Malaysian Journal of Ergonomics (MJEr)
Volume 6 Issue 1 2024 [76-89]

Recent Advances in Ergonomic Posture Research: Assessing Innovations in Occupational Health and Musculoskeletal Disorder Prevention

Ahmad Humaizi Hilmi[1], Asna Rasyidah Abd Hamid[1] and Wan Abdul Rahman Assyahid[1]

[1] Fakulti Kejuruteraan & Teknologi Mekanikal, Universiti Malaysia Perlis

ABSTRACT

This review paper explores recent advances in ergonomic posture research, focusing on innovations aimed at improving occupational health and preventing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The study covers multiple sectors, including agriculture, manual labor, healthcare, and office environments, highlighting the critical role of ergonomics in mitigating physical strain and enhancing worker well-being. Ergonomic interventions tailored to specific industries have demonstrated significant reductions in physiological strain, improved posture, and increased workplace safety and productivity. In agriculture and manual labor, ergonomic adjustments, such as redesigning operator workstations and utilizing ergonomic tools, have proven effective in reducing the physical demands placed on workers, particularly among traditionally underserved groups like female agricultural workers. In healthcare settings, research emphasizes the importance of posture in surgical and clinical environments, where static postures can lead to MSDs. Wearable technologies and real-time biofeedback systems have emerged as valuable tools for improving ergonomic awareness and reducing the physical toll on workers in these high-demand professions. Office ergonomics has also advanced with the development of dynamic seating systems and posture correction devices that encourage movement and reduce strain caused by prolonged sitting. Such innovations help prevent common MSDs, including back and neck pain, while also enhancing cognitive function and productivity in office environments. This review highlights the growing integration of technological innovations, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and wearable sensors, in posture monitoring and risk assessment. These tools enable real-time feedback, improving both the accuracy of ergonomic interventions and worker safety. The review underscores the need for continued research, uniform ergonomic standards, and the implementation of tailored interventions across industries to promote healthier workplaces and reduce the prevalence of MSDs.

Keywords: Ergonomic risk assessment, Wearable technology, Artificial intelligence, Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs), Real-time monitoring, Industry-specific ergonomics, Psychosocial factors

1. ERGONOMIC POSTURE IN AGRICULTURE AND MANUAL LABOR

The field of ergonomic posture research has seen significant advancements in recent years, particularly in agriculture and manual labor. Singh et al. (2024) conducted a notable study that explored the refinement of operator workplaces in agricultural settings, with a special focus on female workers. This study highlights the importance of ergonomics in enhancing both performance and health outcomes, as ergonomic interventions tailored to specific user groups can lead to notable reductions in physiological strain. For example, the introduction of an ergo-refined workplace in agriculture was found to reduce the force needed to actuate control levers, improve operator posture, and lower physiological markers like working heart rate (WHR) and oxygen consumption rate (OCR). These improvements were observed across various operational

conditions, suggesting that ergonomic adjustments can play a pivotal role in reducing physical strain and improving the overall well-being of agricultural workers (Singh et al., 2024).

Musculoskeletal strain, a prevalent issue in agricultural labor, is often exacerbated by poorly designed work environments and tools. The study by Singh et al. (2024) offers concrete evidence that ergonomic workplace interventions can significantly reduce musculoskeletal stress in agriculture. By lowering the physical demand on operators, these interventions also enhance productivity and safety, which are critical in industries where manual labor predominates. The study's findings underline the importance of redesigning workplaces, particularly for populations that are traditionally overlooked, such as female agricultural workers. The use of ergonomic tools and machinery tailored to specific physiological needs can lead to measurable improvements in operator comfort and efficiency.

The broader impact of ergonomics on operator performance extends beyond agriculture into various fields of manual labor. Studies by Esmaeili et al. (2023) and Onofrejova et al. (2024) also explore the relationship between ergonomics and musculoskeletal health. Esmaeili et al. (2023) demonstrated that ergonomic interventions in foundry workers could significantly reduce musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) symptoms. By implementing ergonomic workstation modifications and targeted training programs, workers experienced a decrease in symptoms affecting the back, shoulders, and lower extremities. These interventions helped mitigate the risk factors associated with repetitive tasks and prolonged exposure to awkward postures, which are common in physically demanding occupations like foundry work.

Onofrejova et al. (2024) further examined the role of ergonomic risk assessments in industrial settings, with a focus on standardizing posture-related risk evaluations. Their study highlights the variability in ergonomic standards across different European Union (EU) member states, particularly in terms of how physical workloads are assessed. They emphasize the need for uniform ergonomic risk assessment methodologies to ensure consistent and accurate measurements across industries. The implementation of new ergonomic assessment tools, such as wireless sensors, can improve the precision of these evaluations, thereby reducing the risk of MSDs in industrial labor.

The importance of reducing musculoskeletal strain through ergonomic interventions is also seen in other sectors. For instance, Zulbaran-Rojas et al. (2024) explored the integration of wearable technology in neurosurgery to monitor and improve surgeons' posture during long and physically demanding procedures. Similar to agriculture and manual labor, prolonged static postures in surgical environments can lead to musculoskeletal issues. By providing biofeedback on posture, wearable devices offer a means of improving ergonomic awareness, which can enhance both operator performance and health outcomes. The study's findings suggest that wearable technologies may have broader applications across various industries where physical labor is prominent, including agriculture.

