

Perceived Organizational Support For Menstrual Health: Advancing Employee Well-Being In The Workplace



Dharshini I¹, Dr. P. Gurusamy²

¹Department of corporate secretaryship, PSG college of arts and science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. ORCID ID: 0009-0001-0035-260X, dharshinithiya03@gmail.com

²Department of Corporate Secretaryship, PSG college of Arts and science, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. gurusamy@psgcas.ac.in

Abstract

Menstrual health is progressively acknowledged as a vital aspect of workplace health and the well-being of employees. Although there has been considerable advancement in initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, menstrual health continues to be a largely overlooked component of support in the workplace. Cultural stigma, a lack of organizational awareness, and the absence of gender-sensitive policies often hinder women employees from obtaining sufficient assistance in managing menstrual health at work. As organizations aim to create inclusive and employee-focused environments, it is increasingly crucial to comprehend how perceived organizational support for menstrual health impacts employee well-being. This conceptual paper explores how the perception of organizational support for menstrual health plays a role in enhancing employee well-being by synthesizing current literature from the areas of human resource management, organizational behaviour, occupational health, and workplace well-being. The study examines the relationship between different aspects of employee well-being and organizational support practices, such as supportive policies, flexible work schedules, access to menstrual health facilities, supervisor support, awareness campaigns, and an inclusive organizational culture. This study highlights the necessity of positioning menstruation health as a strategic component of employee well-being and sustainable human resource management, adding to the growing conversation on menstrual health in the workplace by incorporating findings from previous research.

Keywords: Perceived Organizational Support, Menstrual Health, Employee Well-being, Workplace Well-being, Organizational Support Theory, Human Resource Management.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations worldwide are increasingly viewing employee well-being as a key factor for achieving sustainable performance and ensuring a productive workforce. The changing work environment highlights the significance of not only physical safety but also psychological, emotional, and social wellness, demonstrating a broader dedication to fostering inclusive and supportive workplaces. With diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives becoming more significant, companies are expected to cater to the specific health and well-being requirements of diverse employee groups. Among these aspects, menstrual health has surfaced as a crucial yet frequently ignored element of workplace wellness.

Menstrual health involves more than just menstrual hygiene; it also includes the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals in connection with their menstrual cycle. Women can face a variety of menstrual symptoms such as painful cramps, fatigue, headaches, mood changes, and difficulty concentrating, all of which can impact their daily lives and experiences at work. Although the severity and duration of these symptoms can differ, a lack of

support in the workplace may exacerbate physical pain, psychological stress, and job-related issues. Even though menstruation is a natural biological process affecting a large segment of the workforce, conversations about menstrual health remain limited due to cultural taboos, stigma, and a lack of open dialogue in organizations. In recent years, the concept of workplace health has evolved to encompass more than just traditional occupational safety, shifting towards employee-focused practices that support overall well-being. Companies have launched programs targeting mental health, work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, and employee assistance initiatives. However, menstrual health tends to be overlooked in the broader context of organizational well-being strategies. In numerous workplaces, the lack of menstrual health policies, inadequate sanitation options, restricted access to menstrual hygiene products, and a lack of awareness among supervisors and colleagues present obstacles that can adversely affect women's experiences at work. As a result, menstrual health is gaining recognition as an issue worthy of organizational focus, rather than being treated

merely as a personal or medical matter.

OBJECTIVE

- To examine the concept of perceived organizational support in the context of menstrual health.
- To explore the role of organizational practices and workplace support in addressing employees' menstrual health needs.
- To analyse the potential relationship between perceived organizational support for menstrual health and employee well-being.

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR MENSTRUAL HEALTH

Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is the general way in which employees believe that their organization values the work they do and cares about their well-being. According to Organizational Support Theory, when employees receive supportive treatment from their organization, it strengthens their belief that the organization is concerned about their needs and is willing to offer help when it is needed. Research into the relationship between employees and their organization has also increasingly linked perceived organizational support with employee health and well-being. In the case of menstrual health, perceived organizational support can be understood as employees' belief that their workplace recognizes menstrual health as a valid part of their well-being and offers an environment in which menstrual health needs can be managed with dignity, privacy and the appropriate level of support. This view goes beyond general concerns for employee welfare by taking into account a health-related issue that has in the past attracted little attention in workplace policies and management research.

