



HEALTH ISSUES OF WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS: AN EVIDENCE FROM TRICHIRAPPALLI, TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT The construction sector has the largest number of unorganized workers in India. They are the backbone of our nation's infrastructure building in all the aspects. Both men and women are integral part of this community, but women join as unskilled workers and remain to be unskilled till their working life span. The women working in the construction industry are in high risk to get one or other health issues due to hazards working environment, thus this study intended to focus on health problems among women construction workers. The descriptive nature of the study included 474 women construction workers from Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. Snow ball sampling technique was adopted for the selection of respondent and data collected through interview method. The study findings reveals that, there are health related problems of women entering and working in the construction industry and most of them have urinary tract infection and musculoskeletal problems, backache, maximum number of women pointed skin problems and respiratory related problems are the major health problems.

KEYWORDS : Health problems, Construction work women

Introduction

Construction industry is one of the stable growing industries of the world and construction labour form 7.5% of the world labour force (Nahid Sultana et.al. 2014). A wide range of activities are involved in it and the workers engaged in this industry are victims of different occupational disorders and psychosocial stresses. Exposure to harsh environmental conditions like sun, rain, and so on, which result in accidents and adverse health conditions cause psychosocial strain. They are victims of headache, backache, joint pains, skin diseases, lung disorders like silicosis, other musculoskeletal disorders, and so on, (Guddi Tiwary 2014) Women are almost unskilled labourers and they face serious problems related to work, viz., wage discrimination, gender and sexual harassment, unhealthy job relationship and lower wages, (Thayyil Jayakrishnan et.al, 2013). Workers are exposed to variety of health hazards, namely musculoskeletal strain from the adaptation of uncomfortable working position, Skin diseases from close contact with irritant or sensitizing materials, respiratory irritant from dusts, thus the study was undertaken to explore the health problems among female construction workers in Trichirappalli District of Tamil Nadu.

Review of Relevant Literature

Dhivya Keerthiga (2017) A Study on Health Problems among Women Migrant Construction Workers to examine the health problems among migrant women workers of sample size 110 employed in construction sectors in India with special concentration on Coimbatore region of Tamil Nadu reveals that the generation of largest scale employment is a significant aspect of construction work for both male and female workers. Construction workers are unskilled and illiterate workers, which make them very vulnerable to exploitation. The main occupational health problems in the construction industry are back injuries from carrying heavy loads, respiratory disease from inhaling dust, musculoskeletal disorders, and skin problems.

Neeraja Telaprolu et al (2013) conducted a study on work related musculoskeletal disorders among unskilled Indian women construction workers among 118 women workers from Hyderabad city. The study quotes that the nature of work in construction industry puts workers at high risk for acute and cumulative work related musculoskeletal disorders. This study concludes that the education programme on ergonomic principles must be made mandatory for to reduce the risk and to promote occupational health.

Bharara, (2012) conducted a study on Issues of Occupational Health and Injuries among Unskilled Female Labourers in Construction Industry: A Scenario of Punjab State with 80 female workers up to the age of 40 years engaged in construction industry as unskilled labourer were selected from 8 randomly selected construction sites of Ludhiana city. The study brought out that in unorganized sector work is full of health hazards and injuries. Injury data of sampled population

revealed incidences of abrasion of skin, falls, slips, trips, crushing and pinching of body parts, boils in hands and feet, burns, eye injury/hurt being more frequent occurring injuries during work. Illness data of respondent's correlated affect of work on their health as most frequently reported illnesses were weakness, cough/chest infection, urinary tract infection, sore throat, cervical pain, skin allergy, dehydration, back pain, generalized fatigue and heat stroke.

A study by Nahid Sultana (2014) on Health Problems among Women Building Construction Workers. This cross-sectional study was carried out among 134 female construction workers was conducted from Dhaka National Medical College, Dhaka. It was observed that among 134 respondents, majority (71.6%) of the women construction worker were brick breaker and (28.3%) were weight carrier. Among the total respondents 58.2% complain of backache, besides pain full micturition, uterine prolapsed, low backache and respiratory problem were found among them which might need special attention.

Sarika Manhas (2014) done a study to assess the physical health status of female construction workers of Kathua District of Jammu Kashmir. The core sample for the study comprised 120 female construction workers equally divided in two age group viz, 20-30 and 30-40 years. Results reveal that majority of the female workers had moderate level of problems related to various health dimensions namely, eyes, musculoskeletal system, skin, and urinal tract. But at the same time had lower level of problems related to respiration, cardio vascular system, digestive tract and nervous system. Redness, pain, irritation and watery eyes were fairly common along with breathing problems and chest congestion. Overall, the results highlight the poor health condition of female construction workers.

