

Socio-Economic Conditions of Tea Garden Workers in Ambootia Tea Estate: A Case Study of Darjeeling Tea Industry

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ABSTRACT

In India, the most celebrated tea comes from Darjeeling Himalaya. The Darjeeling Tea is considered the world's finest tea and the region has been cultivating and producing tea since the last 150 years. The distinct quality of the tea is due to the the complex geo-environmental and agro-climatic conditions in the region. This paper tries to explore the socio- economic conditions of the labourers of Ambootia tea garden in Darjeeling Hills. It tries to bring the problems of the garden labourers in this region that produces the finest quality tea in the world. The paper also tries to deal upon the negligence of tea management towards the socio-economic development of garden labourers. The basic aim of this paper is to highlight the conditions of tea garden labourers of Ambootia in Darjeeling Hills. The survey showed that around 55% were illiterates. The paper also shows that the economic conditions of tea labourers which shows that only 2% of surveyed sample have monthly income >Rs 10000. In this paper attention was also given on marital status, sanitation condition, child labourer etc. It is also suggested in the paper that efforts must be made to raise awareness among the tea garden workers about human rights. The study also reveals about the problems faced by tea garden women workers.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, open defecation, Women garden worker

Introduction

India is the second largest tea producer country in the world. In India a vital role is played by the Tea industry in the socio-economic condition of the hill people. The tea garden workers mostly females are well trained from their previous generations. They constitute about 70% of the work force in Ambootia tea estate. It is generally assumed that the tea gardens workers all over in India has been leading a miserable life but the real situation is yet to be

investigated. There are very few micro-level studies on tea garden workers. So the present study is done to know about the socio-economic conditions of the workers.

Study area

Ambootia tea estate is situated in the Kurseong subdivision, in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains of Darjeeling district. It is one of the most famous and perhaps the first tea gardens established by the British in the mid-19th century. Ambootia Tea Garden was established in 1861 by Darjeeling Tea Company of England. Ambootia Tea Garden has a total area of 790.64 ha and is located at 26.87°N, 88.24°E. Tea is cultivated in 350.48 ha only in Ambootia Tea Garden.

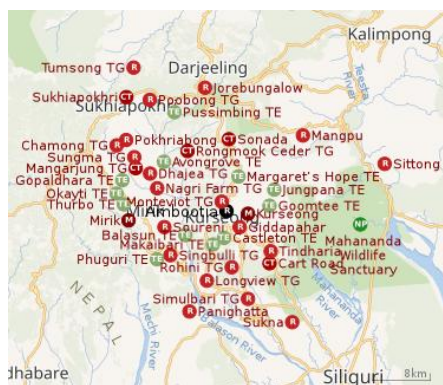


Fig1 Map of Ambootia tea estate

Methodology

This study has been carried out in Ambootia tea estates of Kurseong subdivision. For this study 100 households were surveyed. In this study secondary data were collected from teagarden authority, internet, books, newspapers etc. Primary data were collected from field survey. Random sampling procedure has been used to select sample households for the study. The respondents age limit was not under consideration as they were selected purposively. Among the participants majority were between 25 to 45 years and nearly one-fourth were between 40 to 50 years. Few of them were below 20 years. Female workers found more than the male workers. Simple statistical method is used for data analysis.

Objectives

- (1) To know the socio economic condition of Ambootia tea garden workers.
- (2) To know whether the tea workers are informed about human rights or not.

Hypothesis

Educational status of tea workers is related with family size.

H_0 : There is no significant relation in educational status of tea workers with family size.

H_1 : There is a significant relation in educational status of tea workers with family size.

