



## Women and Household Risk in Paloura, Jammu, J&K

### KEYWORDS

Women, Exposure, Risk, Awareness.

\* Krishna Priya

Dr. Sanjay Sharma

Research Scholar, Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Jammu, Jammu 180006, J&K, India \* Corresponding Author

Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences, University of Jammu, Jammu 180006, J&K, India

### ABSTRACT

*Traditionally, household works have been deemed "women's work", while gender roles have changed over time but still women perform most of the housework. The present study conducted in Paloura, Jammu was aimed to examine the households in order to assess the risks to which the women are exposed and their awareness level. The survey was conducted and information collected from 100 households randomly selected. The study reveals that the women of the sample households are exposed to various types of health risks with regard to LPG, electrical appliances, chemicals based products, cosmetics, self-medication, etc. The estimates of awareness status in terms of cumulative scores among the women in the households have shown moderate (51%) awareness level. It is recommended that there is need to create awareness among the women regarding use of labelled products, good quality cosmetics, herbal products, proper safety precautions while storing.*

### INTRODUCTION

We are part of urban society, witnessing the events those have never happened before. With increased consumerism and advancement in science and technology, changing trends are there in living habit and working of both men and women, but in household environment women experience it more. Although, modern living facilities like equipments, readymade food availability, transportation, communication and use of chemical products like beauty products, etc. for various purposes are readily available for use but, it becomes pertinent to assess their both positive and negative aspects, which are all the way lacking especially in women of developing countries like ours. Anticipating the effects of technology is therefore as important as advancing its capabilities (Greenberg, 1999).

In summary, the water we drink, the food we eat, land we live on and air we breathe are contaminated to greater extent with products of our urban industrial society and women being an essential part of this society, are highly exposed to this risk. In the present study, attempt has been made to assess various kinds of household risks to women in the study area and assess their awareness level.

### METHODOLOGY

The study area Paloura is a residential colony at a distance of 7 km from Jammu city located at 32° 45' N and 79° 49' E. The information regarding education, household risks and awareness among the women of region was collected with the help of a questionnaire through personal interaction in 100 sample households selected by random sampling techniques. For assessing the awareness level of women a scoring scale of 0 to 2 was followed, by considering 0 score for not aware, score 1 for doubtful and score of 2 for aware. The total cumulative scores regarding awareness level of each sample household was calculated and classified into three categories i.e. (0-12) cumulative score for Poor awareness; (13-26) for Moderate awareness; (27 and above) for Good awareness.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Majority of the women in the study area were found to be literate (Table 1) and the male-female ratio in the sample households is more or less equal. During the study it was observed that women in the area are aware of the natural risks, but they are not well versed with the knowledge about the risks to which they are vulnerable due to advancement in technology and changes in day to day life style.

According to the results (Table 2), various energy sources like LPG, kerosene, fuel wood etc. are used. In kitchens of majority of the households LPG is the main fuel for cooking used by 98 percent of the households, but placement of cooking stoves and the cylinders is faulty in many houses. In a study in Bangalore out of a total 641 fire accidents 42 were caused by LPG cylinder leakage (Anon, 2005). Most of the women in the study area use microwaves without proper knowledge and precautions. But it has been reported that microwave ovens have cancer-causing effects, destroy nutritive value of food and have biological effects on direct exposure of humans to microwave emissions (Kopp, 1996). Vegetables and fruits may have pesticides residues, so it becomes mandatory on the part of the consumers to properly wash the vegetables and fruits before consumption. In the study it was observed that 65 percent of the women have the habit of proper cleaning and washing of vegetables and fruits before storage. It has been reported by Barret (2005) that chemicals found in food products have potential impacts on human health.

All the women in the sample households were using chemical cleaners like Phenyl, Harpic, Vimbar, etc. in excess. As revealed by Rosenblith (2005) these products are reported to be toxic to human and animals even at low levels, especially when handled with inadequate ventilation and care. Majority of women place chemical based products in unlabelled containers at various locations in houses. The dangers of these chemicals on human tissues have been revealed in a study conducted by Kristen et al., (2011). It was observed that majority of the households in the study area use ACs, blowers, inverters, T.V. etc, but these appliances were not found properly placed. As per the information collected unattended irons, heater coils and other heating appliances were found to lead to incidents of short circuiting and fire in many households of the study area. Anon, (2005) reported that in Bangalore out of the 621 accidents during six months in the year 2005, 126 were caused by electric short circuits.