In addition to ergonomic improvements, studies by Channak et al. (2024) and Kang and Mirka (2024) examined the effectiveness of ergonomic tools like dynamic seat cushions and back-support exosuits, which are designed to reduce muscle strain in workers required to maintain static postures for prolonged periods. Channak et al. (2024) found that dynamic seat cushions encouraged postural shifts among office workers, resulting in reduced discomfort in the lumbar spine. Similarly, Kang and Mirka (2024) demonstrated that passive back-support exosuits effectively reduced erector spinae muscle activity during short-duration trunk flexion tasks, regardless of posture asymmetry or lower extremity motion restrictions. These studies suggest that introducing dynamic interventions, such as exoskeletons or active seating, can help alleviate the physical burden of repetitive or prolonged tasks in both agricultural and manual labor settings.

The prevention of musculoskeletal disorders and the enhancement of occupational health through ergonomic innovations are critical not only in agriculture but also in broader labor-intensive industries. Ergonomic research and interventions, such as those described in studies by Singh et al. (2024) and Esmaeili et al. (2023), provide compelling evidence that improving workplace design and adopting tailored ergonomic solutions can have a significant impact on reducing musculoskeletal strain. Whether through the introduction of advanced equipment or simple modifications to workstations, the role of ergonomics in protecting worker health and improving performance is becoming increasingly clear. These findings emphasize the need for continued research and investment in ergonomic solutions to enhance occupational health and safety in agriculture and other labor-intensive fields.

2. POSTURAL ERGONOMICS IN CLINICAL AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONS

Recent advancements in ergonomic posture research, particularly within clinical and medical professions, have focused on the influence of posture on performance, musculoskeletal health, and overall occupational well-being. The comparison of postural ergonomics in different medical professions reveals significant ergonomic risks and challenges, particularly in environments such as surgical and clinical settings where static and repetitive postures are common.

A study by Mookambika et al. (2024) compared anaesthesiologists' postures during laryngoscopy in different positions. The findings highlight the critical role that posture plays in healthcare professions. Laryngoscopy, a common procedure in anaesthesia, places significant physical demands on clinicians. Mookambika and colleagues compared the head-elevated laryngoscopy position (HELP) with a 25° backup and a supine position. While the ergonomic differences between the two positions were subtle, the 25° backup position demonstrated improved glottic visualization without increasing ergonomic discomfort for the practitioners. This highlights that modifications in posture, even minor ones, can have a significant impact on both clinical performance and ergonomic health, especially in procedures where precision and control are paramount (Mookambika et al., 2024).

In surgical environments, the relationship between ergonomics and performance is even more pronounced, particularly in disciplines such as neurosurgery. Zulbaran-Rojas et al. (2024) explored ergonomic risks in neurosurgery through the integration of wearable technology. Neurosurgeons often maintain prolonged static postures, which can lead to fatigue and an increased risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). The use of wearable sensors in the study allowed for real-time monitoring of posture during surgeries, providing objective feedback to the surgeons. The results indicated that surgeons spent a significant portion of their surgical time in static postures, particularly during spine surgeries where standing and the use of an exoscope were common. Interestingly, the data also revealed that attendings, who are generally more experienced, spent more time in neutral postures compared to trainees. This suggests that experience may play a role in adopting better postural habits during surgery. Moreover, the integration of wearable technologies in the operating room represents a promising avenue for reducing MSDs by increasing postural awareness and encouraging real-time ergonomic adjustments (Zulbaran-Rojas et al., 2024).

The impact of posture on performance in healthcare professions extends beyond surgery and anaesthesia. Danylak et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review examining ergonomic interventions aimed at reducing MSDs among dental professionals, a group particularly vulnerable to poor posture due to prolonged static positions during patient care. The review found that ergonomic interventions, such as posture training and the use of ergonomic equipment, were effective in reducing the incidence of MSDs among dental practitioners. However, the review also emphasized the need for more widespread and standardized ergonomic training in dentistry to prevent long-term musculoskeletal issues. These findings underscore the

broader implications of posture in clinical professions, where the physical demands of the job can lead to chronic conditions if ergonomic risks are not adequately addressed (Danylak et al., 2024). Across various healthcare professions, the emphasis on improving ergonomic conditions is gaining traction. From surgical environments to dental clinics, the integration of ergonomic principles into daily practice is shown to reduce the risk of MSDs and improve overall performance. In surgical settings, Campbell et al. (2024) conducted a meta-analysis focusing on work-related MSDs in endoscopic sinus and skull base surgeons. The analysis revealed a high prevalence of MSDs among these specialists, particularly in the neck and lumbar spine. Contributing factors included static postures and the repetitive nature of endoscopic procedures. The meta-analysis also found that ergonomic interventions, such as posture-correcting equipment and modified surgical techniques, were effective in reducing the severity and prevalence of MSDs. However, the study called for more research into the direct outcomes of these interventions, particularly in relation to pain and fatigue, which remain underexplored in the current literature (Campbell et al., 2024).

3. OFFICE ERGONOMICS: REDUCING POSTURAL STRAIN

Recent research on ergonomic posture in office settings has increasingly focused on mitigating postural strain to reduce musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and improve occupational health outcomes. The integration of dynamic seating solutions has been proposed as a key innovation for preventing neck and lower back pain among office workers, as explored by Channak et al. (2024). The authors emphasize that prolonged static sitting is one of the most common risk factors for MSDs in office environments, contributing significantly to discomfort in the lumbar and cervical regions. Dynamic seating systems, which encourage subtle movements and frequent postural adjustments, aim to reduce static strain on the spine by promoting natural shifts in body position. This approach offers a more proactive solution to musculoskeletal health, as it supports spinal mobility and prevents the buildup of stress in static postures, reducing the incidence of pain in these critical areas (Channak et al., 2024).

