



OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN UNORGANIZED WORK SECTORS: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

The safety, general welfare, and well-being of people working in a variety of professions are all included in the broad field of occupational health. Employees in a variety of industries face several health-related difficulties, and those working in the unorganized sector are no different. Workers in construction, domestic work, agriculture, and other unorganized occupations are included in India's unorganized sector. These workers might not be aware of their basic rights and frequently work outside the official government regulations. As a result, they are more susceptible to risks related to occupational health. This study examines the major factors impacting the physical and social well-being of workers in the unorganized sector by using primary data to gauge their level of health awareness.

Keywords: *health, safety, welfare, unorganized sector.*

1. Introduction:

The safety and well-being of employees at work are essentially the focus of occupational health. There is increased emphasis on removing hazards that have a direct impact on employees' health. Numerous workplace risk factors that could lead to cancer, accidents, musculoskeletal disorders, respiratory disorders, hearing loss, circulatory disorders, stress disorders, and other illnesses associated with livelihood are among its numerous contributing

causes. Workplace wellness for employees is as important as business performance and revenue. Prevention, which would be considered an economic activity, should be the most crucial activity. According to W.H.O. "Occupational health deals with all aspect of health and safety in the workplace and has a strong focus on primary prevention of hazards."

In India, almost 80% of jobs in the non-agricultural sector are still in the informal sector, despite an increase in economic activity.¹

"Unorganized sector workforce as - those workers who have not been able to organize themselves in pursuit of their common interest due to certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, small and scattered size of establishments," states the National Commission on Labour (NCL-1966-69).² It is impossible to overlook the unorganized sector's contribution to the daily expansion of the Indian economy. Because unorganized units typically don't have set terms of employment, employees in this sector may encounter a variety of problems. The majority of individuals may still be denied these conditions even if the government has made a number of actions to include different terms of employment in this industry. One way to characterize this type of sector would be as dispersed, little entities that are mostly beyond the government's jurisdiction. People who work in this industry may not have stable jobs, which could lead to irregularities in their employment. This is because employees in this industry do not have legal contracts with their employers, and employers in this type of informal employment may not be taxed or registered with the government. Employees in this industry may work in hotels, construction, domestic help, pottery, agriculture, rag picking, street sellers, and more. They made significant contributions to and had an impact on the Indian economy.

1.1. Unorganized Sector:

The unorganized sector categories according to National Commission on Labour are as³

- 1.1.1. Contract labour including construction workers
- 1.1.2. Casual labour
- 1.1.3. Labour employed in small scale industries

¹ <https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/areasofwork/informal-economy/lang--en/index.htm>

² Definition of unorganized sector by the First Indian National Commission on Labour (1966- 69)

³ List as per National Commission on Labour

- 1.1.4. Handloom/power-loom workers
- 1.1.5. Beedi and Cigar workers
- 1.1.6. Employees in shops and commercial establishments
- 1.1.7. Workers in tanneries
- 1.1.8. Sweepers and scavengers

2. Literature Review:

The living conditions of those employed in the official and informal sectors were the subject of a 2017 study by Sudipto Mundle. The automotive industry is the target of the investigation. The researcher discovered that while education and training do have an impact on productivity, social variables are as important in raising employees' standards of life.⁴

A 2009 study on the social protection of workers in the formal and informal sectors was carried out by Sunil Kumar et al. According to the study, workers in the informal sector require more social security attention than those in the official sector. The researchers came to the conclusion that India's policies do not adequately assist the poor.⁵

Ahmed et al. (2014) conducted research on working conditions and the workplace and came to the conclusion that employees in the unorganized sector require medical care since they operate in an unsanitary setting. Because such unsanitary conditions have an impact on productivity, employers must take into account the demands of those who fall under the unorganized category.⁶

Rajesh Bhattacharya (2014) conducted research on the role of the informal sector in urban politics. According to the study, the informal sector workforce has a big say in urban politics. These workers may lose their rights with a change in the political climate.⁷

In the report, Ashima Majumdar (2014) emphasized the importance of the unorganized sector. Since this sector employs the majority of the workforce, its contribution is crucial to the nation's growth. If it is neglected, the development process will undoubtedly suffer. For this reason, the researcher came to the conclusion that it is important to comprehend the needs of those who work in this sector.⁸

In order to comprehend the security concerns in both the formal and informal sectors, Rajsekhar et al. (2006) conducted research. Security, according to the study's respondents, essentially means keeping one's employment. Nonetheless, those employed in the official and informal sectors are not aware of the range of benefits provided by social security programs.⁹



According to a 2009 study by Kulwant on the issues facing unorganized labor, the largest threats to this industry are changes in trade laws and technological advancements. Employees in this industry face challenges with job security, little to no opportunity for professional advancement, and scant protection from unfair business practices. Seasonal employment, a lack of or a very bad relationship between employers and employees, and inadequate social security protections are some of the problems facing the industry. Since the industry is crucial to the expansion of the economy, it is important to comprehend the powerlessness of its employees.¹⁰

3. Objectives:

The research paper studied about the unorganized sector and following are the objectives:

- 3.1.1. To explore the landscape and evolving trends of the unorganized sector in India.
- 3.1.2. To explore the everyday struggles and working conditions of individuals in the unorganized sector.
- 3.1.3. To examine the level of health awareness among workers in the unorganized sector.

