



Analysis of Occupational Posture Risk and Physiological Load in Grinding and Moving HVAC Filter Products Using Rula-Reba, Heart Rate, and Borg RPE

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Abstract

This study aims to study the risk of work posture, heart rate response, and operator workload perception in gluing, lifting, and laying HVAC filter products in the *epoxy center* area of PT XY. In this study, the *Rapid Upper Limb Assessment* (RULA), *Rapid Entire Body Assessment* (REBA), *Heart Rate*, and *Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion* (Borg RPE) methods were used. This study was conducted on six operators through field observation, photo/video documentation, *Heart Rate* measurement, Borg RPE assessment, *manual handling* recording, anthropometric measurements, and brief interviews. The results showed that, compared to gluing and lifting activities, laying activities had the most prominent ergonomic risk patterns. This is shown by relatively high RULA and REBA scores, the highest average *heart rate*, and the perception of workload which is generally in the weight category. In addition, gluing activities indicate postural risks, especially due to the posture of bending, reaching, and the use of *nozzles* and hoses during the work process. Because it involves moving products manually, lifting jobs have a relatively lower risk. However, this work still requires supervision. The mapping results show that improvement should be a top priority. Then followed by gluing and product lifting activities. Ergonomic improvements are aimed at adjusting the placement height of the *pallet support facility*, regulating the position of products, hoses, and nozzles during immersion, and reducing manual displacement distances when lifting. The results of the simulation of the reassessment of RULA and REBA based on the proposed posture showed the possibility of reducing the risk of working posture, especially in the excavation and laying work.

Keywords: ergonomics, RULE, REBA, *Heart Rate*, Borg RPE, *manual handling*, work posture, HVAC filter



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INTRODUCTION

PT XY is a manufacturing company engaged in automotive filters and radiator water. In its production development, this company has divisions that play a role in the production of components and the development of new products, one of which is the *Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning* (HVAC) division. In this HVAC division, there are several work processes that are carried out manually in product work, one of which is the *epoxy center*

process. This gluing process is carried out to provide an adhesive to the product. During this process, the operator is directly involved in every activity, including manual gluing, lifting, and placing of products. This is in line with research by Primasari and Kurnianingtyas (2022), which shows that *material handling* work done manually by employees can result in a high risk of work posture. Based on the results of observations made in the *epoxy center* area, the operator carried out three main activities, namely gluing, lifting after the gluing process was completed, and placing the product to work on other products. All three activities are still done manually, so operators must interact directly with the product during the workflow. This condition is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Working Conditions of *Epoxy Center Operators*

In gluing activities, the operator must orient the *nozzle* according to the shape of the product being worked on, so that the position of the arms, wrists, waist, and back must be maintained during the gluing process. Anwar *et al.* (2024) states that WMSDs in manual workers are related to static or incorrect posture, prolonged repetitive movements, and sustained use of force on certain parts of the body. Once the immersion process is complete, the operator must move the product by manually lifting it and then take it to the laying area about 2–4 meters away on foot. Next, the operator places the product on an area of *the pallet* that has a lower position compared to when doing the initial lift, so that the body position used becomes lower when placing the product.

In this manual work activity, the operator is required to maintain several working postures during the process. In gluing activities, the operator tends to maintain the position of the arm to reach the product, and the wrist remains directed the *nozzle* following the shape of the product. Meanwhile, in the process of lifting and laying the product, the operator manually lifts the load, then brings the product to the storage area, then puts it in a lower position so that his body is bent. Based on the results of field observations supported by initial informal

communication with operators, some operators said that they experienced pain or pain in their arms, wrists, shoulders, and waist shortly after performing the activity. According to Primasari and Kurnianingtyas (2022), manual *handling* activities can pose a high risk of working posture and require ergonomic attention.