The use of dynamic seat cushions, another advancement in office ergonomics, has also been shown to promote postural shifts and muscle activation. Pearse et al. (2024) reviewed various types of active seating technologies, highlighting how these cushions engage core and stabilizer muscles during extended periods of sitting. The cushions encourage micro-movements that activate muscle groups otherwise dormant in static sitting postures. This movement helps distribute pressure more evenly across the lower back and pelvis, alleviating discomfort commonly associated with prolonged sitting. Research indicates that these cushions not only enhance muscle engagement but also improve blood circulation, further preventing muscle fatigue and stiffness. The incorporation of such ergonomic tools in office environments represents a significant step toward reducing the occupational burden of MSDs (Pearse et al., 2024).

Oliosi et al. (2024) explored the variability in sitting patterns and its impact on spinal health, adding another layer of understanding to the importance of dynamic postures in the workplace. Their study suggests that individuals who frequently adjust their sitting positions experience fewer musculoskeletal complaints, particularly in the lower back and neck. Variability in posture ensures that no single muscle group is overburdened for prolonged periods, which is critical for maintaining spinal health. This finding aligns with other research advocating for dynamic seating solutions, as postural variability is key to reducing the risk of MSDs. The study also emphasizes that sedentary behavior, characterized by long durations of static sitting, is strongly linked to chronic back pain and spinal disorders. Encouraging workers to incorporate postural variability through ergonomic interventions could thus play a pivotal role in long-term spinal health maintenance (Oliosi et al., 2024).

These advancements in office ergonomics not only target the physical aspects of posture but also contribute to improving cognitive function and productivity. As noted by Makki et al. (2024), corrective exercises combined with ergonomic interventions have a significant positive impact on both physical health and cognitive performance among office workers. Their study demonstrated that reducing musculoskeletal discomfort through corrective postural practices led to improvements in working memory and mental clarity. This connection between ergonomic health and cognitive function highlights the broader benefits of ergonomic interventions in the workplace. Not only do these interventions alleviate physical discomfort, but they also enhance employees' overall well-being and performance, reinforcing the value of investing in ergonomic solutions for long-term occupational health (Makki et al., 2024).

4. ERGONOMIC INTERVENTIONS AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

Recent advances in ergonomic posture research have yielded significant progress in both technological innovations and ergonomic interventions aimed at improving occupational health and reducing the prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Among these innovations, deep learning-based postural assessment tools, exosuits for trunk flexion support, and artificial neural networks (ANNs) for predicting dynamic postures in lifting tasks have shown considerable promise in addressing posture-related risks in the workplace.

One of the most notable technological advancements is the implementation of deep learning-based postural assessment tools. These tools, as highlighted by Jiao et al. (2024), leverage deep learning algorithms to automate and enhance the accuracy of postural evaluations. Traditional postural assessments often rely on manual observation or basic software, which can be subjective and time-consuming. Deep learning models overcome these limitations by using image recognition technologies to continuously track body movements and assess postures in real-time. This approach enables more precise identification of high-risk postures that can lead to MSDs. By capturing and analyzing vast amounts of data from workers' movements, these tools can identify improper postures early, allowing for timely corrective actions. This is particularly important in environments where workers engage in repetitive tasks or prolonged static postures, both of which are associated with an increased risk of MSDs (Jiao et al., 2024).

Exosuits are another critical innovation aimed at reducing postural strain, particularly during trunk flexion tasks. Kang and Mirka (2024) explored the effectiveness of exosuits in providing mechanical support for workers who frequently perform tasks requiring repetitive or sustained bending motions. Trunk flexion is a common source of lower back injuries, a prevalent form of MSD in manual labor and industrial work environments. Exosuits are wearable devices designed to reduce the biomechanical load on the spine during these activities. By supporting the lower back and trunk, exosuits help minimize the physical strain on muscles and joints, thereby reducing fatigue and the likelihood of injury. Kang and Mirka's research demonstrated that workers wearing exosuits experienced a significant reduction in muscle activation in the lumbar region, highlighting the devices' potential to enhance both safety and productivity. The exosuits are lightweight and flexible, ensuring that workers can perform their tasks without being hindered by cumbersome equipment while still receiving adequate support to prevent injury (Kang & Mirka, 2024).

The use of artificial neural networks (ANNs) for predicting dynamic postures in lifting tasks is another area where technological advancements are transforming workplace ergonomics. Lifting tasks, especially those involving heavy loads or improper techniques, are a major contributor to MSDs, particularly in the lower back and shoulders. Hosseini and Arjmand (2024) demonstrated the application of ANNs in predicting unsafe lifting postures and providing real-time feedback to workers. The ability of ANNs to process large datasets allows them to model the complex biomechanical movements involved in lifting tasks, taking into account factors such as load

weight, body posture, and motion trajectory. By predicting potentially harmful movements before they occur, ANNs enable workers to adjust their techniques in real-time, thereby preventing the development of MSDs. This proactive approach is particularly beneficial in industries where workers perform repetitive lifting tasks, as it allows for continuous monitoring and correction of lifting techniques (Hosseini & Arjmand, 2024).

The integration of these innovations represents a significant leap forward in the prevention of MSDs in occupational settings. By combining deep learning-based assessments, exosuit technology, and predictive modeling through ANNs, workplace ergonomics can be dramatically improved. These tools not only enhance worker safety but also promote efficiency by reducing the physical toll associated with repetitive or strenuous tasks. Additionally, the real-time nature of these interventions allows for continuous monitoring and immediate feedback, ensuring that workers maintain proper postures throughout their shifts.

The use of deep learning models in postural assessments is particularly valuable in settings where manual monitoring would be impractical. For example, in large manufacturing facilities or warehouses, where hundreds of workers may be performing tasks simultaneously, traditional postural assessments are logistically challenging. Deep learning algorithms, however, can analyze video footage from cameras installed in the workspace, tracking each worker's movements and identifying postural deviations automatically. This scalability makes the technology accessible to a wide range of industries, from small businesses to large corporations, improving overall workplace safety (Jiao et al., 2024).

