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The impact of work-life balance on the wellbeing of employees in the tea gardens of Bodoland territorial region

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Abstract--Work-Life Balance as a major problem for employees in the tea garden workers community, whether in public or private life. Men and women both aspire for a balanced personal life and professional life. As-sam's tea plantation sector encompasses many places and ranks first in the Indian economy. The study's goal is to look into the influence of work-life balance on employee happiness in the tea gardens of the Bodoland territorial region. The tea workers' quality of life has a considerable influence on the tea industry's smooth operations. Wage labor is the primary occupation of Tea Garden workers. The Tea Garden community's financial situation is not particularly good. The researcher defines the notion of work-life balance and discusses the tea garden workers' society's socio-cultural, vocational, and re-ligious lives. The community of tea garden workers has formed a new socio-cultural identity & contributed to developing a new composite society. These cultural characteristics establish them as a separate community in new surroundings. The study looks at the lives of women who work in tea gardens in Assam & their social standing, and the key issues they face. In Assam's tea gardens, women work-ers make up most of the workforce. They were helpful in the formation of the tea business in this re-gion. In Assam's tea sector, women workers represent the most potential workforce.

Keywords--tea, industries, economy, Adivasi, labor, community, women workers, tea gardens.

Introduction

Since the middle 1980s, Assam has been the liberation of Bodoland. Bodoland is located in Assam's northwestern corner. Bodoland is home of 1.35 million people or about 5.1 % of Assam's population. They are part of a tribe that lives in the lowlands among the Brahmaputra River & Bhutan's Himalayan foothills. The All-Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) was founded in 1967, and its quest for a distinct status dates back to that time. Although it has gotten far less scholarly attention than the Assam movement and the actions of the United Liberation Front of Assam, the violent Bodo agitation has been and continues to be an essential component of Northeast India's security challenge since the latter half of the 1980s (Vandekerckhove, N., (2008).

India is one of the world's biggest tea producers. The colonists introduced tea plantations to both India and Sri Lanka. Soon after, the tea business grew to be a key industry in both nations' economies, resulting in modern living and a new social system. According to Edgar Thompson, tea has shaped the entire environment that these individuals have inherited. Post-independence, India's successive governments made many modifications to the sector. The tea business is considered a contemporary industry, and its owners are either major corporations or notable people who gain enormously direct or indirect in both of these nations. The laborers on the tea plantations, represent a backward society that lives in a pitiful state. Despite the plantation industry's success in India over several decades, plantation laborers have remained underdeveloped and isolated. They are predisposed to vulnerability since they are members of society's social and economic underclass. Plantation output and productivity are strongly reliant on the employees' labor performance. As a result, the welfare, rights, & motivation of tea plantation employees must be emphasized by plantation planners and promoters (Gayathri, P., 2010).

The Tea Industry in India is one of the country's key foreign exchange producers because it contributes significantly to job creation due to its high labor intensity. India is the world's second-largest tea grower, responsible for around 30% of worldwide tea output. Tea's market size is predicted to be about 10,000 crores, with more than 90% penetration in the domestic economy. With around 210 million per kg tea exported, India is the world's fourth-largest tea exporter, with China taking first place. The tea sector in the United States is well-organized, accounting for 72 percentage of total tea-producing land & 74 percent of the total production. In India, tea is grown on 600,000 hectares (ha), accounting for 16 % of the world's total tea-producing area. Thousands of tea plantations are dispersed across India's several states in the Indian tea business. There are approximately 8,500 tea plantations in West Bengal and Assam, with another 5,500 in Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu in the southern regions. According to ASSOCHAM, Assam generates over half of India's tea and contributes to over 12% of yearly world tea production. The Indian tea industry is massive, with many local and regional companies. With the passage of time & changes in consumer patterns, tea production has become more diverse and valuable (Shreedhar, R., 2018).