Results & Discussion

1. Population distribution

Table1: Distribution of population

Age group	Male	%	Female	%	Total
<20 years	20	41	29	59	49
20-50 years	32	43	43	57	75
>50 years	25	44	32	56	57
Total	77	43	104	57	181

Source: Field survey, 2019

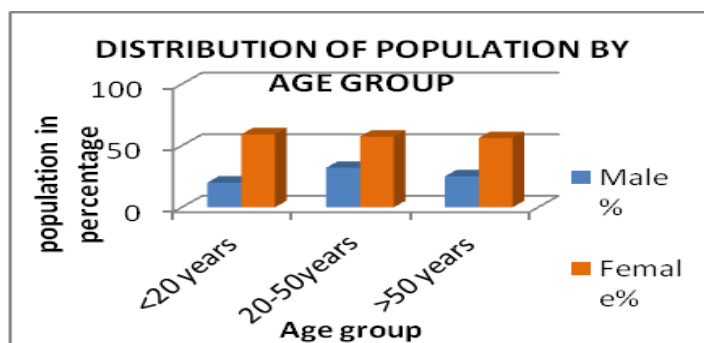


Fig2: Distribution of population by age group

For this study I took different aged people. 49% of the population are below 20 years age group. 75% of the people are in the age group of 20-50 years and the population above age group 50 is 57% of sample population. The result shows that the active workforce of the community are the highest in percentage & they are the real earning group. Below 20 years population are seen mainly as child labourers.

2. Marital Status of Tea workers

The study shows that 50% are married, 34% are unmarried, 10% widow & 6% are divorced. During survey it was found that when people got married, they try to lead separated family. The authority of the tea garden also give them new house and other facilities. For this most of the respondents were married and family was also found nuclear in type.

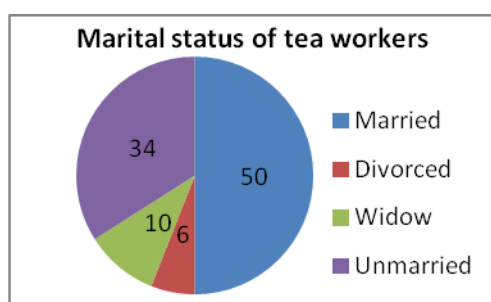


Fig3: Marital status of tea workers

3. Number of earning members & child workers in the family

Unemployed family members are found least as most of them are involved with work. The study shows that 40% of the families have two and four member working in their family. Five members working families are found only 2% & their works are fixed. If any inconsistency occurs in their family then they are found to do extra work in the garden. Family members are also found cultivating various kinds of vegetable and rearing domestic animal like cow, goat, chicken, hen etc. in their home. Survey result shows that earning members in one family are more than dependent or unemployed. Child workers found common in most of the families & this is due to poverty. For poverty children are forced to engage themselves in some income generating work. It is found that 60% families have child workers.

4. Monthly income of the households

The salary of the tea worker is very low although they work hard. It is found from the survey that the average monthly income of a teaworker is Rs1440 only which is not sufficient in today's time. The workers cannot deal healthy life in the tea garden as they can't buy sufficient food. The price of essential commodities also increases day by day. The study showed that 38% of the households monthly income is Rs 6001-8000 and only 2% families earn >Rs10001. During survey it was seen that the tea workers work in the garden from 9 am. to 5 pm & they have to pick up 20 kg tea/day from the garden but their income is very low after such hard work which is very pathetic. Some people are also seen working as a wood carpenter, pump driver etc. inside the tea garden. They get salary only Rs60 per day. They don't get pay equal to their work which is against human rights. The workers don't get any kind of security from government also.

Table:2 Distribution of Household income

Monthly income(Rs)	No. of H.H	% of H.H
<2000	10	10
2001-4000	26	26
4001-6000	20	20
6001-8000	38	38
8001-10000	4	4
>10001	2	2
Total	100	100

Source:Field survey,2019

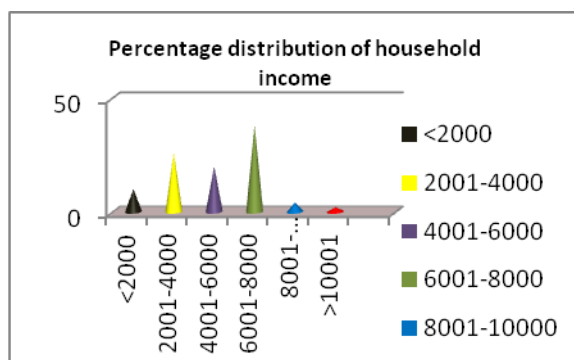


Fig 5 Household income

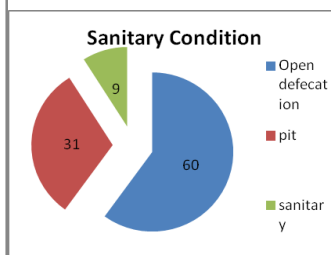


Fig6 Sanitary Condition

5.Sanitation facility

The study shows that 60% of the households use open space as toilets. This open defecation is very unhealthy and prone to various sanitation related diseases. During the survey the respondents told that most of the sanitary toilets provided by govt. and Tea Company are in damaged situation as they are not constructed properly & not maintained well.