Exosuits, meanwhile, offer a practical solution for workers who perform tasks that place a heavy strain on the lower back. In addition to reducing the risk of injury, these devices also help reduce fatigue, allowing workers to maintain a higher level of productivity over the course of their shifts. The reduced strain on the body also means that workers may be able to remain in their roles for longer periods, potentially delaying the onset of chronic MSDs that could force them out of the workforce. As exosuit technology continues to evolve, it is likely that these devices will become even more lightweight and effective, offering enhanced support without compromising mobility (Kang & Mirka, 2024).

The application of ANNs in predicting dynamic postures represents a major advancement in personalized ergonomics. By analyzing each worker's unique movement patterns, ANNs can provide tailored feedback that helps workers optimize their lifting techniques based on their individual biomechanics. This personalized approach ensures that workers are not only protected from injury but also able to perform their tasks more efficiently. The data generated by these systems can also be used by employers to identify trends in posture-related injuries and implement targeted interventions to address specific risks (Hosseini & Arjmand, 2024).

In conclusion, the integration of deep learning-based postural assessment tools, exosuits, and artificial neural networks marks a significant advancement in the field of ergonomic posture research. These innovations not only provide real-time feedback and support for workers but also contribute to the overall improvement of workplace safety and productivity. As these technologies continue to develop, their widespread adoption across various industries has the potential to significantly reduce the prevalence of MSDs, improving both worker health and organizational efficiency.

5. POSTURE-RELATED MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS (MSDS) IN HIGH-RISK PROFESSIONS

Posture-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are a significant concern in high-risk professions, especially those characterized by repetitive tasks, heavy lifting, and prolonged static

postures. These disorders not only affect the physical well-being of workers but also have a profound impact on professional efficiency and productivity. Various ergonomic interventions have been implemented in different industries to mitigate the risks associated with MSDs, focusing on workstation modifications and specialized training.

In industrial settings, ergonomic interventions have shown to be effective in reducing the incidence of MSDs. The study conducted by Kusyk et al. (2024) highlights the importance of improved surgical ergonomics through technological advancements. Their research demonstrated that using exoscopic visualization in anterior cervical spine procedures allowed surgeons to maintain better posture compared to traditional microscopes. The adoption of such ergonomic innovations helps to alleviate musculoskeletal strain, allowing for reduced discomfort during procedures, thereby potentially prolonging the career longevity of surgeons and improving surgical outcomes. This reflects a broader trend in high-risk professions, where improved workstation designs and equipment modifications are key strategies for reducing the physical demands placed on workers.

The impact of workstation modifications extends beyond surgery and is relevant in various manual labor industries as well. The work by Mallampalli (2024) on cashew kernel separating activities in small-scale cashew industries provides a concrete example of how task-specific ergonomic workstations can alleviate the physical strain associated with repetitive tasks. In this case, workers were prone to adopting constrained, non-neutral postures, leading to a high prevalence of lower back, hand/wrist, and shoulder disorders. The introduction of an ergonomic workstation, designed through a participatory approach, allowed workers to sit at an elevated height, thus improving posture and reducing the risk of MSDs. This emphasizes the importance of tailoring ergonomic interventions to the specific demands of a task, as well as involving workers in the design process to ensure that the solutions are practical and effective.

Specialized training aimed at reducing MSDs also plays a crucial role in minimizing the risks associated with poor posture in high-risk professions. Nino et al. (2024) explored the relationship between mental workload, body posture, and individual characteristics, finding that workers with higher anxiety levels or those engaged in mentally demanding tasks were more likely to adopt awkward postures. This suggests that ergonomic training should not only focus on physical movements but also address the cognitive aspects of task performance. Training programs that integrate stress management techniques and teach workers how to maintain proper posture under high mental workloads could be highly beneficial in reducing the overall risk of MSDs.

Workstation modifications combined with specialized training have proven to be a potent combination in reducing MSD-related risks. Shah et al. (2024) identified ergonomic hazards in the Mohs laboratory, where histotechnicians and surgeons experience significant musculoskeletal strain due to the repetitive nature of their tasks. By integrating ergonomic interventions, such as height-adjustable workstations and proper equipment positioning, along with specialized training on posture maintenance, significant improvements in worker comfort and efficiency were observed. These changes not only reduced the physical toll on workers but also improved workflow efficiency, as workers were able to maintain productivity for longer periods without experiencing fatigue or discomfort.

The impact of musculoskeletal strain on professional efficiency is well-documented across various industries. Afzal et al. (2024) examined work-related musculoskeletal pain among primary healthcare providers, finding that the prevalence of MSDs was highest in the lower back and legs, which are critical for maintaining mobility and balance during patient care tasks. The consequences of such pain extend beyond personal discomfort, as it directly affects the ability of healthcare providers to perform their duties efficiently. In the long term, chronic pain can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and a higher risk of early retirement. Addressing these issues through ergonomic interventions, such as proper lifting techniques and

the use of assistive devices, can help mitigate the negative impact of musculoskeletal strain on professional performance.

Moreover, the study by Fray and Davis (2024) reinforces the importance of assistive devices in reducing the physical demands placed on workers, particularly in patient handling tasks. Their review of biomechanical studies found that the use of lift hoists, air-assisted devices, and friction-reducing tools significantly reduced the strain on caregivers, leading to improved posture and reduced risk of injury. This not only protects the health of the workers but also enhances the quality of care provided to patients, as caregivers can perform their tasks more efficiently without being hindered by physical discomfort.

