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Physical problems faced by women engaged in *papad* rolling activity-An analysis of job strain

RITU GUPTA, R. BAKHSHI, P. SANDHU AND M. SIDHU

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ABSTRACT : In a megacity like Ludhiana women from low socio-economic strata are mainly involved in construction industry, cottage industries, domestic services etc. *Papad* making industry in the city is also among one of them which has provided ample opportunity of employment for the women workers but they suffer adverse health impacts due to awkward postures maintained for long durations and repetitive actions. The present study was therefore conducted primarily with an aim to study the work profile of women engaged in *papad* rolling and to assess the nature of work and musculo-skeletal problems of women intensively engaged in this activity. The assessment of work was done using Job Strain Index (JSI) and musculo-skeletal problems were identified from intensity of pain using Body Map. The results revealed that women perform *papad* rolling activity daily for 4-6 hrs./day in sitting –cum-forward bending posture with neck, shoulder and hip flexion and with no rest in between the work. Intensity of exertion indicated that there was noticeable or definite effort made by the women engaged in *papad* rolling activity. Overall the JSI score was found to be 30.81 which indicated that the work was hazard prone for health. Percentage of mean scores of the intensity of body pain indicated that the respondents felt very severe pain in low back (83.20 %), severe pain in upper back (63.20 %), hands and wrist (63.20 %) and moderate pain in neck, shoulder joints and lower arm (40-50 %) indicating trouble in these parts. These being predisposing factors causing musculo-skeletal disorders, there is a need for ergonomic intervention for preventing them in terms of improvement in work posture, modified workplace and introduction of appropriate rest pauses.

KEY WORDS : Musculo-skeletal problems, Awkward posture, Repetitive actions

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See end of the paper for authors' affiliations

Correspondence to :
RITU GUPTA
Department of Family Resource Management, College of Home Science, Punjab Agricultural University, LUDHIANA (PUNJAB) INDIA
Email: rguptafrm@rediffmail.com

A large number of women workforce in India is employed in the unorganised sector. In rural areas, they are mainly engaged in agriculture and allied activities whereas in urban areas they are involved in construction industry, cottage industry and as a domestic help. Unorganised sector in India is broadly characterized as consisting of units engaged in the production of goods and services with the primary objectives of generating employment and incomes to the persons concerned. It plays a vital role in terms of providing employment opportunity to large segment of the working force in the country and contributes to the national product significantly. But the unorganized sector workers do not have any job security, income security, health security or social security. They are exploited for low wages and overburdened with work. They don't get health benefits or sick leave and have to pay from their own pockets. A considerable number of adverse health conditions are linked to women working in awkward postures in unorganised sector. They adopt unnatural postures such as twisting, bending, stooping, reaching forward, squatting, kneeling etc. while performing various activities. Apart from that, the highly repetitive, forceful movements performed by women often with badly designed tools under subhuman working and living conditions, cause a number of health problems of which musculo-skeletal problems are one of the commonest problems of women.

One such industry where a large number of women are employed and are involved in repetitive, forceful movements