

Health Status of Cottage Industry Workers in Ambedkarnagar District

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Abstract: In developing countries, great efforts are directed towards the development of cottage and small scale industries as the engine for their economic growth. The cottage industry of India is one such industry which has provided ample opportunity of employment for the rural people especially for low socio economic class. Cottage industry workers constitute a significant proportion of the total population of any industrial area. The health of this population is reflected in the health of the society in the given area. The aim of present study is to identify the major health problems in different type of cottage industry and the factors which contribute to these problems. The study is mainly based on primary sources of data collected from the workers employed in various cottage industries. A total of 169 workers engaged in 52 cottage industries were interviewed for this study. The various industrial processes and workplace environment create conditions that led to varying health problems in different industries as reflected in the physical and mental disorders afflicting this population. Finding shows that 52.17 percent cottage workers reported muscular problem, 26.09 percent respiratory, 10.87 percent skin problem and 10.87 percent stress and sleep.

Key words: cottage industry, health problem, workers, work environment

I. Introduction

In developing countries, great efforts are directed towards the development of cottage and small scale industries as the engine for their economic growth. The cottage industry of India is one such industry which has provided ample opportunity of employment for the rural people especially for low socio economic class [1]. The impact of industrial growth and human health has been a matter of concern the world over. Industrial growth is generally considered as an indicator of development. Development implies improvement in quality of life. Therefore, the emphasis must be as much on social wellbeing as on economic progress. The need for good health thus becomes one of the primary objectives of development especially in the developing countries [2]. Cottage industry workers constitute a significant proportion of the total population of any industrial area. The health of this population is reflected in the health of the society in the given area. Thus an understanding of health situation of workers employed in cottage industry can be of considerable significance in explaining the spatial differentiation in health and disease pattern. Some studies pertaining to problems in specific industries carried out by researchers in various disciplines.

There is no doubt that like other manufacturing industries, cottage industry has brought various health problems. However these health problems associated with different cottage industries depend on prevailing industrial structure, duration of working hour, work place environment, year of exposure and prevailing socio economic condition.

II. Objectives

The objectives of the present study are:

- To identify the major health problems in different type of cottage industry and the factors which contribute to these problems.
- To suggest some measures that needs to be addressed urgently in order to tackle these problems.

III. Database And Methodology

The study is mainly based on primary sources of data collected from the workers employed in various cottage industries. A total of 169 workers engaged in 52 cottage industries were interviewed for this study. The health status of the respondent has been assessed through questionnaire technique. The health problems have been divided in to three section viz., ergonomic problems, systematic problems and psychological problems.

IV. Study Area

The present study is confined to the cottage industries situated in the Ambedkarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh. Out of the total 169 sampled cottage workers 44.38 percent are engaged in rice mills, 36.09 percent in flour grinding while handloom weaving and spice grinding account 8.88 percent and 10.65 percent respectively.

The general condition of health and health care of cottage industry workers are far from satisfactory. Problems such as skin, respiratory, muscular, stress and sleep have been detected among workers in specific industry. In the absence of adequate diagnosis and treatment facilities occupational diseases have a serious consequences on the social and economic conditions of workers of their families.

V. Discussion

5.1. Occupational Health

Occupational health is essentially preventive medicine. Both have the same aim of prevention of disease and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupation. Occupational health therefore is the application of preventive medicine in all places of employment [3].

Ergonomics is the physiological link between the worker and his environment. This would have an effect on the worker's body and the relative increase of discomfort in various parts of the body. It indicates the effects of varied working condition which led to the occurrence of health related problems. The various systematic problems that are investigated are respiratory systems, cardiovascular system and skin. The psychological problems are examined in terms of stress and sleep.

5.2. Health problems in cottage industries

Health problems in cottage industries differ from one industry to another; it depends upon the nature of the industry. The health problems of some industries are very prominent. In the ongoing paragraph discuss the environmental condition and process which responsible in creating various health problems in different industries.

5.2.1. Rice mill

Rice milling is the process wherein the rice grain is transformed into a form suitable for human consumption. After harvesting and drying, the paddy is subjected to the primary milling operation which includes de-husking as well as removal of bran layer. Haled dust from rice mill is dust particles of diameters smaller than 10mm emitted from milling process to the surrounding air, can access through the lower respiratory tract and pulmonary air bags. Dust can be responsible for serious respiratory disorder include asthma [4].

