

Exploring Women Tea Plantation Workers' Interest in Varied Income-Generating Activities and Decision Making Pattern in Jorhat District of Assam

ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out in Jorhat district of Assam. Four (4) tea gardens under public corporation from Jorhat sub-division were selected using purposive sampling method. A total of 100 women tea plantation workers were selected for the present study. It was found that majority of the household decisions were taken jointly by their husbands followed by independent decision. It was further found that respondents spent the majority of time (7.94 hours) in working at tea garden. The majority (51.00%) of the respondents were mostly interested in poultry farming followed by goat rearing (14.00%).

Key Words: Interest, Decision Making Pattern, Time Utilization Pattern, Women Tea Plantation Workers, Income Generating Activities.

Introduction:

In all developing countries women play a major role in agriculture and allied sector. The farmwomen lead hard lives and perform gruelling works in farm and homestead activities (Biradar 2021). Tea plantation being one of the allied areas of agriculture sector has more than 50 per cent of women workforce. The participation of women in the tea plantation sector has been present since the beginning. The women tea plantation workers constitute almost 50 per cent of the total work force in the tea industry of Assam. They are predominantly involved in working in tea gardens as it is the only means for them at their level to earn livelihood. Women tea plantation workers despite having many other skills and pavements to income, they choose working at tea gardens as they do not have enough time to be indulged in other activities due to working at the tea garden. Also, Despite having an equal share in the work force they are paid less than their male counterparts (Jumi *et al.*, 2021). Women are paid “chukri hazira’ otherwise known as girl wages which are comparatively lesser than their male counterparts (Baishiya, 2016). Through studying the interest of women tea plantation workers they can be shown other ways of earning as an extra income in their free time through vocational trainings which may help them financially in some way or other.

Materials and Methods:

The study was conducted in Jorhat district of Assam. A combination of purposive sampling and simple random sampling method was followed for the present study. Four (4) government tea gardens from Jorhat sub-division were selected using purposive sampling method. A total of 100 women tea plantation workers were selected randomly using a simple random sampling method. The personal interview method was applied for the collection of primary data with the help of the structured interview schedule which was prepared according to the objectives of the study. Data were analysed using percentage, mean, standard deviation and ranking.

The independent variables incorporated in the present study were selected based on substantial literature review and discussion with resource persons. For quantitative measurement of variables, a structured interview schedule was designed for the present study.

Findings and Discussion:

It is revealed from table 1. that a very high percentage of respondents under study had joint decision with husband, the highest being education and carrier for children and borrowing of money (69.00%) respectively, followed by payment of bills and loans and lending money to others (68.00%) respectively, health care of family members and construction of new house (67.00%) respectively, renovation and marriage for children (66.00%), expenditure on treatment of sick family members (65.00%), buying major household items (64.00%), buying necessary items for family members (62.00%), membership in any organisation (53.00%), recreational activities (52.00%), taking part in any social events (48.00%), voting in elections (30.00%), selection and preparation of food (20.00%) and maintenance of house (8.00%) . Thus, it can be inferred that respondents' decision was important for taking the final decision.

Table 1: Decision making pattern of women tea plantation workers in different home and other activities.

ACTIVITIES	Decision making pattern			
	Independent decision	Joint decision		No decision making
	%	Husband	Other members of family	%
Maintenance of house	84.00	8.00	8.00	-
Selection and preparation of food	73.00	20.00	2.00	5.00
Buying major household items	26.00	64.00	7.00	3.00
Buying necessary items for family members	17.00	62.00	17.00	4.00
Health care of family members	21.00	67.00	7.00	5.00
Expenditure on treatment of sick family members	22.00	65.00	8.00	5.00
Education and carrier for children	15.00	69.00	16.00	-
Marriage for children	7.00	66.00	27.00	-
Renovation of house	14.00	66.00	14.00	6.00
Construction of new house	17.00	67.00	11.00	5.00
Borrowing money	21.00	69.00	9.00	1.00
Lending money to others	21.00	68.00	8.00	3.00
Payment of bills and loans	20.00	68.00	9.00	3.00
Recreational activities	40.00	52.00	8.00	-
Voting in elections	66.00	30.00	4.00	-
Taking part in any social events	44.00	48.00	8.00	-
Membership in any organisation	39.00	53.00	8.00	-

The data also shows that despite majority of decision taken was joint with respondents' husband; independent decision was however seen in some areas, highest in maintenance of house (84.00%) followed by selection and preparation of food (73.00%), voting in election (66.00%), taking part in any social events (44.00%), recreational activities (40.00%), membership in any organisation (39.00%) and buying major household items (26.00%). A small number of respondents were independently involved in expenditure on treatment of sick family members (22.00%), borrowing and lending of money (21.00%) respectively, payment of bills and loans (20.00%), buying necessary items for family

members and construction of new house (17.00%) respectively, education and carrier for children (15.00%), renovation of house (14.00%), and marriage of children (7.00%).