India's tea business is roughly 180 years old. In 1823, Robert Bruce found tea plants growing in the upper Brahmaputra Valley, and the first shipment of Indian tea from Assam was delivered to the United Kingdom for sale in 1838. Tea is historically cultivated in four states in India: Assam & West Bengal in the east, and Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in the south due to distinct soil and climatic advantages. Assam is the country's major tea-growing region, consistently producing over 50% of the country's tea (see table 1), followed by West Bengal, which accounts for 17% of the overall quantity.

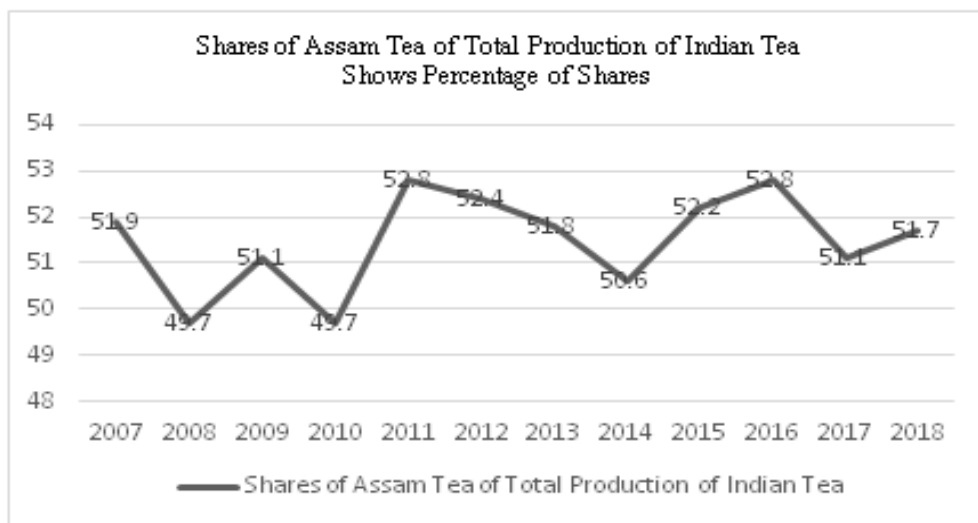


Figure 1. Share of Assam Tea of Total Production of Indian Tea
Source: Compiled from Tea Board of India

Table 1
Shares of Assam Tea of Total Production of Indian Tea Shows Percentage of Shares

Year	Share of Assam Tea of Total Production of Indian Tea
2007	51.9
2008	49.7
2009	51.1
2010	49.7
2011	52.8
2012	52.4
2013	51.8
2014	50.6
2015	52.2
2016	52.8
2017	51.1
2018	51.7

Source: Compiled from Tea Board of India

Concept of Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is a technique for assisting employees in balancing their professional and personal life. Work-life balance encourages people to manage their time and maintain a healthy balance by allocating time to families, health, vacations, and other activities in addition to pursuing a profession or traveling for business. It is a crucial notion in the corporate sector since it serves to encourage workers and improve their loyalty to the organization.

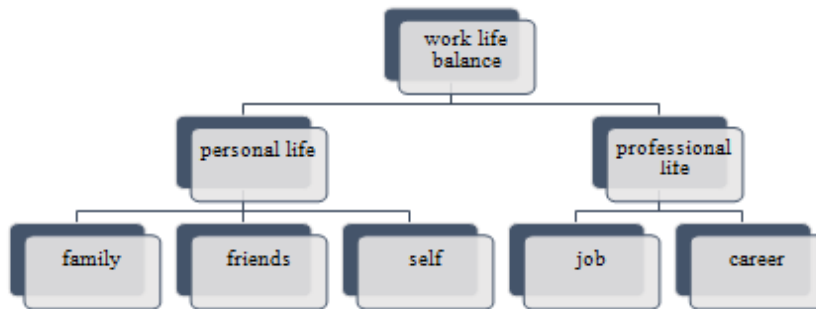


Figure 2. Work-Life Balance

Source: <https://www.mbaskool.com/business-concepts/human-resources-hr-terms/7045-work-life-balance.html>

A work-life balance situation is depicted here, in which an individual must strike a balance between personal (family, friends, and self) & professional (job, career) duties.

