

## MENSTRUAL LEAVE AND GENDER EQUALITY

### *Summary*

Menstrual leave is one of the latest developments in Spanish law. By amending their labour law in order to recognize the right to menstrual leave, Spanish legislators have brought this topic back into the spotlight of European labour law. Although recognized in various legislations around the world, most notably in Asia, the right to menstrual leave has not been established as an international labour law standard. Therefore, there are many open questions concerning its recognition, the content of the legal institute, as well as the consequences of its introduction into the labour legislation. Authors deal with the question whether menstrual leave is a need of women today, so its introduction to labour law can be treated as a progressive legislative development. If so, what is the justification for introducing such special leave and in which circumstances it should be provided? In order to analyse these questions in more detail, research has been divided into several sections. After the introductory part, authors deal with the reasonings *pro et contra* introducing menstrual leave to national legislation. This is followed by comparative analysis of normative solutions in all countries that recognize the right to menstrual leave, and brief analysis of the possibility to introduce this right to the EU *acquis*. Finally, in concluding remarks authors offer the broader picture of the potential role and position of the menstrual leave in the national labour law and antidiscrimination law.

**Keywords:** gender equality, menstrual leave, menstrual stigma, period poverty, accomodation of work environment.

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## MENSTRUALNO ODSUSTVO I RODNA RAVNOPRAVNOST

### Sažetak

Menstrualno odsustvo je jedna od novina u španskom pravnom sistemu. Izmenom svog radnog prava u cilju priznavanja prava na menstrualno odsustvo, španski zakonodavci su ovu temu vratili u centar pažnje evropskog radnog prava. Iako je priznato u raznim pravnim sistemima širom sveta, a posebno u Aziji, pravo na menstrualno odsustvo nije ustanovljeno kao standard međunarodnog radnog prava. Stoga postoji mnogo otvorenih pitanja u vezi sa njegovim priznavanjem, sadržinom pravnog instituta, kao i posledicama njegovog uvođenja u radno zakonodavstvo. Autori se bave pitanjem da li menstrualno odsustvo predstavlja potrebu žena na radu, pa se njegovo uvođenje u radno pravo može tretirati kao progresivan zakonodavni razvoj. Ako jeste, šta je opravdanje za uvođenje takvog posebnog odsustva i u kojim okolnostima ga treba obezbediti? Da bi se ova pitanja detaljnije analizirala, istraživanje je podeljeno u nekoliko delova. Nakon uvodnog dela, autori se bave razlozima za i protiv uvođenja menstrualnog odsustva u nacionalno zakonodavstvo. Sledi uporedna analiza normativnih rešenja u svim zemljama koje priznaju pravo na menstrualno odsustvo i kratka analiza mogućnosti uvođenja ovog prava u pravne tekovine Evropske unije. U završnim razmatranjima autori nude širu sliku potencijalne uloge i položaja menstrualnog odsustva u nacionalnom radnom pravu i antidiskriminacionom pravu.

**Ključne reči:** rodna ravnopravnost, menstrualno odsustvo, menstrualna stigma, menstrualno siromaštvo, prilagođavanje radnog okruženja.

### 1. Introduction

The recent amendment to the Spanish law (Law on amendments to the Organic Law on sexual and reproductive health and voluntary interruption of pregnancy 2/2010 approved in March 3, 2010) introduced provisions which stipulate paid leave of three to five days per month during menstruation for women,<sup>1</sup> and thus gave rise to the dilemma of whether menstrual leave should be regulated.

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<sup>1</sup> Camut, N. *Spain Approves Paid Menstrual Leave, First Country in Europe to Do so*, <https://www.politico.eu/article/bill-europe-spain-parliament-creates-first-menstrual-leave-in-europe/>

For feminists, this kind of leave was a victory, a “historical day of progress in feminist’s rights” (Price, 2022, p. 187). Others were suspicious, cautioning against the possibility of wider discrimination against women in the labour market (Price, 2022, p. 187), along with the lack of opportunities for employment, equal earnings for equal work with male colleagues, as well as unequal chances for professional advancement. While Spain was the first country in Europe to introduce this kind of provisions, there were attempts to introduce similar changes in legislation in Italy (Price, 2022, p. 187) and other non-European countries. Menstrual paid leave is common in Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, and Zambia.

