



A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY ON PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN THE FORMAL SECTOR DURING MENSTRUATION

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the multifaceted challenges encountered by working women in the formal sector during menstruation in Chennai city, India. Menstruation is a biological process that impacts various aspects of women's lives, including their work dynamics, social interactions, and overall well-being. Despite its significance, menstruation remains a taboo subject in many societies, leading to a lack of understanding and support for women experiencing menstrual issues in the workplace. By shedding light on the experiences of working women in Chennai during menstruation, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the intersection between gender, work, and reproductive health. The findings will inform policymakers, employers, and advocacy groups about the importance of creating supportive and inclusive environments for menstruating employees in the formal sector. Ultimately, the goal is to promote gender equality and workplace well-being by addressing the unique challenges faced by women during menstruation.

INDEX TERMS

Menstruation, Formal sectors, Working Women, Health, Organization, Social Construction.

I.INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in the formal workforce has witnessed a significant surge over the past few decades, marking a profound shift in societal norms and economic structures. Despite this progress, working women continue to encounter numerous challenges within the formal sector, ranging from institutional barriers to socio-cultural biases. Understanding and addressing these issues are imperative not only for fostering gender equality but also for maximizing the potential of the workforce. This study aims to delve into the multifaceted problems faced by working women in the formal sector through a sociological lens. By examining the interplay of institutional dynamics, cultural norms, and individual experiences, we seek to shed light on the complexities inherent in women's employment and offer insights into potential avenues for improvement. Through qualitative analysis and empirical research Endeavour to provide a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles hindering the advancement and well-being of women in the workplace. Drawing upon existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender and work by offering nuanced perspectives on the challenges confronting working women. Ultimately, our goal is not only to identify these problems but also to propose actionable solutions that can facilitate a more inclusive and equitable work environment for all.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL ORGANIZATION: Organizations are of kinds: formal agency and casual agency. The cutting-edge industrialized, urbanized, and civilized societies of the sector encompass a huge variety of formal and casual agencies. Formal agency represents agencies which can be characterised with the aid of using a particular function, department of labour, a hierarchy of authority, rationality, and a right association of reputation and roles. They are cautiously deliberate and systematically laboured out. It became Max Weber who, for the primary time, made a sociological evaluation of formal agency.

WORKING WOMEN: Women who are engaged in playing sports are normally out. Working Ladies refers to women who are engaged in paid employment or pursuing a career, contributing to the bodies of workers and the financial system even as balancing their expert and private responsibilities. Working ladies play a vital function in numerous industries, contributing various talents and views to the bodies of workers. They navigate demanding situations along with gender bias and work- existence balance, advocating for identical opportunities.

WORKING WOMEN FROM ANCIENT TO MODERN:

In historic Indian culture, girls have been dealt with as identical to guys, and there has been no discrimination on the idea of gender. Girls have been commemorated throughout society, and society at the time taken into consideration, girls as Janani. This means that mothers, even in Hindu scripts, girls. Women in Vedic period Decline with inside the integrity and Equality amongst them, particularly the placement of the ladies which changed into identical with inside the early Vedic period, later had a downward fashion in later Vedic. Women's empowerment in India, as time handed society advanced with modifications and one way or the other ladies were given their danger to experience their rights and powers however this turned into now no longer to be had for each lady in society. There have been social reforms and plenty of guys and took participated in them too like Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Dayananda Sarasvati.

PROBLEM FACED BY WORKING WOMEN:

Gender pay gap. The place business is rife with many issues and barriers that need to be tackled each day for operating Indian girls. The most unique ones may be summarized as follows: Gender Pay gap. There aren't any on earth wherein girls receive a commission similarly to guys for doing the identical work? Even the Nordic countries, that have extraordinarily excessive average gender parity, cannot declare the same pay for the same work. Sexual Harassment is an abominable truth for Indian girls daily. Despite the boom in numbers, girls are locating that their lawsuits. Women suffer as a result of a lack of sufficient sanitation facilities in the workplace. Only 29% of women over the age of 15 participate faced discrimination at workplace. 5 out of ten personnel in India Inc. have skilled a few Shaped of discrimination. In phrases of benefits, hours, leave, earnings, opportunities, and promotions, there's gender segregation in the vacancy.

