

Migrant Labor in Tea Plantations: Work Participation and Satisfaction in Cherambadi and Pandalur Region, the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu

Kumara Singam Thamarai Selvi^{1,*}, Ayyappan Manikandan²

Abstract

The present study explored how satisfied migrant tea plantation workers were in the Cherambadi and Pandalur villages, Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, India. It uses a combination of research methods, drawing on both primary and secondary data sources to thoroughly examine the factors affecting job satisfaction among this specific group. The primary data collection involved surveys given to 150 respondents chosen from different tea estates in the region. These surveys were designed to cover important aspects of job satisfaction, including working conditions, pay, relationships with colleagues, and opportunities for career growth. Additionally, the analysis was enriched by incorporating secondary data from relevant literature, government reports, and existing studies on tea plantation workers. Software called the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics offer an overall view of job satisfaction levels, while inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, help identify significant predictors of job satisfaction among migrant tea plantation workers. The findings of the study revealed that factors such as fair wages, better housing facilities, health benefits, and supportive management significantly influenced job satisfaction. Conversely, long working hours, limited promotional opportunities, and lack of job security were identified as major sources of dissatisfaction. The results contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge on labor migration and employment well-being, especially within the plantation sector. Furthermore, the study offers valuable policy implications for estate management, labor unions, and government agencies, emphasizing the need to improve living and working conditions to enhance the overall quality of life and productivity of migrant tea plantation workers.

Keywords: Migrant workers, plantation, job satisfaction, economic conditions, growth

INTRODUCTION

The tea industry in Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu, India stands as a vital contributor to India's economy, offering employment opportunities to a substantial workforce. Within this workforce, a significant proportion comprises migrant workers who leave their native regions in search of employment in tea plantations. The well-being and job satisfaction of these migrant tea workers are crucial considerations, as they not only impact the workers' quality of life but also influence the overall productivity and sustainability of the tea industry.

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Job satisfaction, defined as an individual's contentment with their job, plays a pivotal role in shaping work-related attitudes, behaviors, and overall job performance. Understanding the factors that contribute to or detract from the job satisfaction of migrant tea workers in Nilgiri district is essential

for addressing challenges and fostering a healthy working environment. The present study was aimed to delve into the complexities of job satisfaction among migrant tea plantation workers, with a specific focus on the Nilgiri district [1].

The significance of present research was underscored by the unique dynamics of tea plantation industry, where labor migration is a prevalent phenomenon. Migrant workers often face distinctive challenges related to working conditions, social integration, and access to basic amenities. The intersection of these challenges with job satisfaction forms a critical nexus that necessitates scholarly attention and empirical investigation. The present study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining primary data collected through surveys with secondary data derived from existing literature, government reports, and prior studies. By exploring the multifaceted dimensions of job satisfaction, we aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the well-being of migrant tea workers in Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu, India. The insights gained from the present research can serve as a foundation for evidence-based policy recommendations and industry practices to enhance the overall working conditions and job satisfaction of migrant tea plantation workers, contributing to both academic discourse and practical implications for stakeholders in the tea industry.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

The tea plantation industry in Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu, India relies significantly on a migrant workforce, drawn from various regions in search of employment opportunities. While this migration pattern is a common feature in the sector, the job satisfaction levels of these migrant tea plantation workers remain a matter of concern. The complex interplay of work-related factors and the unique challenges associated with migration necessitate a closer examination to identify and address the existing issues. Hence, the present study aimed to explore and understand the problems related to job satisfaction also addressed the crucial aspect of career growth opportunities, acknowledging that limited avenues for advancement can contribute to dissatisfaction, necessitating an examination of potential barriers hindering the professional development of migrant tea plantation workers. Additionally, the study investigated into the challenges associated with cultural adjustments and language barriers resulting from migration, recognizing their significance in influencing job satisfaction. Lastly, the assessment of healthcare facilities available to migrant workers was aimed to understand the correlation between their physical and mental well-being and job satisfaction levels, providing a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted factors that affect the job satisfaction of migrant tea plantation workers in the Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu, India [2, 3].