Menstrual leave, or blood question (Aggarwal, 2017, p. 10), initiates lots of other debate issues such as availability of feminine hygiene products and the lack of protection measures while working during menstruation. In this paper, authors deal with the question whether menstrual leave is a need of women today, so its introduction to labour law can be treated as a progressive legislative development. If so, what is the justification for introducing such special leave and under which circumstances it should be provided? In order to answer those questions, we need to research health and work ability of women during menstruation and to put it in the perspective of the protective health measures at work, as well as the reproductive health of women.

Menstruation is often understood as a private female topic, taboo to wider public discussion. Hashimy points out that “menstruation is surrounded by stigma, shame, and secrecy” (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1284). Discourse relating to menstruation is heavily influenced by gender and cultural bias, often resulting in no discussion on the issue, at all. Perhaps that is the reason why most countries are not willing to regulate it through provisions. Considering the question of menstrual leave, one must know that this is the matter of physiological differences between women and men, and it might be seen as a way to enhance the number of women in the labour market. Agarwal and Raj are adding the mental health side of menstruation, pointing to the special condition that women are facing with the hormonal changes in progesterone (known as PMS, premenstrual syndrome) (Agarwal & Raj, 2020, p. 706). Although women are capable to work during menstruation, their work potential could be lower because of the pain, combined with mood changes known as “premenstrual tension” (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1272). Allowing menstrual leave might be the way of supporting female employees to take care of their health without adverse effects on employment (Bhalerao & Shah, 2020, p. 1270). Some authors consider that approving this kind of leave can reduce “presenteeism”, understood as nonproductive work of employees, as one study in the Netherlands has shown decreases in the productivity of women by 33% during menstruation (Price, 2022, p. 188). However, this is a highly individual issue.

There is no scientific proof that women's work ability is lower during menstruation (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1285). Menstruation is a part of woman's body cycle, and it is followed by the pain of different scales. There is a study that has shown that 34% to 94% of women have painful menstruation (Golding & Hvala, 2021, p. 353), and working under pain can hardly be productive.

Most of the available literature on the topic is recent and originates from Asian countries, which have a significantly longer tradition of standardizing this right. However, the topic of menstrual leave is already in focus in a number of European countries, not only due to legislation changes in Spain. Hence, it is challenging to examine the hypothesis whether and to what extent menstrual leave represents evolutive step in reducing gender discrimination and the issue of the maintaining dignity of female workers during the menstrual period. The research focuses on current topics in favor or against the establishment of such a right. This is followed by a brief overview of comparative solutions, as well as relevant sources of European Union law. The conclusion provides a review of the argumentation that was previously presented, as well as the basic directions in which the development of the right to menstrual leave can be expected further, in the broader context of the right to dignity and protection of women's health at work. Normative and comparative law methods were used in the research.

## 2. Menstrual leave – *pro and contra*

Menstrual leave is a new legal institute, subjected to various interpretations and discussions. This right however has to be perceived in the broader context of the position of women workers during the menstrual period. It is possible to debate the various rights of women workers in this context, such as the right to proper hygiene in the workplace and the right to availability of hygienic menstrual products at the employers' premises.<sup>2</sup> Both of these rights are aimed at preserving reproductive health, as well as the dignity of women in the work process. However, these are only concrete suggestions for solving deeper problems that have their roots in a patriarchal and conservative working environment. Stigmatization of women at work is present during different stages of their reproductive cycle and there are deep-rooted prejudices that lead to discriminatory behavior in relation to pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, as well as the presence of (both) parents in the first years of a child's life. It is not limited to the field of labour, but the elements of discriminatory behaviour towards women during

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<sup>2</sup> Cvetinčanin Knežević, H. *Bitka za pravo na menstruaciju na radnom mestu*. Available at: <https://www.masina.rs/bitka-za-pravo-na-menstruaciju-na-radnom-mestu/>.

the menstrual cycle can also be found in other areas of law. (See for example the actions of insurance companies in: Čolović, 2017, pp. 363-377.)

