

Occupational Respiratory Symptoms in Museum, Archives and Library Workers : A Cross-sectional Survey

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We have investigated indoor air quality related respiratory symptoms and job satisfaction in all 88 library, archives and museums in Turkey that have been operational for at least 25 years, with minimum 4 employees. The study sample meeting the selection criteria consisted of 21 institutions, 13 of which were in Istanbul. In a cross-sectional study, we mailed a total of 404 survey questionnaires, job satisfaction (Bener, 1999) and SF-36 quality of life scales (Koçyiğit, 1999). Response rate was 66% (N=265). The survey questionnaire contained 70 questions consisting of standardized respiratory symptoms questions, existing disease, environmental factors, smoking, access to health services and demographic and job related information about the respondents. A physical environment evaluation form was also sent to each institution to assess air quality maintenance procedures, building characteristics, existence of mechanized clean air systems, if any, as well as the size and type of the collection. Only 6 out of 13 institutions reported having air conditioning. Humidity control was present in 2, dust control was valid for only 2. While all buildings reportedly had excess dust in shelves, work areas and reading halls, 12 institutions had routine cleaning services ranging from 1-7 days per week. Mold and humidity was reportedly a constant problem in 2 buildings. 88 subjects reported eye irritation, 36 reported respiratory symptoms, 31 subjects reported skin irritation that they experienced in the work environment only. Half of the subjects reported nasal symptom in the absence of colds (128). Chi-square tests of the above listed symptoms with various building and work-related characteristics, job satisfaction and Quality of Life Scale points revealed no statistically significant associations with the symptoms; except nasal symptoms distribution among library and archives staff who spent <1 hour/day and those who worked more than 1 hour in the shelves, warehouse and restoration areas of the institutions. The latter experienced a statistically significant higher frequency of nasal symptoms ($\chi^2=6.204$, $df=1$, $p=.013$). Subject who reported 'other work-related health problems' were found to have a lower job-satisfaction than others, and this difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2=6.998$, $df=2$, $p=.030$).

References

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