

A Study to Analyse the Poverty Level Among the Tea Labourer with Special Reference to Nilgiris District

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ABSTRACT: Poverty is a “poor” livelihood outcome. It is based on a fragile or unbalanced set of livelihood assets. Poor are unable to sustain shocks, changes or trends. The policies do not support the poor. Sustainable Livelihood approach to poverty is a holistic one which takes into account the innumerable factors that go into the making of poverty and to identify those issues where an intervention could be crucially important for effective poverty reduction at the local or policy level. The plantations are usually situated in remote and uninhabited areas. The plantation workers are therefore mostly migrants. These labourers are often provided with housing on the estates, along with facilities for shops, services and communal facilities for recreation and culture. It is unfortunate that almost all the companies aim to minimize labour costs. By enhancing their capabilities, equity considerations and by improving sustainability by reducing shocks vulnerability and providing safety nets the livelihood of the poor can become positive. Therefore the present study will focus on analyzing the poverty level among the tea labourers who are illiterate and ignorant of their own progress. The research found that the earning capacity and their saving habits are low. Many of the labourers are in debt due to insufficient income to meet their various ends. Further it helps to suggest the need for policy framework required to protect and promote their quality of life. The importance of considering these factors is analyzed and the results inferred from several tea estates and factory labourers of six taluks in Nilgiris district.

Keywords: Labour, Poverty, Problems, debt, Illiteracy, Benefits, Socio-economic condition,

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I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a multi-facet phenomenon in today’s globalized world. The word “Poverty” or “poor” originated from the Latin word pauper meaning poor, which has its roots in the words pau-and pario that is ‘giving birth to nothing’; referring to unproductive livestock and farmland. The former experienced seasonal poverty when crops failed or demand for casual agricultural labour was low. The latter were permanently poor because of ill health (physical and mental), accident, age or alcoholism. The Nilgiris District is basically a horticulture district and the entire economy of the district depends upon the success and failure of horticulture crops like potato, cabbage, carrot, tea coffee, spices and fruits. The main cultivation is plantation crops and tea and coffee. Potato and other vegetables are raised in Udhagai and Coonoor Taluks. Paddy and ginger are grown in Gudalur and Pandalur Taluks. Paddy is also grown in Thengumarahada area in Kotagiri Taluk. Tea industry occupies an important place in the plantation sector. It contributes a lot of employment opportunities and accounts for more than 10 percent of India’s exchange earnings. Tea workers, both permanent and casual, are entitled to a number of benefits that includes free health care provision, housing, water, schools for their children and a few workers are allocated small plot. Since plantation workers are highly dependent on management for water, electricity, firewood, health, education etc. Most affected group of people are direct victims of disaster in tea industry are the workers.

Tea estates being enclave economies, workers there lose employment, wages and statutory benefits like health, education, safe drinking water, sanitation etc. Incidences of starvation induced deaths and suicides are coming to estates. Management tries to overcome crisis by rising work load, downsizing labour force; cutting down wage, keeping pending retirement benefits and contribution to Provident Fund account of workers and Cutting down statutory welfare measures. The deep crisis in the tea industry has severely affected the standard of living of estate labourers, employment opportunities, and welfare measures availed. So it is fruitful to analyze the poverty level among the tea laborers, its impact and their responses and surviving strategies.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- ❖ To study the socio-economic conditions of the tea labourers.
- ❖ To access the welfare and benefits enjoyed by the tea labourers.
- ❖ To identify the various problems encountered by the tea respondents.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kakali Hazarika (2012) studied the vulnerable conditions of tea tribes and laborers under urbanized culture. 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.

Achyut Krishna Borah (2013) studied the socio – economic condition and income and expenditure pattern of plantation workers in Lepetkota tea estate in Assam The study uses both primary and secondary data sources. The study found that majority of the Indian tea producers are not getting fair prices in the market for their tea and this passes to the workers as wage cuts and it further affects the tea industry without a strong and skilled labour force and there are lack of educational facilities for the children of the tea estate workers in the study area. The study also suggested that every worker must have bank account and deposit a few per cent of his income in the respective account, infrastructure facilities should develop.