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate the overall job satisfaction levels among migrant tea estate workers in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, India.
2. To investigate the occupational difficulties experienced by the migrant tea workers of Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu, India.
3. To compare job satisfaction across demographic variables among migrant tea workers of Nilgiri, Tamil Nadu, India.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focused on migrant workers in the Pandalur and Cherambadi regions' tea estates. The socioeconomic circumstances and inclusion of migrant coffee workers were the main topics of the present study. Data collection was limited to migrant coffee workers in the Pandalur Taluk region of Nilgiri district.

Research-Approach

Data Sources

- *Primary Data:* The main field research methods of the present study were questionnaires and direct interviews. A total of 150 respondents, representing the target population, were surveyed in order to get the necessary and pertinent data.

- *Secondary Data:* The study's theoretical aspects were discussed using the secondary data. Annual reports, journals, periodicals, research articles, textbooks, and specific websites were the primary sources of secondary data.

Design of Sampling

A structured questionnaire was used to gather the necessary primary data from the 150 respondents who were chosen at random.

Statistical Methods and Instruments

Tables were used to display the information gathered from primary and secondary sources. SPSS was used to interpret the data using statistical methods [4, 5].

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

An attempt was made to examine the respondents' socioeconomic status. Analysis was done on the respondent's age, marital status, level of education, and other factors that provide a general picture of their circumstances (Table 1).

The study on job satisfaction among migrant tea plantation workers in the Nilgiri district offered valuable insights into the variations across gender, experience, migration types, living arrangements, income levels, and socioeconomic categories. Firstly, in terms of gender distribution, the workforce predominantly comprised of males (63%) as compared to females (37%). This gender disparity may have implications for understanding job satisfaction, as the experiences and challenges faced by male and female workers in the tea plantations could differ significantly. The majority of workers (79%) reside within the plantation, indicating a significant dependency on employer-provided accommodations. The living arrangements within or outside the plantation may have implications for workers' sense of belonging and satisfaction, highlighting a potential area for improvement. Regarding income levels, a noteworthy majority (68%) earned between Rs.300 to Rs.500 per day, emphasizing the importance of examining the correlation between income and job satisfaction.

Table 1. Interpretation of data.

Variable	Category / Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	63
	Female	37
Experience in Current Plantation	0–5 years	26
	6–10 years	38
	11–15 years	21
	Above 16 years	15
Type of Migration	Long term	34
	Short term	18
	Seasonal	48
Place of Stay	Within the Plantation	79
	Outside the Plantation	21
Age	Below 25 years	8
	25–35 years	43
	36–45 years	36
	46–60 years	10
	Above 60 years	3
Income (per day)	Below Rs.300	27
	Rs.300–Rs.500	68
	Rs.500–Rs.700	5
Marital Status	Married	98

The socio-economic category distribution revealed a diverse workforce, with the majority falling under the Scheduled Caste (SC) category (43%), followed by Scheduled Tribe (ST) at 32%, and minorities at 12%. These demographic factors may contribute to variations in job satisfaction levels. Finally, exploring the savings habits of workers indicated that 56% had a savings habit. This could be a positive factor in assessing financial security and, consequently, job satisfaction [6, 7].

Table 2 showed that the majority of respondents (77%) have a bank account. There was no significant association between bank account ownership and types of migration (Long term, Short term, Seasonal) ($X^2 = 1.3001$, $df = 2$, $P = 0.5221$). This suggested that the possession of a bank account does not vary significantly among different migration types. A significant number of respondents (81%) were members of self-help groups (SHGs). The analysis indicated no significant association between SHG membership and types of migration ($X^2 = 1.449$, $df = 2$, $P = 0.4846$). This implied that participation in SHGs is consistent across various migration types. The majority of respondents (97%) possessed a ration card. There was a highly significant association between possession of a ration card and types of migration ($X^2 = 50.632$, $df = 2$, $P = 0.0000$). This suggested that the possession of ration cards varied significantly among different migration types. About 74% of those surveyed had access to high-quality healthcare. There was a significant association between access to health services and types of migration ($X^2 = 7.762$, $df = 2$, $P = 0.0206$). This indicated that the accessibility of health services varied significantly among different migration types. A substantial number of respondents (109) had access to education. A highly significant association was observed between access to education and types of migration ($X^2 = 18.337$, $df = 2$, $P = 0.0001$). This implied that the accessibility of education differed significantly among different migration types. A total of 115 respondents, or a sizable majority, have access to housing facilities. There was a significant association between housing facilities and types of migration ($X^2 = 6.122$, $df = 2$, $P = 0.0469$). This suggested that the availability of housing facilities varied significantly among different migration types [8].

