

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF TEA FACTORY WORKERS – A STUDY CONDUCTED AT NILGIRIS DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Tea is the ancient beverage and the most popular drink in the world. The tea industry of India is one of the oldest and perhaps the most efficiently organized agricultural enterprises in India. In India, tea has grown in an area of 5.10 lakh hectares producing 23 per cent of the global tea production in 2010. Since the introduction of tea in India in 1823, the industry has contributed immensely towards the socio-economic development of the tea growing regions. India has sixteen tea growing states, of which Assam, West Bengal, Tamilnadu and Kerala account for about 95 per cent of the country's total tea production. Among these states, the share of the Nilgiris, a district of Tamil Nādu's total tea production is the highest. The main aim of the study is to analyse the socio-economic condition of the workers working in Tea Factories in The Nilgiris District and to examine the reasons for joining the tea factories and empowerment / prospects achieved by the workers.

Keywords:- socio-economic, empowerment, development, Nilgiris

BRIEF HISTORY OF TEA IN INDIA

The event which marked the birth of the Indian tea industry was the discovery by Major Bruce in 1823, of the indigenous tea plants in Assam. Major Robert Bruce made friendship with a Singpho (a tribal community) Chief known as Bessagaum and obtained indigenous plants and seeds in 1823. The exact location was at a place in north east Assam. In the following year Robert Bruce showed the wild tea plants to his brother Charles Alexander Bruce. Some of these plants were sent down to the Botanical Gardens, Calcutta, where upon close examination they were pronounced to be of the same family, but not the same species from which the Chinese manufactured tea. But this discovery went unrecognized and no official action was taken at that time (Sarkar, Bidyut :1984) (Regi: 1946).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Tea is the major crop cultivation that provides source of income for many people in the Nilgiris District. Majority of the workers working in the Tea Factories are found to be Tribes. The plantation sector provides income and livelihood for the vast majority of the people residing in the Nilgiris District. The Nilgiris district of Tamilnadu constitutes 14 per cent of the total tea production in South India. This study is undertaken to check if the socio-economic status of the employees have improved after joining the Tea Factory and, is there is a positive effect to justify the reasons for joining the tea factor and has bank intervention and loan dispersion improved the living condition and reduced the burden of the employees.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the socio-economic condition of the workers working in Tea Factories in The Nilgiris District.
2. To examine the reasons for joining the tea factories and empowerment / prospects achieved by the workers.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the present study is descriptive in nature. Simple Random Sampling Procedure is used to achieve more authoritative results.

Sources of Data

The study relies on both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data

The detailed and structured Interview schedule has been used to extract information from the respondents working in different cadres. The tea factories engaged in Tea manufacturing to final stages are considered for the study in the Nilgiris who were selected from each of the three key regions of the district of Tamilnadu viz, Ooty, Gudalur and Coonoor. The primary data was distributed to 842 employees working in different Tea manufacturing companies of the Nilgiris. Out of which 783 responses were found to be complete that can be taken for the next step. After eliminating 183 responses which were found to have differences when assessed for normal distribution and concluded 600 samples for the study.

Sampling Design and Unit of Analysis

Simple random sampling procedure was used to collect the data from the Nilgiris District of Tamilnadu. Initially, a few tea-manufacturers companies were identified and only ten companies were randomly selected to conduct the study. Further out of 783 respondents the researcher filtered the data and considered only 600 responses for conducting the data analysis

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study was limited only to the factories selected for the study and hence it lacks universal applicability. Some respondents were hesitant to answer a few questions and hence, there is a probability of bias where the respondents might not have been serious in giving their opinion. One cannot judge an individual to be always consistent. It may change over the passage of time. Hence the results cannot be extrapolated too far into the future.

Review of Literature

Hema Srikumar et al. (2017)¹ found that the Indian Tea Industry is facing some serious challenges and even its survival is being questioned. The impact and consequence of this deep crisis are multi-dimensional in nature. The processes of abandonment and closure of estates become common. Tea workers lose wage, employment and all other statutory welfare measures. It has severely affected the standard of living of estate labourers, employment opportunities, and level of trade union activities.

Gayathri P et al. (2018)² found that the tea plantation workers of Nilgiri Tea Region, most of whom belong to the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes groups have been subject to a vicious cycle of livelihood insecurity, which gets reinforced by socio-culturally embedded processes. There is a need to break this vicious cycle to enable these marginal communities come out of livelihood insecurity. Jobs on the tea plantations are traditionally passed from one generation to the next. Having limited access to education or economic opportunity outside the tea plantations, tea workers are highly dependent on their employers. Livelihood of tea plantation workers are not less than pathetic.