6. POSTURAL HEALTH IN YOUTH AND PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Recent research on ergonomic posture highlights the increasing relevance of posture-related health issues, particularly among youth, due to prolonged sitting and increasing use of technology. In the context of adolescents, the implications for public health are vast, as early signs of back pain and musculoskeletal issues in this demographic may predict more serious conditions later in life. Studies that explore the relationship between physical activity, sedentary behavior, and spine health in adolescents provide critical insights into how modern lifestyles, especially technological habits, shape posture and related disorders.

In a longitudinal study by Davidson et al. (2024), traditional and dynamic sitting were compared to assess the impact on lumbar spine kinematics and associated pain during both computer work and activity-guided tasks. The findings revealed that dynamic sitting, characterized by backless or multi-axial rotating seat pans, promoted increased pelvis and lumbar spine movements during activity-guided tasks, mitigating low back pain. This movement, absent in traditional sitting postures, is critical for maintaining spine health, particularly among adolescents who often engage in prolonged computer use. However, discomfort in buttocks increased with dynamic sitting, though no significant differences in low back pain or productivity were noted. These findings suggest that while dynamic sitting can promote spinal mobility, ergonomic interventions must be carefully balanced to prevent discomfort in other body regions (Davidson et al., 2024).
Similarly, Wahlström et al. (2024) explored ergonomic challenges following the relocation of office workers to activity-based flex offices (AFOs), which introduced new ergonomic and musculoskeletal challenges. Although their study focused on adults, the implications for adolescents are clear. Prolonged sitting in suboptimal work environments, similar to school settings or home offices during online education, exacerbates neck and shoulder symptoms. This mirrors the issues found in youth populations, especially with the shift to more sedentary lifestyles driven by increased screen time and insufficient physical activity. This research demonstrates the critical need to address ergonomic factors and promote better postural habits from a young age to prevent long-term musculoskeletal disorders.

Another study by Raj et al. (2024) evaluated the influence of stair climbing breaks during prolonged sitting on posture, discomfort, and musculoskeletal performance outcomes. Their findings showed significant improvement in agility and reduction in discomfort with short bouts of stair climbing, but no improvement in other musculoskeletal outcomes. While the research primarily focused on young adults, the implications extend to adolescents, who also experience the negative effects of prolonged sitting. Encouraging similar physical activity breaks in schools or at home during extended periods of sitting can help alleviate posture-related discomfort and potentially improve spine health.

Technology's impact on posture is further exacerbated by modern work environments, as shown in the study by Gallagher et al. (2024), which examined the use of ultrawide curved displays. Adolescents, much like office workers, are increasingly using large screens and multiple devices

simultaneously for both educational and recreational activities. The study found that larger displays led to increased neck twisting and head movements, highlighting a key issue in posture-related musculoskeletal risks. These risks are particularly concerning for younger users who are still in critical developmental stages, suggesting a need for ergonomic design considerations in educational settings and home environments.

Adolescent musculoskeletal health is further complicated by the rise of smartphone usage, as demonstrated in the research by Jacquier-Bret and Gorce (2023). Their study on university students found that prolonged smartphone use across various postures—especially lying and sitting—resulted in high exposure to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). This is particularly concerning given that adolescents typically spend several hours a day on smartphones. The research highlights the need for greater awareness of posture and more ergonomic interventions to reduce the risk of MSDs in this population.

Public health strategies must therefore prioritize ergonomic education, especially in youth, to mitigate the long-term impact of poor posture. For instance, Kim et al. (2024) demonstrated the efficacy of posture correction feedback systems, which reduced neck and trunk flexion and alleviated muscle activity during computer work. These systems can be applied in educational settings to train adolescents to maintain correct posture during long periods of screen use, potentially reducing the prevalence of posture-related MSDs as they age.

Collectively, these studies underscore the significant relationship between posture, physical activity, and technology use in determining the health outcomes of adolescents. A key takeaway from these findings is the importance of integrating ergonomic solutions—such as dynamic seating, regular movement breaks, and posture correction feedback systems—into daily routines. Given the increasing reliance on technology in both educational and recreational activities, it is essential that adolescents develop good posture habits early to prevent long-term musculoskeletal issues.

Moreover, ergonomic awareness must be complemented by public health interventions that encourage physical activity to counterbalance the negative effects of prolonged sitting. The shift to more sedentary lifestyles, exacerbated by online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, has highlighted the need for ergonomic reforms in school and home environments to support healthier postures among young individuals. Strategies such as ergonomic workstation setups, regular activity breaks, and education on proper posture can help reduce the prevalence of back pain and other posture-related disorders in adolescents, ultimately leading to improved public health outcomes.

7. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND EMERGING TRENDS

Advancements in ergonomic posture research have introduced novel approaches and technologies aimed at improving occupational health and mitigating the risk of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). Recent innovations, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) and wearable technologies, have enabled more precise monitoring of posture, while calls for uniform ergonomic standards across industries reflect the growing recognition of the need for consistency in workplace safety measures. Furthermore, emerging strategies for preventing work-related musculoskeletal disorders highlight the importance of early detection, education, and tailored interventions.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and wearable technologies have played an increasingly prominent role in posture monitoring. Smart wearables, such as those equipped with inertial measurement units (IMUs), have become vital tools for real-time posture assessment in various occupational settings. The work by Hoareau et al. (2023) compared the accuracy of in-cloth versus on-skin sensors in

measuring trunk and upper arm postures, finding that while both methods provided acceptable accuracy, in-cloth sensors demonstrated potential for ergonomic assessment in work environments. The system, though influenced by individual factors such as clothing fit, offers a convenient and relatively accurate method of tracking posture over time. Similarly, Young et al. (2023) demonstrated how convolutional neural networks (CNNs) could process data from IMUs to predict wrist posture during occupational tasks. This development significantly reduces the manual effort required for posture analysis and provides clinicians and researchers with a more efficient means of assessing ergonomic risks.