Socio-Cultural Life of the Tea Garden Workers Society

The tea garden workers came from the diverse, ethnic-lingual, social, and economic backgrounds from Jharkhand, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh. The immigration process began during the imperial period and continued after independence. Plantation systems are well recognized for thriving on certain structural components such as immigrant labor, low salaries, and extra-economic power invested in planters over the labour process, among other things. Plantations have a rigid managerial structure that exerts tight control over their workforce. The tea community, on the other hand, saw significant changes in their traditional function and socio-cultural patterns as a result of their entry to Assam's tea estates sector.

Occupational Life Among the Tea Garden Workers

In the tea estate society, the tea plantation business played a key role in social life. The greatest noticeable alteration in the tea gardens society's social life occurred during their occupancy. The migration process and recruitment as tea estate plantation workers altered their vocation from a peasant economy to the plantation Labourer's industrial setup. The employment of Indigenous people as employees in the tea garden industry resulted in the eviction of their agricultural and rural identities. Their daily lives were dictated by the daily activities in the tea

gardens, which were opposed to their lives in their native lands. It was necessary for them to acclimate to the increasingly industrialized environment. Their everyday lives are now governed by the tea garden's administration. It has been noted that a person may only visit the Tea Garden's residential sections with the authorization of the factory and other officers. The labourers are compelled to stay inside the confines of the tea garden.

Religious Life of the Tea Garden Society

During their plantation environment, the tea tribe's religious life has seen a significant transformation. During the colonial period, they were undoubtedly successful in keeping their religion, customs, and belief systems. Other ethnic groups, such as the Santhals, Mundas, and Oraons, had their own Gods and Goddesses. Thankur or Sn Banga is the name given to the Supreme Being, who is the provider of life, rain, crops, and other essentials of life (Kalita, B., 2018).

Women Workers in Tea Garden Areas of Assam

The state of Assam is famed for its tea gardens. It is India's oldest and largest tea-producing state, accounting for around 55 percent of its total production. In the state, there are 322 thousand hectares of tea gardens. Tea plantations need a highly-skilled workforce. From the beginning, women have worked in the tea industry. In Assam's tea estates, women make up more than half of the workforce. During the colonial period, these plantations were located in isolated places with minimal populations. As a result, families were employed, and women were absorbed into the workforce. In Assam's tea farms, both permanent and temporary labour women were used in substantial numbers to pick the tea leaves. Managers hire temporary labourers, either directly or indirectly, to complete projects in the Tea Plantations for a limited time. These temporary Women Employees are employed to address the growing demand for leaf picking and other tea plantation-related tasks. They are economically insecure because they lack job stability and cannot take advantage of additional benefits given to permanent employees. As a result, many temporary women labourers are employed in plucking jobs and receive less compensation from the management.

Socio-Economic Status of Tea Garden Women Workers

Despite playing a critical part in the tea business, little is known about women workers in the rest of the world. They are shown as a disadvantaged group who are abused by their employers, society, and family members. The Tea Plantation Women Workers' socioeconomic situation is precarious when they set foot in the garden. The illiteracy, ignorance, and socioeconomic backwardness of the women folk have been used by British colonists in the past, as well as current management. They live in a secluded society, where they are physically and psychologically undeveloped and socially isolated, as a result of which their degree of political consciousness is low (Das, S., 2019).

Tea Garden Worker Social Exclusion

Three major features of tea plantation workers social isolation have been investigated. Economic, social, and political factors all have a role. Economic dimensions of exclusion are discussed here, including livelihood, work type (permanent/temporary), credit & loan, and home & land. Social components of exclusion include health care, education, family & sociability, and respect for garden visitors. Citizenship and legal equality, electoral participation, and political decision-making are all political dimensions of exclusion. Tea garden workers are, in fact, exempt from these broad considerations. They are divided or discriminated against in these areas, and as a result, they are theoretically barred from the economic, social, and political sectors (Zaman, M., (2018).