DipaliBosumatan and PhaindraGoyari (2013), “Educational status of Tea Plantation Women workers in Assam: An Empirical Analysis,” studies the education status of women tea plantation workers owing to their poor economic condition, parents always considered their children as economic assets. Therefore, sending their children to school upsets the whole economic consideration of the family. Even today during the plucking season, the children (especially girls) are withdrawn from the schools and then either engaged as child labour in the gardens or in household works so as to enable more adult members to work in the garden.

N.P.Hariharan and S.Siva Kumar (2014) “the Economic status of workers in large tea estate with special reference to the NilgirisDistrict of Tamilnadu” studies apart from the primary data collected from 158 tea workers of four tea estates in Nilgiris District. It is found that debt position of workers is high and monthly expenditure constitutes 50% are more in all the blocks of the study area and further female respondents are illiterate which proves the low economic status in Coonoor block.

Bene, Christophe Franken Berger, Tim Nelson and Suzanne (2015) “ Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Resilience Interventions: Conceptual and Empirical Considerations” paper uses both theoretical and empirical examples for addressing chronic vulnerability of populations exposed to recurrent shocks and stressors for measuring how well households, communities and systems manage shocks and how interventions and programmes designed to strengthen. It is found that developing a robust resilience measurement and monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework is therefore a priority.

M.G.Srinivasan (2016),”A Study on Problems of Tea Plantation Workers in NilgirisDistrict, Tamilnadu” studies found that the Most of the workers are suffering from Anemia and Tuberculosis, where malaria is widely spread. It affects the children and the women mostly. Leech bite and Snake bite are the major problem in the plantation field but no proper medical treatment and prevention measures are totally out of clutch. Wild animals are often seen in the plantation field and no proper security measures are provided. The death ratio is high due to the bites and the wild animals is consistent. The health system is not effective.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Tea Industry in Nilgiris has immense potential from the points of both providing employment as well as generating revenue. It can be a lucrative profession and can play a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the economically backward state. But the tea labourers are facing many problems related to nature of work, availability of finance, risk of health, plucking of tea leaves in unsafe zone etc. They are forced to accept the low wage and no revision has made for their betterment. This study aims to identify the poverty constraints faced by the tea labourers in Nilgiris district. It is focused on factors that influence the vulnerable socio-economic condition to involve in tea cultivation and problems faced by tea respondent’s.And further it aims to identify the availability of welfare schemes which are beneficial to the tea labourer for their upliftment.

V. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In spite of detailed analysis made in the present study, this study is not free from limitations. The following are the important limitations:

- i) The study is purely based on the views of 60 respondents only and hence their results may not be universally applicable.
- ii) The geographical area of this study is confined only to Nilgiris District.

iii) The study period is specific.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Nilgiris district of Tamilnadu. The respondents to the study was selected from six taluks namely Gudalur, Pandalur, Coonoor, Kundhah, Ooty and Kotagiri. The source of data is primary which has been collected from the labourers through pre-designed questionnaire method and secondary is collected through books, journals and from the internet .The samples were chosen from the population using convenience sampling technique.

6.1. Sample Size:

A total of 60 labourers were selected from six taluks who are engaged in tea plantation sector.

6.2. Statistical Tools:

The researcher has used the basic statistic tools like Percentage method, Regression, Correlation ,Chi-square, Anova and Independent sample‘T’ test for analysis purposes. Plantation labourers belonging to different categories of work specializes in all the works other than plucking of leaves and female labourers specializes in tea leaf plucking.The study on analysis of poverty level among tea laborers has many characteristics and play a significant role in determining the economic status of each individual labour has direct impact on poor living conditions explained with the help of table.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following tables show the results of the collected data.

