constantly inculcating this knowledge in them[10]. By stigmatizing menstruation and treating it as a disease, this force-fed perception not only shames women about menstruation, but also marginalizes women in the workplace[10]. People of different genders will have different views on this as far as the idea of menstrual leave is concerned. In the article Menstrual Leave at Workplace: Employees' point of view, Through the survey, it was found that men and women have similar answers to whether menstruation will affect work, and both believe that menstruation will affect women's work. At the same time, the vast majority of people think that menstrual leave is not fair to men. But at the same time, a small number of people think that menstrual leave does not provide any benefits for women[14]. Although men and women have similar views on this, and they also think that menstrual leave will affect women's work and is unfair to men, it can be seen from the results that in addition to most female employees and a few men who think it is unfair to men, which shows that some men do not support any policies that benefit women[14]. However, there is no specific concept or policy for menstrual leave in the article, which may make the answers filled in by the respondents less accurate for the respondents, thus affecting the results[14].

In the survey, it can be noticed that there is a difference between men and women in terms of how they feel about the pain level of menstruation. It is possible to understand women and support the policy. It also shows that women may not always want to opt for menstrual leave[15]. In the same way, as mentioned before, menstrual shame prevents women from discussing menstruation related topics in public.

7. Discussion

As an experience that only women can experience, menstruation has many limitations. Long-term menstrual stigma (menstruation is pollution; menstruation can cause women to become irritable, etc.) makes it more difficult for women in the workplace. From the previous literature, it can be seen that the prejudice brought about by menstrual stigma makes women more discriminated against in the workplace. As people living in a patriarchal society, male decision makers and leaders cannot truly feel the trouble caused by menstruation from the perspective of women. On the contrary, the stigma of menstruation can further oppress women's work and social status. But this is not the fault of menstruation and women. On the contrary, the relevant policies should be how to serve women, rather than being a tool to oppress women. While formulating menstrual leave, we should give more consideration to the interests of women themselves rather than whether men think it is fair. Tax policies such as cotton swabs tax and the pricing of swabs also reflect the phenomenon of gender inequality in a patriarchal society that cannot clearly understand menstruation. It is also essential to correct the stigma of menstruation. In addition to oppressing women, the stigma of menstruation also makes women ignore the knowledge of menstrual hygiene and menstrual diseases because they are ashamed to discuss menstruation, thus causing further harm to women's bodies.

8. Conclusion

Menstruation is a physiological phenomenon that average women experience once a month, accompanied by feelings that make women inconvenient or painful. Menstruation is not a kind of pollution, and menstruation will not make women more irritable and irritable. However, menstrual fatigue and anxiety do exist. Although women can also perform well at work, their efficiency will be reduced due to premenstrual syndrome and other reasons. To this end, menstrual leave should be a better service for women. Menstrual leave should also be put in place and consider women who need more allowances than holidays. If you choose to work overtime instead of menstrual leave, how to guarantee women's work income during menstrual leave also needs to be considered. Refusing to stigmatize menstruation can not only alleviate women's inequality in society and the workplace, but also better make more women realize the importance of menstrual hygiene and treat related diseases promptly.

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