

An empirical study on working environment of tribal workers in Coffee Plantations of Araku Valley of Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

India is the seventh largest producer of coffee in the world. The plantations in the south are the cradle of Indian coffee. The Eastern Ghats and the North Eastern states are newly developed areas of coffee plantation. These, coffee plantation is playing an important role in generating employment opportunities to rural and tribal people; Coffee cultivation occupies a place of pride in the Araku valley hills of Eastern Ghats in India. It has a suitable climate for coffee plantation and there are 91 percent of tribal people are residing in this area. Most of the tribals are depending upon agriculture related activities, coffee plantation taken a major place in providing employment to many tribal people. Thus, this paper reveals about working environment of Tribal coffee plantation workers. This is an empirical study based on primary data and secondary data collected through a well-structured Schedule. The study would highlight of the working environment of tribal coffee plantation workers in Araku Valley Mandal of Visakhapatnam District.

Key Words: Coffee Plantation, Tribal workers, Working Environment, Employment etc.,

Introduction:

Coffee production in India is dominated in the hill tracts of South Indian states. Indian coffee is said to be the finest coffee grown in the shade rather than direct sunlight anywhere in the world. Coffee is grown in three regions of India with Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu forming the traditional coffee growing region, followed by the new areas developed in the non-traditional areas of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa in the eastern coast of the country and with a third region comprising the states of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh of Northeastern India, popularly known as "Seven Sister States of India" (Sasubilli Paradesi Naidu, 2018).

Coffee cultivation is a highly labour intensive agricultural activity. 65% of the total cost of cultivation is accounted for by the labour costs in India whereas in Brazil due to high mechanization, the labour costs account for 35 to 40 percent. Labour is required throughout the year; the annual requirement per hectare being 400 man-days for Arabica variety and 300 man days for Robusta. There is mutual interdependent relationship between the planters and the workers. The plantation owners depend on the work force to maintain their plantations in a productive and profitable state. The workers depend on the owners to meet their basis needs such as housing, credit, welfare besides providing gainful employment. A distinct feature of

coffee plantation labour is they earn a regular income throughout the year. Low scope for mechanization, does not threaten their job security (**Coffee Board, 2017**)

Nature of Work in Coffee Plantation

The various types of work that are involved in the maintenance of coffee plantations are Weeding, Digging of manure-pits, Trenches, Tapping, Pruning, Handling and regulation of Shade Harvesting. Spraying has to be done thrice in a year in case of Arabica plants, which are more susceptible diseases. The next stage is the preparation of the produce. The picked berries are fermented and pulped by the help of machines and finally parchment in got. This parchment has to be dried completely before it is stored for curing.

Weeding and digging are expensive annual operation and continue to be done at least thrice a year. The modern method of manuring coffee plants has increased the work for the labourers throughout the year in the coffee plantations. For high yield the process of proper manuring with commercial fertilizers has become Imperative. Manure is not merely spread around the plants on the ground but dumped in pits or trenches dug between rows of plants. Tapping is cutting of the overgrown stem flush to encourage horizontal growth of plants. The dead and dying branches are cut which is known as pruning.

Working conditions in Coffee Plantation

The working conditions of workers employed in coffee plantations are governed by the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 and the rules promulgated by the State governments. The Plantation Labour Act inter-alia requires the employer to provide to the workers and their family members medical, housing, sickness and education facility and various other social security benefits. The act applies in the first instance to tea, coffee, rubber, cinchona and cardamom plantations. However, the state government may apply it to any other plantation.

Tribal Coffee Plantation workers in Araku Valley

Andhra Pradesh having a population of 84,69,278 Scheduled Tribe people, fourteen percent are ie6,18,500 (STs)are residing in Visakhapatnam (**Primary Census Abstract, 2011**). Most of these people living in the agency livelihood depends on agriculture, tourism, forestry products, employment schemes,. In Visakhapatnam, there are 14,680 tribal people who live on agriculture and 1, 03,537 tribal people are live as agricultural laborers. Araku valley mandal, a region in Visakhapatnam District, has a favorable climate for coffee plantations and is largely cultivated there. Araku Valley is a tribal residential area where the majority of tribals getting employment in coffee plantations.

Review of Literature

Jayanthi R., & Ravi Aditya (2019) studied the living conditions, wages, earnings and social security benefits of Small Coffee Plantation Workers in Chikmagalur- Karnataka. Their study reveals that most of the workers are settled or have homes in nearby villages and they use local transport to reach them work place. Majority of workers are working on daily wages but the wages is given on weekly basis and they work on temporary basis. Majority of the workers in the small plantations are not happy about the working conditions. Some of the major reasons they highlight is the low wages, lack of leaves and long working hours during seasonal work.

Andrea Olivar & Francisco Bustamante (2016) from their study showed that social and economic conditions of migrants are worse than those of local workers. This is relevant to migrant workers in Nicaragua when travelling to neighboring countries and in Colombia

where internal migrant workers tend to be more affected by the use of drugs. Regarding benefits and facilities accessed by workers in farms, elements such as accommodation and provision food seem to be improving because of the lack of labour and the implementation of sustainability standards. This is particularly relevant to Nicaragua.

Andreas Stamm et.al (2002) studied the working and living conditions of workers in the large coffee plantations of Central America in the nations of Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico. Three groups of employees are found namely regular, casual and seasonal workers. The study found that living conditions are far from satisfactory below the minimum required standards, wages below required legal standards, lack of schools for the children of workers, employing children at the time of harvest, lack of medical facilities and social security coverage.

