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Impact of welfare measures among coffee plantation workers: A study with reference to Kodagu district

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Abstract

Plantation workers are undeniably as important to Plantation industry as producers, dealers and consumers. The labour is one of the important elements of cost. In India, Welfare measures play a vital role in enhancing the health and efficiency of the plantation workers. Once a worker realised that the industry is concerned about his well-being and appreciated for the work done, naturally he will be motivated. By providing proper welfare measures, company will be able to make the worker perform better. The present study is an attempt to assess the various welfare schemes available for coffee plantation workers and is based on the level of satisfaction of coffee plantation workers regarding those schemes. It tries to find out relationship between welfare measures and demographic factors.

Keywords: Plantation, coffee workers, welfare schemes, rights

1. Introduction

Plantation labour forms an important part of population in India. The conditions of work and wages are improving rapidly in plantation sectors of India. The commercial plantation sector in India mainly consists of crops, viz., tea, coffee, natural rubber, cashew and spices, such as cardamom and pepper. In South India, plantations are located and employment of a large labour force. Labour welfare is the extra dimension, giving satisfaction to the worker in a way which even a good wage cannot. Every human activity centre on welfare. Today welfare has been generally accepted by employers.

2. Rights of plantation workers

The Plantation industry in India is among the largest private employers in India. It is spread across the States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The Plantation workforce, however, has been among the most exploited workforce in the organised sector. Their wages are amongst the lowest when compared to other workers and working and living conditions most dismal. Most of the plantations are located in remote and isolated areas. Workers are mainly dependent on the Plantations as there is hard for other employment avenue. Workers are illiterate and migrants with no awareness about their rights. The fact that plantation areas do not come under the purview of rural development and antipoverty programmes has also prevented conditions from improving.

In 1951, the Parliament passed the Plantations Labour Act [PLA] which sought to provide for the welfare of labour and to regulate the conditions of workers in plantations. Under this law, the State Governments have been empowered to take all feasible steps to improve the lot of the plantation workers. The passing of PLA brought some improvements in the plantations sector. It also helped in creating conditions for organising the workers and the rise of trade unions. However, the potential benefits promised under the PLA remain unachieved mainly due to ignorance of workers about their rights under the law.

3. Overview of plantation Act 1951

The following welfare measures are to be provided to the plantation workers

1. Canteens in plantations employing 150 or more workers (S.11)
2. Crèches in plantations employing 150 or more women workers (S.12)
3. Recreational facilities for the workers and their children (S.13)

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4. Educational facilities in the estate for the children of workers, where there are 25 workers' children between the age of 6 and 12 (S.14).
5. Housing facilities for every worker and his / her family residing in the plantation. The standard and specification of the accommodation, procedures for allotment and rent chargeable from workers, are to be prescribed in the rules, by the state Governments (S.15 and 16)
6. The State Government may make rules requiring every plantation employer to provide the workers with such number and type of umbrellas, blankets, raincoats or other like amenities for the protection of workers from rain or cold as may be prescribed (S. 17)
7. Appointment of a welfare officer in plantations employing 300 or more workers (S. 18). The exact standards of these facilities have been prescribed under the Rules framed by the state Government.

4. Labour Welfare Measures in Coffee Board

The Labour Welfare Schemes implemented by the Coffee Board are

- Educational Stipend
- Medical Attendance
- Housing Subsidy
- Sanitary Subsidy
- Group Insurance cum Deposit
- Medical care
- Sickness benefit
- Maternity benefit
- Employment injury benefit
- Old-age benefit
- Provident Fund

5. Review of literature

Srinivasan M. G. in his study titled "A Study on Workers Perception about Health, Safety and Welfare Measures in Nilgiris District" the study highlights the health, safety and welfare measures provided to the tea plantation workers in the tea plantation estates, the workers' satisfaction level, and to identify the level of benefits given to the tea plantation workers by the tea plantation estates and the unions. The Data collection was done through schedule basis. A sample size of 245 tea plantation workers has been selected for this study covered around 20 tea plantation estates and 12 tea plantation unions. Convenient Sampling technique is applied, and descriptive type of research is undertaken to determine the cause and effect of the tea plantation workers in Nilgiris District.

R. Amsaveni, J. Ilavarasi, and S. Gomathi the study carried out to identify the problems faced by the women tea plantation workers and determine the satisfaction level of the women workers in tea estates in Nilgiris district. They used primary and secondary data for the study. The results were evaluated that there was a significant relationship between the demographic factors and the health-related problems faced by the women workers. Majority of respondents were illiterate. Furthermore, it was also found that Disability, workplace environment, Pay and Conveyance, and Work timings were the highly problematic

factors causing dissatisfaction among the women workers employed in the tea estates.

