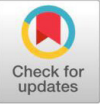


Research Article

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A study on the working environment of rural homemakers while performing different household activities in the Ayodhya district of Uttar Pradesh



Pallavi Singh, Poonam Singh

Department of Resource Management & Consumer Science, College of Community Science A.N.D.U.A & T Kumarganj, Ayodhya-Uttar Pradesh-224-229, India

ABSTRACT

Due to the improper workplace and huge burden of domestic work on women, it negatively affects on their physical as well as psychological health. The present study explores those negative environments and the nature of household tasks that require time and effort and are most associated with fatigue. The goal of this study is to better understand the working environment of the homemakers and to collect information that can be used as the basis for recommendations about ergonomic improvements to the household environment, tasks, and products. A cross-sectional survey was done through an interview schedule. The participant was 240 from Ayodhya District of Uttar Pradesh. The homemakers above 30 years who live in rural areas were randomly selected for the study. The result was found that the working environment of household tasks is badly affects to the homemakers and they were knowledgeable about the risks of having waste in their environment but they lacked knowledge on how to manage waste which included aspects of waste minimization. The physiological and psychological health of homemakers is negatively associated with their working environment and domestic work stress regardless of employment status.

Keywords: Working environment, Domestic work, Homemakers, Fatigue, Women, Physical and Psychological Health, Household waste management.

Introduction

Management of the household is necessary part of the family; it is a mental process and it involves many steps. Most of the household works is generally done by the housewives, women of all ages spend much of their day engaged in domestic activities, including collecting water and firewood, processing and preparing food, travelling and transporting, and care giving etc. The household tasks performed by homemakers are not considered economic activity. Any amount of time spent; any number of activities performed by them will not be noticed because of its non-economic value. But the drudgery involved in it is very high. Drudgery and resulting strain not only impair health, but also affect the quality of work and performance. Performance of household activities is ignored in terms of its layout, size and proper arrangement (Park *et al.*, 2013). Criteria for good work stations in houses are an efficient arrangement of the activities and right amount of space to carry out the activities amidst comfortable and pleasant surroundings. Insufficient space imposes restrictions and more than the required space leads to unnecessary steps resulting in the wastage of energy. However, due to racial and genetic

differences, height of Indian women is much shorter (Gangopadhyay *et al.*, 2005). Hence, the applicability of their norms and guidelines may not suit Indian females to the extent that performance of household activities may become stressful and unsatisfying. So, need was therefore felt to reformulate dimensions of work spaces (specially heights of work tops, tables chairs, clothes line, storage shelves, utensil racks etc.) Recommendations can be made for short, medium height category users so that optimum level of work environment be achieved which would be least fatiguing to body and produced maximum output. Apart from that the homemakers perform all the operations manually using age old methods/technology of doing the work that causes considerable drudgery and in turn affects the health of women. The plight of women in this regard is alarming as they are constrained by illiteracy, poor health, low technical know-how and skills etc. Many of the work and environment are not conducive to good health. Therefore, these factors increase the risk of occupational disease i.e., (musculoskeletal disorders). Among these factors are poor working posture e.g. reaching and stooping, lack of task variation, poor ergonomic work and workplace, poor design of tools and task including work organization such as long working hours, and uncomfortable working times. The goal of this study is to better understand the working household environment of the homemakers and to collect information that can be used as the basis for recommendations about ergonomic improvements to household tasks and products. Therefore, the present research study is designed with the following objectives:

*Corresponding Author: **Poonam Singh**
Email Address: poonamsingh4673@gmail.com

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1. To study about the working environment of the homemakers while performing household activities.

Limitation

1. The proposed research was conduct on the home makers who involved in the household tasks only.
2. The study was limited to Ayodhya District only.
3. The study was limited to a sample size of 240 only.
4. The study was limited to the ergonomic analysis of household activities and not on productivity aspect.
5. The study was limited to the housewives of above 30 years of age.

Methods

Subjects-Two localities were purposively selected from Ayodhya District, i.e., Milkipur Block and Amaniganj Block. Simple random sampling without replacement was used to select the study area and samples. In this study were self-selected women over the age of 30. Total 240 housewives who are performing group of activities such as preparation of food, cooking, cleaning home, dish washing was selected randomly.

Sources of data- The study is based on primary data & secondary data. Data has been collected through survey techniques with a self-structured questionnaire cum interview schedule.

Procedure- A comprehensive survey questionnaire was administered. The survey comprised 40 questions, most of which have multiple items requiring separate responses. The questionnaire collected demographic information, including gender, handedness, age, occupation, education, number of persons in household, cast category, economically active family member, monthly income of the family and type of residence etc. It also collected information on working environment of the homemakers: on the equipment used for those tasks, workplace, proper ventilation, proper lighting, availability of household gadgets etc.

Tools for analysis- The statistical tool used for the purpose of the analysis of this study is simple percentage technique and ranking techniques. After the collection of data through the questionnaire cum interview schedule, editing was done carefully. And based on the responses of the samples, tables were prepared.

