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Occupational health hazards of hill women of Uttarakhand engaged in farm activities

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Abstract

Women in the hilly areas play a vital role in household, allied and agriculture activities. Women in the mountains work harder and for longer hours than men and have vital role in conservation and management of sustainable ecosystem. Women who performed farm activities and work in commercial areas, they generally face the problem of drudgery. They are always engaged in repetitive, monotonous, harmful activities, harmful postures and handling toxic materials. This present study specially focuses on impact of drudgery on hill women health and other ill impact on their children. This study was carried out in two districts of Uttarakhand and total sample size of 120 was taken for descriptive data using purposive and random sampling. The descriptive data was collected with the help of interview schedule. Results revealed that Women are mostly facing problems like heavy physical strain, overwork fatigue, malnourishment, physical stress due to work overload, mental stress due to work overload, mental stress due to work overload, high incidence of miscarriage, disease proneness, and fluctuating lactation ability. As a result of drudgery, children are also deprived from mother's attention, low birth weight, high mortality rate and reduced breast feeding, neglected child. This study may help in deigning of training programme and intervention which helps in reducing drudgery and makes their life more better to live.

Keywords: Drudgery, physical strain, physical stress, mental stress, overwork fatigue, malnourishment etc.

Introduction

Most of the population in India is dependent on agriculture and Indian rural and hill women play an important role in agriculture as well as in domestic management and allied activities. In India according to Census 2011 ^[1], total work force of women was 25.51 percent. The percentage share of women in cultivation was 2.92 percent, in agriculture labour was 18.56 percent, in household industry was 2.95 percent and in other works was 47.20 percent.

Women in the hilly areas play a vital role in household, allied and agriculture activities. They are considered as the backbone of agriculture in hilly areas. Because in the hill areas agriculture is the only option of livelihood for women. Women in the mountains work harder and for longer hours than men and a have vital role in conservation and management of sustainable ecosystem (Chandra *et al.* 2009) ^[2].

Women face many constraints in both areas inside house or outside the house. In rural and hill areas agriculture women workers are unorganized and dispersed. In these areas most of the women are illiterate and have low level of education. They also have the poor bargaining power. Sometimes due to the seasonal work and in off season they generally have to shift to alternative work for employment. Many of women ended up as bonded labourers because of these situations. In agriculture area mostly task performed by the women are generally repetitive, monotonous and arduous. Agriculture activities like sowing, transplanting, irrigation, weeding, fertilizer application, plant protection and harvesting have immense drudgery impact on farm women.

For farm activities like threshing, winnowing and milling now machines are available but in some areas mainly in hilly areas these activities is carried out manually by the farm women. So these activities are also reason for drudgery.

Nag (1981) ^[3] and Sudharani and Raju (1991) stated that women as agricultural labour participate in many activities such as seedling, transplanting, weeding, fertilizer application, plant protection, thinning, harvesting, processing, winnowing, storing, selling, looking after animals, kitchen gardening etc. So it is clear that most of the activities are performed by women. Most activities for farm women are tedious, back breaking and have occupational health hazards.

While performing agriculture activities heavy physical strain, overwork fatigue, mental stress, physical stress and other problems occur. Repetitive work, physical and mental fatigue, strain and hardship of work experienced the women are the main reason of drudgery and many other health problems. The present research paper mainly focused to access occupational health hazards of hill women of Uttarakhand engaged in farm activities.

Methodology

Selection of locale- The present study was conducted in hill and tarai areas of Uttarakhand. In hill area, Nainital block was selected and three villages Mallachopra, Jadapani, Quidal were purposively selected from the operational villages of KVK, Jeolikote. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select the area and simple random sampling was used to select the sample.

A sample size of one twenty was selected for the collection of descriptive data. An interview schedule was used to gather information related to research from the respondents. The collected data was tabulated and analyzed with the help of descriptive (frequency, percentage and mean) and rational statistics (co-relation coefficient).

Result and Discussion

Impact of drudgery on women

Table 1 shows that about 93.34 percent respondents had

heavy physical strain in their body. In the tarai region, 88.34 percent and in hill region 98.34 percent respondents were affected by heavy physical strain. Three fourth of the total respondents had fatigue in their routine due to overburdened with work at home. In tarai region, 75 percent and in hill region 76.65 percent respondents faced the fatigue problem.