It is therefore not surprising the right to menstrual leave is approached cautiously by most authors. On the one hand, it is certainly a positive step that should lead to better working conditions for female workers and a better understanding of their natural cycle, around which there must be no mystique or discomfort. On the other hand, one can easily point to the short reach of this right, but above all to its insufficiency in order to achieve true gender equality at work, bearing in mind all other factors that lead to gender discrimination in this field.

Thus, some authors state that menstrual leave should be allowed, and that therefore it should be seen as a way to create material conditions for women at the workplace (Baird, Hill & Colussi, 2021, p. 223; Rice *et al.*, 2021, pp. 95-105).<sup>3</sup> Golding and Hvala are pointing that menstruation has decreased the income of significant number of women because they tend to work less during those days, part time or take days off (Baird, Hill & Colussi, 2021, p. 223). So a connection can be made between menstrual leave and gender pay gap.

Arguments in favour of menstrual leave can be further reinforced by underlying the goal of protecting the reproductive health of women. Namely, menstruation is the essence of reproductive health which is why some authors assert that menstruation hygiene is part of human dignity (Ahino, 2021, p. 601). This attitude is supported by other authors, who take the position that only women have menstruation, so this is a question in close relation to gender equality (Sakshi & Bhanu, 2021, p. 4128). Weiss-Wolf is convinced of that fact, arguing that there is no gender equality without considering the question of “menstrual equity”, in order to obtain equal educational and employment opportunities (2018-2019, p. 174). That is the reason why some conclude that “the world would change if men were suddenly and magically able to menstruate” (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1286). Others propose a menstrual leave policy in order to resolve problems related to the lack of menstrual napkins, washrooms and other sanitary requirements at workplaces (Agarwal & Raj, 2020, p. 702). That is the case of India, where the question of whether menstrual leave will benefit equality and a better standard of working conditions for women still remains under discussion. Agarwal and Raj argue that support for a menstrual leave would create the possibility of discrimination and gender inequality because the physiological process, such as menstruation, would result in discriminatory practices towards women, even in otherwise highly evolved societies (Agarwal & Raj, 2020, p. 704). Some authors go further claiming that “menstrual injustice” will lead “menstruators” to exclusion, harassment and constitutional violations, as well as to

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<sup>3</sup> “Material conditions” refer to the feminist materialist disability theory, in the sense of creating a material context by adopting an affirmative approach to differences.

perpetuating sexist beliefs and attitudes of (male) co-workers, and to contributing to menstrual stigma and 'outing' in the workplace (Johnson, 2019, p. 79; Levitt & Barnack-Tavlaris, 2020, pp. 567-568). On the other hand, others think that recognizing the special needs of women like menstruation will contribute to increased participation of women in the workplace (Sakshi & Bhanu, 2021, p. 4128). Some authors are precise when talking about menstrual leave, considering it necessary in modern law systems, with the need of taking care of private information that could be available only to female supervisors at the workplace (Aggarwal, 2017, p. 24). Price also deals with such counter arguments for menstruation leaves, recognizing the privacy of women and their right not to reveal their menstrual status (2022, p. 215).

Some authors stand against the menstrual policy on different grounds. There are authors stipulating that to prescribe special leave is not necessary, because menstruation is a normal process of the female body, not an injury or illness, with symptoms that can be more or less painful (Golding & Hvala, 2021, p. 349). Some believe that menstrual leave is a burden towards achieving gender equity (Price, 2022, p. 191). It is presumed that women may abuse this kind of leave, and men would be put in a disadvantaged position. This might be connected with another stereotype that women are less competent for work during menstruation (Price, 2022, p. 191), which could jeopardize the gender equality principle.

### **3. Menstrual leave policies in comparative law**

Spain is the first European country that introduced menstrual leave of three to five days per month, paid by the social security system (Proyecto de Ley Orgánica por la que se modifica la Ley Orgánica 2/2010). This leave is granted only for those women who suffer symptoms such as "severe pain, cramps, cramping, nausea, dizziness and vomiting" and must be accompanied by a medical certificate, so the doctor needs to conclude a temporary medical incapacity to work. There were attempts in Italy to provide the same leave back in 2017, but this proposition was not supported by Italian MPs. The position that prevailed in the end was that menstrual leave would have adverse effects such as lower hire rate of women, fewer chances for their promotion and eventually degradation of women's rights (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1282). That is why Price thinks that Italian society was not ready for all the effects of menstrual leave and the lack of support has shown bad treatment of Italian women by society (Price, 2022, p. 194). The percentage of women in the labour market in Italy is less than 50%, their role in housework prevails and the practice of women laid off from work during pregnancy or longer illness using "blank resignation" still dominates.

