

Title : OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN UNORGANISED SECTOR

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Running title: “Women in unorganized sector”

ABSTRACT:

Objectives: The present study was carried out with an objective of studying the occupational history and to compare and analyse the occupational stress among the women workers involved in construction work, chikankari work and sanitary work.

Methods: The study was conducted in Lucknow city selecting 60 respondents from each type of work. A self structured interview schedule and a rating scale was prepared to collect the information using interview method.

Results: Significant differences in the level of occupational stress i.e., physical stress ($X^2=56.94^{**}$, $p<0.001$ & $p<0.005$) and biomechanical stress ($X^2=17.81^{**}$ $p<0.001$ & $p<0.005$) was found among various types of work and it was also revealed that highest amount of stress is perceived by the women involved in sanitary work.

Conclusion: Among the three types of workers, sanitary workers perceive high level of physical, physiological and biomechanical stress. Regularized working patterns have to be implemented in unorganized sector to improve the working conditions and in turn to minimize the stress for women workers. Ergonomic interventions may also be made to improve the quality of life of women involved in unorganized sector.

Key Words: Unorganised sector, Occupational stress, women workers

INTRODUCTION:

In the era of globalization, the role of Indian women at home and work has taken a multifaceted dimension. India being one of the fastest growing economies, the contribution of women is growing at a steady pace. Most Indian women by and large undertake “productive work” only under the economic compulsion. Most of the women are found to be employed in agricultural activities and in the unorganized sector, the employment of women is high in certain works such as part time helpers in households, construction centres, tanneries, match box, beedi industries etc.

The first Indian National Commission on labour (1966-1969) defined the ‘unorganized sector work force’ as those workers who have not been able to organize themselves in pursuit of their interest due to certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance, illiteracy and small and scattered size of establishments.

Out of the total 397 million workers in India, 123.9 million are women, Of those, roughly 106 million work in rural areas and the remaining 18 million work in urban areas. Ninety six percent of the women workers are in unorganized sector, overall the family work participation rates has increased from 19.7% in 1981 to 25.7% in rural areas. It has increased from 23.1 to 31 percent and in urban area from 8.3 to 11.6 percent. Although more women seek work, vast majority of them get only poorly paid jobs in the informal sector without any job security or social security.

In developing countries like India, ninety percent of employment constitutes the informal sector, in fact this sector is very important for manufacturing activities. Informal sector plays important as well as controversial role. On one side, it provides jobs and reduces unemployment and poverty too, but on the other hand in many of the cases, jobs are low paid with poor job security. As far as the unorganized sector is concerned, the condition of the work is not safe, hazardous, unhealthy with long hours of work, the workers live in pathetic conditions. These poor, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions not only accelerate health related problems like stress, strain, fatigue and injuries due to work, but also reduce productivity as unhealthy work environment results in unhealthy workers.

The impact of work and environment on women was studied and found a strong relationship between women's work life and health(Kotwal et al., 2008). In a study on labor activism and women in the unorganized assessed that wages and working conditions remain completely unregulated (Chaudhary, 2005). A study on physical health and neuroticism among chikankari workers indicated that due to lack of personal resources such as education and awareness, non availability of employment opportunities and normative practices, the women are drawn towards low paid and high risk unorganized sector (Klitzman et al., 1994).

Knowing their way of life, health related problems, occupational related problems and working conditions provide an insight to comprehend the vastness and uniqueness of the issues related to women in unorganized sector. Hence the present study was taken up to study the occupational profile of various works and to compare and analyze the occupational stress among women workers involved in three different types of work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS-

Lucknow city of Uttar Pradesh state, India was selected purposively for the study. Three types of work among various works of unorganized sector, where in majority of the women are involved were identified and selected viz., Construction workers, Chikankari workers and Sanitary workers to conduct the research

Sample selection-

- a- **Construction workers-** Four places where construction projects were going on were purposively selected. The list of workers from each site was collected from the contractors and from each site, using random sampling technique, 15 women in the age group of 20-40 years were selected totaling to 60.
- b- **Chikankari workers-** As Lucknow is famous and known for chikankari industries hence the women employed in these industries were identified as the second category of workers. The centers where the chikankari work takes place were identified with the help of centre coordinator at various areas of Lucknow and out of which 3 centers were selected randomly

using random sampling technique. From each centre, women workers in the age group of 20-40 years were identified and 20 women from each centre totaling to 60 were selected randomly using random sampling technique.