Work activities that involve non-neutral posture, manual lifting of weights, and repetitive movements within a certain period of time can increase the risk of disorders of the musculoskeletal system or Work-related *Musculoskeletal* Disorders (WMSDs). This condition is in line with Primasari and Kurnianingtyas (2022), that manual material removal can increase the risk of work posture and WMSDs complaints if done repeatedly. These risks can arise if work activities do not pay attention to ergonomic principles, so that they can cause discomfort at work, get tired quickly, and reduce the quality of the operator's work.

Various previous studies have shown that jobs involving manual activities with a non-neutral work posture have the potential to have ergonomic risks that require further evaluation. According to Kee (2022) and Ogedenbek *et al.* (2023), observational methods are important in the work measurement process because they are able to provide a direct overview of ergonomic risks based on real working conditions in the field. The findings show that manual work activities need to be evaluated to determine the level of ergonomic risks faced by operators and be the basis for the preparation of proposals to improve working conditions.

In addition to assessing the risk of working posture, several studies also use anthropometric data as the basis for the preparation of ergonomics improvement proposals. Kartika and Mukhtar (2023) show that work posture risks can be identified using the RULA and REBA methods, as well as considering anthropometric data. The results of the research of Sitompul *et al.* (2024) shows that anthropometry in the design of work aids or facilities can be used to reduce work risks. These findings show that ergonomics evaluation not only aims to determine the level of risk, but can also be used as a basis for drafting improvement proposals that are more appropriate to working conditions in the field.

Based on the results of the literature search conducted during the preparation of the research, there have been many studies that discuss the evaluation of ergonomics in manual work activities using various methods of assessing work posture. However, in this study, the study of the immersion, lifting, and placing of products in the *epoxy center* area in the HVAC area is still not widely found. Most of the previous research was conducted on objects, types of work, and production processes with different characteristics of work activities, so they do not fully represent the actual conditions of the *epoxy center process*. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the ergonomic conditions of the operators in the process so that the level of

risk in each work activity can be identified as the basis for the preparation of improvement proposals that are in accordance with the working conditions in the field.

Based on the working conditions and previous research, this study uses a combination of several methods to examine the relationship between methods and analyze the ergonomic condition of the operator. Posture assessments that involve a lot of upper body, such as immersion activities, use *Rapid Upper Limb Assessment* (RULA). Meanwhile, the activity of lifting and placing products was evaluated using *Rapid Entire Body Assessment* (REBA), as it involved overall posture. Hunusalela *et al.* (2022), using RULA and REBA to determine the level of risk at several workstations. Meanwhile, Kartika and Mukhtar (2023) use RULA, REBA, and anthropometry to support the improvement of work facilities. The study also used *Heart Rate* to describe the physiological response of the operator during the activity. HR that reflects the functioning of the autonomic nervous system and can be monitored through wearable devices without interfering with work activities, and has commonly used physiological measures (Li *et al.*, 2023). *The Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion* (Borg RPE) is used to determine the perceived workload of the operator. This will provide a relevant subjective context for repetitive work (Gobbo *et al.*, 2025). Based on this description, research is needed to analyze the ergonomic conditions of operators in the *epoxy center process* in the HVAC area so that the level of risk in each work activity can be identified and used as a basis in the preparation of repair proposals in accordance with working conditions in the field.

Table 1. Previous Research

Author and Year	Research Object	Method	Findings	Weaknesses / Limitations	Linkage to Research
Nwar <i>et al.</i> (2024)	Harvest mushrooms manually on farm workers in Canada	<i>Ergonomic evaluative</i> using RULE, CTD Index, and questionnaire <i>discomfort</i> . Data was collected through field studies and recordings of work activities.	85% when picking posture needs to be changed immediately because RULA score is 6-7, CTD index 1.16 which indicates a potential <i>repetitive strain</i> . So that there are complaints in the hands and shoulders.	The focus of the research was on mushroom farming work, did not discuss product movement in an industrial environment, did not use REBA, and did not consider anthropometry	Supports the idea that manual work with a non-neutral posture and repetitive activities can increase the risk of WMSDs. Therefore, this topic is relevant because it addresses the risks of manual work in this study.