Table No. 1: Demographic Variables of the Workers

Sl. No.	Demographic Profile	Respondents (600 Nos.)	Percentage (100%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	324	54.0
	Female	276	46.0
2.	Age		
	20 to 30	63	10.5
	30 to 40	258	43.0
	40 to 50	227	37.8
	51 and above	52	8.7
3.	Marital Status		
	Unmarried	97	16.2
	Married	448	74.7

¹ Dr. HemaSrikumar, Mrs.C.Jeeva (2017) "A Study to Analyse the Poverty Level Among the Tea Labourer with Special Reference to Nilgiris District" IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science, Volume 22, Issue 11, Ver. 12 (November. 2017) p-ISSN: 2279-0845, PP 07-13.

² Gayathri.P and Dr.R.Arjunan,(2018)"Livelihood Security of Tea Plantation Workers" International Journal Of Research And Analytical Reviews Volume 5, Issue 04, ISSN 2348-1269, pp.194-199, December 2018.

Sl. No.	Demographic Profile	Respondents (600 Nos.)	Percentage (100%)
	Widowed	55	9.2
4.	Educational Qualification		
	Illiterate	112	18.7
	Elementary	165	27.5
	Higher Elementary	115	19.2
	SSLC / H.Sc.	164	27.3
	Others (Technical education, Graduates, etc.)	44	7.3
5.	Position		
	Worker	330	55.0
	Supervisor	190	31.7
	Clerical level	55	9.2
	Others (Admin, Maintenance, etc.)	25	4.2
6.	Experience		
	Less than 3 years	64	10.7
	3 to 5 years	295	49.2
	5 to 10 years	241	40.2
7.	Monthly Family Income		
	Less than Rs.10000	183	30.5
	Rs.10,000 to Rs.15,000	233	38.8
	Rs.15,000 to Rs.20,000	130	21.7
	More than Rs.20,000	54	9.0
8.	Type of Family		
	Joint	430	71.7
	Nuclear	170	28.3
9.	Family Size		
	Small (3 – 4)	223	37.2
	Medium (4 – 6)	331	55.2
	Large(6 – 9)	46	7.7

Table No.2: Regression showing relationship between reasons for joining tea factory and workers empowerment

R Value	R Square Value	Degree of Freedom – V ₁	Degree of Freedom – V ₂	F-Value	Significance
0.146	0.021	3	596	4.346	0.005

Source: Primary Data

It is clear from the table that the co-efficient of multiple regression based on the predictor variables in which the correlation was found to be 0.146 which reveals low level of correlation between **Reasons for joining tea factory and Empowerment perceived by the workers after joining tea factory** and the R² shows 2.1 percent of variation explained by the independent variables to that of the dependent variable. When this R² was tested for its significance by using ANOVA (F=4.346, Sig.0.005) was found to be significant at 5 percent level.

Table No.4.10

Coefficient of determinants based on relationship between Reasons for joining the tea factory and Workers Empowerment after joining tea factory

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	41.694	2.642		15.779	.000
	Communal	.260	.200	.059	1.301	.194
	Constructive	.075	.129	.027	.584	.559
	Financial	.414	.194	.098	2.137	.033

Source: Primary Data

It is evident from the above table that out of three predictors only one variable was predicting highly towards reasons for joining the tea factory having significant relationship with workers empowerment and the high level of significance was observed with the Beta Coefficient based on the results of Critical Values viz. Communal Reasons (t=1.301, Sig.0.194), followed by Constructive reasons (t=0.584, Sig.0.559), which are not found to be significant at 5% level, whereas financial reasons (t=2.137, Sig.0.033) which was found to be significant at 5%.

FACTORY IMPACT

Table No.3: Availability of household consumables and electrical equipments before and after joining the Factory

Household consumables		Before	After
Utensils	Count	456	547
	Row N %	76.00%	91.2%
Radio	Count	471	543
	Row N %	78.50%	90.5%
TV	Count	257	592
	Row N %	42.83%	98.7%
Watch	Count	190	195
	Row N %	31.67%	32.5%
Bicycle	Count	235	296
	Row N %	39.17%	49.3%
Mixie	Count	412	533
	Row N %	68.67%	88.8%
Grinder	Count	292	583
	Row N %	48.67%	97.2%
Mobile / Cell Phone	Count	500	532
	Row N %	83.33%	88.7%

Source: Primary Data

Table No.4: Opinion of the Employees towards Empowerment after Joining Tea Factories in The Nilgiris