Table 2. Significance level between type of migration and financial inclusion of migrant worker.

S.N.	Type of inclusion	Response	Types of migration			Total	Significance level		
			Long term	Short term	Seasonal		X^2	df	P -value
1	Bank A/c	Yes	32	16	29	77	1.3001	2	0.5221
		No	37	12	24	73			
	Total		69	28	53	150			
2	Membership in SHG	Yes	30	28	23	81	1.449	2	0.4846
		No	31	18	20	69			
	Total		61	46	43	150			
3	Possession of ration card	Yes	53	37	07	97	50.632	2	0.0000
		No	14	07	32	53			
	Total		67	44	39	150			
4	Access to good quality health services	Yes	65	28	18	111	7.762	2	0.0206
		No	13	14	12	39			
	Total		78	42	30	150			
5	Access to education	Yes	58	35	16	109	18.337	2	0.0001
		No	10	12	19	41			
	Total		68	47	35	150			
6	Housing facilities	Yes	62	42	11	115	6.122	2	0.0469
		No	12	15	08	35			
	Total		74	57	19	150			

SHG: Self-help group

Table 3. Relationship between type of migration and social inclusion of tea plantation workers.

S.N.	Variables	Chi Square	D.F	P-value	Result
1	Bank A/c	1.3001	2	0.5221	Not significant H1 - rejected
2	Membership in SHG	1.449	2	0.4846	Not significant H1- rejected
3	Possession of ration card	50.632	2	0.0000	Significant H0 - rejected
4	Access to good quality health services	7.762	2	0.0206	Significant H0 - rejected
5	Access to education	18.337	2	0.0001	Significant H0 - rejected
6	Housing facilities	6.122	2	0.0469	Significant H0 - rejected

SHG: self-help group

The present study attempted to understand how migration patterns were related to the inclusion of migrant workers in plantations. We employed a statistical method called the chi-square test to analyze the significance of each aspect of social inclusion separately. We examined six different aspects of social inclusion using this test. Table 3 showed that most of the social inclusion aspects were closely connected to the type of migration among coffee plantation workers, especially in terms of having ration cards, accessing good health services, education, and housing. Consequently, we rejected the idea that there was no relationship between the type of workers and social inclusion [9, 10].

SUGESIONS AND CONCLUSION

The challenging working conditions, characterized by long hours and exposure to hazardous substances, emerged as critical determinants affecting the job satisfaction of tea plantation workers. Social integration proved to be crucial, as the process of migration often leads to social isolation, necessitating efforts to foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment. Compensation disparities and issues related to living conditions underscore the need for fair labor practices and improved accommodations. The present study highlighted that limited opportunities for career growth may contribute to dissatisfaction among workers, emphasizing the importance of creating avenues for professional development.

The data further highlighted the influence of cultural adjustments and language barriers on job satisfaction, suggesting the need for initiatives to facilitate a smoother transition for migrant workers. Access to healthcare and education emerged as significant factors, with their availability directly correlating with the physical and mental well-being of workers. The present study provided a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by migrant tea plantation workers in Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu, India offering valuable insights for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and advocacy groups. These findings can serve as a foundation for targeted interventions and evidence-based initiatives aimed at improving working conditions, fostering social integration, addressing compensation inequities, and enhancing overall job satisfaction among the migrant tea plantation workforce in the region.

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