Varghese <i>et al.</i> (2025)	Employees <i>rubber trapping</i> in Kerala, India	Observation using video with 51 employees and 1111 postures. Rating	RULA focuses on <i>the upper limb</i> and is considered best suited for loads dominant posture	The focus of this research is the comparison of methods in the context of agriculture. None Recommendations for specific improvements,	It is very important to place OWAS and PERA as methods Deep Comparator
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METHODS

This study is a descriptive observational field research with a *cross-sectional design*. These observations are made under working conditions without changing the operator's working methods. The focus of this research is a series of work in the epoxy center area that includes three work activities, including immersion, lifting, and product laying. RULA and REBA were used to determine the occupational posture risks associated with the likelihood of WMSDs. Borg RPE indicates the perception of the operator's workload, while the Heart Rate indicates the operator's physiological response pattern relatively speaking. The results of all four measurements were mapped based on the same operators and activities as the main data of the study. Manual handling, anthropometry, facility conditions, and interview results were used to support ergonomics improvement proposals. Linkage analysis is not carried out through statistical correlation tests, medical diagnoses, or cause-and-effect relationships, but rather descriptively and conceptually.

The research was carried out during practical work activities, especially HVAC production, at PT XY, the Epoxy Center workstation section. Data collection is carried out when the operator performs its work in actual conditions. The observations carried out include three work activities, namely wiping, lifting, and laying products. Observations are made without providing treatment or changing the way the operator works.

Table 2. Operationalization of Research Parameters

Aspects	Parameters	Results	Analysis
Risks of upper body posture	Right and left RULA, posture, muscle use, and weight	Score 1-7 and <i>action level</i>	Determining upper posture risk and score Highest representative
Risks Full body posture	REBA, posture, load, <i>coupling</i> , and activity	Score 1-15 and risk categories	Determining posture risk Overall
Physiological response	<i>Heart rate</i> during the activity	HR friendly in BPM and relative patterns	Comparing pulse responses Inter-activity heart

Perception workload	Borg RPE scale 0-10	RPE scores and categories	Describe the workload perceived by the operator
<i>Manual handling</i>	Weight, distance, beginning-end height, and position.	Description of characteristics Transplant	Supports interpretation and Proposed improvements
Anthropometry	Height, standing elbow height, and forward arm reach	Results measurement on each operator	Supporting the suitability of the proposed improvement dimensions

The simulation was carried out as a conceptual evaluation of the ergonomics improvement proposals that had been prepared. The evaluation was carried out by comparing the RULA and REBA scores in actual conditions with the scores of the proposed posture simulation results. Thus, the success of the proposal in this study is assessed based on the potential to reduce the level of posture risk, not through direct implementation in the field.

DISCUSSION

The recapitulation of results per operator is carried out to combine the results of data processing RULA, REBA, *heart rate*, and Borg RPE for each work activity. This recapitulation is compiled based on all operators totaling six observed in three work activities, namely gluing, lifting, and product placement. Thus, the results of each method can be viewed simultaneously to facilitate the analysis process at the next stage.

Table 3. Per-Operator Results Recapitulation

Operator	Activities	RULES Right	LEFT RULE	RULES Representative	Pattern RULES	REBA Score	Pattern REBA	HR Average	RPE Average	Categories RPE
OP1	Polishing	6	6	6	Height	6	Medium Risk	88	6	Weight
OP1	Lifting	3	3	3	Medium	2	Low Risk	97	6	Weight
OP1	Laying	6	6	6	Height	4	Medium Risk	105	6	Weight
OP2	Polishing	4	4	4	Medium	6	Medium Risk	94	6	Weight
OP2	Lifting	3	3	3	Medium	4	Medium Risk	98	6	Weight
OP2	Laying	7	7	7	Very Height	5	Medium Risk	108	6	Weight
OP3	Polishing	6	6	6	Height	6	Medium Risk	94	4	Medium
OP3	Lifting	3	3	3	Medium	3	Low Risk	96	4	Medium
OP3	Laying	5	5	5	Height	7	Medium Risk	107	5	Weight
OP4	Polishing	7	7	7	Very Height	5	Medium Risk	91	6	Weight
OP4	Lifting	3	3	3	Medium	3	Low Risk	98	6	Weight
OP4	Laying	6	6	6	Height	8	High Risk	106	6	Weight
OP5	Polishing	6	4	6	Height	7	Medium Risk	95	6	Weight