CONCEPT OF MENSTRUATION:

The menstrual cycle is the monthly series of changes the body goes through to prepare for pregnancy. Each month, one of the ovaries releases an egg. This is called ovulation. Hormonal changes at this time get the uterus ready for pregnancy.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION ON MENSTRUATION:

Social Construction on Menstruation These are some of the myths about the style of India. What we're capable of translating from the misconceptions is the strive of the patriarchs to justify the stigmatization of a woman. It is a way to indoctrinate women into wondering that they will be impure and worth of such exclusion. It is a way to ensure that menstruation remains a taboo; any assignment is thwarted and overwhelmed to the ground. It is a way to expose that 'nobody' can dare assignment the notion as it is culturally crafted. assignment cultures because of the truth, Indians give extra importance to their religion and cultures to humans. All the misconceptions and myths that underpin now not pleasant taboos that flare. But moreover, hints of a lack of recognition regarding menstrual hygiene, threatening the health of women. The government's inaction in tackling this severe problem is only a few different instances of institutionalized injustice. This taboo is a root cause of discrimination and the underdevelopment of women. We are a fabricated from that generation when we speak throughout the Sabarimala temple. Continues to be fought.

FEMINIST THEORETICAL ORIENTATION:

Serving Hoffman, Karl Marx, and Michel Foucault—to understand this phenomenon, even as retaining a feminist interest to how their works take away darkness from this profoundly lady predicament. Hoffman’s concept of stigma establishes the micro-level, social-intellectual additives of awful portrayals of menstruation and their internalization via way of means of women. Foucault’s idea of discourses to understand how stigmas are social systems that ex trade over history and assess pre-modern present-day discourses on menstruation. Here to contend that menstrual discourses shifted from premodern superstitious and nonsecular understandings to the medicalization of menstruation and interest to hygiene, with the rise of Present -day sciences with inside the early nineteenth century.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**Working women in the formal sector**

Bandana Sharma, (2019), advised to take a look at article at the topic “**Women Issues at the Workplace in Context of Formal Sector Organization**”. Women have ended up equal contributors in plenty of respects in any respect levels of society. Destiny may see wealthy women speculating in fantastic areas historically conquered vitamin’s of men. This may be the reason for income era and further enjoy the fulfillment among women. In Nepal, the formal location has unfold out many career possibilities for women ., however on the equal time, employment on this location has brought together many stressful conditions and troubles like administrative center harassment, restricted facilities for maternity provisions, and moreover lack of outstanding and regular running environment, which has affected women employees “job-satisfaction “ and “ job-security” in plenty of fantastic ways. Her goals for the duration of the look have been 1.Examined the contemporary administrative centre environment and facilities available via way of means of the lady personnel employees of the formal location. 2. Identified a horrible behaviour’s that formal area personnel confront with inside the administrative centre used the Stratified random sampling approach that has been carried out for sampling.

DR. Sampriiti Biswas, (2019), suggested a study article on the topic “**Workplace Discrimination In opposition to Women inside the Formal Sector: Bias with inside the Quality of Work within the Metropolitan Cities of India**” Sociocultural practices primarily based totally on a platform of very sturdy patriarchal ideology in South Asia, particularly in curtailing women’s mobility. It regularly stops them from utilising possibilities to expand in addition to decorating their capabilities. Women are confronted with the double burden of family painting in addition to jobs in the exertions market. (Boyd, 1990). A massive percent of ladies were confronted with backbreaking, monotonous jobs that also Didn’t pay them well and had been mainly casual in nature. Also, they did not acquire any cash income, Or fee for family sports. The position performed for ladies at Domestic that means nurturing and bearing Children, family maintenance, and cooking. Are sports that fall outdoor the countrywide Accounting Systems.

