

## **A Study on the Perception of Employees with Regard to the Working Conditions in Tea Plantations with Special Reference to the Tea Plantations in Wayanad District**

**Shibina M.,**

Senior Research Fellow-UGC,  
Department of Management Studies,  
Kannur University, Thalassery Campus,  
Palayad, Kannur, Kerala, India.

**Dr. P. T. Raveendran,**

Professor,  
Department of Management Studies,  
Kannur University, Thalassery Campus,  
Palayad, Kannur, Kerala, India.

### **ABSTRACT**

*Better working condition, provides highly productive employees because, working environment has an influence on the behavior of the employees towards the organization. The present study focuses on the working condition of tea plantation workers in Wayanad district.*

*Wayanad district in Kerala is one of the major districts producing tea in the state. Majority of the people depends tea plantation job as their livelihood. Socially and economically backward people are mainly come to the tea plantation job. The distinct feature of tea plantation industry is the highest number of women workers. While the study analyzing the working condition of tea plantations in Wayanad district. percentage analysis and one sample t test were used to find out the working condition of employees in tea plantations.*

**Keywords:** Tea plantation, working condition, Tea plantation workers.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Tea is considered as one of the most popular and low cost beverage in the world (Hicks, 2009). The history of tea in India began in Assam during late 1930s by the British. It started after the discovery in 1823 by Robert Bruce and Maniram Dewan in the hilly regions of Assam (Magar & Kar, 2016). The major tea producing states in India are Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Indian Tea Association, 2018). The other states also contributes substantial share of tea in the country. Tea industry in Kerala is the backbone of the agricultural sector of the state (Kurian, 2013). Wayanad and Idukki are the major tea producing districts in Kerala.

Tea industry in India is one of the most foreign exchange earner as well as one of the most employment generators in the country, because the nature of industry needs continuous supply of work force. The Indian tea industry provides employment opportunity to large number of people in rural and urban areas directly and indirectly. Major portion of the tea plantation labourers in India are still women. Women workers being an important part of the labour force engaged in the plantation industry in India (Chalam, 2009). The working condition of tea plantation employees are regulated by the Plantation labour Act 1951. As per this law the employer must provide their employee to medical, housing, sickness and other welfare measures.

The study analyses the working condition of tea plantation workers in Wayanad district of Kerala state.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

The objective of the study is:

- To understand the working condition of tea plantation workers in Wayanad district.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Palmer (1986) probed the working conditions of Nysland tea estate. The author found that wage structure and working conditions were not attractive. Due to this the tea plantations faced the problem of labour shortage. It caused to the failure of the industry. Panwar (2017) observed the living conditions of tea plantation workers. He stated that the living condition of the workers has not been improved so much. While analyzing the working condition of tea plantation workers, he found some problems like lack of proper safety equipments, lack of sanitary facility at the work place, no water facility at work place etc. The study also found that the tea plantation management did not provide permanent status to the employees due to the fear of trade union fight. In this adverse condition, the author suggested that the government should implement proper laws and regulations to protect the employees. Majumder&Roy(2012) illustrated the socio economic conditions of tea plantation workers in Bangladesh. The study analyses the variables of income, living conditions, working conditions, health and safety etc. of the tea plantation workers. The study stated that working conditions such as wage rate, working hours and leave facilities, physical and social working conditions etc. of an employee affected the productivity of the workers Joseph (2012) identified the problems of tea plantation industry in Kerala. The study found that the worker were dissatisfied with their working conditions such as long distance working place, lack of resting place and latrine facilities at work place etc.

The literatures show that the employees in tea plantations were not in good position. The plantation management was not to provide adequate facilities to the employees. In this condition the study focused on the working condition of tea plantation employees in Wayanad district of Kerala state.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is descriptive in nature in the sense that the researcher tried to portray the perception of employees regarding the working condition of tea plantation workers.

### Data Collection:

Both primary and secondary data are used for the study. The primary data collected from the respondents through a structured questionnaire and also through direct personal interview. The secondary data are data gathered from various literatures published in journals, newspapers, books etc.