The application of AI in these wearable technologies extends beyond simple posture monitoring. AI can also analyze vast amounts of data to identify trends and predict potential risks before symptoms become severe. For example, Kuber et al. (2022) reviewed the current strategies for assessing upper-body industrial exoskeletons (i-EXOs) and proposed a guideline that integrates tools and technologies for the field evaluation of i-EXOs. This guideline emphasizes the importance of subjective measures such as discomfort and usability, as well as objective measures like muscular demand and kinematics, illustrating how AI can enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of ergonomic interventions.

However, while AI and wearables offer promising tools for posture monitoring, the lack of uniform ergonomic standards across industries remains a critical barrier to widespread adoption and effective implementation. Different industries have varying levels of ergonomic awareness and risk, and without a unified approach, interventions may fall short in addressing the unique challenges of each sector. Indrayani et al. (2022) developed an educational protocol for occupational health nurses to enhance their competence in ergonomic risk assessment. The protocol focuses on systematically identifying and categorizing high-risk postures, training personnel in the use of assessment tools, and improving inter-rater reliability. Such protocols underscore the need for uniform ergonomic standards that ensure consistency in risk assessments across industries and job types.

One sector particularly vulnerable to work-related MSDs is construction. Lewis et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study on male construction workers and found significant associations between occupational biomechanical exposures and surgical treatment for subacromial impingement syndrome (SIS). Workers exposed to upper-extremity loading, hand-arm vibration, and static work were found to be at higher risk for SIS surgery, highlighting the need for early intervention and consistent ergonomic practices in industries with high physical demands. Jahn et al. (2023) similarly reviewed the association between occupational mechanical exposures and chronic low-back pain (LBP), emphasizing the need for standardized exposure definitions and metrics to improve the quality and generalizability of future research. These studies advocate for uniform ergonomic standards that can be adapted across industries, ensuring that all workers, regardless of their occupation, benefit from protective measures against MSDs.

In addition to uniform standards, strategies for preventing work-related MSDs focus on a combination of ergonomic interventions, training, and technology. For example, Ünver and Makal Orğan (2023) demonstrated how anti-fatigue floor mats can significantly reduce pain and fatigue among surgical team members. The use of such mats can be extended to other sectors, such as manufacturing or healthcare, where prolonged standing is common. The ergonomic intervention not only improves worker comfort but also reduces the likelihood of developing MSDs over time. Similarly, the study by Kim et al. (2023) on lower body postures in chair design highlights how ergonomic interventions tailored to specific body mechanics can reduce muscular recruitment and improve posture. This research suggests that future ergonomic solutions should consider the entire body, not just isolated regions, to achieve better long-term outcomes.

Training programs are also essential for preventing MSDs, as they help workers develop healthier postural habits. Gold et al. (2023) found that "Just in Time" ergonomic teaching significantly

improved postural habits among junior otolaryngology trainees, reducing the risk of musculoskeletal pain during surgeries. The study underscores the importance of incorporating ergonomic education into training programs, particularly for industries where poor posture can lead to long-term health issues. In a similar vein, the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (2023) recommended formal ergonomics education and microbreaks during procedures to prevent endoscopy-related injury, further demonstrating the effectiveness of training in reducing work-related MSDs.

Emerging strategies for MSD prevention also emphasize the importance of tailored interventions that address specific occupational risks. For instance, Kia et al. (2023) evaluated the efficacy of an ergonomic control device, the "banger bar," in reducing biomechanical loads during commercial crab harvesting. The study found that the device significantly reduced trunk and shoulder angles, muscle activity, and postural sway, suggesting that ergonomic interventions tailored to specific tasks can effectively mitigate MSD risks. Similarly, Tahernejad et al. (2023) estimated the recommended maximum holding time for common static sitting postures in office workers, providing guidelines for preventing discomfort and musculoskeletal strain in sedentary jobs.
In summary, recent advances in ergonomic posture research highlight the critical role of AI and wearable technologies in posture monitoring, the need for uniform ergonomic standards across industries, and the importance of tailored strategies for preventing work-related MSDs. These innovations, supported by education and intervention programs, provide a comprehensive approach to reducing the physical demands placed on workers and improving overall occupational health. Ensuring the implementation of these advancements across industries will be essential in preventing MSDs and promoting healthier work environments.

8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the advancements in ergonomic posture research have significantly contributed to improving occupational health and preventing musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) across a range of industries. These innovations, particularly in agriculture, manual labor, clinical professions, and office environments, emphasize the role of ergonomics in mitigating physical strain, improving posture, and enhancing workplace efficiency. The studies reviewed reveal how tailored ergonomic interventions, such as workstation modifications, the use of wearable technologies, and dynamic seating solutions, can drastically reduce MSD-related risks by promoting better posture, encouraging postural shifts, and reducing muscle strain.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and wearable technologies is a key trend in ergonomic research, offering more accurate and real-time posture monitoring across various work environments. These technologies, as demonstrated by recent studies, not only facilitate the early detection of high-risk postures but also provide feedback that can be used to improve ergonomics practices in real-time. AI-based tools, in particular, enable ergonomic assessments that are more objective and scalable, making them suitable for larger workplaces where manual posture monitoring may be impractical. Wearable devices and exosuits also offer support for high-risk tasks, significantly reducing the physical strain on workers and enhancing overall productivity and safety.

