

## RESEARCH NOTE

## Problems Faced by Women Tea Plantation Workers in Performing Their Duties

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### ABSTRACT

*In the present study, it is operationally defined as the inconveniences faced by the women tea plantation workers in performing various tasks at the tea garden or tea garden factory. Their tasks include; plucking of tea leaves, weeding, nursery work, column cutting, cleaning of drains and other factory work etc. The study was carried out in Jorhat district of Assam. Four (4) tea gardens under public corporation from Jorhat sub-division were selected using purposive sampling method. A total of 100 women tea plantation workers were selected for the present study. The major findings revealed that insufficient wage was ranked I with mean score (2.99), lack of toilet facilities at work was ranked II with mean score (2.95), no provisions for protective gears at work was ranked III with mean score (2.82), back pain due to carrying of tea baskets for a long time was ranked IV with mean score (2.45), cuts and rashes on fingers and palm due to plucking of tea leaves was ranked V with mean score (2.43).*

**Key words:** Problems; Women; Tea Plantation; Workers; Duties;

Women make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies (Biradar, 2021). Tea plantation requires a huge number of labour forces. The women tea plantation workers are significant for the industry as they form almost 50 per cent of the total workforce in the tea industry in Assam (Baishya, 2016). Despite having an equal share in the work force they are paid less than their male counterparts. Their main task involves manual plucking of tea leaves which is considered to be one of the most cumbersome duties in a tea garden. Other tasks include weeding, manuring, pruning of tea bushes, transplanting, nursing young tea saplings etc. Women labourers working in tea factories are also engaged in shorting of tea leaves, cleaning of the tea factory and other manual works. Women pluck tea leaves with their bare hands, as a result, they are exposed to certain chemicals sprayed on tea leaves which affects their health. In addition to that tea gardens during summers are prone to snakes which can be a threat for these women plucking tea leaves for hours likewise, during winters

and rainy seasons mosquitoes and frogs come into play. With improper maternity leave, women workers even during their pregnancy have to work in the field so that their wage is not missed. Also, a few days after the delivery of the baby, women are expected to be immediately present in the field to work (Saikia, 2008). In the tea plantation sector, women tea plantation workers have designated the bottom position in functional and social stratum.

### METHODOLOGY

Sampling and simple random sampling method was followed for the present study. Four (4) government tea gardens from Jorhat sub-division were selected using purposive sampling method. A total of 100 women tea plantation workers were selected randomly using a simple random sampling method. The personal interview method was applied for the collection of primary data with the help of the structured interview schedule which was prepared according to the objectives of the study. Data were analysed using percentage, mean, standard deviation and ranking.

The independent variables incorporated in the

present study were selected based on substantial literature review and discussion with resource persons. For quantitative measurement of variables, a structured interview schedule was designed for the present study.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*Personal profiles:* Table 1 shows that majority of respondents (45.00%) were under the age group young category i.e. 18-30 years followed by lower middle (40.00% ) i.e., 31-43 years and Upper middle (45-56) years was Similar findings was reported by *Debnath and Debnath (2017)* where they found that majority of the respondents belonged to young age category followed by lower middle and upper middle category. The educational status of the respondents revealed that the majority of the respondents (52.00%) were illiterate followed by primary level (24.00%) and middle school level (18.00%). A very less percent of respondents studied up to class X (5%) and HSLC passed (1.00%). Similar finding were reported by *Ansari and Sheereen (2016)*, *Sharma and Bhuyan (2016)*, *Ruma and Dipak (2014)*. Where they found that majority of the respondents were illiterate. The monthly income of the respondents was majorly seen between (Rs. 4492- Rs. 5012) followed by (31.00%) of them earned (Rs. 3971-

Rs. 4491) per month and (19.00%) of the respondents earned (Rs. 3540- Rs. 3970) per month.

*Conservatism- liberalism:* It can be noted from Table 2. that majority (63.00%) of the respondents had medium level of conservatism and liberalism followed by (21.00%) of them had medium level of conservatism-liberalism and very less number of respondents i.e. (16.00%) had low level of conservatism- liberalism. Hence, it can be concluded that the women tea plantation workers are neither too conservative nor too liberal. This may be due to widening the areas of thoughts and slowly moving towards progressive thinking by the women tea plantation workers.