Banu and Kumar (2018) conducted a study on the Working Conditions and Issues of Women Workers in an Unorganized Sector- Special Reference to Construction Sector with 63 women workers in Thuraiyur Taluk, Tiruchirappalli. The data shows that the women construction workers affected by numerous health issues on which 8 of 10 have a urinary tract infection and 66.66% them suffer from musculoskeletal problems. The lungs related ailments are faced by 57.14% respondents and 92.1% women workers have an allergic to dust. However, the 9 out of 10 women not having any skin disease.

Thayyil Jayakrishnan et al (2013) conducted a study on Occupational health problems of construction workers in India Construction industry is one of the stable growing industries of the world and in India it is the largest economic activity after agriculture. Construction workers are at a greater risk of developing certain health disorders and sickness than workers in many other industries. The cross-sectional study was conducted at Kozhikode district of Kerala, India, Construction projects were selected by simple random method and sample size 410. The study reveals that respiratory infections, eye

disease, skin and musculoskeletal problems. Measures are needed to improve the work environment of construction workers by ensuring availability of protective gears, sanitation facilities at the sites along with an accessible, accountable occupational health services.

Methodology

The descriptive nature of the study was included 474 women construction worker. Snow ball sampling was adopted for the selection of respondents and the data collected through interview schedule.

Result and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondent, in which the women construction workers were equally distributed in all the age groups in which most of them belongs to Hindu community. The study reveals that all the respondents were married out of which few lost their spouse and four fifth of them fall into the income category of Rs. 5000 to Rs. 7000. The community wise data distribution shows that two fifth of them belongs to scheduled caste and rest are pertaining to backward and most backward community.

The table 1 highlights the health issues faced by the women construction workers, 84.2% workers complaint urinary tract infection and 15.8% had no such complaint. Seven out of ten (70.7%) worker found to be suffering from musculoskeletal problems, four fifth of them said that they are suffering from respiratory related issues; 59.7% had skin problem; 43.9% had dust allergy and 89.5% had backache.

Table: 1 Health Problems of Women Construction Workers

Health Problems		Frequency	Percentage
Urinary tract infection	Had	399	84.2
	Had Not	75	15.8
Musculoskeletal problems	Had	335	70.7
	Had Not	139	29.3
Respiratory/lungs problems	Had	84	17.7
	Had Not	390	82.3
Skin Allergy	Had	283	59.7
	Had Not	191	40.3
Dusts Allergy	Had	208	43.9
	Had Not	266	56.1
Backache	Had	424	89.5
	Had Not	50	10.5

Half of them felt their work is not overloaded and at the same moment 90 percent of expressed feeling of helplessness, consequently faced tension and strain at work place. The women felt that their working time was not flexible and encountered nerry relationship at work. In this study little higher than fifty percent of women construction workers complained of skin and dust allergy. These findings are consistent with the study by Nahid Sultana (2014) that the presence of chemical in cement is known to cause allergic problems. Further limited availability of water facility and lack of toilet and climate conditions leads to health issues to construction workers. In this study 84.2% respondents had urinary tract infection, dust, injuries; heat and moisture were mentioned as problem in workplace. Since the majority of the respondents had urinary tract infection and backache. These findings are in line with a study by Bharara (2012) that urinary tract infection, sore throat, cervical pain, skin allergy, back pain are the major health issues faced by the women construction workers.

Construction worker have got an attributable risk of 70.7% for musculoskeletal injuries, higher than all other worker. Postural changes like bending forward or standing and weight bearing may cause backache, low back pain, and neck pain and so on. Few of them reported different types of respiratory problems. These results are in complied with a study conducted by Ram Lakhani (2004) indicate that those who are periodically working in the construction industry, reported diverse types of respiratory complaints. Breathing of cement dust can cause respiratory disorders and difficulty in breathing.

Conclusion

The Constitution of India provides equal rights and opportunities to both the genders. Construction sector falls under unorganized sector of an economy. The findings of this study revealed that different types of health problems were prevalent amongst the workers in construction industry. Thus, good health of the worker must be the prime concern of the reformers. Necessary measures should be taken to protect the

workers by reducing exposure to prevailing hazards. In addition to that the workers should be aware regarding the hazards in their working place.

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