

A Study on Job Satisfaction of Women Workers in Tea Estates with Special Reference to the Nilgiris District

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Abstract

Job satisfaction is an important indicator of how workers feel about their jobs and is a predictor of work behaviors. The study aimed to ascertain the job satisfaction levels of women workers employed in tea estates located in the Nilgiris District, Tamil Nadu. The Nilgiris being the largest tea tract in South India occupies an important place in the tea map of the country. Thus, tea plays a vital role in the economy of the district. Therefore, an attempt has been made in the present paper to identify the problems faced by the women workers, examine the facilities offered to them, and ascertain the satisfaction level of the women workers in tea estates in the Nilgiris district. The data was collected through a structured interview schedule from 300 respondents by using the convenience random sampling method. The tools used for analysis, that is, simple percentage, chi-square analysis, and factor analysis were applied to analyze the collected data. The results of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between the demographic factors and the health related problems faced by the women workers. Furthermore, the findings show that the majority of the respondents were illiterate, and were employed in the process of plucking the tea leaves, as this activity generates a major chunk of the revenue for the tea estates. From the factor analysis, it was identified that the factors such as Work Allotment and Relationship with Colleagues, Support and Reward, Safe Environment, Compensation, and Training and Development influenced the levels of job satisfaction significantly. In addition, it was also found that four factors, that is, 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.

Keywords : job satisfaction, women workers, tea estates, health

JEL Classification: J28, M12, M54, O15

Paper Submission Date : March 26, 2013 ; **Paper sent back for Revision :** July 11, 2013 ; **Paper Acceptance Date :** August 19, 2013

In the past, women were treated as mere cattle of their husbands. They were not allowed to go to school or college or any other educational institution. In childhood, they were dependent upon their fathers, in their adulthood on their husbands, and on their sons in their old age. However, the role and position of women has undergone a lot of changes, and today, women are walking shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts in all spheres of life. Women, due to their inborn sincerity and hard work, outshine the members of the opposite sex. Women who are gainfully employed outside the home are considered as working women. Working women face more obligations due to the multiple roles played by them. They are supposed to juggle both - the home and the workplace - with equal ease.

India plays a dominating role in tea production, consumption, and exports. Our country accounts for around 31% of the global production of tea. The total turnover of the industry is ₹ 10,000 crores, and it also provides employment to 1.1 million Indian workers, and generates income for another 10 million people. In that, women constitute 50% of the work force (Tea.in, 2013). The Nilgiris being the largest tea tract in South India, occupies an important place in tea map of the country.

Tea is a perennial plant belonging to the spices family, and it is consumed as a beverage after brewing. Tea originated from China and found a mention in the Chinese dictionary of 350 B.C. According to the Chinese writer, Che-Pu, the practice of tea drinking began in the 6th century A.D. and was gradually introduced in Japan in 1000 A.D. Tea originated in South East Asia, and it was known to the Chinese as early as 2737 B.C. In the 4th Century, tea was

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used as a medicine in China. The Dutch traders introduced tea to Europe in 1610. In 1664, tea became a popular drink in England (Muraleedharan, Durairaj, Hudson, 2007 , p. 1 ; Teaauction.com, n.d.; Wickremasinghe, 2008).

☞ **Tea Cultivation in South India :** Dr. Christle experimented with Tea in Nilgiris in 1832. A timeline of tea cultivation in South India is as follows :

The Nilgiris (The Nilgiris District)	- 1859
Central Travancore (Idukki District)	- 1875
Kanna Devan Hills (Idukki District)	- 1878
Wynaad (Wynaad District)	- 1889
Anamallais (Coimbatore District)	- 1897
Establishment of UPASI	- 1893 (Muraleedharan, Durairaj, Hudson, 2007 , p. 2)

In the Nilgiris District, tea is the most popular plant. The main field operations in a tea plantation are harvesting (plucking), applying fertilizers (manuring), weeding, chemical spraying, pruning, and planting. In the tea industry, tea leaves are harvested regularly with no resting, as it is the only revenue generating operation in a tea plantation. Here, the women workers play a main role in plucking the tea leaves (Muraleedharan, Durairaj, Hudson, 2007 , p. 2).

Statement of the Problem

In the Nilgiris, women workers are uneducated, and they do not even know how to write their names. Their livelihood depends only on the income they earn from the tea estates. Many studies have been conducted on tea industries, but there are not enough studies that have researched the job satisfaction of women workers in the tea estates of the Nilgiris. Hence, the present study examines the job satisfaction of women workers in tea estates, and the level of satisfaction derived by the women workers and the facilities offered to them.