6.Educational status

About 55% of the respondents were totally illiterate. During the survey they reported that they are in the garden to work & not to get education. But they also reported that they had no restriction to educate their future generation. In findings it is seen that after class five majority leave education. Only 4% is seen getting education upto class ten. They start working in the tea garden.

Table4: Educational Status of Tea workers

Educational status	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	99	55
Upto class V	42	23
VI to X	32	18
Upto class X	8	4
Total	181	100

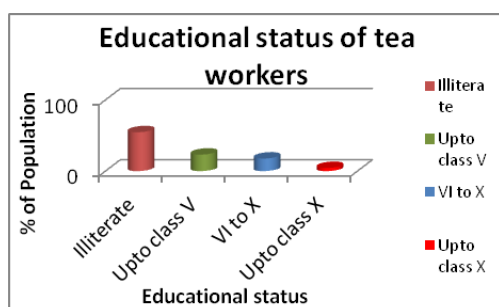


Fig7: Educational status of teaworkers

Source: Field survey, 2019

7. Hypothesis testing

Educational status of tea workers is related with family size.

H_0 : There is no significant relation in educational status of tea workers with family size.

H_1 : There is a significant relation in educational status of tea workers with family size.

To test this hypothesis chi-square(χ^2) statistic is applied.

Table 5: Statistical test on relationship between Family size and Educational status

Educational status	Illiterate	Literate	Total
Family size			
1-3	15	42	57
4-6	28	31	59
7-9	39	26	65
Total	82	99	181

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Table6: Chi results			
FAMILY SIZE/EDUCATION STATUS	ILLITERATE	LITERATE	Row Totals
1-3	15 (25.82) [4.54]	42 (31.18) [3.76]	57
4-6	28 (26.73) [0.06]	31 (32.27) [0.05]	59
7-9	39 (29.45) [3.10]	26 (35.55) [2.57]	65
Column Totals	82	99	181 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 14.0694 at 2 degree of freedom. The p -value is .000881. The result is significant at $p < .05$. As the calculated value is greater than the tabular value at 2 degree of freedom & .05 significance level the result is significant. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This shows that there is significant relationship between the household size and education status of tea workers. From the table it is evident that smaller the family size of tea workers higher is the literacy and larger the family size of workers lower is the literacy.

8. Knowledge about human rights

Majority of the workers don't have any idea about human rights. Most of them are very much normal to their lifestyle. But there are also some people who are concerned about it. Sometimes there are stealing inside the houses but the community people reported that they were done by outsiders. Tea consumption is increasing day by day but the production of tea is not what is needed. This is mainly due to the poor condition specially health of the tea workers which is hampering the tea production. For poor health condition they cant give the necessary effort which is needed.

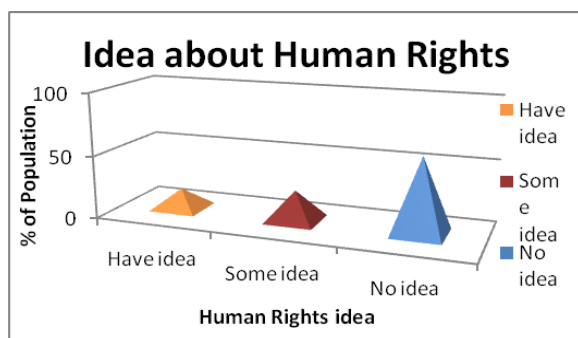


Fig8:Idea about human rights

8.Problems faced by female tea garden workers



Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is concluded that tea garden workers face several daily problems and they are still behind in terms of culturally, socio-economically and educationally. Majority of them work only for their livelihood & family survival as they are illiterate & innocent . So the tea garden authority should try to literate them and always give them moral support to become socio-economically developed.

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