All the women of study area use mobile phones, but it can be detrimental to the health, as the radiations emitted by mobile phones lead to various health problems as reported by Lai and Singh (1996). Use of plastics has become very popular everywhere and many of our foods and beverages are packed, stored and carried in them. The use of plastics was prevalent in almost every household, 80 percent of the women use plastics due to the reason that they are inexpensive and convenient. The effects of chemicals present in plastic items, containing Bis

phenol-A, shows increase in the chances of breathing problems according to Derbyshire (2011).

Proper storage of chemical based products like fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides, etc. is ensured by few sample households (8%). The women in the area were also found to use various insecticides like mosquito and cockroach repellants, sprays, coils, powders, etc. and most commonly used products were Lakshman rekha, Hit, Mortein etc. Women and small children can come in contact with these chemicals knowingly or unknowingly through air, water and food. The chemical waste and garbage in dumping sites also poses a great threat to man and environment of the area as also revealed by Titus (2001).

Many health problems are observed in day-to-day life. In the study it was observed that 44 percent of the women were taking the consultation and medicines prescribed by the doctors. Smoking is another risk to which the women of the study areas are exposed to. It was observed that (45%) of the women are exposed to passive smoking and out of them 87 percent complaint of restlessness when exposed to cigarette smoke. The use of cosmetics is very popular in Indian women, which can be seen in inhabitants of the sample households in the study area. During the study it was observed that majority (65%) of the women prefer cheap products as compared to costly products. This reluctant approach among the women of the study area may lead to various health effects as many chemicals are present in these products, particularly phthalates in cosmetics and personal care products. (Barret, 2005).

According to the evaluation of awareness level of women in the study area (Table 3), maximum women (51%) got the cumulative score between (13-26), which signifies Moderate Awareness level. It is also observed that there are quite a big number (34%) women falling in the Poor Awareness category. These results show that this may be due to indifferent attitude of the respondents regarding safety measures related to various risks (Anon, 2005). Their high education level indicates that they should be well familiar with all the risks in their household environment but, this view fails if the results of the study area are considered. It becomes pertinent that we should have knowledge, skill, awareness and responsibility to make our self and our society a safe society.

**Table 1:- Education level of women in the study area.**

| SITE    | UNDER MATRIC | MATRIC | UG | GRAD. | PG |
|---------|--------------|--------|----|-------|----|
| PALOURA | 5            | 19     | 26 | 41    | 9  |

**Table 2:-Response of women regarding various risks:-**

| S.No. | QUESTIONS   | YES | NO  |
|-------|---|-----|-----|
| 1     | Do you use LPG as fuel for cooking?                         | 98% | 2%  |
| 2.    | Do you switch off gas regulator when not in use?            | 72% | 28% |
| 3.    | Is your LPG cylinder inside house?                          | 96% | 4%  |
| 4.    | Is there proper storage of vegetables, fruits, cereals etc? | 65% | 35% |
| 5.    | Do you wash fruits and vegetables properly before eating?   | 65% | 35% |
| 6.    | Do you have exhaust fan and proper ventilation?             | 87% | 13% |
| 7.    | Is separation and disposal of waste done properly?          | 25% | 75% |
| 8.    | Do you often use cleaner in kitchen?                        | 68% | 32% |
| 9.    | Do you consume packed food?                                 | 67% | 33% |
| 10.   | Do you have microwave oven in your kitchen?                 | 20% | 80% |
| 11.   | Whether you protect yourself while using it?                | 5%  | 95% |
| 12.   | Do you use polythene bags or plastics?                      | 80% | 20% |