The women today are no longer content to worship their home as their only abode. Nor do they wish to confine themselves within the four walls of their home. Rather, they aspire to explore newer avenues and nurture a zest to prove their worth in varied fields at par with their male counterparts. In the tea estates, the working women perform both the domestic (child-rearing, taking care of husband (if married), and managing the home) as well as occupational (employee) roles simultaneously, which needs a lot of adjustments on their end.

Hence, the present study was undertaken to find out the answers to the following questions:-

- 1) What are the factors affecting women workers in tea estates?
- 2) What are the problems faced by women workers in tea estates during their working hours?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on how and why the women workers were working in the tea estates in the Nilgiris District. So, the main objective of this study is to analyze the level of job satisfaction of women workers in tea estates in the Nilgiris. The scope of the study extends to the following related aspects such as demographic characteristics of the respondents, the various factors affecting women workers in tea estates, problems faced by women during the working hours, and the study also sheds light on some of the safety measures provided to the women workers in tea estates in the study area.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To assess the level of job satisfaction of the women workers employed in the tea estates in the Nilgiris district, and to analyze the facilities and safety measures provided to them.
- 2) To identify the various factors that affected the job satisfaction levels of the women workers, and to ascertain the problems faced by them while they were working in the tea estates.

Review of Literature

Empirical studies (related to job satisfaction) conducted in India as well as abroad are presented here to form a theoretical base. In order to find out the gaps in the studies, it is important to review the available literature on the

related aspects of the present study. Wild, Hill, and Ridgeway (1970), in their paper, "Job Satisfaction and Labour Turnover Amongst Women Workers," analyzed the job satisfaction of women workers with a sample size of 290 female shop floor workers and 56 female shop floor ex-workers of a large electrical/electronic engineering company using a multiple choice questionnaire and unstructured interviews. The study found that 30% of the respondents were dissatisfied with their jobs. An analysis of their responses indicated the over-riding importance of the work itself as a determinant of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. From the study, it was also found that the workers were dissatisfied with the 'voluntary' retirement scheme.

Smucker, Whisenant, and Pedersen (2003) in their paper, "An Investigation of Job Satisfaction and Female Sports Journalists" examined the level of satisfaction of the female journalists working with daily newspapers. They found that the employees were satisfied with their level of pay, supervision, and people at work ; but they were dissatisfied with the existing opportunities for promotion. Farrell (2006) in the paper, "Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction Among Hospice Nurses Working for Non-profit Hospice Organizations in California" examined sociological, psychological, physiological, and economical factors influencing job satisfaction among hospice nurses. The data was collected through a questionnaire from the nurses, social workers, clergy, and home health aides. The study focused solely on job satisfaction among the hospice nurses. From the study, it was found that nurses had the highest job satisfaction levels, which also indicates that their supervisors provided full support to them. The most important factors related to job satisfaction of the nurses were identified as - anxiety related to the death of others, anxiety related to the dying of others, anxiety related to his or her own dying, the degree of routinization, distributive justice within the organization, the area of death and dying, and so forth. The tenth most predictive variable was that of task significance. The eleventh most predictive variable was related to the degree of job opportunity in their own organization. The degree of supervisory support, the degree of positive affectivity, and the amount of routinization by nurses were found to be the most influencing factors in their working environment.

Mansour (2008) in his study, "Women Job Satisfaction in Saudi Arabia: An Exploratory Analysis" revealed that women employees in Saudi Arabia were satisfied with their jobs. They perceived their work as challenging and felt secured. They felt comfortable working with their co-workers. Furthermore, they got enough resources and support from their superiors. However, the study showed that the respondents were barely satisfied with the promotion and compensation systems in their companies. So, the results of the study found that the overall satisfaction of the total employees was 72.7% during the study period. Saravanan (2011) in his study, "Impact of Socioeconomic Status on the Level of Job Satisfaction of Women Workers in Hosiery units at Tirupur" analyzed the factors determining the Level of Job Satisfaction of Female Labour Force Working in the Hosiery Units of Tirupur, Coimbatore on the basis of micro-level data. The factors like age, education, work environment, family size, marital status, wage, job security, working hours, chances for promotion, and job satisfaction were considered as socioeconomic and demographic factors. The results found that age, nature of employment, and level of income had a positive effect on the level of job satisfaction. The level of education had a negative influence on job satisfaction. From the analysis, it could be concluded that all the variables identified and included for the study were found to be significantly influencing the job satisfaction levels of the surveyed employees. This meant that the levels of job satisfaction had been influenced significantly by the majority of the included independent variables on the socioeconomic status of the women employees.

