

Abstract

Introduction: Workers in the tea plantation industry in Uganda are exposed to several occupational health hazards yet there is an acute shortage of information relating to safety and health in the tea plantation industry because these have not been adequately studied. The main risks posed arise from the negligent use of fertilizers, chemicals and unguarded machinery by unskilled casual labourers leading to numerous mechanical and chemical hazards that result in many accidents. This study focused on investigating the occupational safety and health (OSH) hazards in tea plantation estates. It also assessed workers knowledge and attitudes on occupational safety and health hazards. The research was expected to create awareness and deepen the understanding on the problem of OSH hazards in the tea plantation industry to help in planning steps and interventions to prevent common occupational injuries and accidents in tea estates.

Research Question: What are the occupational safety and health hazards in Mityana tea Plantation? How is the reporting, documentation, and management of occupational injuries and diseases done in Mityana tea plantation Estate?

Objectives: 1. To identify the occupational safety and health hazards at Mityana tea plantation Estate. 2. To assess workers knowledge and attitude on prevention of occupational hazards at Mityana tea plantation Estate. 3. To describe the reporting, documentation and management of occupational injuries, accidents and diseases experienced by tea workers at Mityana Tea Plantation Estate.

Methodology: Descriptive study using cross-sectional and retrospective design was used. Respondents were selected from both the field and factory based on stratified random sampling method, where the population was divided into strata basing on gender alone in order to ensure adequate representation of male and female from each division with shared occupational health and risk attributes. Then a random sample from each stratum was taken in a number proportional to the stratum's size compared to the population size (200). Finally these subsets of the strata were then pooled together forming a random sample. The study was carried out from September to October 2011 at Mityana tea plantation estate located in Mityana District.

Findings: 66.5% of the workers work in the field compared to 32.5% in the factory, with most injuries being experienced in the factory (67.9%) compared to the field (32.1%) implying that risk of injury was greater in the factory than in the field. Injuries resulting from physiological strain and physical factors like harsh climate, vagaries of terrain, chemical hazards, and snake bites were the most prevalent amongst plantation workers in the field while injuries of a minor nature resulting from mechanical risk factors that mainly affected the upper and lower limbs were the most prevalent in the factory. Most workers (65.2%) reported their injury and documentation was maintained, 34.8% did not report, while many (69%) frequently reported their injury after several days despite the presence of an established reporting protocol.

Recommendations: 1. Need to promote the knowledge and labor rights of the tea plantation estate workers regarding safety and health. Employers too need to be informed about health and safety risks in the workplace because they have the moral and often legal responsibility to protect workers. 2. Sensitization meetings on OSH hazard prevention and periodic training on safe work procedures to prevent accidents and injuries with special emphasis on training on PPE usage and First aid respectively. 3. Continuous and consistent maintenance of records on work place injuries, to enable monitor the progress on occupational safety and health in the tea estates.