|     |   |     |     |
|-----|---|-----|-----|
| 13. | Do you use chemical preservatives?  | 73% | 27% |
| 14. | Do you know their constituents?   | 6%  | 94% |
| 15. | Is there excessive use of cleaner?  | 9%  | 10% |
| 16. | Do you use chemicals for storage of clothes in off season?  | 97% | 3%  |
| 17. | Is there proper storage of detergents powders, soaps etc. in original containers?   | 55% | 45% |
| 18. | Do you spray insecticides in furniture?   | 98% | 2%  |
| 19. | Do you cover yourself with mask, gloves etc. before use of poisonous substance?   | 23% | 77% |
| 20. | Whether you ensure proper storage and pack or disposal of these fertilizers, pesticides etc. containing bottles, packet etc.? | 8%  | 92% |
| 21. | Do you consult doctor regularly?  | 12% | 88% |
| 22. | Are you victim of passive smoking in the house?   | 45% | 55% |
| 23. | Do you feel restless due to passive smoking?  | 87% | 13% |
| 24. | Do you test the products for allergic reactions and its composition?  | 7%  | 93% |
| 25. | Do you prefer cheap cosmetic products?  | 65% | 35% |
| 26. | Do you have fire fighting devices in homes?   | 5%  | 95% |

**Table 3: - Awareness level of the women in the study area:-**

| Cumulative score | Awareness level    | Percentage of sample households |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| 0-13             | Poor Awareness     | 34%                             |
| 13-26            | Moderate Awareness | 51%                             |
| 27 & above       | High Awareness     | 15%                             |

**CONCLUSION**

In modern society, we are facing new trend of development in science and technology in which manufacturing and production of variety of items has increased and also use of these products is growing. With each passing day new risk factors are coming in our life but, majority of women population is unaware of this fact. Chemical based products can help us live better lives, but if we do not understand about the chemicals we use, they can harm us. Also use of electrical appliances like AC's, blowers, microwaves, invertors, televisions, etc. has also increased and which may cause detrimental effect on human health.

It was observed that some accidents have occurred due to less awareness of women about various risks, in spite of high education level in the study area. The awareness level of majority of the women respondents of sample households (51%) had moderate awareness i.e. cumulative scores ranging between 13-26 points. High awareness was observed in only 15 percent of the women respondents whereas a large percentage of 34 percent of women respondents had poor awareness.

**Suggestive Measures**

A key goal of science and technology is to determine and educate every section of society. Women should be familiar with first aid procedures. Use of labelled products with proper safety precautions and ventilation should be promoted. A product should always be tested before use. Electrical cords with broken bodies should never be used. Have appliances serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Keep all combustible material away from stove tops, heaters and lamps. Do not spray household cleaners, detergents and insecticides on switches and power points. Pesticides, insecticides, etc. must be stored in a safe and elevated position. Do not store flammable chemicals near a source of heat. Use only the smallest amount of product necessary for the job.

Install smoke detectors on each floor of your home. Women should follow the safety tips on new appliances.

**REFERENCE**

- Anonymous (2005). Rising concern over LPG-related fire accident, Karnataka. The Hindu, Monday, May 16. □ Barret, J. R. (2005). Chemical Exposure: The ugly side of beauty products. Environ. Health Perspect., 113(1): 24. □ Derbyshire, D. (2010). "Bisphenol A (BPA): California Bill to Ban 'breast cancer' Chemical Found in Baby Bottles Approved. <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/worldnews/article-1291478/Bisphenol-A-BPA-California-ban-breast-cancer-chemical-baby-bottles-approved.htm>? □ Greenberg, M. R. (1999). Health Effects of Environmental Chemicals: Environmental Risks and Hazards. Prentice Hall of India, Private Limited, New Delhi. Susan L. Cutter. 297-309. □ Kopp, W. P. (1996). The alarming effects of microwave Apparatus on Food and Humans. Truth campaign magazine 1/2 Microwave Madness, 118: 34-37. □ Kristan, Hartnett, K.M., Fulgintis, L. C., Modica, F. (2011). The effects of corrosive substances on human bone, teeth, hair, nails and soft tissues. Journal of Forensic Sciences, 56:1556-4027. □ Lai, H. and Singh, N. P. (1996). Single-double strand DNA breaks in rat brain cells after acute exposure to radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation. International Journal of Radiation Biology, 69(4); 513-521. □ Rosenblith, R. J. (2005). Toxic household products. Research Journal of Environmental Sciences, 4: 549-557. □ Titus, A. (2001). Isolation and Characterisation of Organochlorine Pesticides from Landfill Sites. Indian Journal on Environment HLTH, 43(4):190-193.