Personal and background information of the respondents -Under this section of findings, the personal and background information pertaining to age, educational qualification, family type etc., are discussed. Data on the personal information of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1:Information regarding the background information of the respondents

Background Information	frequency	percentage
Age		
30-40	93	38.75
40-50	77	32.08
50 and above	70	29.16
Education		
Illiterate	62	25.83
Literate (both read & write)	60	25.00
Primary school	44	18.33
Middle school	30	12.05
Highschool	23	9.58
Intermediate	14	5.83
Graduation	7	2.91
Post-graduation & above	0	0.00
Family size		
Small	68	28.33
Medium	132	55.00
Large	40	16.66
Family type		
Nuclear	115	47.91
Joint	90	37.05
Extended	35	14.58
Cast category		
General	67	27.91
OBC	70	29.16

SC	66	27.05
ST	37	15.41
Economically active family member		
Male	154	64.16
Female	36	15.00
Both	50	20.83
Monthly income		
Less than 10,000/-	86	35.83
10,000-20,000/-	127	52.91
More than 20,000/-	27	11.25
Type of dwelling		
Kaccha	90	37.05
Semi pucca	116	48.33
Pucca	34	14.16

Age of the respondents- It is clear from the data presented in Table No. 1 that most of the respondents i.e., 38.75 percent belonged to the age group (30 to 40) years. Followed by 32.08 percent belonging to the age group (40 to 50) and 29.16 percent of the respondents belonging to the age group (50 and above).

Educational Qualification- Data pertaining to the educational qualification of the respondents it was observed that the majority of the respondents i.e., 25.83 were (illiterate) followed by 25.00 percent of them were (literate they can read & write) ,18.33 percent of the respondent have only (primary education) ,12.05 percent were belonging to (middle-high school), 9.58 percent of the respondent have (high school education), 5.83 of them were from (intermediate) and only 2.91 percent of the respondent have the qualification at (graduation level).

Family size - Table also revealed that majority of the respondents i.e., 55.00 percent have (medium family size i.e., up to 5 to 7 members) followed by 28.33 percent have (small family size i.e., up to 5 members) and 16.66 percent of the respondents have (large family size i.e., more than 8 members).

Family type- About 47.91 percent of the respondents have (nuclear family type) followed by 37.05 percent of the respondents have (joint family) and only 14.58 percent of them have (extended family).

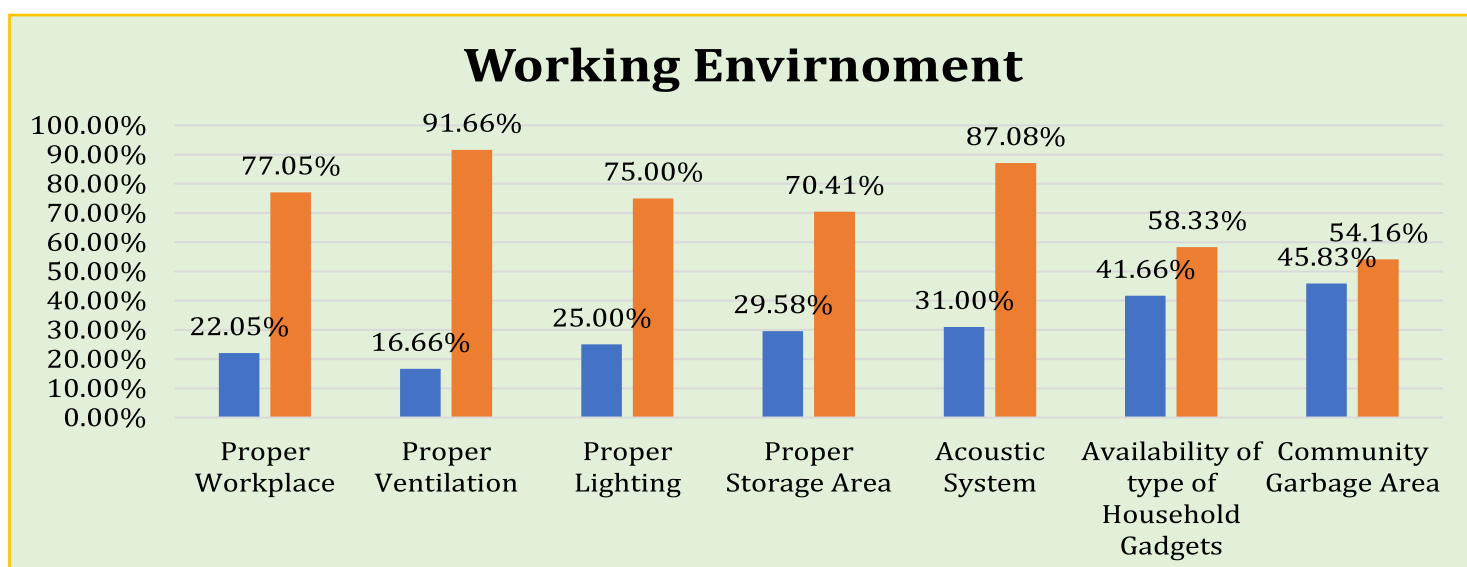
Cast category- Out of the total selected respondent's majority of the respondents i.e., 29.16 belonged to the (OBC category) followed by 27.91 per cent of the respondents belonging to the (general category) 27.05 percent of the respondents belonging to the (SC category) and only 15.41 percent of them belonging to the (ST category).