The present study focuses on identifying the demographic profile of the respondents, facilities offered to women workers, satisfactory level of women workers, and factors affecting the job satisfaction level of women workers in the tea estates in the Nilgiris district.

Research Design and Methodology

↳ **Research Design :** Research design indicates a plan of action to be carried out in connection with a proposed research work. The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature.

↳ **Sources of Data :** The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from the women workers in the tea estates in the Nilgiris by means of administering a structured interview schedule and secondary data were collected from various sources like journals, magazines, websites, and so forth.

↳ **Sample Size :** 300 respondents were selected for the study. Convenience random sampling method was adopted

for collecting the responses from the respondents.

⇒ **Period of the study** : The study was undertaken for a period of six months from July to December 2012.

⇒ **Area of the Study** : The study was carried out in the tea estates located in the Nilgiris District.

⇒ **Statistical Tools Applied for the Analysis** : Simple percentage, chi-square, and factor analysis were applied to test the independence of attributes between the variables.

⇒ **Limitations of the Study** : The present study has certain inevitable limitations :

- 1) The respondents may have been biased in answering the questions.
- 2) The study was limited to a sample of 300 women respondents in the Nilgiris District.
- 3) The profile of the respondents was limited by their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. A psychographic analysis of the respondents' attention span, interests, and opinions was not attempted.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between demographic factors (viz., age, marital status, literacy levels, earnings, and work experience) of the respondents and health related problems faced by them.

Results and Discussions

⇒ **Percentage Analysis** : Percentage analysis revealed the background details of the respondents. According to the study, 32% of the respondents were in the age group of 26 to 40 years, and 36% of the respondents were married. Majority (61%) of the respondents were illiterate and 47% of the respondents belonged to the semi-rural areas ; 35% of the respondents had 3-4 members in their family. 65% of the respondents belonged to the nuclear family type ; 62% of the respondents had 1 to 2 earning members in their family, and 46% of the respondents had 2 to 3 children. 49% of the respondents' children were studying in school, 33% of the respondents had less than 2 years of experience of working in tea estates. Majority (63%) of the respondents worked at the tea estates for 8 to 9 hours daily.

In the tea estates, 87.3% of the respondents were working in the plucking process and 30% of the respondents said that while plucking the tea leaves, they were affected by insects like leaches, flies, and mosquitoes. They used hand gloves, safety goggles, and safety shoes to protect their body. During the rainy season, rain coats and rain covers were provided to the women workers to safeguard them from the rain.

In the Nilgiris district, women workers got paid on the basis of daily wages, weekly wages, and payment based on the amount of tea leaves plucked by them. Majority of the respondents, that is, 48% of the respondents received payment based on weekly wages and 64% of the respondents were paid ₹ 101 – ₹ 150 per day. In tea estates, the plucking process is done all over the year. The women workers were entitled to receive overtime for a maximum of 3 hours. 60% of the respondents put in extra hours at work. 50% of the respondents got their overtime payment based on the amount of tea leaves plucked by them. Sometimes, they received payment on the basis of working hours also. In addition, almost all the women workers were getting a bonus from the tea estates amounting to ₹ 1,000 – ₹ 1,500 during the festive season. There are two kinds of workers in tea estates - they are permanent workers and temporary workers. It was found that 98% of the respondents were working on a permanent basis, and were selected on the basis of regularity, work efficiency, low absenteeism, and time spent at work.

In estates, the women workers sought permission from the estate manager and other supervisors for taking a leave. Majority of respondents took leaves due to self-illness and illness of family members. Some estates imparted training to the women workers to pluck tea leaves, to maintain the tea crop, and so forth. However, in small tea estates, no formal training was provided to the women workers. It was observed that 72% of the respondents discussed their problems with their co-workers regarding issues like family, estates, and their physical condition. 63% of the respondents faced health related problems like headache/migraine, high blood pressure, poor sleep patterns, indigestion, stomach ulcers, asthma, heart diseases, and allergies. Majority of the women workers revealed that they were offered some facilities like bonus, transportation facilities, health care facilities, maternity leave facilities, motivation, creche facilities, educational facilities for their children, hospital facilities, quarter facilities, insurance

Table 1 : Demographic Factors and Health Related Problems Faced by the Respondents

Chi-Square Test			
Factors	Pearson chi-square value	Df	Asymp.Sig
Age	3.021	51	.000
Marital status	2.638	51	.000
Literacy level	1.943	34	.000
Earnings	1.435	34	.000
Work Experience	2.614	51	.000

Source: Primary Data

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.542
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx.Chi-Square	697.916
	Df.	78
	Sig	.000

Source: Primary Data

facilities, job security, as well as some other incentives and facilities.

