



HEALTH HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH FARM HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY ELDERLY RURAL WOMEN

Home Science

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ABSTRACT

Aging is defined as a progressive deterioration of physiological functions with age. It brings about a number of physiological changes. It not only affects a person's looks, but also becomes a cause of physical deterioration. Rural elderly women in the 50 to 65 age group often lose good quality life, due to several family situations, hence unaware about obtaining and maintaining health care at minimal. Aside from common barriers, including shortage of care providers and facilities, older women face various challenges. Elder women living in rural areas are at risk for inadequate health care coverage, limited access to health information, and on the top of it their being involved in all odd activities at household level.

This study was undertaken to know the health risks among elderly rural women and to gather information about farm household activities performed by these aged women. The present study is descriptive in nature. Herein, an attempt is made to describe the situation and major health risks faced by the elderly women from 70 samples of aged 60 and above in seven rural communes of Udham Singh Nagar of Uttarakhand, India. Findings reveal that the most common activities performed by most of the rural elderly were carrying load, collection of fuel/fodder, harvesting, transplanting/sowing and weeding. A significant association was found between health risks and the farm household activities performed by the elderly rural women ($p < 0.05$).

KEYWORDS

Ageing, Elderly, Health Risks, Farm Household Activities.

INTRODUCTION

Aging is defined as a progressive deterioration of physiological functions with age. It brings about a number of physiological changes. It not only affects a person's looks, but also becomes a cause of physical deterioration. The population faces multiple physiological and medical problems which ruin their life. Aside from common barriers, including shortage of care providers and facilities, elderly face other challenges such as inadequate health care coverage, limited access to health information, and on the top of it their being involved in all odd activities at household level.

Though the condition of the elderly women is far better in urban areas as there are provisions of Old age Houses, and even the people are aware about their pension and Insurance, but the condition is just reverse in the Indian villages. As of 75 percent of elderly persons are living in rural areas (Hiremath, 2012). Hence the elderly women within rural communities are a population of special concern. In rural areas, the elderly women work till their body permit them, experiencing low power, no prestige in family and poor social life and economic independence. As they often tend to lose good quality of their life, due to several family situations, hence obtaining and maintaining health care at minimal.

Thus, there arises an emerging need to pay greater attention to ageing - related issues and to promote holistic facilities, policies and programs for dealing with the emerging ageing society in order to provide them a better life. So the need was felt to study the health risks among rural elderly women with the following objectives:

- To study farm household activities performed by the elderly rural women.
- To study health risks due to farm household activities performed by elderly women.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study had been carried out in the G.B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pantnagar (U.S. Nagar), Uttarakhand. Descriptive research design was adopted. Multistage purposive and snow ball sampling procedures were followed to select the sample. On the whole 7 villages of 1 block of Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand of India were taken. From 7 villages total 70 samples from different families were selected. The data were collected through interviewing questionnaire. The collected data was tabulated and analyzed with the help of descriptive (frequency, percentage and scoring) as well as relational statistics (chi-square test).

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Farm Household Activities

Activity profile determines whether a person engaged in a particular activity. The activities included in the present study are household, farm and livestock. The performance of these activities influences the health of rural elderly women. It is evident from the Table-1 that rural elderly women performed in all these activities. The most common activities performed by most of the rural elderly women were carrying load (85.71%), collection of fuel/fodder (84.28%), cooking/washing (80%), harvesting (77.14%) and weeding (75.71%).

Table-1: Distribution of activities carried out by rural elderly

Activities	N=70
Cooking/Washing	56 (80.00)
Milking	42 (60.00)
Weeding	53 (75.71)
Digging/Levelling of land	21 (30.00)
Transplanting/Sowing	50 (71.42)
Harvesting	54 (77.14)
Collection of fuel/fodder	59 (84.28)
Carrying load (Fuel, fodder, dung, farm products etc.)	60 (85.71)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

Health Hazards among Elderly Farm Women

Risks and hazards are associated with the performance of activities performed by the elder women. These harmed the rural people and affect their health. The data pertaining to health risks among elderly rural women presented in Table-2. The data revealed that more than half of the elderly women (57.14%) reported the activity performed by them is too strenuous. Majority of elderly women (67.14%) reported that the activity performed by them requires a great amount of force. Over frequent or over prolonged activity reported by 35.71 per cent of the elder women.