OP5	Lifting	3	3	3	Medium	3	<i>Low Risk</i>	98	7	Very Weight
OP5	Laying	5	5	5	Height	7	<i>Medium Risk</i>	107	7	Very Weight
OP6	Polishing	6	6	6	Height	6	<i>Medium Risk</i>	87	6	Weight
OP6	Lifting	3	3	3	Medium	4	<i>Medium Risk</i>	95	6	Weight
OP6	Laying	7	7	7	Very Height	7	<i>Medium Risk</i>	105	6	Weight

Based on the recapitulation of results per operator in Table 3, the data is then rearranged based on work activities to identify patterns of RULA, REBA, *Heart Rate*, and Borg RPE results in each activity observed. This preparation aims to facilitate analysis per activity so that which activities have a higher level of risk can be identified more clearly.

A recapitulation of actual data patterns per activity

A recapitulation of actual data patterns per activity was made to show the trend of the results of the assessment of RULA, REBA, *Heart Rate*, and Borg RPE in the three activities. This recapitulation is carried out by grouping the results of each operator's observations on each work activity, so that the pattern of results of each activity can be observed more systematically. Thus, the difference in risk characteristics in each activity can be seen more clearly before the discussion of the relationship between the parameters used in this study is carried out.

Table 4. A Summary of Actual Data Patterns by Activity

Activities	RULES Representative	RULA Pattern	REBA Average	REBA Pattern	HR Average	HR Pattern	RPE Average	Categories RPE
Polishing	5.83	Height; The Majority of the Action Levels 3–4	6	<i>Medium Risk</i>	91.5 bpm	Relatively lowest	5.67	Medium
Lifting	3	Medium; Action Level 2	3.17	<i>Low–Medium Risk</i>	97.0 bpm	Relatively moderate	5.83	Medium
Laying	6	Height; Action Levels 3–4	6.33	<i>Medium-High Risk</i>	106,3 bpm	Relatively most height	6	Medium

The summary in Table 4 is the basis for discussing the relationship between the level of occupational posture risk obtained from RULA and REBA and physiological responses based on *Heart Rate* and workload perception based on Borg RPE. This presentation makes

it easier to identify activities that show a higher tendency to ergonomic risk compared to other activities.

Preparation of Ergonomics Improvement Proposals

Ergonomics improvement proposals are made after priority activities are determined through mapping the results of RULA, REBA, *Heart Rate* and Borg RPE. This supporting data includes the characteristics of *manual handling*, the dimensions of work facilities, operator anthropometry, and information from brief interviews. Although supporting data is not used in the order of priority of activities, it is still used as a basis for considering proposed improvements that are more in line with actual working conditions.

Based on supporting data, the moved product weighs about ± 8 kg, the moving distance is about 2-4 meters, the initial height of the transfer is about ± 60 cm, and the final height of the laying is about ± 16 cm. The dimensions of the facility show the height of the table is about ± 55 cm and ± 80 cm, the laying height is about ± 16 cm, and the working range distance is about ± 50 cm. Operator anthropometric data shows a standing elbow height of 101-108 cm and a forehand reach of 54-58 cm. Complete anthropometric data and supporting data are presented in the appendix.