Problems faced by working women during Menstruation

Dr. Makati Chavan Deb, Dr. Monika Jain, and Ms. Vii Sridhar (2022) mentioned a study article on the topic”. Issues and demanding situations of menstruation within side the place of job in India “ This examine explored the diverse problems and demanding situations confronted with the aid of using menstruation. Inside the place. The researchers additionally desired to observe the effect of menstruation on their work, fitness, and family life. For the present day examine, the researchers surveyed 525 running menstruation to apprehend the elements affecting their menstrual fitness and hygiene and the troubles they face. The fundamental findings of the research found out that running menstruation should now no longer be the most effective bodily ache but additionally address mental modifications and pressure on the place work. The fundamental demanding situations are the sourcing of menstrual products, their disposal, lack or absence of hygienic washrooms, and soreness in the place of work. The researchers cautioned that to address soreness and manage pain, running menstruation could make life-style modifications than pharmacotherapy. Further, businesses ought to make sure of WASH centres and set up sanitary servitude machines alongside with incinerators to remedy the problems associated with sourcing and disposal of menstrual products. Awareness packages may be organized to create a knowledge of menstruation amongst male individuals of the organization. The idea of “length leave” can also be taken into consideration with the aid of using businesses, relying on the wishes of menstruation and the process roles. The researchers have now no longer covered menstruation running as helpers, road vendors, or agricultural workers, and hence their problems and demanding situations may be similarly studied.

Janet Grace Sayers, and Deborah Jones (2014) said a study article on the subject matter, “Truth scribbled in Blood: Women’s Work, Menstruation, and Poetry” Inspired with the aid of using Helene Course’s ‘The Laugh of the Medusa’, this paper revisits a public uproar over menstruation with inside the administrative center brought on with the aid of using a declaration from the CEO of New Zealand’s biggest frame of personal zone employers, that durations make girls take greater unwell go away than men. The utterance brought on an extraordinary outpouring of public dialogue and writing approximately operating whilst menstruating, in addition to approximately productiveness and identical pay. We talk about how a remark approximately girls’ durations ruptured the fame quo of menstrual repression with the aid of using the use of decided on online posts rendered as poems. Then, drawing on the course and the concept of poetic rapture, we talked about girls’ line writing in tandem with feminist writing on menstruation. In our theoretical reflections, we bear in mind how poetry, menstruation, and social media can ‘cause trouble’ for regimes of power. We argue that menstruation has to be a required subject matter for organizational.

Social construction of Menstruation

Susan M Moore (1995) stated a study article on the topic, “Girls’ information and social structures of Menarche”. The purpose of this look was to evaluate Australian women’s ideals and emotions about menarche and menstruation through the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Eighty-seven Grade 6 women had been interviewed and finished questionnaires, inclusive of each self-record and projective measures, regarding pubertal status, attitudes to and information. Approximately menstruation. The results confirmed information to be limited, with proof of wrong and poor myths approximately menstruation. Attitudes to menstruation have been characterised via means of embarrassment, discomfort, and ambivalence approximately developing. Themes in the tale of entirety obligations similarly meditated those attitudes, in conjunction with disgrace and anxiety, related intervals with disability or illness, and expressed the norm of intervals as activities which require using deception and denial as coping strategies. Mature problem-fixing tactics to the hypothetical conditions inside the memories have been rare. Factor evaluation of the attitudinal and information found out 4 factors—Comfort thru Knowledge; Negative Feelings: Discomfort thru Knowledge; and Independence—which have been mentioned in phrases of the ambivalent social creation positioned on menstruation.

Ashley Patterson (2014) has stated in an article, “The Social Construction and Resistance of Menstruation as a Public Spectacle”. She studied approximately the improvement of the Feminist theoretical attitude of 3 main male theorists like Hoffman, Karl Marx, and Michel Foucault to apprehend the phenomena. She used Serving Hoffman’s idea of Stigma To set up the micro level, social mental components of terrible portrayals of menstruation and internalization of women. Next, she used Michel Foucault’s concept of discourses to apprehend How stigmas are social buildings that Ex-trade over historical, and he or she compared Premodern and cutting-edge discourses on menstruation. She contended that menstrual discourses shifted From premodern superstitious and non-secular understandings to the medicalization of menstruation And a focal point on hygiene. She used Marx for capitalism to talk about how the emergence of the personal Care enterprise applied new scientific discourses to his or her business hobby via tracing the Industrialization and commodification of female hygiene products. She studied the Stigmatization of menstruation, the medicalization of menstrual discourses surrounding this Stigma, and the commercialization of menstruation.