Table-2: Health risks associated with farm household activities

Risk factors/hazards	(N=70)
The activity is too strenuous.	40 (57.14)
The activity requires a great amount of force.	47 (67.14)
The activity is over frequent and over prolonged.	25 (35.71)
The activity is only achieved by a twisting movement of the trunk.	36 (51.42)
The activity is likely to result in a sudden movement.	39 (55.71)

There is insufficient bodily or recovery period.	48 (68.57)
The load is too heavy and too large.	31 (44.28)
The load is difficult to grasp or hold because of its instability, volume (bulky), shape and surface material.	50 (71.42)
The load is harmful because of its sharp edges and dangerous substance.	42 (60.00)
The place of work prevents the handling of loads at an unsafe height.	41 (58.57)
The load being lifted, carried, pushed and pulled in a repetitive manner.	43 (61.42)
The activity involved an unstable posture.	48 (68.57)
The activity require awkward postures like twisting the trunk, bending the back forwards or backwards, holding objects far from the body.	39 (55.71)
Pulling/pushing activities provoke bad posture, such as handling height above the shoulder or below the waist.	41 (58.57)
There is excessive carrying, pushing or pulling distances.	26 (37.14)
There are edges on surfaces along the carrying route or working area that may cause cuts, abrasion or other injuries to the hands or body.	23 (32.85)
Handling devices for lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling activities are missing.	54 (77.14)
The carrying route or working area is uneven, slippery and unstable.	29 (41.42)
The task occur in adverse environmental conditions such as too high or too low temperature, inadequate lighting conditions, windy conditions (air movement), too humid or too dry and too noisy	42 (60.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage)

It was further revealed that about 51.42 per cent of the rural elderly women reported that the activity performed by them is only achieved by a twisting movement of the trunk. On the other hand more than half of the rural elderly (55.71 %) found the activity is likely to result in a sudden movement. Majority of the elder women (68.57%) reported that there is insufficient bodily or recovery period.

About 44-72 per cent of the rural elderly reported that the load carried by them is too heavy or too large and also difficult to grasp or hold because of its instability, volume (bulky), shape and surface material. Sixty per cent of elder women reported that the carried load is harmful because of its sharp edges and dangerous substance. More than half of them (58.57 %) reported that the place of work in which they performed prevent the handling of loads at an unsafe height.

The load being lifted, carried, pushed and pulled in a repetitive manner was reported by the majority of elder women (61.42%). More of elder women (68.57%) reported that the activity performed by them was made with the body in an unstable posture. More than half of the elder women (55.71%) reported that the task performed by them require awkward postures like twisting the trunk, bending the back forwards or backwards, reaching, holding objects far from the body.

Pulling and pushing activities provoke bad posture, such as a handling height above the shoulder or below the waist was reported by about 59 per cent elder women. On the other hand 37.14 per cent of the elderly women among the total sample reported that there is excessive lifting, lowering or carrying distances. About 33 per cent of them reported that there are edges on surfaces along the carrying route or working area that may cause cuts, abrasion or burns to the hands or body.

Majority of elder women (77.14%) reported that handling devices for lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling activities are missing. The carrying rout or working area is uneven, slippery and unstable; this was reported by 41.42 per cent rural elderly. Sixty per cent reported that task performed by them occur in adverse environmental conditions such as too high or too low temperature, inadequate lighting conditions, windy conditions (air movement), too humid or too dry and too noisy.

Association between Health Risks and Farm Household Activities
Chi-square test for independence of attributes was applied to explain

whether or not two attributes associated or related to each other. A calculated value of chi-square test was compared with tabulated value of chi-square at 5 per cent level of significance.

Table-3: Results of chi-square test

Chi-square value	p-value	Remark
26.2971	2.757e-05	(p<0.05) Significant association

From Table-3 using Chi square test it was observed that there was highly significant association between risks/hazards and farm household activities performed by the rural elderly (p<0.05).

CONCLUSION

From the results of the study it was revealed that all the activities of household, farm and livestock were performing by rural elder women. The most common activities performed by these aged women were carrying load, collection of fuel/fodder, cooking/washing, harvesting and weeding. It was further revealed that these women were facing health risks while performing these activities. A significant association was also found between health risks and these activities (p<0.05).

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