Table 5. Proposed Ergonomics Improvements Based on Priority

Priority Activities	Key Findings	Supporting Data	Proposed Improvements
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Laying	Laying activities are a priority Mainly because the results of the mapping of the RULE, REBA, <i>Heart Rate</i>, and Deposit RPE. Activities This involves lowering the product to a low area such as <i>Pallet</i> so that the posture The body becomes bent over	The weight of the product is about 8 kg, the moving distance is about 2-4 meters, the laying height is approximately 16 cm, while the height of the standing elbow The operator is in the range of 101-108 cm. This product is placed on a pallet so that after the process is completed it can be moved using handlift/handpallet for inspection or packing.	Repairs are directed at the adjustment of supporting facilities <i>pallets</i>, <i>not on the elimination of use Pallet</i>. Proposals that can be given in the form of use <i>Pallet stand</i>, lift table, <i>Scissor Lift Table</i>, or similar aids to make it high <i>Pallet</i> can be approached working height, the laying process is more comfortable. Once the product is finished being assembled <i>Pallet</i> can still be moved using <i>handlift or handpallet</i>. This proposal was chosen because does not change product transfer flow using <i>Pallet</i> as a means of transportation, but only changes the altitude area Placement to make it more in-house common sense in the workplace.
Polishing	This gluing activity indicates a postural risk in the upper body because the operator needs to hold <i>Nozzle</i> directly Continuous for Work process. The operator must also maintain the position of the hands, wrists, arms, and body for the results to be Experience Stay precise. He and In other words, the operator can experience bowing, bowing posture, and Reach in the future.	The height of the workbench used depends on the condition of the machine that is ready to be used. Can be on machines that use a table ± 55 cm or ± 80 cm. Distance The reach is ± 50 cm forward, while the process of gluing the operator's hand reach forward is on average in the range of 54-58 cm. <i>Nozzle</i> always held during Immersion activities take place and conditions hose <i>Nozzle</i> hanging in the area work. From the results Interview Related Immersion	Improvements can be made by positioning the product closer to the operator to reduce forward range. In addition, it can Consider the use of assistive devices such as <i>fixture</i>, <i>jig</i>, <i>Stopper</i>, or product support to make the product position more stable during gluing process. Hose <i>Nozzle</i> also can be styled using a hose hanger, a retainer hose <i>Tool Balancer</i> so that the hose pull does not overloading the operator's hands. Objectives of Recommendations This is to help the operator maintain a more stable posture without compromising the rigor of the drilling process. Height of the working area Recommended made more consistent and adapted to the characteristics of the job so that the operator does not have to bend, bend or reach excessively. The recommendations should applied without changing the quality of production because it does not change the

		process this, complaints occurred in wrists, arms, shoulders, and waist as well as obstacles must be in maintaining a working position during	process of the design or product specifications.
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Lifting	Lifting activities involve Manual transfer of products from the workbench to the pallet. Although the product is Observed to weigh about 8 kg or more, this activity should be taken into account as it is carried out in the absence of special handles and distances Transplant Can change based on position <i>Pallet empty</i> around the area <i>center epoxy</i>.	The product weighs about ± 8 kg, the moving distance about 2-4 meters, high The beginning of the lift is about ± 60 cm and the end height is about ± 16 cm. No grip Specifically for products, so that The operator lifts it by holding its sides. Work area still allows use of tools such as <i>Handlift/Hand pallet</i>, and Tools other moves.	Repairs can be made by reducing manual moving distances, for example by placing <i>Pallet</i> empty closer to the workbench before The process begins. In addition, the use of trolleys, pushables, or hand pallets can be considered to assist when moving products when pallets are far away. Since the product does not have a special handle, the operator needs to be directed to lift the product as close to the body as possible, avoiding twisting movements and ensuring a stable grip position before moving. The aim of this proposal is to reduce the burden of manual moving without the main workflow using pallets as the product moving medium. This proposal makes use of the relocation facility existing in an industrial environment so that the implementation is more possible than changing the overall working method.
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Based on Table 5, the proposed improvements are made based on the results of the ergonomic analysis and actual working conditions at the *epoxy center*. Therefore, the recommendations given do not change the main production flow or the use of *pallets* as a medium to move products, but are more directed at adjusting work facilities, setting work areas, and implementing tools that can be applied by the company. With this approach, the proposals given are expected to be more realistic to be implemented compared to changes in the overall work process.