Japan introduced menstrual leave after World War II. It was granted only to women who suffer “heavy” symptoms during menstruation that make them less productive, as well as to women whose jobs can worsen their medical condition (Hashimy, 2022, pp. 1275-1276). Menstrual leave was offered only for one day per month, and it was called “seirikyuuuka”, meaning psychological leave (Price, 2022, p. 189). Even though the struggle for menstrual leave took twenty years, it ended with discrimination against women, because employers preferred employing men (Price, 2022, p. 189). Employers were not able to distinguish women who suffer heavy symptoms, because the medical certificate was not a condition for being granted the right to menstrual leave. Some authors raised arguments against this type of leave, such as those that women take “unfair advantage” of leave during menstruation (Price, 2022, p. 189).

South Korea was one of the states that provided menstrual leave for female employees. These provisions date from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, this did not result in improved position of women at the labour market. A discrepancy between law and practice is present, and hence these provisions are not enforceable, thus turning the menstrual leave from paid to unpaid leave (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1278). Furthermore, although it is not specifically required by the law, employers have forced female workers to prove they are menstruating in order to take paid leave. This practice was marked by the South Korean court as illegal and as a violation of the right to privacy of female workers, in 2017 (Karin, 2022, p. 505).

Known as “mothers’ day”, menstrual leave exists in the legal system of Zambia (Price, 2022, p. 191). Women in Zambia are entitled to one paid day of menstrual leave per month. Although this provision has a social meaning to encourage women in a strong patriarchal society, those authors who stand that menstrual leave is an “anathema” to the principle of equality and something that brings men and women apart, seem to prevail in local legal community (Price, 2022, p. 191). Others argue that menstrual leave is incompatible with the role of women in Zambia as the main caregivers (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1280), pointing out the wider social problems women face due to stereotypes.

Indonesian law provides paid menstrual leave of two days per month (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1282). The cultural bias in this country supports this kind of leave, along with special maternity protection. This kind of extra leave is granted only to women who suffer severe pain, for the first and second day of the period. Women are entitled to full wage, but there is a problem with the enforceability of these provisions especially in multinational corporations. (See further: Price, 2022, p. 194.)

It has been a decade since Taiwan introduced menstrual leave for female employees for three paid days. If a total number of these days is more than three per month, it will be considered as paid sick leave (Bhalerao & Shah, 2020, p. 833).

Australian law does not contain provisions about menstrual leave, but several employers enacted the right of menstrual leave (Price, 2022, pp. 190-191). Those offer their female employees one paid day per month because of the symptoms of menstruation and menopause, along with sick policy leave. This was the way for these companies to be heard, but also to encourage others to take the same step. A prominent example is the case of Nike Australia, as the first company in the corporate sector that introduced this kind of leave (Baird, Hill & Colussi, 2021, p. 213). With regard to female employees, the company's code provides "no physical exams may be conducted to verify eligibility for menstrual leave if it is a benefit mandated by the country law" (Baird, Hill & Colussi, 2021, p. 213).

A specific situation is also found in China, which does not have uniform provisions for menstrual leave, but some provinces do (Price, 2022, p. 194). Women are entitled to one or two days of paid leave during menstruation with a medical certificate. However, there were several problems with the implementation of these provisions, like additional costs in regard to women's absences and the lack of the proper supervisors (Price, 2022, p. 194). Some authors say that this kind of policy in China is unfriendly, also raising concerns about the abuse of this leave (Hashimy, 2022, p. 1281).