5.2.2. Flour grinding

Flour grinding also produces a large amount of dust. On an average, flour grinding workers are exposed to the workplace environment for eight to ten hours a day. Poor ventilation is the basic problem in flour grinding throughout the country. Flour dust accumulate in the work place environment because of poor ventilation, hence workers get exposed to excessive amount of flour dust which lead to pulmonary and respiratory diseases due to a long time continuous exposure [5]

5.2.3. Spice grinding

Spices are vegetable products used specially in powder form for giving a taste to foods. Spice grinding is associated with dust and noise problems. During the process of grinding large amount of dust produces and inhale by the workers which lead to respiratory problems [6].

5.2.4. Handloom weaving

Handloom industry in Ambedkarnagar district is the most important, ancient traditional cottage industry, which plays an important role in improving economic condition of rural people by providing employment to a large number of people in study area. The process of handloom weaving involves exposure to cotton dust which causes irritation in the nose, eyes and respiratory system [7]

Table.1 shows the health profile of sampled cottage industry workers in the study area. About 80 percent respondents reported that they have various kinds of health problems in different industries. The association between different categories of industries and the various health problems show that problem of respiratory and muscular are frequently reported in rice mill and flour grinding.

Table.1 Ambedkarnagar District: Nature of Health Problems according to Industry Type (In Percentages)

Nature of Health Problem	Rice mill	Flour grinding	Handloom weaving	Spice grinding	Total
Skin	2.01	2.02	4.68	2.17	10.88
Respiratory	7.97	11.59	2.17	4.35	26.08
Muscular	29.71	17.39	3.62	1.45	52.17
Stress and sleep	4.35	2.90	0.72	2.90	10.87
Total	44.04	33.90	11.19	10.87	100.00

Source: Based on field survey, 2010

With reference to the weavers the skin disease are reported more. It is because of use of dye in the weaving materials. The respondents get itching. To avoid the effect of dye, they use cloths to cover their hand. (Table.1)

The fact that the problems of stress and sleep almost pervade in all cottage industry, the consequence of industrial environment are brought into sharp focus. Psychological stress caused by time and work pressure, have been associated with sleep disturbances. Majority of the workers in the cottage industry are daily wagers and living in poor socio economic condition so they are compelled to work for more than 12 hours, this lead to adverse psychological effects (Table.1)

Table.2 Ambedkarnagar District: Respiratory Problems according to Industry Type (In percentages)

Kind of problem	Rice mill	Flour grinding	Handloom weaving	Spice grinding
Breathing	72.73	50.00	66.67	66.67
Asthma	18.18	43.75	-	16.67
Bronchitis	9.09	-	33.33	-
T.B.	-	6.25	-	16.67
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Based on field survey, 2010

