

CASE STUDY ON MENSTRUAL LEAVE PRACTICES IN INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS

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We live in a world where talking about menstruation is considered taboo. Girls are taught to keep their periods hidden from the outside world and unfortunately, men and society fail to recognise the excruciating pain. However, with the advent of social media, a lot of women, media organisations, individual blogs began addressing the issue and that led to the acceptance of talking about menstruation and difficulties associated with it.

Thanks to broader discussion and acceptance of the issue, two Indian organisations have decided to give paid leaves to their female employees.

However, India is not the first country to consider period leave or time off for female staff. In fact, in many countries like Japan, South Korea and Italy menstrual leave is part of women employees' leave policy. Now in India many companies are following the footsteps of these countries and allowing female employees to take a day or two days leave during menstruation:

1. SWIGGY

Online food delivery company Swiggy has taken a unique initiative for its female food delivery partners. Swiggy has announced to give two days monthly "time off" to its women delivery partners.

“Discomfort from being out and about on the road while menstruating is probably one of the most underreported reasons why many women don't consider delivery to be a viable gig. To support them through any menstruation-related challenges, we've introduced a no-questions-asked, two-day paid monthly period time-off policy for all our regular female delivery partners. This industry-first initiative gives our female DEs the option to voluntarily take time off during their menstrual cycle and be eligible for a minimum earnings guarantee during that time” Mihir Shah, Swiggy's Vice President of Operations said in a recent blogpost.

In 2016 we onboarded our first female delivery partner in Pune. Since then, we have been striving to build inclusivity and diversity across the platform with a commitment towards increasing the number of women delivery partners in Swiggy's delivery fleet.

To bring about necessary changes, we ensure to stay cognizant of the challenges our women delivery partners face, especially with respect to access and safety. Creating an environment that encourages women to consider delivering with Swiggy is a priority, and here are some of our recent efforts in that direction.

PAID TIME-OFF DURING PERIODS

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ACCESS TO HYGIENIC RESTROOMS

Our partners, both men, and women spend a considerable time on the move and often don't have easy access to clean and safe public restrooms. We have worked with restaurant partners in Cochin and are expanding this to other large cities to address this need gap. More recently, we have also partnered with Shell to provide our delivery partners access to restrooms across all their petrol stations in the country. We thank restaurant partners and the good folks at Shell who understand the importance of enabling this and urge more to do the same for the ecosystem.

MEASURES FOR SAFETY

The safety of our delivery partners is of utmost importance to us. Measures like 'safe zones' and capping delivery hours at 6 PM for female delivery partners were implemented. However, we realized that this move limited true inclusivity, while also restricting female partners from delivering during one of the most lucrative slots – the dinner peak. We're changing that by bettering our security processes. Starting with Bangalore where we have the highest number of women delivery partners, we're opening up dinner slot deliveries. It will be extended to other cities after we complete training our partners there. Some of the measures we have in place include –

- Robust virtual safety training modules that cover situational training, Swiggy SOS-emergency support usage guidelines, and important safety dos & don'ts.
- Both female and male delivery partners have the option to decline deliveries if they deem an area to be unsafe – no questions, no disincentives. We are spending time constantly communicating this so that partners know that their safety is our top priority.
- An SOS service is available on the Delivery Partner App that instantly connects one to a Swiggy helpline, local police, or an ambulance in the case of a medical emergency.

We are happy to share that many women delivery partners are already benefiting from the above changes. An NPS survey done at the end of September highlighted a 23-point jump in satisfaction among our women delivery partners from six weeks ago. In the same period, the number of women delivery partners in Bangalore has doubled with other cities also seeing a small growth.



2. CULTURE MACHINE

In July 2017 Culture Machine, a Mumbai-based digital media startup made a headline when the company announced good news for its women employees and allowed them to take a day off on the first day of their period. The company was inspired to adopt this policy by one of its video channels, Blush, which focuses on women's issues and empowerment.

Youtube link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avPgUxGC1Sg&t=153s>

While it's no secret that period cramps are the worst, over the years, women have had to show up to work and mask their pain with a silly excuse. Recognizing this pain and the taboo around it, Culture Machine Media Pvt. Ltd. has initiated a new leave policy, called First Day of Period Leave, where women can take a leave on the first day of their period, which is usually when the pain is at its worst. This video was filmed in secrecy featuring the women of Culture Machine, who were oblivious of this new change, at the time of the shoot. They were told for the first time on camera and this is how they reacted.

To support the cause and get your office to introduce this policy, sign the petition on this link: <https://www.change.org/p/period-leave...>

Because it's time we address that women menstruate and it is okay to take a day off to get through the discomfort.

As a HR Consultant what are your views about women being granted Mensuration Leave?

Draft a welfare policy for Period Leave for Female Employees citing different Legislations [with relevant sections] governing working conditions/environment. (Justify with LL acts in India)

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