Balkan countries did not introduce a menstrual leave policy in their labour law. It is questionable how effective this policy could be prescribed in Serbian law. Enforceability of menstrual leave would be a problem, due to weak implementation of anti-discrimination regulations that already exist. Having that fact in mind, the Commissioner for protection of equality stated that, in her opinion, such policies would bring more discrimination to Serbian women.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4. The position of the menstrual leave in the legislation of the European Union**

There is no policy of menstrual leave in the legislation of the European Union. However, if we consider that menstruation leave is a part of gender equality, we can rely on the values and traditions enshrined in the *acquis communautaire*. The gender equality principle was developed through the principle of equal pay for equal value of work, as a tendency of employers to make sure that the costs of employment are the same for all, and in order to prevent unloyal competition (Kovačević, 2021, p. 1019). Therefore, this principle was part of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (Treaty establishing the European

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.alo.rs/zena/zivot-prica/726781/zbog-menstrualnih-tegoba-odsustvo-sa-posla-oglasila-se-i-poverenica-evo-da-li-ce-zene-u-srbiji-na-bolovanje-tokom-ciklusa/vest> (21. 3. 2023).



Economic Community, 1957, Art. 119) and the same provision took place in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 157). It further evolved following the Court of Justice of the European Union judgment in the *Defrenne* case (*Defrenne v. Sabene*, no. 43/75 since 08.04.1976. ECLI:EU:C:1976:56), when the principle of equality was given a social meaning, which replaced the economic one and was linked to the prohibition of discrimination between sexes.

The evolution of the principle of equal treatment has continued with Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community (Prechal & Burri, 2009, p. 14) and Treaty of Amsterdam (Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, *OJ C 340*, Art. 2), which presented the term *gender mainstreaming*, referring to the obligation to consider gender equality in all parts of society. The Treaty of Amsterdam introduced affirmative action for the first time, allowing the enactment of documents that could prevent discrimination (Matijević & Ćorić, 2007, p. 102), and the ban on discrimination was also mentioned in the Treaty of Lisbon (Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, *OJ C 306*, Art. 19).

The Treaty provisions on gender equality and prohibition of discrimination were elaborated in more detail in secondary legislation with Directive 75/117/EEC, that prescribed equal pay for equal work (Council Directive 75/117/EEC, 1975), amended with Directive 76/207/EEC (Directive 76/207/EEC on implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions, 1976), which introduced new prohibited grounds of discrimination, such as family and marriage, setting forth for the Directive 2002/73/ES (Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, 2002), that entitled mothers and pregnant employees to the right not to be fired during pregnancy and to be spared from night work. Eventually, Directive 2006/54/EC (Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast), 2006) represents a comprehensive document enacted with the aim to bring together the equality principle in different fields of work. Consequently, some authors conclude that this directive contributed to the systematization of questions related to gender equality (Nielsen, 2012, p. 30; Barnard, 2012, p. 259), as well as to a progressively understanding of the equality principle by the

Court of Justice of the European Union (Kovačević, 2021, p. 1021). Although the Directive makes a step closer to work-life balance, the provisions related to direct and indirect discrimination maintain the core of this document. More is done with defining the equality of work; therefore, it is important to take into consideration the nature of work, terms of work and responsibilities. One of future amendments of this Directive 2006/54/EC could lead to adopting feasible solutions regarding menstrual leave, in recognition of the specificities of female physiology. The aim of menstrual leave is to delete the inequalities between sexes in employment and to raise participation of women at the workplace by providing a formal leave, in order to enable women to obtain an opportunity to stay at home during their period. On the other hand, even though supporting women at work contributes to their family life, as well as to maintaining the work-life balance, Directive 2019/1158 on work-life balance for parents and carers is not the right instrument for introducing this kind of leave. It is focused on the rights of other caregivers, fathers, adopters with the aim to enable equal share of the burden of family responsibilities. The focus of Directive 2006/54/EC is to provide equality, as a fundamental principle of Community law, providing equal opportunities for both sexes at work and eliminating discrimination on the ground of sex, as well as ensuring equal treatment in the areas of work and pay. Women would feel empowered in employment and would be closer to achieving equality in working with men, being allowed menstrual leave. Prescribing this kind of leave would demonstrate the commitment of society to gender equality and the values and traditions enshrined in the *acquis communautaire*.