A recent global scoping review has also identified workplace interventions relating to the physical work environment, information and training, policies and procedures, flexible working arrangements, and confidential routes for employees who need support. Yet the review also pointed out that there is limited evidence concerning the design, implementation and evaluation of such workplace interventions.

EMPLOYEE WELL BEING

In today's human resource management and organizational research, employee well-being has become a major issue. It goes beyond simply avoiding illness or experiencing workplace stress and includes all aspects of employees' physical, psychological, emotional, and social functioning both in and outside of the work environment. There is an increasing amount of organizational research which acknowledges that the relationship between employees and their organization, including the

extent to which employees feel supported by the organization, can have an impact on their health and well-being. Looking at the workplace, employee well-being is shaped by the conditions in which people carry out their work, by the resources they have access to, and by the degree to which organizations acknowledge and respond to their needs. It follows that supportive organizational practices can help create a work environment in which employees feel more at ease, secure, satisfied, and psychologically well. Yet employee well-being cannot be seen as something that is the same for everyone, since different employees may face various health-related, social, and occupational challenges.

Menstrual health is one of the areas which can have an effect on the well-being of female employees. The symptoms associated with menstruation can have an impact on physical comfort, concentration, mood, energy levels, and on one's ability to meet the everyday demands of work. Recent research carried out in the workplace has shown that concerns about menstrual health can affect well-being, productivity, absenteeism, and a sense of inclusion, and insufficient support from the organisation may worsen these problems.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT THEORY

Organizational Support Theory (OST) is the main theoretical basis for explaining how employees interpret the actions of their organization and form opinions about the level of support that is available to them. The theory states that employees develop an overall view of the extent to which their organization appraises the contribution they make and shows concern for their well-being; this view is known as Perceived Organizational Support (POS). The main point of Organizational Support Theory is that employees do not simply passively receive from the organization its policies, practices and benefits; rather, they interpret these things and form beliefs concerning the organization's intentions with regard to them. If employees think that favourable treatment, supportive policies and good working conditions show that the organization genuinely cares about them, they are more likely to feel a stronger sense of support. It has been found that fairness, support from supervisors, human resources practices, organizational rewards and favourable working conditions are all important factors in leading to a high level of perceived organizational support.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING MENSTRUAL HEALTH

Organizations have a significant opportunity to foster environments where employees can address their menstrual health needs with respect, confidentiality, and suitable assistance. Support for menstrual health should not be seen as just a standalone policy or benefit; it necessitates a

combination of organizational practices, managerial backing, workplace resources, and a culture of inclusivity.

- **Developing Menstrual Health Policies and Support Frameworks** - Organizations can create well-defined guidelines or support structures that acknowledge menstrual health as an essential part of employee wellness. These frameworks might specify the types of support offered, the process for requesting help, available workplace modifications, and the roles of managers and human resource professionals. However, these policies should not merely function as formal documents. Existing reviews have highlighted that organizational policies and processes are a key area for workplace interventions, while also pointing out the need for better evaluation of how these interventions function in real-world settings.
- **Providing Flexible Work Arrangements** - Work flexibility can serve as important support for employees dealing with menstrual symptoms. Depending on the nature of the job, organizations might consider options such as flexible working hours, remote or hybrid work, additional breaks, temporary workload changes, or flexible scheduling. Workplace evidence has shown that flexible working arrangements, flexible hours, and more or flexible breaks can be effective interventions in supporting menstrual and reproductive health at work.
- **Ensuring Adequate Workplace Facilities and Resources**- The physical workplace environment plays a crucial role in supporting menstrual health. Organizations can ensure that employees have access to clean and private restrooms, proper facilities for disposing of menstrual products, clean water, and enough opportunities to rest when needed. Reviews of workplace interventions have specifically pointed to changes in the physical work environment, such as accessible bathrooms, rest areas, and other practical accommodations.
- **Training Managers and Supervisors**-Managers and supervisors are key in determining whether organizational support is perceived positively by employees. Even when supportive policies are available, employees may be reluctant to seek help if they fear embarrassment, insensitivity, or a negative reaction. Therefore, organizations can provide awareness and sensitivity training for managers. This training can help them understand that menstrual experiences vary from person to person and that employees

may need discretion, confidentiality, and flexibility.