↳ **Chi-Square Analysis :** Chi-square test was used to test if the two variables are statistically associated with each other significantly. It was used to test the significance of influence of one factor over the other factor. From the Table 1, it is clear that with the significant value of .000 at 1% level of significance, the hypothesis is rejected and it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between the demographic factors (viz., age, marital status, literacy levels, earnings, and work experience) of the respondents and their health related problems.

↳ **Factor Analysis for Factors Related to the Satisfaction Levels of the Women Workers :** Factor analysis is a very useful method for reducing the data completely by reducing the number of variables being studied. In the present study, factor analysis was carried out for identifying the factors affecting the satisfaction level of the women workers employed in tea estates, and to identify the problematic areas causing dissatisfaction to the women workers. The Tables 2 and 3 represent the results of the factor analysis with reference to the satisfaction level of women workers in tea estates. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) was calculated using correlations and partial correlations to test whether the variables in the sample were adequate to correlate. The general rule of thumb is that a KMO value should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed. The Table 2 shows that KMO value is 0.542. Bartlett's test of sphericity tests whether there is a relationship between the variables. A p -value < 0.05 indicates that it makes sense to continue with the factor analysis.

It is observed from the Table 3 that the five factors extracted together account for 67.967 of the total variance (information contained in the original 13 factors). Hence, the factors were reduced from 13 to 5 underlying factors. The factors like relationship with co-workers, workload and health care facilities loaded as 0.754, 0.656, and 0.516 on Factor 1 respectively. Thus, Factor 1 is a combination of these three factors, therefore, this factor can be named as Work Allotment and Relationship with Colleagues. It is evident that creche facilities, support, co-operation, work recognition, and appreciation loaded as 0.816, 0.680, and 0.512 on Factor 2. Thus, this factor can be named as Support and Reward. For Factor 3, it is to be noted that providing protective clothing to the employees and working environment have the highest loading of 0.832 and 0.830 respectively. Therefore, this factor can be named as Safe Environment. It is noted from the Table 3 that 'pay' has the highest load of 0.819; hence, this factor (Factor 4) can be named as Compensation. It is evident from the Table 3 that the factor training and development programmes loaded as 0.769 on Factor 5. Hence, this factor can be named as Training and Development. Hence, five factors, that is, Work Allotment and Relationship with Colleagues, Support and Reward, Safe Environment, Compensation, and Training and Development were the highly influencing factors with reference to job satisfaction of women workers employed in tea estates in the Nilgiris.

Table 3. Rotated Component Matrix (Factors Affecting Satisfaction)

Variables	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Convenience	-.821	-.058	.141	.131	.769
Relationship with Co-workers	.754		.077	-.252	.278
Work Load	.656	-.107	-.074	.459	.227
Health Care Facilities	.516	-.395	.273	.145	-.406
Creche Facilities		.816		-.076	
Timings	.374	-.721	.112	-.079	.272
Support & Co-operation	.071	.680	.097	.261	
Work Recognition and Appreciation	.068	.512	-.063	.236	.337
Protective Clothing	.208		.832		.054
Working Environment	-.195		.830	-.232	
Safety Conditions at the Work Place	.160	-.084	-.599	-.477	.134
Pay	-.140	.291	-.102	.819	.132
Training and Development	.052	-.051		.087	.769
Initial Eigen Values	2.730	2.020	1.844	1.266	1.016
Total percentage of variance	17.072	16.759	14.481	10.818	8.837
Cumulative percentage of variance	17.072	33.831	48.312	59.130	67.967

Source: Primary Data

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotated Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Table 4 . KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.506
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx.Chi-Square	892.675
	Df.	45
	Sig	.000

Source: Primary Data

➤ **Factor Analysis for Problematic Factors :** Factor analysis technique had been applied to find the underlying dimensions (factors) that existed in the 10 variables relating to the factors affecting the job satisfaction of women workers employed in tea estates. The Tables 4 and 5 represent the factor analysis for problems faced by women workers in the Nilgiris tea estates.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling Adequacy (KMO) was calculated using correlations and partial correlations to test whether the variables in the sample were adequate to correlate. The general rule of thumb is that a KMO value should be greater than 0.5 for a satisfactory factor analysis to proceed. By observing the results presented in the Table 4, it is clear that the KMO value is 0.506. The Bartlett's test of sphericity tests whether there is a relationship between the variables. The p value < 0.05 indicates that it makes sense to continue with the factor analysis.