III. METHODOLOGY:

A descriptive research study on the challenges faced by working women in Chennai during menstruation reveals multifaceted issues. Interviews and surveys conducted among female employees in formal sectors highlight common obstacles such as inadequate restroom facilities, limited access to menstrual products, and discomfort due to long working hours. Additionally, societal taboos surrounding menstruation exacerbate the challenges, leading to stigma and discomfort in discussing related issues openly. The study emphasizes the need for workplace policies promoting menstrual health awareness, providing adequate facilities, and fostering a supportive environment to address the unique needs of working women during menstruation in Chennai. Selection of the sample for the present study the research selected 52 respondents. The researcher used simple random sampling method from probability sampling procedure to select the respondents. Tools of data collection this study used the structured interview schedule for collecting the primary data and secondary data from the respondents. Observation method also applied to collect the supplementary information. Data processing interview schedule is prepared and the response are collected from the respondents through interview method.

IV. OBJECTIVE :

- To study the socio-economic condition of working women in the formal sector.
- To analyse physical and mental problem faced by working women
- To study on social construction of menstruation.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**Table No. 5.01 Distribution of age based on their age**

S.NO	AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	BELOW 25	30	60
2	25 – 35	16	32
3	35 – 45	4	8
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that majority of the respondents belongs to the below 25 age group (60 percent). 16 respondents belong to the 25-35 age group. Only 4 respondents (8 percent) belong to the 35-35 age group.

Table No. 5.02 Distribution of respondents based upon their relationship status

S.NO	RELATIONSHIP STATUS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	MARRIED	11	21
2	SINGLE	39	79
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 11 respondents (21 percent) are married and 39 respondents (79 percent) are single.

Table No. 5.03 Distribution of respondents based on the nature of work

S.NO	NATURE OF WORK	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	IT WORKER	15	30
2	MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL	13	26
3	TEACHING PROFESSIONAL	13	25
4	OTHERS	9	19
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 15 respondents (30 percent) are working in the IT field. Whereas 13 respondents (26 percent) are working in the medical field. Another 13 respondents (26 percent) are working women in the teaching sector. Only 9 respondents (19 percent) comes under the category of others which includes professions such as banking sector, students, interns etc.

Table No. 5.04 Distribution of the respondents based on the challenges faced by them due to menstrual cycle in workplace

S.NO	CHALLENGES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	YES	27	55
2	NO	17	34
3	MAYBE	6	11
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 27 respondents (55 percent) face challenges in their workplace during menstruation. Whereas 17 respondents' (34 percent) states that they do not face any kind of challenges. The remaining 6 respondents (11 percent) stated that at times they face issues and sometime they don't face any such challenges in workplace.

Table No. 5.05 Distribution of respondents based on the facilities that are provided in the workplace

S.NO	FACILITIES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	AGREE	32	65
2	DISAGREE	6	12
3	NEUTRAL	12	23
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 32 respondents (65 percent) agrees that their workplace are providing facilities regarding their menstrual cycle. Whereas 6 respondents (12 percent) states that during their menstrual cycle they do not provide any such facilities. The remaining 12 respondents (23 percent) states that at times they provide facilities and sometimes they do not provide such facilities. The facilities include providing clean restrooms, napkins, leave, proper disposal of the napkins etc.

Table No. 5.06 Distribution of the respondents based upon how menstruation is affecting the productivity and performance of the work

S.NO	IMPACT IN THEIR PRODUCTIVITY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	YES	23	46
2	NO	18	36
3	MAYBE	9	18
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 23 respondents (46 percent) face difficulty in their performance which in turn affects the productivity. 18 respondents (36 percent) states that it does not impact their performance. The remaining 9 respondents (18 percent) states that at times it is affecting their work and sometimes it doesn't affect their performance or the productivity.