- c- **Sanitary workers-** Two educational institutes were selected where majority were the women working as sanitary workers using purposive sampling technique and from each institute, 30 women in the age group of 20-40 years were identified and selected randomly using random sampling technique.

To carry out the present study, a self made questionnaire comprising of two sections was used. First section covered the general information and the occupational profile of the respondents and second section was a rating scale where in various parameters to measure physical, physiological and biomechanical stress felt by the respondents due to work were explored.

The relevance of the self made interview schedule was tested by conducting a pilot study on 10 respondents from each category and the requisite changes were made and the schedule was finalized. The data was coded, tabulated and analyzed using percentages and chi-square test.

RESULTS:

A. Occupational profile of the respondents:-

Women engaged in construction work, chikankari work and sanitary work were identified as the respondents for the present study. The occupational profile of the respondents was studied by understanding their working pattern and occupational stress.

It is evident from the Fig1 that majority (68.88%) of the workers have experience of 3-5 years in their work. 70 percent of chikankari workers, 56.66 per cent of construction workers and 50 per cent of sanitary workers have experience of 3-5 years. The data reflects, on an average, majority of the women involved in three types of works has an experience of 3-5 years. Very few (10%) of the respondents among sanitary workers have an experience of 0-2 years and the same with more than 5 years of experience.

Working pattern of the women workers:-

The differences in pattern of work of the women involved in these three works was studied by analyzing number of hours they are involved in work, number of working days in a week, number of breaks in a day and duration of break.

It is evident from the Fig 2 that majority (88%) of the workers spend 7-9 hours in their work. It is observed that cent percent of construction workers and chikankari workers spend 7-9 hours at work, where as only 63.33% of sanitary workers spend 7-9 hours at work, the variation may be due to the type of institute where they are working.

It is evident from the table 1 that, cent per cent of the construction workers work 7 days in a week, the reason being, the construction work goes on continuously till the project is completed without observing any holidays between. It is also seen that, sanitation workers have 1 day holiday, work for 6 days. In case of chikankari workers to earn more money, 76.66% of the workers do not take any break and only 23.33% of them take break for 1 day and work for 6 days in a week.

It can be portrayed from the table 2 that 10% of the sanitary workers take 7-8 breaks per day. Majority (73.33%) of the chikankari workers take 0-2 breaks per day followed by 5-6 breaks (16.66%) and 3-4 breaks (10%). In case of construction workers, 50 per cent take 0-2 breaks followed by 3-4 breaks (33.33%) and 5-6 breaks (16.66%). Equal percentage (33.33%) of sanitation workers take 0-2 and 5-6 breaks.

It can be noted from the table 3 that, majority (56.66%) of chikankari workers take a break of 15-30 minutes, where as 70% of construction workers and 53.33% of the sanitary workers take a short break of 0-15 minutes. None of the construction and chikankari workers take 30-45 minutes break. It can also be observed that 23.33, 16.66 and 10% of construction workers, chikankari workers and sanitary workers respectively take a break of 45-60 minutes.

B. Occupational stress of the respondents.

Occupational stress of the women workers involved in three types of work was measured in terms of their physical & physiological and biomechanical stress.

The data presented in the Fig 3 and Table 4 clearly revealed that difference in physical and physiological stress is highly significant at 0.01 and 0.05 level indicating the effect of the type of work on the physical and physiological stress. From the table it can be noted that majority (73.33%) of the sanitary workers reported high physical stress. None of the chikankari workers reported high stress where as only 6.6% of construction workers reported high stress. A study conducted on women workers involved in unorganized sector reported significant association between high psychological job demands like excessive work load, extreme time pressure loads to high level of stress (Meelchoir et al., 2006). Construction work, even though is very stress full work, the women have not reported high stress may be due to the type of chores they are performing or they got use to the work and not perceiving it as stressful work. It can also be noted that 60% of the chikankari workers reported low physical and physiological stress due to work, where as none of the sanitary workers reported low stress.