*Problem faced by women tea plantation workers:* The data in Table 3. reveals that insufficient wages ranked I with mean score (2.99), followed by lack of toilet facilities at work ranked II with mean score (2.95), no provisions for protective gears at work ranked III with mean score (2.82), back pain due to carrying of tea baskets for long time ranked IV with mean score (2.45), cuts and rashes on fingers and palm due to plucking of tea leaves ranked V with mean score ( 2.43), inadequate crèche facility ranked VI with mean score (2.37), Huge distance between work place and house ranked VII with mean score (2.30), inadequate maternity benefits ranked VIII with mean score (2.29), management pressure to meet work targets ranked IX with mean score (2.24), work under heavy rain and sunlight ranked X with mean score (2.10), poor drinking water facility ranked XI with mean score (2.09), poor first aid facility ranked XII with mean score (1.48), slippery and wet work area ranked XIII with mean score (1.91), prevalence of snakes and poisonous frogs at work place ranked XIV with mean score (1.71), exposure to field sprays ranked XV with mean score (1.48), heavy noise at work place raked XVI with mean score (1.42).

The findings indicated that the wages given to the

**Table.1. Personal profile of women tea plantation workers**

Variables	Categories	(%)
Age	Young (18-30)	45
	lower middle (31-43)	40
	upper middle (44-56)	15
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	52
	Primary	24
	Middle	18
	Up to X	5
	HSLC	1
Monthly income	(Rs. 3540- Rs. 3970)	19
	(Rs. 3971- Rs. 4491)	31
	(Rs. 4492- Rs. 5012)	50

**Table.2. Distribution of respondents according to their percentage of conservatism-liberalism**

Statements	SA	A	D	SD
Marriage within one’s own caste should not be pursued and intercaste marriage should be favoured	9.00	14.00	30.00	47.00
More problems get involved when one adopts improved farm and home practices	-	14.00	79.00	7.00
One should pay proper attention to arguments forwarded by young, if ready to accept them	17.00	83.00	-	-
Women should wear traditional not ultra modern dress	28.00	60.00	12.00	-
The legalisation on abortion is nothing but short of sin	13.00	57.00	30.00	-
Women should not confine to homes and they should go out and work in the factories and fields	22.00	78.00	-	-

SA=Strongly agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

**Table.3. Distribution of women tea plantation worker according to problem faced by women tea plantation workers in performing their duties (N=100)**

Problem	MS	Rank
Wages are insufficient for family	2.99	I
Lack of toilet facility at work place	2.95	II
No provisions for protective gears at work	2.82	III
Lots of mosquitoes and other insects	2.45	IV
Back pain due to carrying of tea baskets for long time	2.45	IV
Cuts and rashes on fingers and palm due to plucking of tea leaves	2.43	V
Poor crèche facility	2.37	VI
Long distance between work place and house	2.30	VII
Inadequate maternity benefits	2.29	VIII
Management pressure to meet work targets	2.24	IX
Work under heavy rain and sunlight	2.10	X
Poor drinking water facility	2.09	XI
Poor first aid facility	2.05	XII
Slippery and wet work area	1.91	XIII
Prevalence of snakes and poisonous frogs at work place	1.71	XIV
Exposure to field sprays	1.48	XV
Heavy noise at work place	1.42	XVI

women tea plantation workers are so less that it is insufficient for their family as the prices of items for daily living have been increasing day by day. In violation of Plantation Labour Act 1951, the women tea plantation workers are not paid the actual wage as the management deducts some amount of money from their actual wage

in the name of providing various other facilities to them.

The findings highlighted that the women often go deep into the tea bushes for natural calls and are prone to various infections and other risks. It was also found that in the sample tea gardens the women tea plantation workers were not provided with any kind of protective gears while working which made it difficult for them to work at tea garden by increasing the risk while working at the tea garden. Back pain due to carrying tea baskets was most commonly observed as a problem. It was observed that the facilities provided at tea garden by management were not up to the mark it was seen that poor drinking water facility, inadequate maternity leave, poor crèche facility, poor first-aid facility and management pressure made it difficult for the women tea plantation workers to perform their duties at the tea garden. This study is supported by *Banik (2015)* and *Borah (2013)*.

## CONCLUSION

Women tea plantation workers are one of the significant features in the tea industry as half of the workforce are women. Studying the problems faced by them will check the lags that women are facing in this vast tea plantation sector and accordingly renovations in current policies and programmes can be made to improve their status. The main finding was that wages received by them were very less and it was ranked as the number one problem.

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