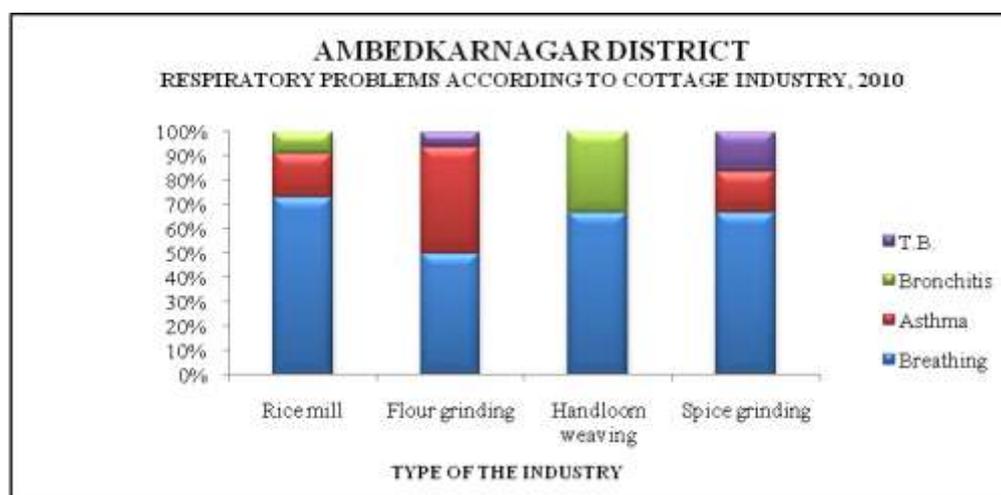


Figure 1

Respiratory problems are very common among all cottage workers (Table.2). In case of rice mills, flour grinding and spice grinding workers, as they are receiving a heavy dose of dust particle which leads to respiratory diseases due to excessive exposure to fine organic dust prevalent in the workplace environment. The weavers frequently report the breathing problems because the minute thread dust and the cotton dust surround the room's atmosphere while they operate the looms. They get respiratory problems because they inhale the dust. Bronchitis and T.B is found to be a threat from cottage workers although, Fig .1 shows a very small percentage of T.B and bronchitis complaints as compare to breathing and asthma.

Table.3 Discomfort in Body Parts

Parts of Body	Rice mill	Flour grinding	Handloom weaving	Spice grinding
Back	48.78	50.00	40.00	50.00
Neck	7.32	8.33	20.00	-
Shoulder	36.59	33.33	40.00	-
Others	7.32	8.33	-	50.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Based on field survey, 2010

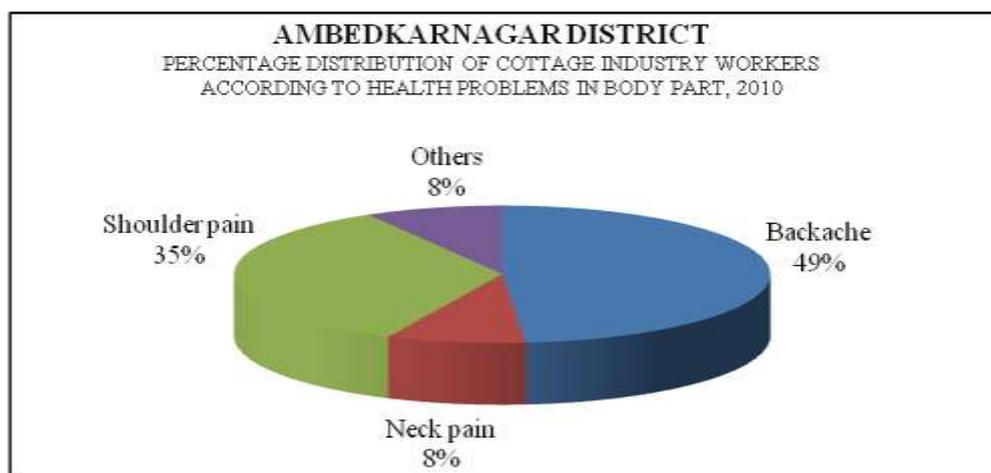


Figure 2

The Fig. 2 shows that 49% of the people are facing backache, 35% are suffering from shoulder pain and 16% are suffering from neck pain and other problems. The data in Table.3 show that back pain and shoulder pain are major physical problems found in practically all the categories of industries. The problem may have arisen due to posture, since most industries required constant standing posture and long working hours.

VI. Conclusion:

The industrial environment, prevailing today is far from conducive to generate a sense of happiness among the people who work within this environment. The various industrial processes and workplace environment create conditions that led to varying health problems in different industries as reflected in the physical and mental disorders afflicting this population. Although the exact occupational diseases could not be identified during this study, the ailments described by the respondents give sufficient indication of the nature of health problems that are being encountered. To sustain human progress and well-being, there is an urgent need of full effort to tackle these problems. The following are some of the issues that need to be addressed urgently:

1. Cottage industry workers should be made aware of work related health problems through media or door-to-door campaigns by non-governmental agencies.
2. The workers must enforce the use of safety devices against pollution and other chemicals especially weavers should use cloths to cover their hand to avoid effect of dye.
3. The poor facilities and bad environmental conditions will affect the worker's health and consequently production repeatedly. There should be proper ventilation in the workplace.
4. Stress management should be introduced in the organization and interaction could help in better occupational adjustment.

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