Dr. R. Santhana Krishnan and Dr. M. Rajarajan this research is an attempt to determine the relationship between labour welfare facilities provided and job satisfaction experienced by labour in Transport Corporation Limited in Tamil Nadu. The study concludes that, corporation provides the statutory welfare measures, but other corporations provide extra welfare facilities to the employees so to retain the employees and their quality of work life. The corporations maintaining smooth relationship between workers and management. Labour welfare facilities provided by employers are based on diverse approaches and connected to various theories. Job satisfaction is influenced by different factors, which determine the level of satisfaction. Some of the welfare measures like housing facilities; loan facilities, rest room facility, housing facilities and gratuity should be incorporated along with welfare measures in order to satisfy employees and so to improve job performances. The corporation should take necessary steps to improve these measures. By doing this the employee can do their job more effectively and efficiently.

6. Research Design

The research design comprises of the following

6.1 Objectives

The study aims to accomplish the following specific objectives

1. To review the Labour Welfare measure adapted by Coffee Board for plantation workers.
2. To analyse the views of coffee plantation workers towards the welfare measures provided to them.
3. To identify whether there is any relationship between welfare scheme and demographic factors.
4. To provide suggestions for possible improvements based on findings.

6.2 Methodology

In order to reach the objectives of the study, a sample survey was conducted in coffee plantation estates in Madikeri Taluk of Kodagu district. Primary data are collected with the help of interview schedule, based on various aspects of labour welfare. In this study, 150 Respondents from different coffee estate are considered.

Secondary data collected from office records, Journal, newsletter and handbooks.

6.3 Scope of the study

The study is undertaken in Madikeri taluks of Kodagu district. The scope of data collection is restricted to coffee plantation workers located in different coffee estates of Madikeri region.

6.4 Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was framed based on the research objectives

H₀: There is no significant relationship between demographic factors and welfare schemes.

H₁: There is significant relationship between demographic factors and welfare schemes.

7. Analysis and interpretations

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents

Age	Below 25 yrs	06
	25 – 35 yrs	46
	35 – 45 yrs	77
	Above 45 yrs	21
	Total	150
Gender	Male	92
	Female	58
	Total	150
Education	Illiterate	47
	Primary	57
	Secondary	46
	Total	150
Experience	Below 5 yrs	43
	5 – 10 yrs	68
	Above 10 yrs	39
	Total	150

Sources: Survey data

7.1 Association between demographic factors and welfare facilities

Chi square analysis is used to test whether demographic factors like age, gender, education and experience of the respondents have significance influence over welfare measures.

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E}$$

O = observed frequency

E = expected frequency

Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

Table 2: Significance level between age and satisfaction level towards various welfare schemes

Demographic factors		Satisfaction level		Total	Significance level		
		High	Low		X ²	d.f	P value
Age	Below 35 yrs	29	23	52	1.3115	1	0.252119
	Above 35 yrs	64	34	98			
Gender	Male	48	44	92	5.054	1	0.0246
	Female	41	17	58			
Education	Illiterate	35	12	47	1.071	1	0.3008
	Upto secondary	68	35	103			
Experience	Below 10 yrs	69	42	111	1.172	1	0.27899
	Above 10 yrs	28	11	39			

Source: survey data Significance level at 5%

Table 3: Association between age and satisfaction level towards various welfare schemes

Sl. No.	Variables	Chi square	d.f	P value	Result
1	Age	1.3115	1	0.252119	Significant H ₀ rejected
2	Gender	5.054	1	0.0246	Significant H ₀ rejected
3	Education	1.071	1	0.3008	Significant H ₀ rejected
4	Experience	1.172	1	0.27899	Significant H ₀ rejected

Source: survey data

After analysis results reveals that the null hypothesis is rejected, hence it can be concluded that there is significant influence of demographic factors like age, gender, education

and experience over satisfaction level towards various welfare schemes.

Table 4: the overall satisfaction of the respondents towards various fringe benefits

Particulars	Highly satisfied	satisfied	Moderate	Dissatisfied
Sanitation facilities	79	66	07	---
Housing facilities	102	41	07	----
Medical leave with pay	98	32	20	----
Provident fund	92	46	12	----
Insurance coverage	81	55	14	----
Maternity benefit	52	06	-----	----
Education stipend scheme	22	48	58	22

Source: survey data

8. Findings

- The study found that 98 respondents are in the age group of above 35 years.
- It was found that 92 of the workers in the coffee estates are male.
- Most of the respondents satisfied with various welfare facilities.
- Some of the respondent's i.e. 22 are not satisfied with the education stipend scheme provided to their children's education.

9. Suggestions

This study reveals that the workers are almost satisfied with various welfare facilities. The following are some of the suggestions suggested.

- During the off-season coffee pickers are jobless so in order to compensate their life, they must be financially supported.
- An increase in educational stipend from Degree to P.G level is needed to meet the huge expenditure of education during that stage.
- The Housing Subsidy Scheme should be paid in two instalments at the time of Foundation and the next is on the completion of roof level.
- The Welfare Scheme should be implemented to temporary workers, if the planter is not providing the same.

10. Conclusion

From the study it is found that most of the workers aware of all the welfare schemes introduced by the government and coffee board. It is concluded from this study that Coffee Board is very much interested in providing welfare facility to their plantation workers. Workers are happy with Medical care Scheme, Sanitary Subsidy Scheme PF benefits and Housing and sanitary Subsidy Scheme. Workers are less satisfied with Educational Stipend Scheme which requires attention.

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