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PREVALENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH HAZARDS AMONG TEA PLANTATION FIELD WORKERS IN PEDRO ESTATE NUWARA ELIYA AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE

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Background: The Sri Lankan economy relies heavily on the tea industry for foreign exchange and jobs, making tea workers vital. However, they face numerous health risks and belong to a disadvantaged community, with limited research on their health. This study seeks to address these issues, acknowledging that the industry's sustainability depends on workers' well-being.

Methods: This descriptive cross-sectional study assessed occupational health hazards and work-related quality of life (QoL) among 122 tea plantation workers in Pedro Estate, Nuwara Eliya, selected through cluster sampling. Data were analyzed using SPSS, with socio-demographic and health hazard details presented descriptively. QoL was measured using the 23-item "Work Related Quality of Life (WRQoL)" questionnaire with six psychosocial factors. Workers were categorized into low, average, and high QoL based on scores. Relationships between health hazards and QoL were examined using the Chi-square test, with significance set at 0.05.

Results: The response rate was 100% (n=122). Out of 122, 86.06% had faced some type of an occupational health hazard within the last year, while 80.3%, 39.3% and 22.1% have faced musculoskeletal pain, animal attacks and mechanical injuries respectively. The overall quality of life was average or high among 69.7% while the rest (30.3%) had a low quality of life. Work related quality of life was found to be significantly associated with the prevalence of musculoskeletal pain and animal attacks ($p < 0.05$), but not significantly associated with mechanical injuries ($p > 0.05$).

Conclusion: The work-related quality of life of a tea plantation estate workers, is significantly associated with the prevalence of musculoskeletal pain and animal attacks. Ergonomic interventions should be implemented to reduce the prevalence of musculoskeletal pain, while provision of personal protective equipment, along with annual awareness programs can help to reduce animal attacks.

Key words: Tea workers, Occupational health hazards, Quality of Life