



A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF TEA GARDEN LABOURS IN JALPAIGURI DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Abstract: *The Study was conducted in two purposively selected tea gardens of which one in Kalchini Block and other in Kumargramduar Block in Jalpaiguri district. 100 Tribal (Oraon sub caste) respondents were selected randomly for the purpose of the study. A pre tested structured interview schedule was used for data collection. Statistical analysis was done after compilation of data collected.*

It was found that most of the respondents under study were migrants and dissociated from their roots resulting in unemployment problem. The study revealed that most of them were dependent on the income as tea garden labour for their livelihood excepting few who had alternative options like animal husbandry, agricultural labour, and casual work of NREGA etc. Further it was found that they live in an ecologically stressed situation with hunger and malnutrition. In maximum cases they were deprived from Govt. assistance in reality.

Key words: *Socio-Economic, Tea garden, Labour, Oraon, Tribal*

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INTRODUCTION:

The Northern part of West Bengal known as Tarai and Hilly region. For the favorable agro climatic environment many Tea Garden run their business in this district. The labours of the tea garden are the basic resource for the tea industry. Most of the tea garden labours belong from Tribal community. Most of them are disassociated from their root of origin. At the British era most of the tea garden labours' family brought in this area for the tea garden work (Das Gupta,2013). The economic condition and the livelihood pattern of this section of Indian population are quite different from other rural based population.

The present study was conducted to know about the present socio economic status of tea garden labours of Jalpaiguri district.

METHODOLOGY:

The field investigation was carried out during May'12 to Aug'12 in Kalchini Block of Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal, India. The Block was selected randomly from the list of Blocks of the district. One gram Panchayat (one from each Block) was selected by random non-probability sampling procedure. In this gram panchayat randomly 2 tea gardens were randomly selected for the study. From each Tea garden 50 respondents were selected randomly and so the total sample size of the study was one hundred (N=100). The socio-economic status of tea garden labours was measured by the help of pretested structured interview schedule. The data were collected through personal interview and group discussion. Some statistical tools like frequency distribution, non parametric tests, correlation were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS:

Table 1:Frequency distribution of Socio-economic variables:

Variables	Category	Frequency
Age	20-30 years	20
	31-40 years	28
	41-50 years	26
	51-60 years	16
	above 60 years	10
Religion	Hindu	22
	Chirstian	78
Gender	Male	58
	Female	42
Marital status	Married	88



	Unmarried	8
	Widow	4
Category	land less	84
	marginal	16
Source of Income	Agriculture	16
	animal	12
	service	70
	business	2
Family income	Below Rs.2000	76
	Rs.2001-5000	22
	Rs.5001-8000	2
	Business	2
	Independent	8
	cultivation	18
Education	Illiterate	6
	Rea & write only	4
	Primary	24
	Middle	46
	High school	18
	Graduate & above	2
Family member	up to 5	26
	Above 5	74

From the above table it reveals that most of the respondent belong to middle age group. 78 percent of the respondents are Christian and near about half of the respondents are women. 88 percent of the respondents are married and most of the respondents that is 84 percent are land less and rest of 16 percent belong to marginal land holding category. Most of them depend on service i.e labour in Tea Garden and 16 percent and 12 percent of the respondents source of income is Agriculture and Animal husbandry respectively. Mishra (2007) observed that The primary occupation of the Oraon in the study area is agriculture. Only 2 percent depend on business. Most of the respondents' family income is below Rs. 2000 and 22 percent of their family income is Rs.2001-5000 and a minimum of them earn more than Rs.5000 per month. Only 6 percent of the total respondents are illiterate and most (24 %) of their education level is upto middle. Beck and Mishra (2012) found in their study that 43.3 % of Oraon Respondents are illiterate in the Sambalpur district of Orissa. Only 2 percent of them are Graduate. 76 percent of the respondents' family size is more 5 members.



Mean effects:

Table:2.1 Mean effect of age with on other dependent variables

Age	Total_com	Info_cul	Mar_Total	D_Total	W_Total	Adop_Total	Heal_awr
20-30yr	41.00	7.00	2.40	26.10	22.70	3.30	6.40
30-40yr	41.00	7.29	2.29	23.07	24.07	2.71	5.21
40-50yr	41.38	7.69	1.85	26.00	21.85	2.31	5.46
50-60yr	41.88	7.25	2.63	26.38	19.50	2.38	5.38
Above 60yr	30.80	4.80	3.00	26.80	19.40	1.60	4.40

Table 2.2: Mean effect of Gender on other dependent variables:

Mean	Total_com	Info_cul	Mar_Total	D_Total	W_Total	Adop_Total	Heal_awr
Male	40.31	7.03	2.45	26.00	20.52	2.24	5.21
Female	40.10	7.14	2.14	24.43	24.10	3.00	5.81
Mann-Whitney U	293.000	284.500	263.500	259.500	189.500	210.000	241.500
Z	-.227	-.404	-.863	-.890	-2.305	-1.932	-1.267
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.821	.686	.388	.373	.021	.053	.205