Based on the proposed improvements listed in Table 4.17, the simulation of the reassessment of RULA and REBA is based on the posture of representative proposals for gluing, lifting, and laying activities.

Table 6. Comparison of Actual Score and Improvement Simulation Score

Activities	RULES Actual	REBA Actual	RULES Simulation	REBA Simulation	Remarks
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Polishing	5,83	6	3	2	The proposed posture simulation showed that the risk of posture decreased
Lifting	3	3,17	3	3	Lower risk and more conditions Controlled
Laying	6	6,33	3	3	Simulation of the proposed posture Produce
Polishing	5,83	6	3	2	The proposed posture simulation shows that posture risk Downhill
Lifting	3	3,17	3	3	Lower risk and more conditions Controlled
Laying	6	6,33	3	3	Simulation of the proposed posture Produce

The simulation results show that proposed improvements can reduce the risk of posture, especially in gluing and laying activities. However, these results are still conceptual because they have not been applied directly in actual working conditions. Therefore, implementation and field evaluation can be carried out in future research to test the effectiveness of the proposals that have been prepared.

CONCLUSION

A work posture analysis using RULA and REBA showed that each job had a different level of ergonomic risk. The activity with the highest level of posture risk is laying, followed by gluing activities. While lifting activities have a relatively lower level of risk. The use of *Heart Rate* and Borg RPE complemented the results of the work posture assessment by demonstrating the physiological response and perception of the operator's workload. The pattern of results shows that laying activity causes the highest heart rate response and Most operators on workload perception are in the weight category. These results show that the ergonomic risk assessment becomes more comprehensive when the RULA and REBA results are read together with *the Heart Rate* and Borg RPE. Based on the results of the analysis, it shows that ergonomics improvement proposals are prepared by taking into account the characteristics of each work activity. Use supporting facilities for laying activities such as *pallet stands* or *scissor lift tables* to adjust the height of the laying area. In gluing activities, improvements are directed to the adjustment of the working position and the use of product

support aids and nozzle hoses. Meanwhile, in lifting activities, the proposal is focused on reducing the distance of the transfer and the use of moving aids. Posture simulations based on the proposal show the potential to reduce the level of posture risk, especially in gluing and laying activities.

This study has limitations, including observations were made on six operators with one observation on each operator only. *Heart Rate* data is only used to describe the relative pattern of interactivity heart rate response and is not used for formal physiological workload calculations. Therefore, future research is expected to use more subjects and make repeated observations, as well as more comprehensive physiological measurements

Suggestions

The results of the study show that laying activities have the most prominent ergonomic risk patterns, the Company must prioritize improvements to these activities. To avoid the operator lowering the product to a position that is too low, companies may consider adjusting the height of the product placement or the use of auxiliary tools such as *pallet* stands, lift tables, *scissor lift tables*, or other auxiliary tools. For gluing activities, companies can consider setting the product closer to the operator, adjusting the *nozzle* and hose, and using aids such as *fixtures*, *jigs*, *stoppers*, or product supports to make the operator's work posture more stable. For lifting activities, companies can consider placing the laying area closer to the workbench and using moving aids.

For further research, it is recommended that the proposed ergonomics improvements be implemented and retested to see if the improvements have an impact on RULA, REBA, *Heart Rate*, and Borg RPE. Follow-up research may also consider the use of more specific techniques to assess manual moving operations, increase the number of operators observed, and include different types or weights of different products. Thus, the results of further research can provide a better picture of how effective ergonomics improvements are in the work area of an epoxy center.

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