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Occupational ergonomics and health problems faced by domestic maids

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Abstract

The study was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana state with the objective of for understanding ergonomics health problems faced by domestic maids. Women accounted for about 80 per cent of counted domestic workers in 2015. In fact, the ILO says about 1 in 25 women workers in the world are domestic workers. The majority of respondents pointed out that they faced problem like headache followed by weakness, skin problem, cold and allergy. They pointed out they were facing this problem because of poor environment. Majority of respondents pointed out that they feel pains in different body parts (they were facing moderate level of upper limb viz., pain in palm, lower arm, elbow joint, shoulder joint and fingers.

Keywords: Domestic, maids, ergonomics, health

Introduction

Domestic workers provide a range of services in private homes: they sweep and clean; wash clothes and dishes; shop and cook; care for children, the elderly, and the disabled; they provide gardening, driving, and security services. Some live on the premises of their employer. Others work part time, often for multiple employers ^[1].

The majority of domestic workers in China, Mexico, India, and other populous developing countries, are people from the rural areas who are employed by urban families. Women accounted for about 80 per cent of counted domestic workers in 2015. In fact, the ILO says about 1 in 25 women workers in the world are domestic workers ^[2].

ILO estimates in 2015, based on national surveys and/or censuses of 232 countries and territories, place the number of domestic workers at around 67.1 million ^[3]. But the ILO itself states that "experts say that due to the fact that this kind of work is often hidden and unregistered, the total number of domestic workers could be as high as 100 million ^[3].

The number of domestic workers in India range from official estimates of 4.2 million to unofficial estimates of more than 50 million. Girls and women make up the significant majority of domestic workers. Between 2000 and 2010, women accounted for seventy-five % of the increase in the total number of domestic workers in India ^[4].

Given the fact that domestic work is often hidden and unregistered, the total number of domestic workers could be as high as 100 million. In developing countries, they make up at least 4 to 12 per cent of wage employment. Around 83 per cent of these workers are women or girls and many are migrant workers ^[5].

The women domestic workers live in different types of slum settlements and work in the informal sector. Commuting becomes a major issue both in terms of cost and time (Menon and Bhan, 2008) ^[6]. Hazards to which domestic workers can be exposed are cuts, burns, respiratory diseases, dermatitis, allergies, ergonomic injuries, broken bones and concussion or even death ^[7].

Objectives

To study the occupational ergonomics of domestic maids
To study the health problems of domestic maids

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Methodology

The study was conducted in Hisar district of Haryana state with the objective of for understanding ergonomics health problems faced by female domestic maids. From Hisar district 30 domestic maids were selected randomly. A well-structured questionnaire was constructed for data collection. Data were collected personally by the researcher.

Results and conclusion

Socio- personal profile of the beneficiaries

Age: The data in Table 1 reveal that majority of the beneficiaries in Hisar district were in the younger age group (50.00) followed by middle age group.

Table 1: Socio-Personal profile of the beneficiaries N=30

Sr. No.	Variables	Beneficiaries
		Hisar (n=30) Frequency (%)
Age		
1	Less than 19-24 years	15(50.00)
	25-30years	5(16.67)
	Above 30 years	10(33.33)
Caste		
2	Scheduled caste	17(56.67)
	Backward caste	3(10.00)
	General caste	-
Marital status		
3	Married	30(100)
	Unmarried	-
	Widow	-
	Divorce	-
Types of family		
4.	Nuclear	26(86.67)
	Joint	4(13.33)
Size of family		
5	upto5 members	26(86.67)
	More than 5 members	4(13.33)
Types of house		
6.	Mixed	2(6.67)
	Pucca	28(93.33)
	Kutch/Thatched	-

Caste

The caste wise distributions reveal that the majority of beneficiaries belonged to schedule caste (56.67) followed by backward caste (10.00%).