Table No. 5.07 Distribution of respondents based upon the physical issues that are faced during menstruation while working

S.NO	PHYSICAL ISSUES	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	YES	43	86
2	NO	3	6
3	MAYBE	4	8
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 43 respondents (86 percent) face physical issues such as leg pain, cramps and head ache during menstruation while travelling to the workplace. Whereas 3 respondents (6 percent) have stated that they do not face such physical issues. The remaining 4 respondents (8 percent) stated that at times they may face such issues and sometimes they do not have such physical issues during menstruation.

Table No. 5.08 Distribution of respondents based upon the experience in societal construction on women by restricting them to go to work during menstruation

S.NO	EXPERIENCE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	YES	4	8
2	NO	38	76
3	MAYBE	8	16
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 4 respondents (8 percent) states that during menstruation due to the societal construction they are restricting them to engage in working. About 38 respondents (76 percent) do not face any such experience even during the menstruation. Whereas 8 respondents (16 percent) states that sometimes they experience such restrictions due to societal construction.

Table No. 5.09 Distribution of respondents based upon the stigmatization or taboos in the social circles or community with relation to menstruation

S.NO	TABOOS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	YES	10	19
2	NO	34	69
3	MAYBE	6	12
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 10 respondents (19 percent) believes that there are taboos that are present in the community regarding menstruation. About 34 respondents (69 percent) states that such taboos are not prevailing in the current generation. 6 respondents (12 percent) states that stigmatization and taboos are not completely gone but at times we can experience it at the societal level which includes restriction from visiting temples during menstruation, to avoid social gathering etc.

Table No. 5.10 Distribution of respondents based upon the laws regarding menstruation benefits given to the working women

S.NO	AWARENESS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
1	YES	19	37
2	NO	24	48
3	MAYBE	7	15
TOTAL		50	100

The above table shows that 19 respondents (37 percent) are aware about the Right of women to menstrual leave and free access to the health products Act, 2022. Whereas 24 respondents (48 percent) are unaware about the rights that are given to such women. 7 respondents (15 percent) states that they are partially aware about such laws.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

MAJOR FINDINGS Stigma and Discrimination: Many women reported experiencing stigma and discrimination related to menstruation in the workplace, leading to discomfort and decreased productivity. Inadequate Facilities: Lack of clean and accessible toilets, provision for sanitary products, and private spaces for changing contribute to the challenges faced by menstruating women. Health Concerns: Women highlighted the difficulty in managing menstrual pain and other health issues while meeting work demands. Limited Policy Support: Existing workplace policies often overlook the specific needs of menstruating women, exacerbating their challenges.

SUGGESTIONS

Implement Menstrual Leave Policies: Employers should introduce policies that allow for flexible working hours or designated menstrual leave days to accommodate women's needs during menstruation. **Promote Awareness and Sensitivity** Conduct workshops or training sessions to educate employees about menstruation, reduce stigma, and foster a more supportive work environment. **Upgrade Facilities** Companies should invest in upgrading restroom facilities, free sanitary products, and ensuring proper waste disposal mechanisms. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offer options such as remote work or flexible hours to enable women to manage their workloads more effectively during menstruation.

CONCLUSION: The sociological study conducted on the challenges encountered by working women in formal sectors during menstruation in Chennai city reveals multifaceted issues that warrant attention. The findings underscore the pervasive nature of menstrual stigma, inadequate menstrual hygiene facilities in workplaces, and the lack of supportive policies catering to menstrual health needs. These challenges not only impede women's productivity and well-being but also perpetuate gender inequalities in the workforce. Therefore, addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies that encompass destigmatizing menstruation, ensuring access to menstrual hygiene products and facilities, and implementing policies that accommodate women's menstrual health needs in the workplace. By fostering an environment that respects and supports women's menstrual health, workplaces can contribute to greater gender equity and empower women to thrive in their professional endeavours.

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