4. Research Methodology:

4.1. Type of Research: The study is analytical and based on both primary and secondary data.

4.2. Data collection techniques: The information gathered comes from a variety of secondary sources, including journals, papers, and research publications. The primary data is gathered using a structured questionnaire; the interview/discussion method has also been involved in the data collection process.

4.3. Sampling: The data is gathered using the convenience sample. The workers in the samples are employed only in the construction industry and are part of the unorganized sector.

4.4. Hypotheses of the study:

4.4.1. H_{alt} : There is a statistically significant difference in health awareness between male and female workers in the unorganized sector, with males demonstrating greater awareness.

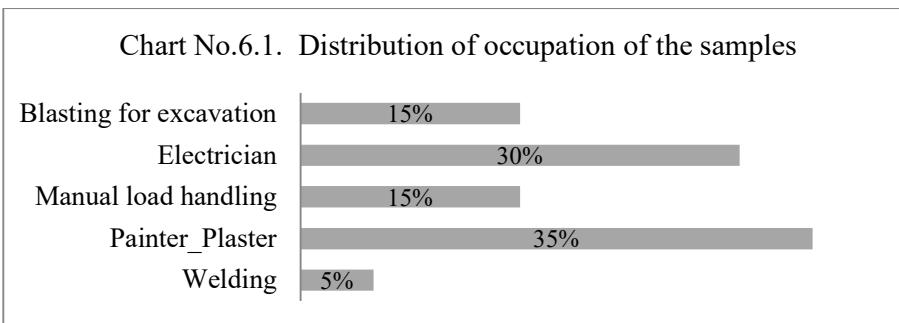
4.4.2. H_{null} : There is no statistically significant difference in health awareness between male and female workers in the unorganized sector.

5. Limitations of the Study:

The scope of this study is restricted to workers employed exclusively within the unorganized sector, thereby excluding insights from the formal workforce. Geographically, the research is confined to the Pune region, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other parts of India. The sample size is limited and represents only a subset of individuals working in the specified sector, which may affect the statistical robustness of the conclusions. The study focuses solely on the construction segment of the unorganized sector, excluding other informal industries such as domestic work, street vending, or agriculture. Data collection was conducted within a defined time frame, which may not capture seasonal or temporal variations in health awareness and working conditions.

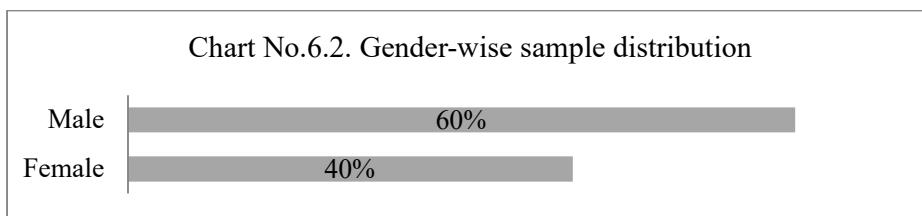
6. Data Analysis:

The distribution of samples by occupation in the construction industry is shown in the following chart (Chart No. 6.1.).



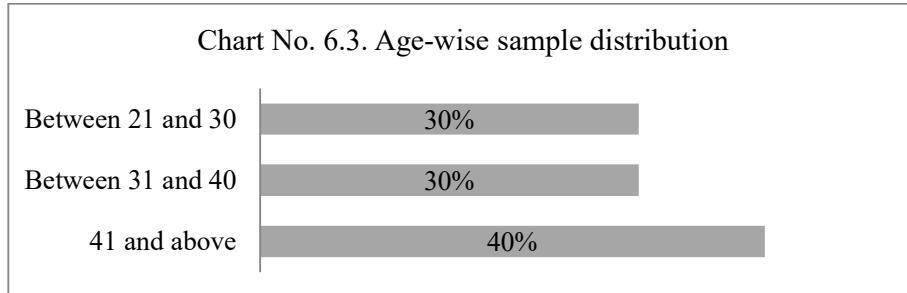
15% of the samples are used for blasting in excavation for building purposes. 30% are electricians, 15% handle loads by hand, 35% are painters or plasterers, and 5% are welders.

The gender distribution of the sample is displayed in the chart (Chart No. 6.2).



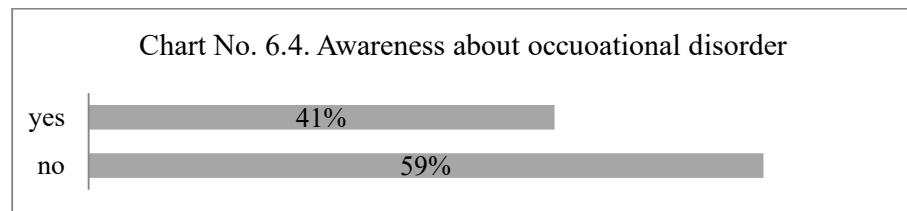
The remaining samples are female, with 60% of the samples being male.