Table 1: Frequency Table – Demographic Profile

S.No	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
1.	Age		
	Below 25	6	10.0
	25-35	14	23.3
	35-45	21	35.0
	Above 45	19	31.7
	Total	60	100.0
2	Sex		
	Male	28	46.7
	Female	32	53.3
	Total	60	100.0
3	MaritalStatus		
	Married	33	55.0
	Unmarried	12	20.0
	Divorce	4	6.7
	Widows	11	18.3
	Total	60	100.0
4	Education		
	Illiterate	23	38.3
	Primary	24	40.0
	Secondary	12	20.0
	Higher Sec	1	1.7
	Total	60	100.0
5	Nature of Work		
	Plucking leaves	49	81.7
	Packing	5	8.3
	Transport	6	10.0
	Total	60	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2017)

From the above Table 1, it is inferred that majority (35%) of the tea respondents who fall between the age of 35-45. Majority (53%) of the respondent are female. It is clear that majority (55%) of the respondent are

married. Majority (40%) of the respondent gained primary level of education and majority of (82%) of the respondents involved in tea leaf plucking.

Table 2: Monthly Income of the Respondent

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T. value	Sig. value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.774	.673		1.151	.255
Age of the Respondent	.059	.069	.108	.849	.400
Size of the Family	.076	.053	.159	1.419	.162
Type of work	.030	.144	.036	.210	.835
Nature of Employment	.609	.226	.520	2.701	.009
Year of Service	.039	.088	.084	.438	.663
Community of the respondent	.072	.053	.146	1.370	.177
Other sources of Income	.041	.023	.194	1.778	.081
Basis of Payment	.255	.138	.238	1.849	.070
Education status of the Respondents	.237	.105	.355	2.258	.028
a. Dependent Variable: Monthly income					

Source: Computed Data

Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant impact of age, family size, type of work, nature of employment, years of service, community, other sources of income, basis of payment and education on monthly income of the respondents.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant impact of age, family size, type of work, nature of employment, years of service, community, other sources of income, basis of payment and education on monthly income of the respondents.

From the above table it reveals that variables nature of employment and Education status of the respondents plays a vital role on the respondent monthly income and remaining variable likeage, community, size of the family, type of work, year of service, other sources of income and basis of payment, have no impact on monthly income so the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3: Correlation between Total expenditure and Demographic Profile of the respondent

Variables	Pearson's R Value	Acceptance / Rejection of Null Hypothesis	'p'Value
Age	0.24	Accepted	0.063
Marital status	0.06	Accepted	0.650
Ownership of House	0.26	Rejected	0.039
Type of work	0.16	Accepted	0.222
Nature of Employment	0.18	Accepted	0.151
Family Background	0.04	Accepted	0.740
Sources of borrowing	0.10	Accepted	0.432
Food intake per day	0.19	Accepted	0.134
Shortage of food during the year	0.06	Accepted	0.650
Nature of family	0.06	Accepted	0.639

Source: Computed Data

Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis: There is significant correlation between total monthly expenditure, demographic factors, sources of borrowings and food intake.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is no significant correlation between total monthly expenditure, demographic factors, sources of borrowings and food intake.

From the above table it shows that the variable the ownership of house has significate relationship with total expenditure because irrespective of their demographic profile, sources of borrowing , ownership of house

data shows that most of the tea respondents resides in a rented house which becomes a major part of expense from their low wage. So null hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4: Association between satisfaction of income and Benefits enjoyed by the tea labourer

Benefits	Calculated Chi-Square Value	Acceptance / Rejection of Null Hypothesis	'p' Value
Amount of income /per day	5.71	Accepted	0.222
Stability of income	8.85	Accepted	0.065
Access to credit	6.95	Accepted	0.138
Sick pay	6.88	Accepted	0.332
Bonus	11.6	Accepted	0.070
Working hours	3.10	Accepted	0.796
Pension	10.0	Rejected	0.039
Leave	3.33	Accepted	0.504
Training, education for work	0.87	Accepted	0.646
Access to information	3.30	Accepted	0.507
Housing	19.0	Rejected	0.004
Sanitation	34.2	Rejected	0.000
Transport	7.82	Accepted	0.252
Piped drinking	10.6	Accepted	0.101
Children education	18.1	Rejected	0.020