## 5. Conclusion

In practice, menstruation was not only a reason for stigmatizing women in labour processes, but also for denying the very right to work. This is not only related to Asian and African countries, although there are a number of studies that the menstrual cycle is considered “dirty” in certain regions, and that menstruating women should be excluded from social activities. Karin, however, cites examples of workers being fired based on circumstances related to their cycle (2022, p. 451). For example, female worker was fired because she bled in the workplace and thus “damaged the employer’s property”. Another worker was also dismissed due to the necessity of frequent replacement of menstrual pads at the workplace. All these examples are from the United States of America. Examples from Europe were no better: the practice of specially marking female workers during their cycle was known in Spain, Norway, and the Czech Republic, as well as surveillance of female workers in Germany “to prevent shoplifting” during periods.

All of this points to a serious lack of knowledge about the menstrual cycle, which leads to discrimination against female workers, but also to the need to conduct the “battle for menstrual rights” free of common stereotypes and prejudices. As said before, men and women differ by nature and menstruation is one of those differences. It cannot be neglected that menstruation is also connected with the reproductive role of women in society, which is unique. Women are given special protection against discrimination only in order to have an equal treatment with men. Menstruation might be seen as a part of this significant role that is given to women by nature, which is why menstruation leave should be allowed to women, as a part of special protection. Prescribing this kind of leave would be a way of acknowledging the right to women’s mental and physical health during menstruation and thus to contribute to gender equality. On the other hand, menstrual leave can be justified only on those occasions when women suffer symptoms that are unbearable. Not all women during menstruation have pain, dizziness, nausea and this kind of special leave must be accompanied by a relevant medical report.

However, menstrual leave should be just the first step in creating appropriate environment for women in the labour process, during days of their menstruation. It is extremely important that both state authorities and employers embrace and support action on raising awareness of menstrual hygiene and the fact that menstrual products are not available for all girls and women. The last said is confirmed by the initiatives for reducing taxes on menstrual products in order to abolish “period poverty”.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Karin states several important accommodations that should be made in order to women successfully adapt to working environment during their periods, such as: paid breaks, time off, flexible scheduling, or telework; affordable menstrual products and safe spaces to apply them; or modifications like uniform changes, fans, or workstations placed in closer proximity to restrooms (Karin, 2022, pp. 452, 462-468). It is very important to note at this point that women need to be given the option of choosing whether to use menstrual leave, as well as any of the abovementioned measures at work (Levitt & Barnack-Tavlaris, 2020, p. 566).

The right to menstrual leave should therefore be seen as one segment of a larger action that would lead to true gender equality at work. Criticisms pointing to the introduction of this leave in terms of potential abuses are more

<sup>5</sup> <https://gdc.unicef.org/resource/how-does-period-poverty-have-negative-effect-teenage-girls> Croatia reduced taxes for period products from 25% to 13% in 2022, and in Scotland these products are free. For more read: H. H. Price, Periodic Leave: An Analysis of Menstrual Leave as a Legal Workplace Benefit. *Oklahoma Law Review*, 74(2), pp. 200-202. UK abolished taxes on period care for women on January 1, 2021. For more read: Hashimy, S. Q. 2022. Menstrual Leave Dissent and Stigma Labelling: A Comparative Legal Discourse. *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*, 5(6), pp. 1285-1286.

reminiscent of traditionalists' resistance to any progressive changes, than serious thinking about the problems women face during their menstrual cycle at work. The alternative offered by opponents of the introduction of leave is actually not an alternative, but the maintenance of the *status quo* in which women are segregated and discriminated against, and in some cases even harassed because of their natural reproductive cycle. In this sense, the need to introduce menstrual leave is unquestionable. However, part of the criticism that can be heard about it is justified. Menstrual leave will not be enough by itself, as an isolated measure, and it needs to be followed by other activities of the employer in order to truly adapt the working environment so that women do not feel stigmatized, excluded, marked, and that they can contribute to the work process as well as in every other period during the month. Also, only well-organised and persistent informational and educational campaigns could mitigate some realistically expected negative effects, such as the already mentioned "perpetuating sexist beliefs and attitudes", and "menstrual stigma and 'outing' in the workplace". As Levitt and Barnack-Tavlaris cleverly notice: "Assessing the pros and cons of menstrual leave can serve as an entry point to discussions about workplace culture and accommodations more generally (Levitt & Barnack-Tavlaris, 2020, p. 572)." So, the final goal is to break "the culture of silence" (Karin, 2022, p. 459) about reproductive health of female workers, and only then will adopt measures give positive effect – menstrual leave included.

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