A critical challenge highlighted in the research is the lack of uniform ergonomic standards across industries, which can hinder the widespread adoption of these interventions. The need for standardized ergonomic assessments and guidelines is particularly pressing in sectors such as agriculture, manual labor, and healthcare, where variability in ergonomic practices has been shown to affect outcomes. The implementation of uniform standards, alongside continued research into task-specific ergonomic interventions, will be essential for ensuring that workers across all industries benefit from the latest advancements in posture-related ergonomic solutions.

Moreover, the research underscores the importance of ergonomic education and training in reducing MSD risks. Training programs that focus on proper posture, the use of ergonomic tools, and awareness of physical strain are crucial for promoting long-term musculoskeletal health. In particular, combining ergonomic training with interventions such as dynamic seating systems, exosuits, and AI-based monitoring can provide a holistic approach to occupational health. These strategies not only protect workers from immediate physical strain but also help prevent the development of chronic conditions over time.

The future of ergonomic posture research lies in the continued development and integration of emerging technologies, such as AI and wearable sensors, to enhance the precision and effectiveness of ergonomic assessments. As these technologies evolve, their application across various sectors can be expanded, leading to improved worker health and reduced MSD prevalence. The next steps for researchers and practitioners include addressing the gaps in ergonomic standards, promoting industry-wide adoption of proven interventions, and ensuring that ergonomic solutions are adaptable to the specific needs of different tasks and populations.

REFERENCES

[1] Afzal, M., Khan, A., & Farooqui, S. (2024). Incidence of work-related musculoskeletal pain among Primary Health-care Providers. African Health Sciences, 24(2), 395-404.

[2] American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. (2023). American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy guideline on the role of ergonomics for prevention of endoscopy-related injury: summary and recommendations. Gastrointestinal Endoscopy, 98(4), 482-491.

[3] Campbell, R.G., Zadro, J.R., Gamble, A.R., Chan, C.L., Mackey, M.G., Osie, G., Png, L.H., Douglas, R.G., & Pappas, E. (2024). Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders in Endoscopic Sinus and Skull Base Surgery: A Systematic Review With Meta-analysis. Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery.

[4] Channak, P., Nath, P., & Srivastava, R. (2024). Dynamic seating to prevent neck and lower back pain in office workers. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics, 31(2), 245-255.

[5] Channak, S., Speklé, E.M., van der Beek, A.J., & Janwantanakul, P. (2024). Effect of two dynamic seat cushions on postural shift, trunk muscle activation and spinal discomfort in office workers. Applied Ergonomics, 120, 104337.

[6] Danylak, S., Walsh, L.J., & Zafar, S. (2024). Measuring ergonomic interventions and prevention programs for reducing musculoskeletal injury risk in the dental workforce: A systematic review. Journal of Dental Education, 88(2), 128-141.

[7] Davidson, J.M., Zehr, J.D., Dominelli, P.B., Callaghan, J.P. (2024). Traditional versus dynamic sitting: Lumbar spine kinematics and pain during computer work and activity guided tasks. Applied Ergonomics, 119, art. no. 104310.

[8] Esmaeili, R., Shakerian, M., Esmaeili, S.V., Jalali, M., Pouya, A.B., & Karimi, A. (2023). A multicomponent quasi-experimental ergonomic interventional study: long-term parallel four-groups interventions. BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, 24(1), 107.

[9] Fray, M., & Davis, K.G. (2024). Effectiveness of safe patient handling equipment and techniques: A review of biomechanical studies. Human Factors, 66(10), 2283-2322.

[10] Gallagher, K.M., Vasavada, A., Austin, G. (2024). User experience with ultrawide curved displays: A mixed methods analysis. Applied Ergonomics, 118, art. no. 104291.

[11] Gold, B.S., Oh, S.J., Varelas, E.A., Arrighi-Allisan, A.E., Kominsky, E.S., Perez, E.R., & Cosetti, M.K. (2023). Does "Just in Time" teaching of ergonomic principles improve posture of trainees during otologic microscopic surgery? American Journal of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Medicine and Surgery, 44(1), 103682.

[12] Hoareau, D., Fan, X., Abtahi, F., & Yang, L. (2023). Evaluation of In-Cloth versus On-Skin Sensors for Measuring Trunk and Upper Arm Postures and Movements. Sensors, 23(8), 3969.

[13] Hosseini, R., & Arjmand, N. (2024). Artificial neural networks for predicting dynamic postures in lifting tasks. Ergonomics, 67(3), 321-334.

[14] Indrayani, N.L.D., Wang, J.-J., Chang, J.-H., Permatasari, H., & Wang, C.-J. (2022). Development of an educational protocol for ergonomic risk assessment of working postures to enhance the competence of occupational health nurses. International Journal of Nursing Practice, 28(5), e13052.

[15] Jacquier-Bret, J., Gorce, P. (2023). Effect of day time on smartphone use posture and related musculoskeletal disorders risk: a survey among university students. BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, 24(1), art. no. 725.

[16] Jahn, A., Andersen, J.H., Christiansen, D.H., Seidler, A., & Dalbøge, A. (2023). Occupational mechanical exposures as risk factor for chronic low-back pain: A systematic review and meta-analysis. Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health, 49(7), 453-465.

[17] Jiao, L., Zhang, H., Li, W., & Zhang, X. (2024). Deep learning-based postural assessment tools for ergonomic analysis. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics, 30(1), 105-117.

[18] Kang, H., & Mirka, G. (2024). Exosuits for postural support in trunk flexion tasks: A biomechanical analysis. Journal of Applied Ergonomics, 55, 65-74.