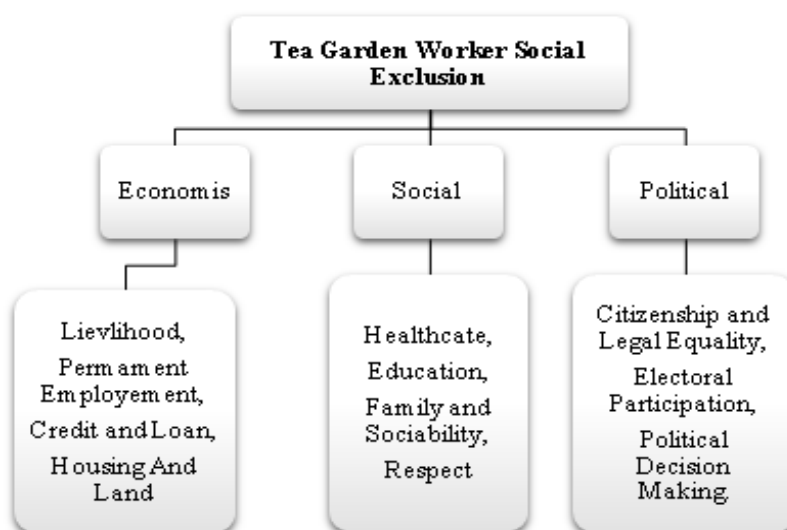


Figure 3. Social Exclusion of Tea Garden Workers.

Sources: Zaman, M. O., & Abir, T. M. (2018). The Process of Social Exclusion of Tea Garden Workers: A Study on Sylhet City Corporation, Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Humanity, Art, and Literature*, 5(2), 101108.

Major Problems of Labour Working in Tea Garden

- **No permanent employment:** The majority of the tea plantation labourers are from the "adivashi" group and locals. In the tea gardens, these folks are the most exploited. The majority of them work as part-time labourers, depending on output and demand and peak season. A minor percentage of these people also work in factories, offices, and other places. Adult men and women work in equal numbers. Though child labour is not common, children are used in a few rural gardens for plucking, weeding, hoeing, or nursery work.
- **Low wages:** Tea pickers earn the lowest income compared to organized employees. Tea gardens use temporary labour at lower salaries than the minimum wage during peak season. The majority of them work as low-wage

manual labourers daily. Workers in large tea gardens are given a bonus during festivals or an additional amount if the output exceeds expectations.

- **Poor living conditions:** One of the most serious issues that labourers confront is living in overcrowded and unsanitary circumstances in residential colonies. They live in terrible socioeconomic situations, and most labourers are illiterate. Labourers suffer from a variety of illnesses and health issues, primarily due to inadequate personal and family cleanliness, sanitation, and housing, as well as a lack of education.
- **Health problems:** These workers are sensitive to a range of infectious illnesses as a result of their poor living circumstances. Bad working conditions in the tea industry have resulted in health issues. Worm infestation, respiratory disorders, diarrhea, skin diseases, filariasis, and pulmonary TB are among the primary health issues experienced by labourers, according to a research study. Other health issues include hypertension, seizures, and back discomfort. Some people are unhealthy.
- **No health benefits:** Each tea garden is required by the Plantation Workers Act of 1951 to provide a health center with adequate medical services. The gardens, on either hand, are in rural locations, or the health centers are in far-flung communities. The worker does not have enough access to these facilities. For female tea garden employees, there is no payment of gratuity packages accessible.