Source: Computed Data

Hypothesis 3:

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant association between satisfaction of income and Benefits enjoyed by the tea labourer.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant association between satisfaction of income and Benefits enjoyed by the tea labourer. From the above table, it shows there is no association between the satisfaction of income & benefit enjoyed by tea labourers. A very few variables like Pension scheme, proper Housing and Sanitation facility benefits improves the living standard of tea labourers. So null hypothesis is accepted and alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 5: Difference between satisfaction of income and Welfare received by the tea labourer

ANOVA						
Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Services by company on housing	Between Groups	.723	2	.362	.380	.686
	Within Groups	54.210	57	.951		
	Total	54.933	59			
Health care	Between Groups	2.056	2	1.028	1.306	.279
	Within Groups	44.877	57	.787		
	Total	46.933	59			
Sanitation at work	Between Groups	2.640	2	1.320	1.460	.241
	Within Groups	51.544	57	.904		
	Total	54.183	59			
Water supply	Between Groups	.618	2	.309	.359	.700
	Within Groups	49.032	57	.860		
	Total	49.650	59			
Electricity	Between Groups	.279	2	.139	.131	.878
	Within Groups	60.655	57	1.064		
	Total	60.933	59			
Free food at work spot	Between Groups	.056	2	.028	.148	.863
	Within Groups	10.877	57	.191		
	Total	10.933	59			

Source: Computed Data

Hypothesis 4

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between satisfaction of income and Welfare enjoyed by the tea labourer.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between satisfaction of income and Welfare enjoyed by the tea labourer.

From the above table, it is transparent that there is no significance difference between the satisfaction of income and welfare received by the tea labourers .As income earned from the work spot doesn't provide enough satisfaction from the welfare rendered by the tea estate. So the null hypothesis is accepted and alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6: Gender wise various problems faced by the respondent

Problems	Gender	N	Mea n	SD	't' Value	'p' valu e
Health related Issues	Male	28	2.35	0.78	1.366	0.177
	Female	32	2.06	0.87		
General problems faced by the respondent	Male	28	2.57	1.10	0.645	0.522
	Female	32	2.37	1.23		

Source: Computed Data

Hypothesis 5

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between various problems faced by the Male and female tea labourer.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between various problems faced by the male and female tea labourer.

Table 6 shows that there is no significant difference between Gender-wise classification on health related and general problems faced by the respondents involved in tea plantation. Both male and female tea respondents experienced common health disorder like body ache, heart attack and skin allergy. Similarly general problems like insufficient water, low wage and Animal attacks is found in the work spot. So the null hypothesis is accepted and Alternative hypothesis is rejected.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

1. The wage of the workers is very low. There is a need for policy measures to increase the wage of the labourers in the estates.
2. Government should provide immediate relief to mitigate the distress to workers through free ration of food, medical facilities, drinking water, and assistance to the school going children.
3. Education is a long-term process and any interruption will cause serious repercussions on the trend of the students. The remoteness of place of residence and long journey can be improved by regular transport facility.
4. A proper medical care council should be formed. And safety health measures includes Gloves, uniforms and weather related clothing should be provided periodically provided to labourersinvolved in tea plantation sector.
5. The workers are met with the basic health problems in the health centers run by the management. So, there is a need for measures to cover even the complicated health issues to increase the efficiency and standard of the workers.

IX. CONCLUSION

The Indian Tea Industry is facing some serious challenges and even its survival is being questioned. The decline in the auction price of Indian Tea, low productivity, mismanagement, insufficiency in value added products and the trade liberalization polices of Government of India have contributed to the crisis. 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 estatelabourers, employment opportunities, and level of trade union activities. I hereby conclude that the Tea-Workers in this District are paid very less and least beneficiary measures are given to them. Minimum wage should be provided to them andit should be sufficient to lead their life. As the labours have got their rights to get their wages. A separate Board hasto be established for the Welfare of the workers, helpful methods and comparison of the same has to be introduced with immediate effect. Hence is the importance of this micro level study.

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