Table 2.3: Mean effect of source of income on other dependent variables:

Sou_income	Total_com	Info_cul	Mar_Total	D_Total	W_Total	Adop_Total	Heal_awr
Agriculture	35.38	5.75	3.00	27.75	21.63	1.63	5.50
Animal husbandry	42.33	7.67	2.83	23.83	24.17	2.83	4.83
Service	41.00	7.20	2.14	25.11	21.74	2.69	5.54
Business	39.00	10.00	.00	23.00	22.00	4.00	6.00
Chi-Square	5.247	8.552	7.377	1.443	1.292	5.804	1.682
Df	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.155	.036	.061	.695	.731	.122	.641

Table 2.4: Mean effect of Education on other dependent variables:

Education	Total_com	Info_cul	Mar_Total	D_Total	W_Total	Adop_Total	Heal_awr
Illiterate	29.33	4.00	2.33	29.33	17.67	1.67	4.33
Read and Write only	33.00	6.00	4.00	23.00	22.00	1.50	4.50
Primary	42.25	7.67	1.92	27.00	21.25	2.50	5.42
Middle	40.61	7.30	2.35	23.52	22.61	2.43	5.52
High school	43.00	6.89	2.67	26.22	22.78	3.33	5.89
Graduate and above	29.00	8.00	.00	32.00	24.00	4.00	6.00
Chi-Square	14.993	11.548	10.122	4.750	5.915	8.054	2.712
Df	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Asymp. Sig.	.010	.042	.072	.447	.315	.153	.744



*Total_com= Total communication score, info_cul= information related to culture, D_total: Decision making score, W_total= Women empowerment, Adop_Total: Adoption total score, Heal_awr= Health awareness.

- Age has significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on communication and cultural information. It seems that lower age group has more communication score than that of older age group and age group of 41-50 years are having more communication score than other age group (Table 2.1).
- Gender has significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on Women empowerment (Table 2.2).
- Source of income has significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on cultural information. It seems that Business person has high mean score on cultural information (Table 2.3).
- Education has significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on cultural information. It seems that graduate has more cultural information than other education group (Table 2.4).

Correlation:

Table 3: Spearman's correlation among different variables in the study

	Age	Gen	Marital	Cat	Source-Income	Edu	Fam-income	Total_com	D_Tot al	W_Tot al	Adop - Total	Heal - awr
Age	1											
Gender	-.565**	1										
Marital_sta	.124	-.119	1									
Category	.201	.071	.085	1								
Source-Income	-.347*	.147	-.147	-.115	1							
Education	-.834**	.467**	-.221	-.235	.480**	1						
Family-income	-.028	.045	-.007	-.122	-.029	.048	1					
Total_com	-.302*	-.018	-.058	-.007	.285*	.391*	-.208	1				
D_Total	.102	-.124	-.053	.159	-.131	-.097	.004	-.184	1			
Women empowerment_Total	-.302*	.373**	-.193	-.106	-.036	.249	-.090	-.059	-.158	1		
Adoption_T otal	-.361**	.299*	-.258	-.065	.304*	.332*	-.109	-.009	-.037	.515**	1	
Health_awareness	-.292*	.202	-.049	-.099	.064	.253	.141	.049	.220	-.010	-.031	1

Note: Bold coefficients are significant at 1% level of significance and bold-underlined coefficients are significant at 5% level of significance



- Age is highly negatively but significantly correlated with gender, Education and adoption and negatively significantly correlated with communication and health awareness. Gender is highly positively and significantly correlated with Education and women empowerment and significantly correlated with adoption.
- Source of income is highly significantly but negatively correlated with income and highly significantly correlated with Education. Source of income is also significantly correlated with communication and adoption

GROUP DISCUSSION:

From the group discussion with the respondents some important facts were focused. Besides the daily occupation some respondents or their family members were interested to join the MGNREGA work which irregularly worked out in their area. They got hardly 35 days of work instead of 100 days.

The rationing system was totally controlled by the tea garden authority instead of Public distribution system, result of that the rationing system was very irregular and most of part of the year they did not get that.

The main problem of that area was poor education system and health facility. The percentage of malnutrition and child mortality rate was very high in the area. They were also less aware about health and hygiene.

Some of the respondents' did like to go to the forest to collect Non Timber Forest Product(NTFP) like vegetables, mushrooms, fire woods, medicinal plants etc. Some of them used to sale those collected product at nearby market.

CONCLUSION:

Respondents in the study area are mostly migrated, middle aged, landless, married and they need alternative option for their livelihood. Their present condition is not so much good due to their low financial status as well as they do not get sufficient support from their tea garden authority. It was found that the cultural pattern has been changed significantly among the lower age groups and educated respondents. Age also has negative but significant effect on adoption and education. Some of the respondents do not get sufficient access to the government facilities like MGNREGA scheme and Public distribution system. Some respondents depend on NTFP for their livelihood.



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