



## **Health conditions of workers in iron and steel industries of Bellary district: A sample survey**

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### **Abstract**

Labour welfare is essentially needed for overall prosperity and growth of industries. As such, every industry has to take measures for maintaining the good working conditions for workers. For this purpose, there is need to provide health promotion equipments and tools such as helmets, clean air masks, etc. There is need to promote health of workers by organizing regular health awareness camps and health check-up camps for workers. To look into the health conditions, the present study was made in iron and steel industries located in Bellary district of Karnataka. A Sample survey of 400 workers working in different industries located in three towns was made. It is found that many of the workers are suffering from few of the health problems. Hence, it is suggested to provide health welfare facilities for these workers.

**Keywords:** labour welfare, health check-up, workers, industry

### **Introduction**

Labour welfare is an essential part of social welfare. Welfare refers to a state of living of an individual or a group in a desirable relationship with total environment ecological, economic and social. It means the adjustment of the labours work life, social life and family life to the society. The concept of welfare is necessarily dynamic, bearing a different interpretation from country to country, from time to time and even in the same country according to the value system, social institution, degree of industrialization an general level of social and economic development. According to the international labour organization report "workers welfare" may be understood as including such services, facilities and amenities as may be established in the vicinity of undertakings to perform their work in healthy and congenial surroundings and to avail themselves of facilities which improve their health and bring high morale (Prabhu, 2014) <sup>[1]</sup>.

The term 'occupational safety and health' implies that there are two aspects to this field. One is the area of safety, which seeks to make workplaces safe for workers so that they do not suffer injuries. Second is occupational health, the main aim of occupational health is to prevent the occurrence of illnesses among workers because of exposures at their place of work. The occupational diseases and exposure to hazards can be prevented by various measures like pre- placement examination, periodic examination, various medical and health care services, notification, supervision of working environment, health education and counseling etc (Sweety, 2014) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Due to occupational risks, accidents, threats, polluted environment, etc at the industries, many of the workers are facing sickness leading to poor health. As such, there is need to maintain industries as environment friendly and maintain the health and wellbeing of the workers. In iron and steel industries, there is air borne dust, dirt, noisy sound, polluted drinking water, etc, which are threats to health of workers.

Further, there are less safe areas at work places such as fire, heated machines, electric short-circuit, etc have become threat to health and life of workers. Hence, there is needed to take precautions on the part of management of these companies to protect the workers against such occupational risks. For this purpose, assessment of health conditions of the workers from time to time is essential. Further, based on health problems, there is need to organize free medical check-up camps and health awareness camps for the workers. The present study is made to assess the health conditions of the workers in iron and steel industries of Bellary district.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study is aimed to look into the health conditions of the workers in iron and steel industries of Bellary district. It is aimed to look into the risky factors such as industrial accidents, bad habits of the workers, different types of illness from which the workers are suffering, etc. It is also aimed to know about the health welfare measures taken by the iron and steel industries for the welfare of their workers.

### **Methodology and Limitations**

The secondary literature on industrial accidents, occupational health, etc was collected so as to derive theoretical background to the study. Based on the secondary literature, interviews with total 400 workers working in different iron and steel industries located in Toranagallu, Hospet and Sandur of Bellary district is made. Hence, present study is limited to 400 workers working in different iron and steel industries of Bellary district. The collected primary data from the workers is analyzed, interpreted and discussed as under.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

#### **1. Ill Health Due to Work at Iron and Steel Industry:**

Many of the health problems such as Asthma, Bronchitis, Tuberculosis, etc are affected due to dust and dirt spread at the

iron and steel industries. As such, the workers are frequently suffering from ill health problems, if the hygienic conditions are not maintained at the work places. It was asked to the respondents that whether they are facing ill health due to their work at iron and steel industry and the collected primary data is presented in the following table.

