Musculoskeletal symptoms and disorders, and related knowledge, attitude and practices among female textile workers in Karachi, Pakistan - A cross-sectional study

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Objectives: The aim of this study was to determine the prevalence of Musculoskeletal symptoms and disorders (MSD) and to assess Knowledge, Attitude and Practices regarding Musculoskeletal symptoms and disorders among female textile workers in Karachi, Pakistan.

Methodology: To assess the prevalence of MSD, we used the adopted version of Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire (NMQ). For assessing individual and work-related factors, a structured questionnaire was developed and used. Data was be captured on EpiData and analyzed using SPSS 19. Percentages and frequencies were calculated for musculoskeletal symptoms and disorders, socio-demographic and work-related factors. Standard deviation (SD) and mean were calculated for age, duration of work and monthly income. For KAP variables, responses were coded as “positive” or “negative”. Those scoring “positive” were considered as having good knowledge, attitude, and practices.

Results: 311 female textile workers participated in this study. 253 (81.4%) of the female textile workers reported musculoskeletal symptoms. The Lower back was the most frequently affected region (71.7%), followed by shoulders (70.7%), neck (43.4%), forearm and elbow (24.4%), hands and wrist (20.6%), upper arms (15.1%) and upper back (5.1%). Self-reported average difficulty of pain was moderate, and most individuals (29.6–53.1%) reported duration of pain to be between 3-5 days. Nearly 69.5% female workers were very dissatisfied with their working space. Frequency of musculoskeletal complaints were popular among 26-35 years of age bracket. Higher monthly income, up to 5 years spent working in the textile industry, marital status and lower educational attainment all correlated positively with complaints. Those with MSD complaints were more likely to have better knowledge and safer practices score.

Conclusion: To conclude, there is a high prevalence of musculoskeletal symptoms and disorders among female textile workers in economically developing countries. Preventive measures and worksite interventions are needed to reduce work-related musculoskeletal disorders in this population. Health insurance, treatment and reimbursement schemes should be launched.