The figure below (figure No. 6.3.) displays the age group of the samples.



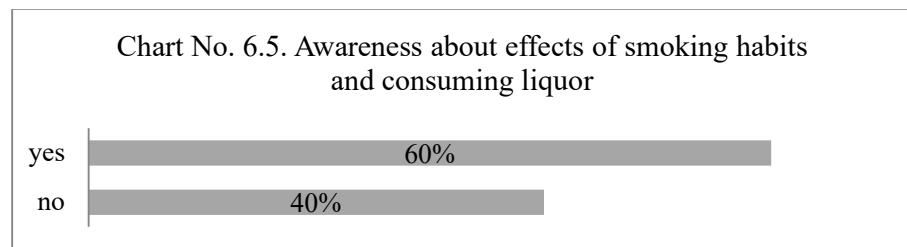
Of the total sample, 30% of respondents are aged between 21 and 30 years, another 30% fall within the 31 to 40 age group, and the remaining 40% are above 41 years of age.

The figure below (figure No. 6.4) illustrates the level of awareness regarding the occupational disease.



Occupational disorders may lead to chronic disabilities, musculoskeletal issues, and lower back pain. Among the surveyed individuals, 59% were unaware of such health risks, while only 41% demonstrated awareness.

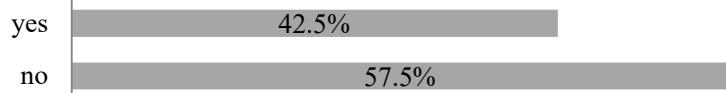
The awareness is shown in Chart No. 6.5.



60% of the respondents are aware of the potential health effects associated with smoking and alcohol consumption, while the remaining 40% lack such awareness.

Chart 6.6 illustrates the impact of excavation activities.

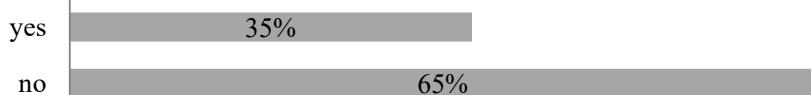
Chart No. 6.6. Awareness about effects of excavation on health



Approximately 42.5% of the respondents are aware of excavation activities and their health-related impacts, whereas 57.5% lack awareness of the potential health risks involved.

The awareness of the health effects of working with cement is shown in the chart (Chart No. 6.7).

Chart No. 6.7. Awareness about effects of working in cement on skin and body



65% of the respondents are unaware of the potential health effects of working with cement on the skin and body, while only 35% demonstrate awareness of these risks within the construction sector.

7. Hypothesis Testing:

The group means were analyzed using a t-test, as the data met the assumption of normality. Given that the independent variable is categorical and the dependent variable is measured on a scale, the t-test was deemed appropriate for testing the technical hypothesis.

The F-test for variances is displayed in Table No. 7.1 below, which helps determine the kind of t-test that should be applied.

Table No. 7.1.

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Mean	2.194444444	2.25
Variance	1.313771518	0.191489362
Observations	72	48
df	71	47

F	6.860806816
P(F<=f) one-tail	8.0843E-11
F Critical one-tail	1.572550337

Since the F value in Table No. 7.1 above is more than the F Critical, the variances in the table are uneven, and the t-test of unequal variances has been used as follows:

Table No. 7.2.

t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Mean	2.194444444	2.25
Variance	1.313771518	0.191489362
Observations	72	48
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	98	
t Stat	-0.37256094	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.35513988	
t Critical one-tail	1.660551217	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.710279759	
t Critical two-tail	1.984467455	

As shown in Table 7.2, at a 0.05 level of significance (α), the calculated t-statistic is less than the critical t-value, leading the researchers to fail to reject the null hypothesis.

Based on the findings, researchers conclude that health awareness among male and female workers in the unorganized sector may not differ significantly. In other words, the level of health awareness appears to be comparable across both genders.

8. Recommendations:

- 8.1. The unorganized sector plays a crucial role in driving the nation's economy, with a significant portion of the workforce engaged in informal employment across various industries.
- 8.2. Businesses operating within these sectors should take proactive measures to support this workforce by raising awareness about potential health risks and ensuring access to protective facilities and safety measures.

8.3. Given that only a small fraction of workers in the unorganized sector are informed about available social welfare schemes, employers should actively engage in educating them about social security benefits and other entitlements to enhance their well-being and inclusion.

9. Conclusion:

The unorganized sector, which accounts for over 80% of employment in India, holds immense potential for contributing to national economic growth. Despite its significance, this segment has often been overlooked in policy and business practices. Limited education and prevailing social constraints have left many workers unaware of critical aspects of their employment—such as health risks and the social welfare benefits periodically offered by the government. It is imperative that businesses adopt a more responsive and inclusive approach toward this workforce. Workers in the unorganized sector are entitled to fundamental rights, and it is the responsibility of employers to ensure these rights are respected and upheld.

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