### Study Area:

The study is carried on Wayanad district of Kerala state. The researcher selected three tea plantations for the study such as HML Arapetta estate, Podar Plantation, Rippon and Chembra estate, Meppady.

### Sample Size:

From the selected tea plantations, 20 employees were selected from each of the three tea plantations. Total 60 employees were selected for the study by randomly.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The study tries to understand the working condition of tea plantation workers in Wayand district of Kerala state. The study analyses the variables of gender, marital status, age, years of experience, nature of work, income and working condition of the respondents by using SPSS version 20.The study used percentage analysis and one sample t test for analyzing the variables.

**Table 1: Gender wise distribution of the respondents**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	21	35.0
Female	39	65.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

Table , presents the gender wise distribution of the respondents. Out of the 60 respondents 65 percent of the respondents were female employees and the remaining 35 percent of them were male employees.

**Table 2: Marital status of the respondents**

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Married	59	98.3
Un married	1	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

Table 2 depicts that 98.3 percent of the respondents were married. Only 1.7 percent of the respondents were unmarried.

**Table 3: Age wise distribution of the respondents**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Up to 20 years	0	0
21 to 30 years	0	0
31 to 40 years	10	16.7
41 to 50 years	26	43.3
Above 51 years	24	40.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

It is inferred from table 3, out of the workers 16.7 percent of the respondents were in the age group in between 31 to 40 years, 43.3 percent of them were in 41 to 50 years and the remaining 40 percent were in the age of above 51 years. No respondents found in up to 20 years or in the age group of 21 to 30 years.

**Table 4: Literacy status of the respondents**

<b>Literacy status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Illiterate	14	23.3
Literate	46	76.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

Table 4, illustrated the literacy status of the respondents. Among the 60 workers 23.3 percent of the respondents were illiterate and 76.7 percent of the respondents were literate.

**Table 5: Nature of work of the respondents**

<b>Nature of work</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Plucking	37	61.7
Field	9	15.0
Factory	5	8.3
Any other	9	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

Table 5 presents that 61.7 percent of the respondents were engaged in plucking of tea leaves, 15 percent and 8.3 percent of the respondents were worked in field and factory respectively, the remaining 15 percent were engaged in other related works.

**Table 6: Years of experience of the respondents**

<b>Years of experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1-5	4	6.7
5-10	3	5.0

Years of experience	Frequency	Percent
10-20	18	30.0
Above 20	35	58.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

From table 6 point out the years of experience of the respondents, among the workers, 6.7 percent had the work experience of 1-5 years, 5.0 percent had the work experience in between 5-10 and 30 percent had 10-20 years. The remaining 58.3 percent had the experience of above 20 years.

**Table 7: Income wise distribution of the respondents**

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent
up to 5000	17	28.3
5000-10000	43	71.7
Above 10000		
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Primary Data

Table 7 depicts that 28.3 percent of the respondents had the income of up to 5000 and the remaining 71.7 percent of the respondents were in the income group of in between 5000-10000.No respondents found were in the income of above 10000.

**Workers perception regarding working condition:**

Proper working atmosphere is needed for employees to perform well. The jobs in tea plantations are mainly in open spaces. Plucking, pruning, cutting of tea plants are done in open sapce and processing of tea leaves in factories. So tea plantation work is considered as hard in nature. So the study analyse the perception of the workers regarding the working condition of tea plantation employees.

Table 8 presents the mean score obtained for the perception of employees regarding working condition in tea plantations.

