Socio-Demographic and Quality of Work Life of Tea Plantation Workers in Nilgiris

1P. Gayathri, Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Barathiar University, Coimbatore, TamilNadu, India, vinaygayathri88@gmail.com

2Dr.R. Arjunan, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Barathiar University, Coimbatore, TamilNadu, India, swarjun95@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study was carried out to examine the Socio-Demographic background and Quality of Work Life of Tea Plantation Workers. The Tea industry in India has given occupation to the major work force in which Nilgiris is also take part. Under the cultivation of tea in South India, Nilgiris accounts for about 90000 hectares and these results in produces tea of about 30 million kg of tea annually which is nearly 60 per cent of the total population. This study has made an attempt to explore the quality of work life of the tea plantation workers in Nilgiris district. The study describes the Socio-Demographic, Quality of Work Life of Tea Plantation Workers. The present study is descriptive in nature. The selected sample is located in and around of Coonoor the Nilgiris District. Totally 50 tea Plantation workers was selected randomly. The Questionnaire was designed into two parts. First part includes demographic information such as age, education, gender and wage etc. The second part of the questionnaire comprise some factors which is related with quality of work life. After the field survey, data analysis was followed with the help of appropriate statistical tools. Hence the researcher made an attempt to explore the problems faced by the tea workers in workplace and provide some suggestion that can helps to improve the present condition. The research findings will uplift the plantation workers community in all status. Plantation Workers will also reach a good status in the society thereby proving that all are equal before Law and in the Society.

Keywords: Tea plantation, socio-demographic, plantation workers, quality of work life.
INTRODUCTION

Among tea production in the world, India is one of the leading producers of tea. The tea plantations were introduced both in India and Sri Lanka by the colonisers. Soon the tea industry emerged into a major industry in the economies of both countries and led to the development of a modern life along with a new social structure. According to Edgar Thompson tea has fashioned the whole environment inherited by the people of these countries. The successive governments of India introduced several changes in this industry after independence. The tea sector is considered a modern industry and the owners of the industry are either leading companies or prominent individuals who benefit directly or indirectly in an immense way in both these countries. However, the workers in the tea estates form a backward community and live in a pitiable state. Despite several decades of progress of the plantation industry in India, plantation workers have remained less developed and isolated. There is an inbuilt vulnerability as they belong to the social and economically underprivileged sections of society. The production and productivity of plantations depend heavily on the performance of these workers employed therein. Therefore, the tea plantation workers welfare, rights, and motivation must be accorded importance by the planners and promoters of the plantation industry.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hazarika (2012) studied the vulnerable living conditions of tea tribes and labourers under urbanized culture. The main source of data collected for the study are books, published literature of plantation companies, associations, journals, reports published by different organizations etc. Apart from that primary data collected from 1500 workers in six big tea gardens of Assam. It is found that women workers in India are facing one of the worst forms of exploitation in modern times. Wage cut policy of the employers affect productivity of the industry. His analysis suggested that measures must be taken to prevent availability of alcoholic beverages and gambling in and around tea garden areas. Women empowerment is urgent need for the tea garden workers and special value-based education should be introduced.

Sarkar (2013) studied the condition of tea garden workers of Jalpaiguri district in Colonial India. The study was conducted with the help of secondary data available from district gazettes. His study found that the situation of children and women workers in the tea gardens of Dooars is considerably worse in some areas. They are persecuted by the managers, watchmen and others in
the tea garden. The workers were paid low wages and bound to do over – duty without bonus money. The garden workers had to borrow money at high interest from money lenders and they could not pack back with interest and they had to sell their children for relief from abysmal poverty. Most of the workers suffered from the lack of nourishment and proper medical treatment. There was no school for children and lack of safe drinking water. The workers could not maintain their family smoothly. The study suggested that there is a need for creating a good relationship among owners, managerial staff and labourers. There is a need to setup a department to look into the welfare of tea garden labourers.

The ongoing negative socio-economic impact of the tea industry, increasing population and other factors have meant that the tea plantations are unable to provide sustainable livelihood to the plantations community. Another study (Tirkey, 2005) describes the impact of tea plantations on the geoecological and socio-economic conditions of communities in the Darjeeling district in India. Nilgiris is the home to 65000 small growers and all belonging to Badaga Community which is the single largest indigenous group in the district. The Nilgiris district tea growers pleaded for promotion of their tea in the domestic market as a way out of the crisis (Venugopal, 2005).

Alamgir Kabir (2007) done a study to reveal “Tea Plantation Workers and its working circumstances.” The study was conducted among 120 tea plantation workers in Bangladesh. Findings of the study indicates that in addition to crop yield, a large number of factors have contributed to the low productivity of tea plantation workers in Bangladesh. Among these factors, socio-cultural and religious barriers; geographical isolation and bonded nature of workers, very low education and poor health status of the workers; extremely inadequate wages and fringe benefits; low quality and quantity of benefits in kind; and in congenial working conditions are the most influential ones. In addition of these factors, three other factors, namely absence of reproductive health facilities, absence of nursery school facilities and lack of plucking amenities have contributed to low productivity among women who account for the majority of the plantation workforce. The present study reveals that all these factors together deprive the tea plantation workers from their basic right to ‘decent work’. This deprivation greatly deteriorates the labour standards of the tea plantation industry in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has the potential to
capture a substantial portion of the world tea market only if it can improve its labour standards and ensure its workers’ their right to ‘decent work’