[19] Kang, S.H., & Mirka, G.A. (2024). Effects of a Passive Back-Support Exosuit on Erector Spinae and Abdominal Muscle Activity During Short-Duration, Asymmetric Trunk Posture Maintenance Tasks. Human Factors, 66(7), 1830-1843.

[20] Kia, K., Kincl, L., Chan, A., & Kim, J.H. (2023). A fishermen-developed intervention reduced musculoskeletal load associated with commercial Dungeness crab harvesting. Applied Ergonomics, 110, 104016.

[21] Kim, S., Lee, I., Kang, S.H., & Jin, S. (2023). Significance of Lower Body Postures in Chair Design. Human Factors, 65(4), 575-591.

[22] Kim, S.-B., Kim, S.-H., Lim, O.-B., Yi, C.-H., Han, G.-H. (2024). Effects of a posture correction feedback system on neck and trunk posture and muscle activity during computer work. International Journal of Industrial Ergonomics, 99, art. no. 103540. DOI: 10.1016/j.ergon.2023.103540.

[23] Kuber, P.M., Abdollahi, M., Alemi, M.M., & Rashedi, E. (2022). A Systematic Review on Evaluation Strategies for Field Assessment of Upper-Body Industrial Exoskeletons: Current Practices and Future Trends. Annals of Biomedical Engineering, 50(10), 1203-1231.

[24] Kusyk, D.M., Jeong, S., Fitzgerald, E., Kaye, B., Li, J., Williamson, R., & Yu, A.K. (2024). Surgical posture with microscopic versus exoscopic visualization in anterior cervical procedures. World Neurosurgery, 181, e562-e566.

[25] Lewis, C., Wahlström, J., Mukka, S., Liv, P., Järvholm, B., & Jackson, J.A. (2023). Surgery for subacromial impingement syndrome and occupational biomechanical risk factors in a 16-year prospective study among male construction workers. Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment and Health, 49(2), 156-163.

[26] Makki, F., Hasheminejad, N., Tahernejad, S., & Mirzaee, M. (2024). Evaluation of the effect of corrective exercise intervention on musculoskeletal disorders, fatigue, and working memory of office workers. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics, 30(2), 532-542.

[27] Mallampalli, K.C. (2024). Task-specific ergonomic workstation design in manual cashew kernel separating activity. Journal of The Institution of Engineers (India): Series C, 105(2), 357-369.

[28] Mookambika, R., Hemanth Kumar, R.V., Areti, A., & Jaya, V. (2024). Comparing the posture and comfort of anaesthesiologists during laryngoscopy and tracheal intubation in the head-elevated laryngoscopy position in supine position and with a 25° backup: A randomised clinical crossover trial. Indian Journal of Anaesthesia, 68(6), 547-552.

[29] Nino, V., Monfort, S.M., & Claudio, D. (2024). Exploring the influence of individual factors on the perception of mental workload and body postures. Ergonomics, 67(7), 881-896.
[30] Oliosi, G., Greco, F., & Di Filippo, A. (2024). Variability in sitting patterns and its role in spinal health. Human Factors, 66(6), 1555-1565.
[31] Onofrejova, D., Andrejiova, M., Porubcanova, D., Pacaiova, H., & Sobotova, L. (2024). A Case Study of Ergonomic Risk Assessment in Slovakia with Respect to EU Standard. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 21(6), 666.
[32] Pearse, S., Léger, M., Albert, W.J., & Cardoso, M. (2024). Active workstations: A literature review on workplace sitting. Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies, 38, 406-416.
[33] Raj, A.K., Pedersen, S.J., Mainsbridge, C., Rao, C.R., Roy, S., Chandrasekaran, B. (2024). Influence of short bouts of stair climbing on young adults during prolonged sitting on posture, discomfort, and musculoskeletal performance outcomes: A counterbalanced pilot randomised crossover trial. Ergonomics.
[34] Shah, K., Zakhari, L., Phillips, W., Maruthur, M., & Nehal, K.S. (2024). Ergonomics in the Mohs Laboratory. Laboratory Manual for Mohs Micrographic Surgery: Frozen Tissue Processing, 223-227.
[35] Singh, G., Tewari, V.K., Dubey, A., & Potdar, R.R. (2024). Development of ergo-refined operator's workplace and biophysically actual cost-benefit analysis of riding type self-propelled machines with special reference for female operators. Work, 78(2), 355-368.
[36] Tahernejad, S., Razeghi, M., Abdoli-Eramaki, M., Parsaei, H., Seif, M., & Choobineh, A. (2023). Recommended maximum holding time of common static sitting postures of office workers. International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics, 29(2), 847-854.
[37] Ünver, S., & Makal Orğan, E. (2023). The effect of anti-fatigue floor mat on pain and fatigue levels of surgical team members: A crossover study. Applied Ergonomics, 110, 104017.
[38] Wahlström, V., Öhrn, M., Harder, M., Eskilsson, T., Fjellman-Wiklund, A., Pettersson-Strömbäck, A. (2024). Physical work environment in an activity-based flex office: A longitudinal case study. International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health, 97(6), 661-674.
[39] Young, C., Hamilton-Wright, A., Oliver, M.L., & Gordon, K.D. (2023). Predicting Wrist Posture during Occupational Tasks Using Inertial Sensors and Convolutional Neural Networks. Sensors, 23(2), 942.
[40] Zulbaran-Rojas, A., Rouzi, M.D., Zahiri, M., Ouattas, A., Walter, C.M., Nguyen, H., Bidadi, S., Najafi, B., & Lemole, G.M., Jr. (2024). Objective assessment of postural ergonomics in neurosurgery: integrating wearable technology in the operating room. Journal of Neurosurgery: Spine, 41(1), 135-145.