Thirty seven percent respondents were malnourished. In tarai region, 30 percent and in hill region, 45 percent respondents faced the malnourishment problem. Ninety three percent had physical stress due to work overload. In the tarai region, 88.34 percent and in hill area 98.34 percent respondents affected by physical stress due to work overload in home, farm and allied activities.

Seventy nine percent had mental stress due to work. In the tarai region, 78.34 percent and in hill area 80 percent respondents was affected by mental stress due to work. The drudgery had impact on 12.5 percent respondents high incidence of miscarriage. In tarai region, 10 percent and in hill region, 15 percent respondents had this problem.

Overall around sixty four percent respondents had the problem of disease prone. In tarai region, 58.34 percent and in hill region 70 percent respondents affected by disease prone especially skin related problem. Forty four percent respondents had the problem of fluctuating lactation ability due to drudgery. In tarai region, 35 percent and in hill region 53.34 percent respondents were affected by fluctuating lactation ability problem.

Table 1: Impact of drudgery on women

Factor	Frequency		
	Tarai region	Hill region	Total
Heavy physical strain	53 (88.34)	59 (98.34)	112 (93.34)
Overwork fatigue	45 (75)	46 (76.65)	91 (75.84)
Malnourishment	18 (30)	27 (45)	45 (37.5)
Physical stress due to work overload	53 (88.34)	59 (98.34)	112 (93.34)
Mental stress due to work overload	47 (78.34)	48 (80)	95 (79.17)
High incidence of miscarriage	6 (10)	9 (15)	15 (12.5)
Disease prone	35 (58.34)	42 (70)	77 (64.17)
Fluctuating lactation ability	21 (35)	32 (53.34)	53 (44.17)

Note: Values in parenthesis indicates percentage.

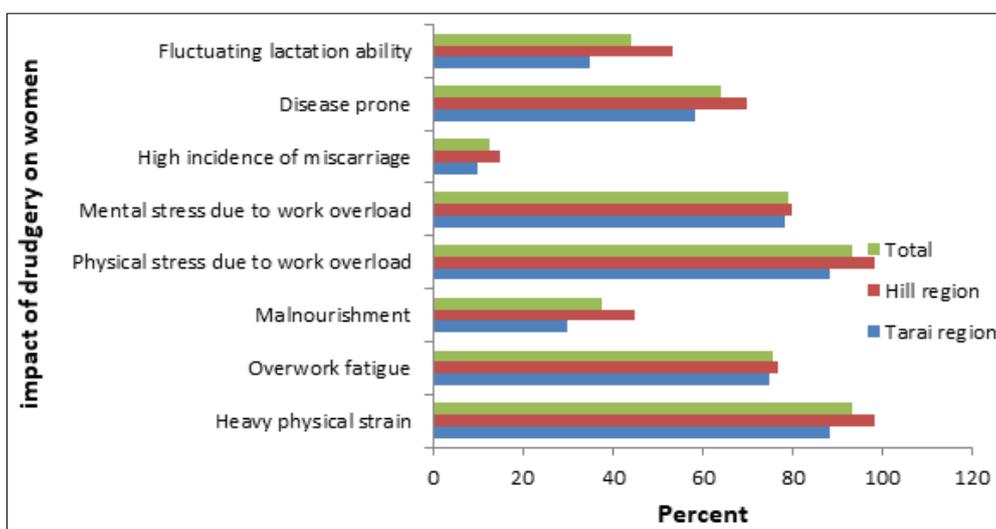


Fig 1: Distribution according to impact of drudgery on women

Impact of drudgery on child

Table 2 justifies the impact of drudgery on children. 82.5 percent respondents feel that children are deprived of mother’s attention. Mostly respondent feel that they did not

give time to their children. Eighty percent respondents in tarai and 85 percent respondent in hills feel that children were deprived of mother’s attention.