Recent Review of literature

Issahakul John, (2020) examined the effect of Work-Life Balance (WLB) on employee well-being, and gender inequalities at the University of Cape Coast. The approach used was a descriptive survey. A multi-stage selection procedure was utilised to pick 291 respondents from the teaching and administrative staff to participate in the survey. The data were analyzed using regression and an independent sample t-test. The study discovered a statistically meaningful difference between male and female participants' work-life balance concerns, with females having more trouble with their work-life balance issues. Sharmistha Bhattacharyya, (2020) investigated that Assam is known for its tea industry. This business had expanded throughout the years, originating mostly during colonial administration. Assam's tea made a significant impact both in India and overseas. The profitability of this business, on the other hand, has been falling in recent years. The study's goal was to pinpoint the issues with tea plantations that had culminated in such losses. The study was performed in the Panitola Tea Estate in Assam's Tinsukia area.

Md Nazrul Islam, (2019) investigated tea plantation workers in Bangladesh's poverty and vulnerability, as well as their survival tactics. According to the findings, the most significant source of poverty and vulnerability among tea garden employees seems to be a lack of skill in numerous areas of life. The report made several practical policy recommendations for reducing the poverty and vulnerability of employees. Swapna Sikha Das, (2019) examined that Assam's tea plantation business spanned a wide range of activities and ranked first in the Indian economy. Robert Bruce, a young British officer, was instrumental in discovering tea in Assam in 1833. The European working class gradually established several tea estates throughout Assam. As the author was known, the

tea business was a labor-intensive sector that required many people. Many Adivasi ethnic groups from various regions of India were transported to Assam by the British administration to work in the tea plantations, each with their unique social and cultural qualities.

Md. Ohidur Zaman, (2018) suggested that Bangladeshi tea garden workers are socially, politically, and economically marginalized. As a result, the study's goal was to investigate the process of tea garden workers' social exclusion. All the tea gardens within Sylhet City Corporation have been selected as the study area, and empirical data had been collected from selected respondents by survey and in-depth interview methods. They lack social and political rights, and they have little control over their physical environment. Such deficiencies made them incapable & created a poverty cycle which leads them to social exclusion. Shreedhar R., (2018) stated that the tea business in India grew in prominence as one of the country's key foreign exchange-earners and as a source of employment due to the sector's high labour intensity. A healthy workplace entails more than just keeping colds and flu at bay. It was more comprehensive, considering employees' physical, spiritual, environmental, intellectual, emotional, occupational, and mental well-being. The study suggested tailoring tea intake to the health conditions of people at work, which was urgently needed because employees' health was currently at risk owing to immense strain and stress.

Biraj Jyoti Kalita, (2018) stated that Assam's tea plantation business spanned a wide range of activities and ranked first in the Indian economy. Robert Bruce, a young British officer, was instrumental in discovering tea in Assam in 1833. The European working class gradually established several tea estates throughout Assam. As we all know, the tea business was a labor-intensive sector that required a large number of people. The British administration recruited several Adivasi ethnic groups from various regions of India to Assam to work in the tea plantations, each with their unique social and cultural characteristics. Chandan Kumar Sharma, (2017) concluded that the tea estate in the Northeastern Indian state of Assam, established by the British colonial regime in the mid-nineteenth century, significantly altered the area's socio-economic profile. However, it had an energizing effect on the state's rural economy. The plantation sector, controlled by British businesses, saw few native planters, but a part of Assamese peasants had historically engaged in small-scale tea growing in their homeland. Many Indian entrepreneurs joined the plantation business after India's independence, owing to the departure of British planters.

Madhuwanti Mitro, (2016) examined the concept of sustainable development implemented in the plantation sector. It accomplished so by looking at a Darjeeling tea farm that meets the three pillars of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental. Under the supervision and direction of its owner, the Makai Bari tea plantation began its journey to sustainability at a time when tea values were dropping dramatically, and export had dropped to a bare minimum. Not only had this tea plantation been able to earn a profit, but it had also become the first tea plantation in India to be organically certified. Chandra Kala Magar, (2016) stated that Assam's tea plantations, which account for 53.97 percent of the country's tea land, 49 percent of the tea worker population, & 52.04 percent of tea output, play a vital role in the state's economics, culture, and governance.