Economically active family member- From the data it was observed that the majority of the male i.e., 64.16 per cent are (economically active in the family) followed by 20.83 percent both males & females are (economically active in their family) and only 15.00 percent female are (economically active member in their family).

Monthly Income- The data showed that monthly income of the respondents 52.91 percent have the income between (Rs.10,000 to Rs.20,000 per month) followed by 35.83 percent of the respondents have an income of (less than Rs.10,000 per month) and only 11.25 per cent of the respondents have an income of their family (Rs.20,000 and above).

Mode of Dwelling- From the table it was found that the majority of the respondents i.e., 48.33 percent live in (semi pucca house) followed by 37.05 percent of the respondents live in (kaccha houses) and only 14.16 percent of the respondents live in (pucca houses).

Table 2: Household working environment of the homemakers



(Kumari and Dayal, 2009), stated in their study that, many work and environmental factors can affect the health of the homemakers. In many of the work environments where the homemakers are found the conditions that promote various occupational diseases (i.e., musculoskeletal disorders) are readily manageable. Inappropriate and poor working postures, poor design of work places, poor work organization, etc. are all areas where relatively simple interventions can significantly reduce the rate of exposure to occupational disease during household activities like mopping, cooking, utensils cleaning, washing clothes, and other household activities.



It was observed from the data presented in figure 2 that the majority of the homemakers i.e., (77.05 per cent) don't have a proper workplaces for performing different household activities. During the survey work, it was also observed that in rural areas home there is not proper ventilation system with a percentage of (91.66 percent). Followed by (75.00 percent) of the homemakers don't have proper source of lighting in their homes. In most of the homes i.e. (70.41 percent) not proper storage areas for different household items and foodgrains etc. which creates extra clutter for the homemakers. With the increasing numbers i.e. (87.08 percent) in rural areas homes, there was not the proper acoustic system. The majority of the homemakers i.e. (58.33 percent) don't have different household gadgets (like a television, refrigerator, mixture grinder, LPG connection, wooden furniture, sailing fans/coolers etc.). And lastly, (54.16 percent) of the homemakers state that there is no proper community garbage area for them.



It was observed that due to improper household working environment the homemakers suffer from different health problems like; respiratory problems (asthma), eye problems (watering in eyes, vision impairment), back pain and joint pain etc.

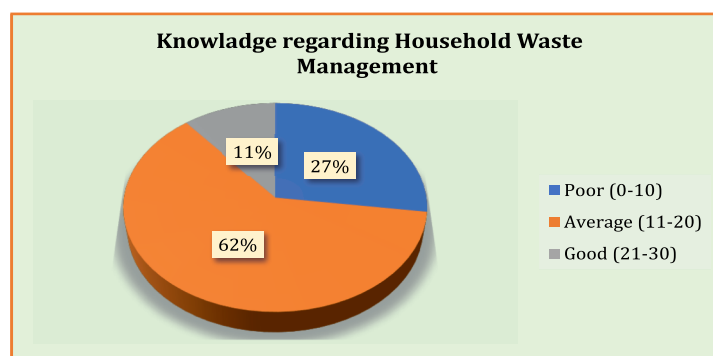
The study revealed that the majority of the homemakers i.e., (62.00 per cent) were knowledgeable about the risks of having waste in their environment. However, they poorly handled household waste. They lacked knowledge on how to manage waste which included aspects of waste minimization, recycling, composting, segregation and separation. Followed by (27.00 percent) of the homemakers have poor knowledge/don't have any idea regarding household waste management and its effect on their health. The results also show that only a small fraction of the home makers.e., (11.00 percent) was having good knowledge about household waste management and waste disposal. The majority of homemakers used illegal dumping, disposing of waste in the drainages, roads, unfinished

structures, nearby streams and also the bush at the end of the compound.

CONCLUSION

Home makers is the backbone of the family. Although their working environment, workload and health are generally neglected by the other members of the family. In this study, it was found that the working environment of household tasks badly affects the homemakers and they were knowledgeable about the risks of having waste in their environment but they lacked knowledge on how to manage waste which included aspects of waste minimization. So, in this way to promote women's health, we need to take into account the effects of domestic work, work-family conflicts, and social support from families, as well as occupational factors.

Table 3: Knowledge regarding household waste management among homemakers;



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