More than half of the total respondents feel that their child

had low birth weight affecting their growth. In tarai region, 53.34 percent and in hill region 63.34 percent respondent's children faced this problem. About twelve percent respondent's faced the problem that due to drudgery their child had high rate of mortality. In the context of tarai region it was 10 percent and in hill region it was observed to be 15 percent. Due to drudgery about 44.16 percent respondents had

the feeling that their breast feeding reduced due to drudgery. In tarai region, 35 percent and in hill region, 53.34 percent respondents faced this problem. Seventy eight percent respondents felt that they did not give time to their child. In tarai region, 76.67 percent and in hill region, 80 percent respondents were of the opinion that their children are neglected due to workload.

Table 2: Impact of drudgery on child

n=120

Factors	Frequency		
	Tarai region	Hill region	Total
Deprivation of mother's attention	48 (80)	51 (85)	99 (82.5)
Low birth weight	32 (53.34)	38 (63.34)	70 (58.34)
High mortality rate	6 (10)	9 (15)	15 (12.5)
Reduced breast feeding	21 (35)	32 (53.34)	53 (44.16)
Neglected child	46 (76.67)	48 (80)	94 (78.34)

Note: Values in parenthesis indicates percentage.

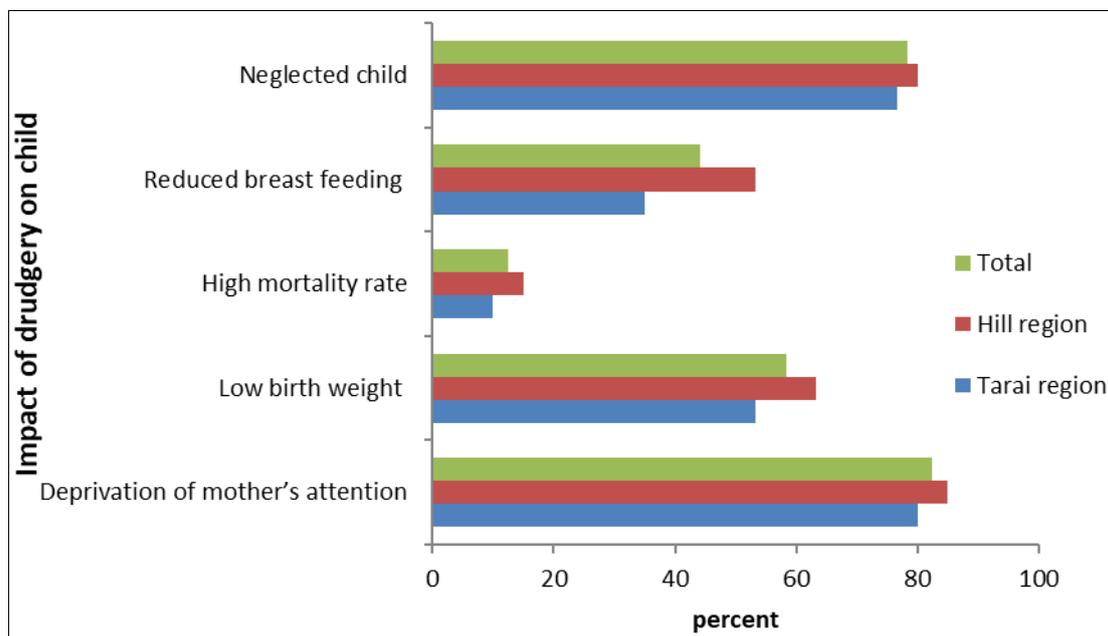


Fig 2: Distribution according to impact of drudgery on child

Conclusion

According to data pertaining to impact of drudgery on women mostly respondents suffer from heavy physical strain and physical stress due to work overload i.e. 88.34 percent and 98.34 percent in tarai and hill area. And fewer respondents have the problem related with incidence of miscarriage i.e. 10 and 12 percent in tarai and hill.

Most of the respondents felt that children are deprived of mother's attention i.e. 80 and 85 percent in tarai and hill. Seventy six percent and 80 percent respondents felt that children are neglected by them in tarai and hill area due to work pressure.

This paper gives a clear cut idea about drudgery impact on Indian farm woman weather belong to hill or tarai region besides of this, it also highlights negative impact on their children. Thus this paper can be helpful in making intervention which can overcome these negative impact on woman heath and their children and help them to lead a happy and prosperous life.

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