

Accidents and injuries faced by farm women while performing agricultural tasks

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ABSTRACT

Women are the main workforce in the Indian economy. Women play a vital role in the field of agriculture. Women work for about 14-16 hours a day to carry out various activities on farm and at home. The most common types of injury among farmers were cut, slipping, insect bites and swelling in hands and feet. Most of the agricultural work is mechanical and farmers are found to be using traditional hand tools. Laborious work, maximum use of hand tools, challenging work environment and neglecting safety measures could be responsible for occupational injury.

Key Words : Occupational injuries, Work environment, Safety measures

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is an important part of India's economy and at present it is among the top two farm producers in the world. This sector provides approximately 52 per cent of the total number of jobs available in India and contributes around 18.1 per cent to the GDP. Women play a vital role in building this economy. Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. At present, the women found in the work force in agriculture and allied sectors are estimated at about 61 million which amounts to about 30 per cent of the total rural workers in the country. Joshi *et al.* (2014) reported that many agricultural operations and household activities performed by women involve a lot of physical strain, which create serious health problems in the long run. All the agricultural operations are time consuming and full of drudgery leading to pain and discomfort in different body parts which are high risk factor for muscular stresses in women. About 350,000 deaths occur globally due to fatal occupational injuries (Takala, 2005). Levy *et al.* (2006) found that cuts, puncture and laceration are the common types of injuries among farm women. Musculoskeletal injuries are the predominant form of reported non fatal occupational injuries. Fractures, bruises, lacerations, contusions, penetration by foreign bodies and sprain or strains are the most frequent types of occupational injuries (Yihhoo and Kumie, 2010).

Occupational hazards in agriculture :

Agricultural work possesses several characteristics that are risky for health: exposure to the weather, close contact with wild and poisonous animals: insects and snakes, plants, extensive use of chemical and biological products, difficult working postures and lengthy hours, and sometimes use of hazardous agricultural tools and machinery. Farmers who worked for less or equal to 48 hours a week, were less injured compared to those who worked for more than 48 hours per week. Possible examination could be that the farmers who work for more hours exposed to the risk factors for injuries (Levy, 2016).

Objective :

To find out occupational hazards faced by farm women while performing agricultural activities.

METHODOLOGY

Locale of the study :

The study was conducted in five villages Dhindar, Noorganj (Noorpur), Sarna, Rawali, Milk Chakarpur of Muradnagar Block, Ghaziabad District, U.P. The sample size was comprised of 75 farm women aged between 25-60 years to identify the workers involved in wheat cultivation. 25 farm women from each village were selected for data collection. Self structured questionnaire was used for eliciting information regarding occupational hazards, type of activity performed, health problems encountered during work of farm workers. Information was collected by personal interview method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 given shows the accidents occurred while performing agricultural activity. It was found that majority 38.6% and 33.3% of women workers met with accidents while using spade and sickle. Whereas 17.3% and 10.6% were suffered from hoe and khurpi.

Table 1 : Accidents occurred by using tools		(Total respondents=75)	
Tools	Women workers		Percentage (%)
	Frequency (n=75)		
Sickle	25		33.3
Spade	29		38.6
Hoe	12		17.3
Khurpi	9		10.6

The Table 2 given shows that maximum 33.3% and 30.6% of faced injuries by using agricultural hand tools (spade, sickle etc.) and due to cuts and wounds. Whereas 17.3%,14.6% and 4.0% women workers faced injuries of hands and feet which causes swollen and sore hands and feet, slipping and snake/insect bite, respectively while doing agricultural tasks.

Conclusion :

It is concluded from the study that women work in harsh environmental condition that gives birth to accidents and injuries. The tools used by women leads to accidents and injuries while performing agricultural tasks. The most common types of injury among farmers were cut, slipping,

**Table 2 : Distribution of workers according to the injuries faced while doing agricultural tasks
(Total Respondents=75)**

Injuries due to	Women workers	
	Frequency (n=75)	Percentage (%)
Slipping	11	14.6
Snake/insect bite	3	4.0
Hand tools (spade, sickle etc.)	23	30.6
Swollen and sore hands and feet	13	17.3
Cut, wounds and injuries	25	33.3

insect bites and swelling in hands and feet. Most of the agricultural work is mechanical and farmers are found to be using traditional hand tools. Laborious work, maximum use of hand tools, challenging work environment and neglecting safety measures could be responsible for occupational injury.

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