It was further revealed that joint decision with other members of family was also seen in areas like marriage of children (27.00%) followed by buying necessary items for family (17.00%), education and carrier for children (16.00%), renovation of house (14.00%), construction of house (11.00%). A few numbers of respondents were jointly involved with other members of family in borrowing money and payments of bills and loans (9.00%) respectively, followed by maintenance of house, expenditure on treatment of sick family members, lending money to others, recreational activities, taking part in any social events, membership in any organisation (8.00%) respectively. It was interesting to note that in buying major household items and health care of family members (7.00%) respectively, voting in election (4.00%), and selection and preparation of food (2.00%) the respondents showed the lowest response in joint decision making with other members of family.

However, no participation was also seen in the areas like, renovation of house (6.00%), selection and preparation of food, health care of family members, expenditure on treatment of sick family members, construction of new house (5.00%) respectively, buying major household, and lending money to others, payment of bills and loans (3.00%) respectively and borrowing money only 1.00%).

Therefore, it is revealed from the findings that majority of the respondents made joint decision with their husbands in taking final decision in various activities. Independent decision was also seen among the respondents which was high in areas of maintenance of house and selection and preparation of food which may be due to the notion that women are suppose to take lead in maintenance of house and preparation of food also it is considered to be the basic responsibility of all women. It was also noted that joint decision with husband had the highest influence in most areas except for in voting in elections where the respondents had independent decision making pattern. Similar study was done by Borah (2017) where she found that respondents took joint decision in most areas but expect for voting in election (45.00%). It was further found that very less respondents had no decision making pattern in most areas. Hence, it can be characterized that respondents' decisions are considered important and they have equal status to men in decision making either via; independent or joint decision.

Table 2 shows that respondents spent the majority of time in working at tea garden 7.94 hours flowed by 7.88 hours in sleep, 2.08 hours in kitchen, 0.95 hours in watching TV, radio etc, 0.91 hours in personal care, 0.815 hours in care for children and family, 0.69 hours in cleaning, 0.29 in fetching water and cleaning, 0.28 hours in religious activities, 0.25 hours in collection of firewood, 0.10 hours in care for animals and 0.77 hours in any other activities. The findings indicated that women tea plantation workers spent very little time at home during the day time as they are engaged in tea garden for work hence; most of their household and other reproductive roles are carried out at early morning before going to work and at evening hours after coming back from work.

Table 2. Average number of hours spent daily on household activities by women tea plantation workers.

Sl. No.	Activities	Average total time spent (in hours)
1.	Kitchen	3.08

2.	Cleaning	0.69
3	Fetching water and cleaning	0.29
4.	Collection of Firewood	0.25
5.	Personal care	0.91
6.	Care for children/Family	0.81
7.	Care for animal	0.10
8.	Religious activities	0.28
9.	Watching TV, Radio etc	0.95
10.	Working at Tea garden	7.94
11.	Sleep	7.88
12.	Any other	0.77
Total hours		24

Table 3. Distribution based on the interest of women tea plantation workers on different income generating activities N=100

Category	Most interested	Interested	Not Interested
Activities	(%)	(%)	(%)
Poultry farming	51.00	43.00	6.00
Goat rearing	14.00	15.00	28.00
Piggery	2.00	38.00	60.00
Tailoring	1.00	17.00	82.00
Knitting work	-	17.00	83.00
Fabric painting	-	8.00	92.00
Embroidery	-	7.00	93.00
Food preservation (pickle, jam, squash making)	-	48.00	52.00
Bakery	-	10.00	90.00
Beauty parlour	1.00	7.00	92.00
Vegetable gardening	1.00	3.00	66.00
Bamboo craft	-	3.00	97.00
Vermicomposting	1.00	6.00	93.00
Fishery	-	1.00	99.00

Table.3. reveals that majority of the respondents were most interested in poultry farming (51.00%) followed by goat rearing (14.00%) that being the case, the respondents can be given training on those areas for skill development and extra income in their free time.

It was also found that respondents also showed their interest in food preservation (pickle, jam, squash making) (48.00%), poultry farming (43.00%), piggery (38.00%), tailoring and

knitting (17.00%) work respectively and goat rearing (15.00%), bakery (10.00%), fabric painting (8.00%), embroidery and beauty parlour (7.00%), vermicomposting (6.00%), vegetable gardening and bamboo craft (3.00%), and fishery (1.00%).

Further, it was revealed that huge numbers of respondents were not interested in bamboo craft (97.00%), embroidery (93.00%), vermicomposting (93.00%), beauty parlour (92.00%), fabric painting (92.00%), bakery (90.00%), tailoring (82.00%) and knitting work (83.00%). It was also inferred that more than half of the respondents were not interested in vegetable gardening (66.00%), piggery (60.00%) and food preservation (52.00). This may be because women tea plantation workers are engaged in tea garden straight from the morning to evening for almost 8 hours a day therefore, they have very less time to participate in such income generating activities. The women tea plantation workers are further bound to do their household chores after coming back from work hence, their interest in such income generating activities go off with their roles at the tea garden and their homes. This finding is supported by Ateino (1992) and Hasan *et al.* (2015).

Conclusion:

From the above findings it can be concluded that women tea plantation workers were most interested in poultry and goat rearing. As the data revealed that majority of the respondents were most interested in poultry farming followed by goat rearing that being the case, women workers in their free time can be given training on those areas for skill development and additional income in their free time.

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