- **Promoting Awareness and Reducing Menstrual Stigma**- Organizational support also involves addressing the silence and stigma around menstruation. Initiatives such as awareness campaigns, educational materials, workplace discussions, and internal communications can help make menstrual health a normal topic related to employee well-being. These initiatives should not be aimed at forcing employees to share personal information. Instead, they should create a safe and supportive environment where employees feel comfortable discussing menstrual health without fear of judgment or embarrassment.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Perceived organizational support is closely tied to employee well-being in organizational research. Organizational Support Theory suggests that employees form beliefs about whether their organization values their work and cares about their well-being. When employees feel that the organization supports them, this perception can lead to positive outcomes such as better attitudes and well-being. Review and meta-analytic evidence consistently show that employee well-being is an important result of perceived organizational support. Applying this to menstrual health, perceived organizational support means employees believe their organization recognizes menstrual health as a legitimate part of well-being and is willing to provide the necessary support. This support may include flexible work options, supportive managers, access to appropriate facilities and products, confidential support, and an inclusive workplace culture.

Existing reviews of workplace interventions also highlight policies, flexible working options, workplace resources, and confidential pathways as important methods for supporting menstrual and reproductive health. The link between organizational support for menstrual health and employee well-being becomes especially important when menstrual symptoms affect work. However, the connection between organizational support for menstrual health and employee well-being is still not well-explored in management and organizational research. A recent systematic literature review found that there are few peer-reviewed studies specifically looking at menstrual health in workplace settings and that there is not enough attention given to how organizational support relates to employee well-being.

RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

A major research gap exists in understanding how employees perceive organizational support for menstrual health. Existing research on organizational support has largely focused on general perceptions of organizational care and concern, as well as their impact on employee attitudes and well-being. However, specific organizational support related to menstrual health is still underdeveloped conceptually. Future research could therefore work on developing and validating measures that capture employees' views on organizational support related to menstrual health. Another gap concerns the effectiveness of workplace interventions. Although existing literature outlines various potential interventions, such as flexible work options, physical environment changes, information and training, supportive policies, and confidential support mechanisms, there is little evidence on how these are designed, implemented, accessed, and evaluated. Future studies could explore which forms of support are most effective in improving employee well-being and under what organizational conditions they are most likely to succeed.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

The present paper has several practical implications for organizations, human resource professionals, managers, and policymakers. The main point of the paper is that menstrual health should be viewed as a valid part of employee well-being rather than being considered only as a personal issue.

First, companies can include menstrual health in their overall employee well-being and workplace health initiatives. Instead of making separate programs, menstrual health support can be added to current policies related to employee health, flexible work, diversity and inclusion, occupational health, and employee assistance. This method could help show that menstrual health is part of a larger effort to support employee well-being.

Second, organizations should create clear and easy-to-use support systems. These do not have to be just one policy on menstrual leave. Support can include flexible work options, reasonable adjustments, suitable facilities, access to menstrual products, private ways to get help, and clear guidance for both employees and managers. Research on workplace interventions shows that physical environments, information and training, and organizational policies and procedures are key areas for supporting menstrual and reproductive health in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

Menstrual health is an important but not enough addressed part of workplace health and employee well-being. While organizations have become more focused on employee wellness, diversity, and inclusion, menstrual health has often been left out of standard human resource management and organizational support practices. This paper looked

at how perceived organizational support for menstrual health can improve employee well-being. Using Organizational Support Theory, the paper suggests that employees may see company policies, practices, resources, and manager behaviour as signs of how much the organization values their health and well-being. The discussion shows that the success of organizational support depends not only on having formal policies but also on employees' ability and willingness to use them. The paper therefore highlights the importance of including menstrual health in broader employee well-being and human resource management strategies. A supportive work environment can help reduce unnecessary challenges related to managing menstrual health and encourage a greater sense of dignity, inclusion, and well-being. However, the limited research on menstrual health in management and organizational studies points to the need for more study. Future research should create better measures of organizational support for menstrual health, look at its connection to different aspects of employee well-being, and assess the effectiveness of workplace programs in various fields and organizational settings.

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