During British colonial control, the introduction of tea plantations not only altered the environment of the upper Brahmaputra valley by introducing green tea trees maintained by tea tribes from east-central India and also spawned a distinct tea culture.

Anand Sharma, (2016) stated that wage labor was the Tea Garden Labourers' major occupation. The Tea Garden community's economic situation was precarious at best. The proprietor of that Tea Plantation had assigned permanent staff their accommodations. The study's goal was to highlight the living circumstance of Majan Rajgarh Borline's tea estate labourers. Md. Kamruzzaman, (2015) examined that tea was a successful revenue source in Bangladesh, but its workers' (women's) livelihoods were not appropriately emphasized. The study's main goal was to assess and characterize the extent to which tea garden workers' livelihoods have improved. Human, natural, physical, financial, and social capital were all used to measure livelihood. A four-point rating system was used to create an interview scheduled for livelihood development indicators: improved, moderately managed to improve, slightly improved, and not improved at all. The women who labour in the tea garden were surveyed.

P. Gayathri, (2010) examined tea plantation workers' socio-demographic background and work-life quality in India. The tea business employed a substantial portion of the workforce, including Nilgiris. Nilgiris accounts for over 90000 hectares under tea cultivation in South India, which results in yearly tea production of roughly 30 million kg, or nearly 60% of the overall population. The purpose of the study was to look at the quality of life of tea plantation workers in the Nilgiris district. Nel Vandekerckhove, (2008) analyzed the difficulties in Bodoland required more than migration. Instead, the researcher focused on forests and tea plantations, claiming that they produced tribal captivity, which eventually led to conflict by building major constraining structures. And they stated that throughout the battle, there was a movement in power over these buildings, altering the livelihood arithmetic of the communities affected. Finally, the author analyzed the BTC/ (Bodo-land BTAD's Territorial Council/Bodoland Territorial Administrative District) constraints and potential due to the peace process and warned that the Bodo's escape from entrapment might lead to the entrapment of other people in the area.

Discussion

The study looked at how work-life balance affects employee happiness in the tea plantations of the Bodoland territorial region. Because India is one of the world's major tea producers and the tea business seems to be a labor-intensive sector, the quality of tea workers' lives had a substantial influence on the tea industry's smooth operations. The study discusses how tea estate workers create a backward society that lives in deplorable conditions and the work-life balance situation. An individual must strike a balance between personal (family, friends, and self) & professional (job, career) commitments. Plantation output and productivity are strongly reliant on the employees' performance that labour there. The study looked at the socioeconomic, occupational, and regional lives of employees in society, as well as the primary issues that workers in tea gardens

face, such as low salaries, bad living conditions, health issues, and the lack of health benefits.

Conclusion

The tea industry's long-term growth is critical not only for generating local and international currency but also for preserving environmental balance. Assam is a warm nation disaster-prone, and the current rate of global warming is frightening. This may be mitigated to a significant extent by tree planting. The tea workers are the most important participants in the tea industry's existence and progress. Because the tea business is labor-intensive, tea employees' quality of work-life (QWL) has an impact on the sector's long-term viability. Tea employees are overly reliant on the firms for food, medical, housing, and education, among other things. They cannot afford necessities such as clothing, shelter, medical care, food, and even the drinking of the tea they make. They remain socially marginalized, low-paid, illiterate, impoverished, and cut off from the rest of society. Low earnings, inadequate food, a lack of voice in decision-making, a lack of education, little or no training, and a lack of compensating facilities are causing dissatisfaction among tea garden employees. Despite these flaws, tea workers stay because they have lifelong job security, pleasant supervisors, a flexible work schedule, and a place to stay for everyone. Except for schooling, tea workers with all demographic categories had comparable perceptions of quality of work-life factors. All tea employees had identical views on two practises, namely remuneration and training, both of which were rated as unsatisfactory.

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