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Tea industry in India has given occupation to the major work force in which Nilgiris is also take part. Under the tea cultivation in South India, Nilgiris accounts for about 90000 hectares and these results in produces tea of about 30 million kg of tea annually which is nearly 60 per cent of the total population. Tea plantation workers play major role in production of tea. But the life of tea plantation workers is under threat. Every year, majority of tea plantation workers are affected from diseases. There is no proper drinking water facility and a drainage system is most of the plantations. Most of the workers are suffering from Anemia and Tuberculosis, where malaria is widely spread. It affects the children and the women mostly. Leech and Snake bite are another major problem in the plantation field but no proper medical treatment and prevention measures are totally out of clutch. Problems from wild animals are often seen in the plantation field and no proper security measures are provided. Hence the present study highlights the socio-demographic background and quality of work life of Tea plantation workers in Coonoor, Nilgiri district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to find out the present condition of the quality work life of tea workers and provides some suggestion to improve their situation. In order to achieve this objective, the following particular objectives are followed.

1. To know the socio-demographic background of tea plantation workers
2. To find out the present condition of the quality work life of tea plantation workers
3. To offer suitable suggestions and recommendations to improve Quality of Work Life

DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The Tea Plantation workers working in Coonoor, Nilgiris district are considered as the targeted sample respondents for the research study. The study describes the Socio-demographic, Quality of work life of tea plantation workers. The study is Descriptive in nature. The primary data was collected from 50 respondents using a questionnaire. The process of drawing a sample from a
large population is called sampling. The researcher used simple random sampling to select the respondents for the study. The size of the sample is 50 out of the 364 tea plantation workers. After the field survey, data analysis was followed with the help of appropriate statistical tools. Since this is a pilot study to check the feasibility of the main study, the sample size is small.

**SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study would help to know about the socio-demographic background of Plantation workers. Further, the present study also helps to know about the quality of work life of tea plantation workers. The research findings will uplift the plantation workers community in all status. Plantation workers will also reach a good status in the society thereby proving all are equal before Law and in the society.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the findings of the socio demographic background of the respondents. The results of the study reveal that less than half of the respondents were in the young age group of 26-34 years old and rest of them were in middle age and above. Among 50 respondents (25) percent of the respondents are male and (25) percent of them are female. A good majority of the respondents are married and rest of them are unmarried. A vast majority of the respondents are Hindus and it also found that the meager rest of them are Christians and Muslims. More than half of the respondents have completed primary education, very few of the respondents were illiterate and rest of them completed their high school and higher secondary. A vast majority of the respondents were permanent and rest of them were temporary. Nearly less than half of the respondents work experience were between 6-15 years and rest of them had experience between 16-25 years and above 26 years. Almost all the respondent’s monthly income was above Rs. 5000. A good majority of the respondents reside in quarters and rest of them reside in their own house and a few from rented house. A good majority of the respondents are from nuclear family and rest of them belong to joint family and staying alone. The results on the levels on dimensions of quality of work life reveal that more than half of the 37 respondents (74) per cent had moderate level of compensation, 13 respondents (26) percent of them had low compensation. Regarding work environment nearly half of the 46 respondents (92) percent of them felt poor work environment and only mere (8) percent of them felt very good work environment. In the
case of work characteristics 39 respondents (78) percent of them had normal work characteristics, 11 respondents (22) percent of them had poor work characteristics. When seen on the level of social orientation 38 respondents (76) percent of them had high level of social orientation, 12 respondents (24) percent of them had low level of social orientation. Regarding constitutionalism at workplace 32 respondents (64) percent of them had moderate constitutionalism at workplace. Among 50 respondents 40 respondents (80) percent of them had moderate work-life balance. 44 respondents (88) percent of them had moderate social relevance. Regarding Comforts at work place, Among 50 respondents 32 respondents (64) percent of them had high life comforts. Hence in identifying the quality of work life of plantation workers it was understood that among 50 respondents half of the respondents had moderate level of quality of work life. Therefore, the quality of work life of tea plantation workers has to be improved. Based on the findings the suggestions are given to employers, government and non-government organization.

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

• The wage of tea worker should increase.

• The management should provide sufficient rations and protein-deficient meals.

• Management should establish secondary school in tea garden. Government should come forward for establishing more government school in tea garden.

• Health care facilities should improve. They are also a part of our society. So, the government should concern about the health care facility of tea workers.

• All the worker should treat equally in term of house facility. All the workers should get some house.

• Management should provide compensation for all the tea worker.

• Management should consider the workers opinion in decision making.

• Training facility should increase
CONCLUSION

From the above discussions it is concluded that the living standard of the tea estate workers are very miserable. They are economically and socially backward and deprived from the modern social life. Most of the tea estate workers are not much educated so that they have no ideas regarding various labour welfare and other social security schemes which are implemented by the Government. They haven’t been provided proper sanitation in which women are the biggest victims, water facilities are way far away from the working place, they are not given permanent status so to escape from union fights. The government should look after this matter, the government should provide proper laws and regulation so to protect this skill labors, and tea plantation is not only providing quality tea for the Indian people but also it is the biggest source of Indian economy. The government should make a separate body to look after this and make some stringent laws to protect the workers from not getting exploited. Government should connect plantation workers to the labor law departments directly so that workers can directly go there and fight for their rights, owners of the plantation field should strictly follow to have proper working hours and should give proper wages.

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