**Table 1:** Ill Health Due to Work at Iron and Steel Industry

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Fully Feel	76	19.00
Somewhat Feel	126	31.50
Don't Feel	163	40.75
Don't Know	35	8.75
Total	400	100

As stated by all the workers surveyed under the study, 76 (19.00%) are fully felt that there is ill health due to work at iron and steel industry, 126 (31.50%) have somewhat felt that there is ill health due to work at iron and steel industry, 163 (40.75%) have not felt that there is ill health due to their work at iron and steel industry and 35 (8.75%) have no awareness about the same. It shows that majority of the respondents are feeling ill health due to their work at iron and steel industries.

## 2. Personal Habits

Due to work stress, strain and fatigue, many of the workers are addicted to bad habits such as chewing tobacco, smoking, alcoholism, etc, which promote ill health among the workers. In this respect, the information was collected from the respondents on the personal habits and presented in the following table.

**Table 2:** Personal Habits

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Alcoholism	98	24.50
Smoking	114	28.50
Chewing Tobacco/ Gutka	74	18.50
Any Other	27	6.75
None	156	39.00
Total	400	100

Surprisingly, it is highlighted from the above table that, only few of the respondents don't have any habits, but few of the respondents have more than one type of bad habit. Particularly, of all the respondents, 98 (24.50%) are addicted to Alcoholism, 114 (28.50%) are addicted to smoking, 74 (18.50%) are addicted to Chewing Tobacco and Gutka, 27 (6.75%) have other habits like Gambling and only 156 (39.00%) of the respondents don't have any personal bad habits. Due to these bad habits, there may be ill health for the workers working in iron and steel industries.

## 3. Frequency of Visit to Health Centres and Hospitals:

The present study mainly focused on the health of the workers working in iron and steel industries and it is essential to look into the frequency of visits of workers to health centres and hospitals, so as to assess the health state of the workers. The collected primary data on frequency of visit of workers to

health centres or hospitals is as under.

**Table 3:** Frequency of Visit to Health Centre and Hospitals

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Regularly (Fortnightly/ Monthly)	112	28.00
Occasionally (Quarterly/ Six Monthly)	144	36.00
Rarely (Annually)	61	15.25
Never	83	20.75
Total	400	100

On the frequency of visit to health centres and hospitals, as expressed by all the respondents, 112 (28.00%) of the respondents are visiting regularly, that is fortnightly or monthly, 144 (36.00%) are visiting to hospitals or health centres occasionally, that is quarterly or six monthly, 61 (15.25%) of the respondents are visiting to health centres and hospitals rarely or annually and only 83 (20.75%) are not visiting to health centres or hospitals. It shows that there are regular or occasional health problems for the majority of workers working in iron and steel industries.

## 4. Health Problems

As discussed already, Asthma, respiratory problems, bronchitis, tuberculosis, etc are most common problems due to work in iron and steel industries. As stated by the respondents, the health problems from which they are frequently or occasionally suffering are listed as under.

**Table 4:** Health Problems

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Respiratory Problems	163	40.75
Asthma/ Bronchitis	97	24.25
Tuberculosis	53	13.25
Any Other	32	8.00
Not Applicable	83	20.75
Total	400	100

It is observed from the above table that, few of the respondents are suffering from more than one type of health problem. Specifically, as stated by all the workers covered under the study, 163 (40.75%) are suffering from respiratory problems, 97 (24.25%) are suffering from Asthma or Bronchitis, 53 (13.25%) are suffering from tuberculosis, 32 (8.00%) are suffering from other types of health problems and it is not applicable to 83 (20.75%) of the respondents as they are not facing any of such health problems. It is emphasized that when the health problems of workers are analyzed, it is proved that due to their work at iron and steel industries, they are getting health problems.

## 5. Health Facilities Provided by Company

It is already noted that, companies are providing few of the health facilities include health centres at the work premises. Medical reimbursement and medical allowances are most common health facilities provided by iron and steel industries. In this respect, the information was collected from the respondents on the health facilities provided and presented in the following table.