**Table 8: Employees perception regarding the working condition (test value=3)**

Variables	Mean	SD	t value	p value
Difficulty to reach work place	2.43	1.38	-3.17	.002
Canteen facilities	2.10	1.03	-6.72	.000
Amenities	2.01	1.17	-6.50	.000
Adequate rest time	2.81	1.61	-.88	.381
Work overload	3.10	1.52	.50	.614
Toilet facilities	1.90	1.13	-7.53	.000
Freedom for decision	2.71	1.4	-1.55	.126
Work pressure	3.00	1.46	.00	1.000
Equitable treatment	2.20	1.43	-4.31	.000
Availability of machines and equipments	2.46	1.39	-2.96	.004
Harassments at working place	2.98	1.43	-.09	.928

**Source:** primary Data

Table 8 depicts the perception of workers regarding working conditions of tea plantations. Mean score obtained for the components work over load and work pressure are 3.1 (t=.508,p=.381), 3.00 (t=.000,p=1.00) respectively at test value 3. It indicates that there is no significant difference with test value. The employees are strongly agreeing with the statements that they have work overload and work pressure in their job. The mean score obtained for the components difficulty to reach work place, canteen facilities, amenities, toilet facilities, equitable treatment and availability of machines and equipments are 2.43 (t=-3.175, p=.002), 2.10 (t=-6.725, p=.000), 2.01 (t=-6.501, p=.000), 1.90 (t=-7.537, p=.000), 2.20 (t=-4.316, p=.000) and 2.46 (-960p=.000) respectively at test value 3. The study indicates that there is a significant difference with the test value and the

employees are disagreeing with the statements. The mean score obtained for the components adequate rest time, freedom for decision and harassments at working place are 2.81 ( $t=-.88, p=.381$ ), 2.71 ( $t=-1.55, p=.126$ ) and 2.98 ( $t=-.090, p=.928$ ) respectively at test value 3. It indicates that there is a no significant difference with the test value and the employees neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements.

### **FINDINGS:**

- The study found that among the 60 workers, 65 percent of the respondents were female employees and the remaining 35 percent of them were male employees.
- With regard to the marital status of the respondents 98.3 percent of the respondents were married. Only 1.7 percent of the respondents were unmarried.
- Majority of the workers were in the age group (43.3%) of 41 to 50 years, 40 percent were in the age of above 51 years, 16.7 percent of the respondents were in the age group in between 31 to 40 years.
- Most of the employees are literate (76.7%) and the 23.3 percent of the respondents were illiterate.
- With the regard to the years of experience of the respondents, 6.7 percent had the work experience of 1-5 years, 5.0 percent had the work experience in between 5-10 and 30 percent had 10-20 years. The remaining 58.3 percent had the experience of above 20 years.
- Among the workers, 61.7 percent of the respondents were engaged in plucking of tea leaves, 15 percent and 8.3 percent of the respondents were worked in field and factory respectively, the remaining 15 percent were engaged in other related works.
- With regard to the monthly income of the respondents, 28.3 percent of the respondents had the income of up to 5000 and the remaining 71.7 percent of the respondents were in the income group of in between 5000-10000.
- The perception of the regarding working conditions of tea plantations is that the employees are strongly agreed with the statements that they have work overload and work pressure in their job.
- The study found that the employees are disagreeing with the statements such as easiest to reach work place, canteen facilities, amenities, toilet facilities, equitable treatment and availability of machines and equipments.
- The study found that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements such as adequate rest time, freedom for decision and harassments at working place.

### **SUGGESTIONS:**

Based on the findings, the study suggested some measures for improving the working conditions of the respondents.

- The tea plantation management must arrange small travelling facilities within the tea gardens. It will help the employees to reach their work place without burden. Because most of the tea plantations are located in hilly regions.
- Tea plantation management should arrange adequate sanitary facilities within the garden.
- The management should take steps to reduce work overburden and work pressure. Provide advanced machineries to the employees to reduce the work over burden of the workers and also provide adequate counselling facilities to the workers for reducing the mental stress due to work and personal problems.
- Conduct meetings with the employees once in a month to hear and to take measures for the problems faced by the employees.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Tea plantation industry is one of the major livelihoods for the peoples in Wayanad district. So sustainability of the industry depends on the productivity of the workers. It can be achieved through providing better working conditions and adequate labour welfare measures. But the study found that most of the employees are disagreeing with the statements of employees are getting proper working condition at their work place. So the tea plantation management should take adequate measures for improving the working condition of their employees.

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