The Table 5 shows the total variance explained by using the principal component analysis. Four factors were extracted based on the variance (Eigen value greater than 1). The four factors extracted together account for 70.08% of the total variance. This is pretty good, because we are able to economize on the number of variables - from 10 variables, we were able to reduce the same to four underlying factors. The Table 5 presents the results of the rotated component matrix. It shows that the variables illiteracy and physical disability have high loadings of 0.868 and 0.821 on Factor 1. This suggests that Factor 1 is a combination of these two variables. Thus, Factor 1 can be named as Disability. In case of the Factor 2, the variables work environment, problem with superiors, and work timings have loadings of 0.842, 0.738, and 0.690 respectively. This indicates that the Factor 2 is the combination of these three

variables. Thus, Factor 2 can be named as Workplace Environment. In case of Factor 3, the variables - transportation facilities, wages, and problems with co-workers have a loading of 0.792, 0.621, and 0.550 respectively. This indicates that the Factor 3 is the combination of these three variables. Thus, the Factor 3 can be named as Pay and Conveyance. In case of Factor 4, the variable work time loaded as 0.511 respectively. Hence, this factor can be named as Work Timings. Hence, the four factors that were extracted were - Disability, Workplace Environment, Pay and Conveyance, and Work Timings. These were the highly problematic factors for the women workers employed in the tea estates in Nilgiris.

Table 5. Rotated Component Matrix (Problematic Factors)

Variables	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Illiteracy	.868	.132	-.146	
Physical Disability	.821	.163	.076	
Work Environment		.842		.086
Problems With Superiors	-.263	.738	-.188	.380
Timings	.246	.690	-.255	.511
Transportation Facilities	-.081	.169	.792	
Wages	-.174	-.186	.621	.064
Male Domination	-.412	-.161	-.585	.140
Problem With Co-workers	.396	-.105	.550	.335
Climate Conditions	.072		-.077	-.927
Initial Eigen Values	2.632	1.791	1.416	1.169
Total Percentage of Variance	19.269	18.757	17.912	14.137
Cumulative Percentage of Variance	19.269	38.026	55.938	70.075

Source: Primary Data

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotated Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Suggestions

- ✎ The estates could try and impart more training to the women workers.
- ✎ Most of the respondents were affected by health related problems. This is a grave issue, and to resolve this problem, the estate owners/managers could reduce the workload (so that the employees got enough time to rest as well as to have an adequate work-life balance which reduced their stress levels) and provide proper health care facilities for their employees.
- ✎ Proper motivation facilities are to be given to the workers for improving their work efficiency.
- ✎ Most of the respondents were employed in the plucking process. Hence, the owners of the tea estates need to employ modern technology to make this process easier for the workers.
- ✎ Sanitation facilities, rest rooms, crèche facilities could be provided to the women workers by the Nilgiris tea estate owners.
- ✎ From the study, it was found that majority of the workers were illiterate. Hence, it is suggested that at least there should be a provision of imparting primary education to the women owners. The responsibility and the cost of providing education to the women employees can be borne by the Tea Plantation Association.

Conclusion

Job satisfaction is the way an employee feels about a job or work. It is a generalized attitude towards a job, based on evaluation of different aspects of the job. Today, there is scarcity of workers in tea estates, where more skilled and unskilled workers are required. From this study, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the demographic factors and the health related problems with regards to the women workers employed in the Nilgiris tea estates. Hence, the employers need to place great emphasis on the health related aspects of the women employees, which would definitely increase the satisfaction levels of the women workers with their jobs, and if the women employees are in a good state of health, they will be more productive and will feel more comfortable while working.

The factor analysis results revealed that Work Allotment and Relationship with Colleagues, Support and Reward, Safe Environment, Compensation, and Training and Development were the highly influencing factors related to the job satisfaction of the women workers. In addition, it is clear that the factors such as Disability, Workplace Environment, Pay and Conveyance, and Work Timings were the highly problematic factors faced by the women workers in the Nilgiris tea estates.

By motivating, training, providing a peaceful working environment and recognition to well performing employees through awards and incentives, the productivity and satisfaction levels of the women workers can be increased. Women working in the Nilgiris tea estates face a lot of health-related problems. Hence, precautionary and safeguarding measures need to be given paramount importance. Ignorance is the root cause for many problems, and the women workers were mostly illiterate. Hence, it is recommended that the Nilgiris Tea Plantation Association takes necessary steps to impart (at least) primary level education to all women workers.

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