Marital status

The results pointed out that 100 per cent of beneficiaries were married

2	Caste	
	Scheduled caste	17(56.67)
	Backward caste	3(10.00)
	General caste	-
3	Marital status	
	Married	30(100)
	Unmarried	-
	Widow	-
4.	Types of family	
	Nuclear	26(86.67)
	Joint	4(13.33)
5	Size of family	
	upto5 members	26(86.67)
	More than 5 members	4(13.33)

Family type

A perusal of Table 1 describes that majority (86.67%) of the beneficiary’s belonged to nuclear family followed by joint (13.33%)

Family size

Data indicates that the majority (86.67) of the beneficiaries had up to 5 members followed by more than 5 members (13.33%).

Table 2: After becoming domestic work did you developed any health problem

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	26	86.67
Maybe	4	13.33
No	-	-
Total	30	100

Table 2 revealed that after becoming domestic workers respondents faced many problem related to health.

Table 3: Type of problem face by respondents

Particulars	Respondents	Percentage
Skin problem	10	33.33
Allergy	3	10.00
Headache	18	60.00
Cold	5	16.67
Weakness	14	46.67

The majority of respondents pointed out that they faced problem like headache followed by weakness, skin problem, cold and allergy. They pointed out they were facing this problem because of poor environment.

Health problem related to ergonomics

As an occupation, the field of domestic worker is very diverse and challenging because of this we need to focus on problem related to agronomics.

Table 4: Upper limb problem

Name	Severe	Moderate	Low
Fingers	5(16.67)	17(56.67)	8(26.67)
Palm	4(13.33)	18(60.00)	8(26.67)
Lower arm	4(13.33)	18(60.00)	8(26.67)
Elbow joint	4(13.33)	18(60.00)	8(26.67)
Shoulder joint	4(13.33)	18(60.00)	8(26.67)

Table 4 pointed out that the majority of respondents pointed out that they were facing moderate level of upper limb viz., pain in palm, lower arm, elbow joint, shoulder joint and fingers.

Table 5: Lower limb problem

Name	Severe	Moderate	Low
Feet	3(10.00)	16(53.33)	11(36.67)
Ankle joint	6(20.00)	15(50.00)	9(30.00)
Lower leg	4(13.33)	16(53.33)	10(33.33)
Knee joint	6(20.00)	14(46.67)	10(33.33)
Thigh	5(16.67)	15(50.00)	10(33.33)
Hip joint	5(16.67)	15(50.00)	10(33.33)

Majority of respondents revealed that they faced problem related to lower leg, thigh, hip joint, ankle joint and feet.

Table 6: Posture problem

Name	Severe	Moderate	Low
Bending	8(26.67)	18(60.00)	4(13.33)
Lifting	8(26.67)	14(46.67)	8(26.67)
Carrying	9(30.00)	14(46.67)	7(23.33)
Pushing	4(13.33)	15(50.00)	11(36.67)

Table 6 revealed that majority of respondents had problem lifting thing and bending. They also faced problem like carrying and pushing.

Conclusion

Domestic maids provide a range of services in homes: they sweep and clean; wash clothes and dishes etc. due to their work they come across many physical problems related to skin, joint pains, respiratory diseases, allergies, ergonomic injuries, broken bones etc and for that the main risk factors were: awkward posture, repetitive motion, long working hours, lack of recovery time etc.

The study reveals that majority of the beneficiaries were in the younger age group which belonged to schedule caste followed by backward caste and most of the beneficiary's belonged to nuclear family. After analyzing the data collected we come to a conclusion that 26 out of 30 faced physical problem. The majority of respondents pointed out that they faced problem like headache followed by weakness, skin problem, cold and allergy. They pointed out they were facing this problem because of poor environment.

Majority of respondents pointed out that they feel pains in different body parts (they were facing pain in palm, lower arm, elbow joint, shoulder joint and fingers, lower leg, thigh, hip joint, ankle joint and feet and majority of respondents had problem lifting thing and bending. They also faced problem like carrying and pushing.)

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