The highly significant results of X^2 in the table 5 & Fig 4 clearly indicated that the level of biomechanical stress differs with the type of work the women are involved in. It can be noted from the above table that in comparison to physical stress where none of the chikankari workers and very few construction workers reported high stress, high biomechanical stress was reported by 46.66; 3.33 and 73.33% of construction, chikankari and sanitary workers, respectively. Results are at par with the findings of the study conducted on construction workers and found high level of biomechanical stress and due to job overload and skill under utilization(Lakhani, 2004). Majority (70%) reported low biomechanical stress. Equal percentage (6.66) of the construction and chikankari workers reported low biomechanical stress.

DISCUSSION:

The findings of the study clearly indicate highly significant differences in the level of physical & physiological stress and Biomechanical stress across various types of work. The chikankari workers in

comparison to construction and sanitary workers have low occupational stress. This may be due to the reason that the chikankari work do not involve more physical and physiological fatigue, whereas in case of sanitary workers, the work they do involve physical as well as psychological strain. The sanitary workers perceive high level of physical, physiological and biomechanical stress. Regularized working patterns has to be implemented in unorganized sector to improve the working conditions and inturn to minimize the stress for women workers. Ergonomic interventions may also be made to improve the quality of life of women involved in unorganized sector. The results of the present study may also be used to plan social and economic intervention to improve their quality of life.

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Table 1.: Number of working days in a week

Number of working days in a week	Construction Workers (N=60)	Chikankari Workers (N=60)	Sanitary Workers (N=60)	Total (N=180)
5 days	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
6 days	0(0)	14(23.33)	60(100)	74(41.11)
7 days	60(100)	46(76.66)	0(0)	106(53.88)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages)

Table 2.: Number of breaks in work.

Number of breaks in work/ day	Construction Workers (N=60)	Chikankari Workers (N=60)	Sanitary Workers (N=60)	Total (N=180)
0-2	30(50.0)	44(73.33)	20(33.33)	94(52.22)
3-4	20(33.33)	6(10)	14(23.33)	40(22.22)
5-6	10(16.66)	10(16.66)	20(33.33)	40(22.22)
7-8	0(0)	0(0)	6(10)	6(3.33)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages)

Table 3: Duration of breaks in minutes

Duration of break (in minutes)	Construction Workers (N=60)	Chikankari Workers (N=60)	Sanitary Worker (N=60)	Total (N=180)
0-15	42(70)	16(26.66)	32(53.33)	90(50)
15-30	4(6.66)	34(56.66)	14(23.33)	52(28.88)
30-45	0(0)	0(0)	8(13.33)	8(4.44)

45-60	14(23.33)	10(16.66)	6(10)	30(16.66)
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(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages)

Table 4: Physical and physiological stress of the respondents

Occupational stress (physical and physiological)	Construction Workers (N=60)	Chikankari Workers (N=60)	Sanitary Worker (N=60)	Total (N=180)
Low	6(10)	36(60)	0(0)	42(23.33)
Average	50(88.33)	24(40)	16(26.66)	90(50)
High	4(6.66)	0(0)	44(73.33)	48(26.66)

$X^2=56.94^{**}$

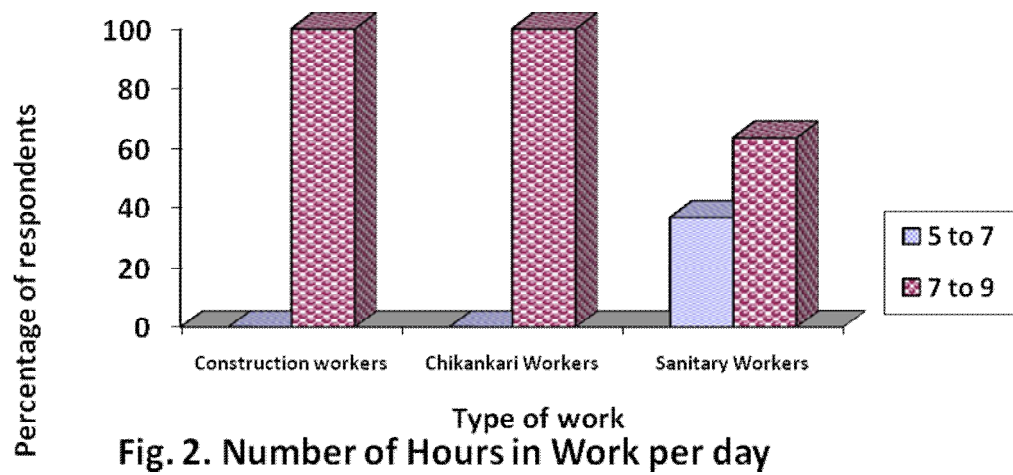
****=Highly Significant**

Table 5: Biomechanical stress of the respondents:

Occupational Stress (biomechanical)	Construction Worker (N=60)	Chikankari Workers (N=60)	Sanitary Worker (N=60)	Total (N=180)
Low	4(6.66)	42(70)	4(6.66)	50(27.77)
Average	28(46.66)	16(26.66)	12(20)	56(31.11)
High	28(46.66)	2(3.33)	44(73.33)	74(41.11)

$X^2=17.81^{**}$

****=Highly Significant**



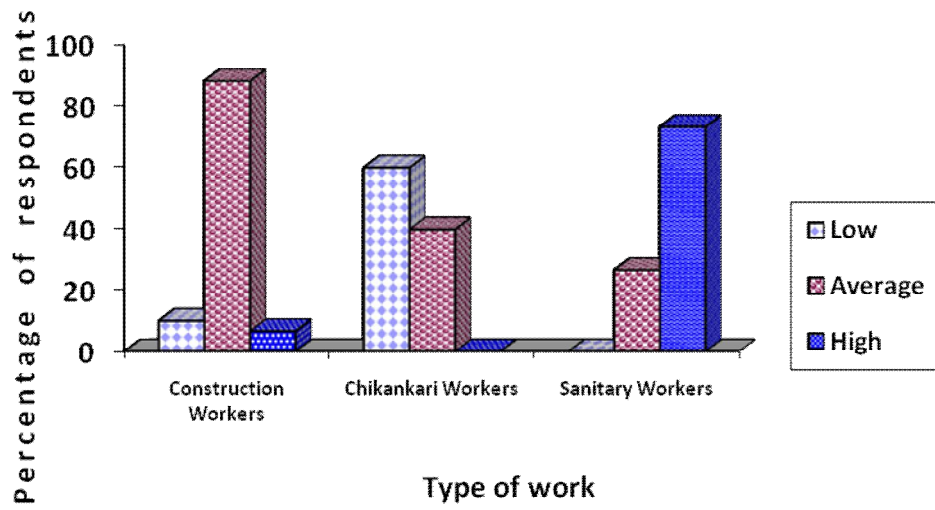


Fig. 3. Physical & Physiological stress due to work

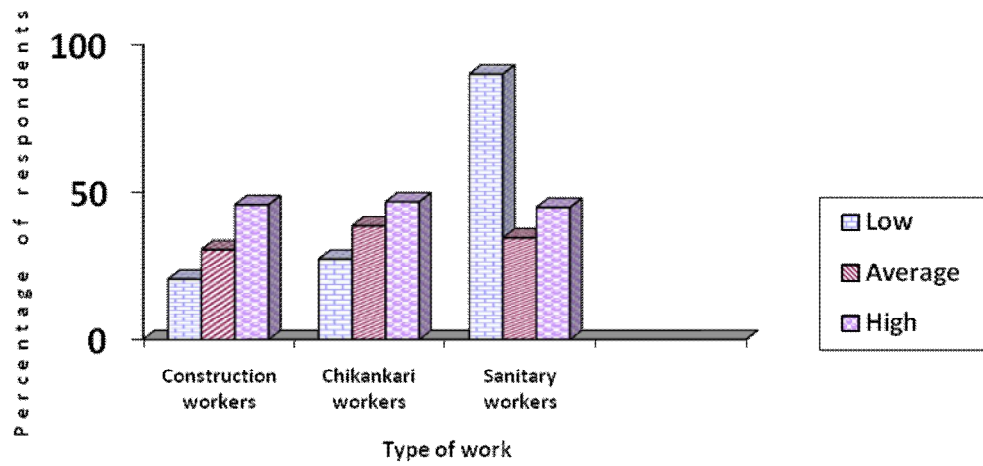


Fig. 4 Level of Biomechanical stress due to work