**Table 5:** Health Facilities Provided by Company

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Health Centre at Work Place	66	16.50
Reimbursement of Medical Expenses	51	12.75
Medical Allowance	112	28.00
Medical Facilities Only for Selected Staff	48	12.00
Just Leave with Pay during Illness	30	7.50
None	93	23.25
Total	400	100

On the health facilities provided by their companies, among all the workers, 66 (16.50%) have stated that their company has set up health centre at their work place, 51 (12.75%) have remarked that their company is providing reimbursement of medical expenses, 112 (28.00%) have expressed that their company is providing medical allowance, 48 (12.00%) have mentioned that their company is providing medical facilities only to selected staff, 30 (7.50%) have expressed that their company is providing just leave with pay during their ill health and 93 (23.25%) have stated that their company is not giving any of the medical and health facilities to them.

### 6. Health Care Activities of the Company

It is noted that apart from providing health facilities and allowances, many of the companies and industries are organizing health awareness camps, free health check-up camps, etc regularly for the benefits of the workers. The health care activities of the companies as stated by the respondents are shown as under.

**Table 6:** Health Care Activities of the Company

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Regular Health Check-up Camps	274	68.50
Free Health Treatment	115	28.75
Awareness Camps in Health Care	234	58.50
Any Other	46	11.50
None	67	16.75
Total	400	100

It is noted from the above table that, many of the workers surveyed have expressed that their companies are organizing more than one type of health care activity at their work places. Particularly, 274 (68.50%) of the respondents have mentioned that their company is organizing regular health check-up camps at their work places, 115 (28.75%) of the respondents have stated that their company is providing free health treatment at their work places, 234 (58.50%) have remarked that their company is providing awareness camps in health care, 46 (11.50%) of the respondents have agreed that their company is providing other types of health care activities and only 67 (16.75%) of the respondents have felt that their companies are not organizing any of such health care activities.

### 7. Work Place with Occupational Risks

There are occupational risks such as excessive heat, threat of electric shocks, dust, dirt, excessive noise, poisonous

chemicals, etc at the industrial work places. Due to such risks, there may be ill health and even life risks for the workers. In this respect, it was asked to the respondents that whether there are such types of risks, which they are facing at their work places and such occupational risk faced by the respondents at their work places are depicted as under.

**Table 7:** Work Place Covered with Occupational Risks

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Excessive Heat	64	16.00
Unprotected Electric Threats	29	7.25
Excess Dust & Dirt	93	23.25
Excess Damp/ Cool Area	16	4.00
Excessive Emission/ Smoke	62	15.50
Excessive Noise	47	11.75
Danger from Poisonous Chemicals	15	3.75
None	114	28.50
Total	400	100

Above table made it clear that, as stated by many of the respondents, there are more than one type of threats and occupational risks at their work places. Specifically, among all the respondents, 64 (16.00%) have stated that there is excessive heat at their work places, 29 (7.25%) have expressed that there is unprotected electric threats at their work places, 93 (23.25%) have remarked that there is excess dust and dirt at their work places, 16 (4.00%) have mentioned that there is excessive dampness and cool area at their work places, 62 (15.50%) have stated that there is excessive emission and smoke at their work places, 47 (11.75%) have agreed that there is excessive noise at their work places, 15 (3.75%) have mentioned that there is threat or danger from poisonous chemicals at their work places and 114 (28.50%) have mentioned that there are no such threats at their work places. It is concluded that majority of the respondents are facing more than one type of occupational risks at their work places.

### Suggestions and Conclusion

Iron and steel industries are playing significant role in their contribution to GDP and few of these industries are also export oriented. Hence, there is also considerable profit earned by these companies. When the health conditions of the workers working in these industries are analyzed, it is found that there are unsatisfactory working conditions at the industries. As such, many of the workers are suffering from ill health. It is suggested to the companies to provide environment friendly working conditions such as planting trees, which will reduce pollution. Further, clean air masks and helmets are essentially needed for workers so as to protect from industrial accidents and ill health due to dirt and dust. There is need to organize the health awareness camps, free health check-up camps at the industries so as to enhance health welfare of the workers.

### References

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