

Musculoskeletal Disorders and its Associate factors among Laundry Workers: A Comparative Cross-Sectional Study

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Abstract

Background: Ergonomics is the science of discovering and gathering information about behaviour, abilities, limitations, and human characteristics in the design of machines, equipment, work systems, and a productive, comfortable, safe, and effective environment for humans. The increase in the number of musculoskeletal disorders in the workplace is attributed to the lack of application of ergonomics. Further, the improper utilization of healthcare services and poor health-seeking behaviour aggravates musculoskeletal disorders.

Material and Method: A Comparative cross-sectional study was conducted in the field practice area of the Department of Community Medicine of Maulana Azad Medical College (an urban slum in the Mirdard Area where the Family adoption program of undergraduate students is being carried out) among Community laundry workers and the general population for a period of three months. All study population aged ≥ 18 years available at the study area during the visit were included, while people with any congenital/systemic musculoskeletal disorders e.g.: ankylosing spondylitis, rheumatoid arthritis, etc., or belonging to any profession involving heavy musculoskeletal work were excluded from the study. A total of 80 participants were selected using a random sampling technique (40 washer men and 40 general community dwellers) matched for age and sex and were interviewed using a pre-tested self-designed interview schedule. The data is being analysed using SPSS v25. For declaring statistical significant associations, chi square test is used with $p \leq 0.05$ as the cut off.

Results: Mean age of the study participants was 39.21 ± 4.65 years. Proportion of males was 95% in both the groups. Various self-identified ergonomic hazards among the community laundry workers were slippery floors (95%), contact with harsh chemicals (87.5%) and lack of proper protective equipment (85.0%). Most (97.5%) of the laundry workers and 70% of the general community preferred using private health care services and the majority (82% and 89.2% respectively in both the groups) said the reason was inappropriate OPD timings which clashed with their working hours.

Conclusion: Community laundry workers are exposed to potential risk factors for their health at their workplace. On the contrary, the health services catering to the population on the study area was not found suitable to be used by the laundry workers due to various factors. This warrants further exploration to discover solutions for improving the ergonomics and health seeking behaviour.