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.902

Empowerment	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Wtd. Mean	Rank
The bank intermediation helps workers to drive away moneylenders and usurers from exploitation	13	0	93	272	222	4.150	4
	0.022	0.000	0.465	1.813	1.850		
The bank intermediation helps the poor by giving a lasting solution to abandon debt	19	10	61	215	295	4.262	1
	0.032	0.033	0.305	1.433	2.458		
The bank intermediation workers that may increase capacity of purchasing power	64	40	115	178	203	3.693	11
	0.107	0.133	0.575	1.187	1.692		
The bank intermediation helps workers to increase the value of assets	17	23	46	233	281	4.230	2
	0.028	0.077	0.230	1.553	2.342		
The bank intermediation helps workers to increase the income	27	34	158	167	214	3.845	6
	0.045	0.113	0.790	1.113	1.783		
The bank intermediation helps workers to increase the savings	35	49	104	199	213	3.843	7
	0.058	0.163	0.520	1.327	1.775		
The bank intermediation helps workers to induce social responsibility	11	64	99	266	160	3.833	8
	0.018	0.213	0.495	1.773	1.333		
The bank intermediation helps workers to provide employment opportunity	56	49	100	191	204	3.730	9
	0.093	0.163	0.500	1.273	1.700		
The bank intermediation helps workers to create better awareness over helping tendency	20	100	118	202	160	3.637	12
	0.033	0.333	0.590	1.347	1.333		
The bank intermediation helps workers to increase power over decision-making	68	35	137	204	156	3.575	13
	0.113	0.117	0.685	1.360	1.300		
The bank intermediation helps workers to create confidence on banking operations	21	54	154	219	152	3.712	10
	0.035	0.180	0.770	1.460	1.267		
The bank intermediation helps workers in building confidence to face issues/problems	13	11	80	289	207	4.110	5
	0.022	0.037	0.400	1.927	1.725		
The bank intermediation helps workers to increase self-esteem	6	7	107	207	273	4.223	3
	0.010	0.023	0.535	1.380	2.275		

Source: Primary Data

Note: Figures in Parenthesis represent Weighed Scores

Table No.5: Analysis of Variance between Number of earning members in the respondents family and Factory Impact measuring Social, Familial, Personal and Administrative problems

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Social Problem	Between Groups	453.613	2	226.807	4.524	.011
	Within Groups	29933.347	597	50.140		
	Total	30386.960	599			
Family Problem	Between Groups	238.072	2	119.036	3.526	.030
	Within Groups	20151.922	597	33.755		
	Total	20389.993	599			
Personal Problem	Between Groups	97.904	2	48.952	2.840	.059
	Within Groups	10289.690	597	17.236		
	Total	10387.593	599			
Administrative Problem	Between Groups	88.622	2	44.311	.855	.426
	Within Groups	30951.336	597	51.845		
	Total	31039.958	599			

Source: Primary data

Table No.6: Number of earning members in the respondents family and Factory Impact towards Social Problem

Number of breadwinners	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
2 members	141	40.7305	
More than 2 members	345		42.6667
Only 1 member	114		43.0263
Sig.		1.000	.893

The respondents working in Tea Factory having only one earning member in their family opined significantly higher with respect to the Social Problems. It is concluded from the post hoc test that the respondents having only one earning member in their family opined that they had faced higher level of social problem.

Table No.7: Number of earning members in the respondents family and Factory Impact towards Family Problem

Number of breadwinners	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
2 members	141	22.2766	
More than 2 members	345	23.5130	23.5130
Only 1 member	114		24.1140
Sig.		.139	.625

Source: Primary data

Table No.8: Number of earning members in the respondents family and Factory Impact towards Personal Problem

Number of breadwinners	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
More than 2 members	345	18.5797	
Only 1 member	114	19.0439	19.0439
2 members	141		19.5532
Sig.		.318	.273

Source: Primary data

SUMMARY OF ANOVA

The result reveals that the employees working in Tea factory revealed that Factory Impact had not led them towards Social Problems, Personal Problems and Administrative problems, irrespective of their positions, whereas, the respondents' are faced with family problems.

It is clear from the post hoc test that the respondents working in clerical cadre had higher level of opinion towards family problems.

The result reveals that the employees working in the Tea factory revealed that in spite of their experience the Factory Impact has led them to face Social Problem, Family Problem and Administrative problem, while, the respondents did not opine significantly towards personal problems.

The result reveals that the employees working in the Tea factory revealed that based on the Number of earning members in the respondents family the Factory Impact has led them to face Social Problems, Family Problems and Personal Problems, while, the respondents did not opine significantly towards Administrative Problems.

CONCLUSION

It is observed from the study based on the opinion of the employees working in Tea factories who revealed their opinion on a few difficulties that have not been addressed by the management. While, maximum number of employees working in the Tea factories felt prospective and opined positive improvement in their personal life and also they have achieved necessary empowerment through the bank intervention to allot and disburse adequate loan amounts to the right candidates to elevate their standard of living in the field of social and economic status, which had a significant impact on achieving higher level of satisfaction. However, based on the statistical results, there are a few problems that needed to be dealt by the management and elevate the prospects of their employees lifestyle when the suggestions are considered will help the Tea Factories to achieve greater heights in the years to come.

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