Objective of the Study

- To study the type of work in coffee plantation of Araku Valley, Visakhapatnam District.
- To study the occupational status and availability of employment in coffee plantation of araku valley.
- To study the hour of work, leaves, holidays and relationship of the owner and the workers in the coffee plantation of Araku valley

Need for the Study

Tribal people depended upon the forests for their livelihood. Now their main source of livelihood is wage labour in the coffee plantations and farm lands. Employment is seasonal, working environment in plantation is very much rigid and apart from daily wage, they do not receive any social security benefits from employers. Poverty and ill-health are endemic to these communities of working people. There is well-entrenched social discrimination practiced against tribal people and their status on human development indicators like infant mortality, enrolment in schools, per capita income are far below that of the other communities in the district.

This has generated a need for the study for this segment of population. Thus the present study will focus on these tribal workers in the Araku valley district of Visakhapatnam. Very limited studies have been conducted on the tribal workers in plantation and their common and unheard problems in Andhra Pradesh state of Visakhapatnam district. Out of which a little has been worked out in Araku valley. As Araku valley is one of the highest coffee producing areas in the state of Andhra Pradesh the requirement for Tribal workers is accelerating day by day. Hence, the present study is intended to investigate the working environment of Tribal workers with special reference to Araku valley Coffee plantation of Visakhapatnam district as very few studies were made in this area. Thus the current study will be extremely beneficial to the Tribal workers community as a whole since knowing the situation of these workers in the informal sector the government can advance to take some effective and creative steps for the overall improvement of this trodden and discarded workforce.

Scope of the Study

The present study is confined to the tribal coffee plantation workers employed in Araku Valley, Visakhapatnam district. The present study focuses on the working environment of tribal coffee plantation workers with reference to the above said study area.

The data was specifically collected from the tribal workers who are working in the Coffee Plantations in Araku Valley, Visakhapatnam using two stage sampling method.

Method of Study

The present study is a survey method. Survey method is used to elicit appropriate and reliable information including the responses of the sample respondents from Coffee Plantations of Araku Valley Mandal, Visakhapatnam.

Universe & Sampling

This study related to Working Environment of tribal workers in who are working in coffee plantation in tribal area of Visakhapatnam District are considered since Araku Valley mandal is producing highest amount of quality coffee. The research is concentrated on the tribal workers working in the coffee plantation situated in Araku Valley only. As per 2011 census it is observed that there are 169 villages existing in Araku Valley Mandal. Out of those 169 villages it is observed that the coffee plantations exist only in thirty five villages. Keeping the time, money, manpower and other difficulties in approaching and eliciting information from the tribal people, only 50 percent of those 35 villages i.e. 17.5 approximately 18 villages are selected using systematic Sampling Method (Every alternative village/ coffee plantation were selected). The total no. of coffee plantation workers existed in these eighteen selected coffee plantation villages are about 5812 in number (at the time of survey), these 5812 workers sometimes move from one plantation to another plantation but ultimately the total is more or less same. As this is high in number, it is decided to collect information from 10 percent of those workers selected randomly from each plantation. These randomly selected workers together give 585. However besides the care taken by Researcher, 37 schedules are discarded as they are not completely filled. This gives 548 completely filled schedules selected through two stage sampling. The first stage is selection of 50 percent coffee plantation villages and the second stage is 10 percent selection of coffee plantation workers existing in all the eighteen coffee plantation villages selected in first stage.

Data collection and study instrument

The study is mainly based on primary data. Secondary data has been procured to substantiate the primary data. To seek the opinions of the respondents from the coffee plantations a structured schedule covering the working environment of the respondents.

Data Analysis

The attempt has been made, to analyze and understand the perceptions of sample respondents with respect to their working environment in coffee plantations, Araku Valley, Visakhapatnam. The information collected from the sample respondents has been systematically analyzed through Simple Percentile Method. Below is the description of working environment attributes of Tribal Coffee Plantation workers in Araku Valley, Visakhapatnam of the present study.

Distribution of respondents basing on their Working Environment variables

Table 1

Distribution of respondents basing on their type of work, which is carried out in this plantation

Type of Work	Frequency	Percent
Planting	62	11.3
Seed Collection	135	24.6
Manuring	50	9.1
Cleaning	102	18.6
Weeding	64	11.7
All the above	135	24.6
Total	548	100.0

Table 1 is about type of work of the respondents. It shows that out of the total respondents 11.3 percent of them are in planting, 24.6 percent of them are in seed collecting, 9.1 percent of them are in manuring, 18.6 percent of them are in cleaning, 11.7 percent of them are in weeding and the remaining 24.6 percent of the respondents are doing all type of works at coffee plantation.

Table 2
Distribution of respondents basing on their Occupational Status

Occupational Status	Frequency	Percent
Permanent	81	14.8
Contract basis	254	46.4
Daily work	213	38.9
Total	548	100.0

Table 2 is about occupational status of the respondents. It shows that out of the total respondents majority (46.4 percent) of them are working on Contract basis, 38.6 percent of them are working on daily wage basis and remaining 14.8 percent of them are working as permanent basis.

Table 3
Distribution of respondents basing on their availability of employment in months per year

Availability of Employment	Frequency	Percent
Below 2 months	28	5.1
2-4 months	272	49.6
4-6 months	150	27.4
6 Months & above	98	17.9
Total	548	100.0

Table 3 is about availability of employment (months). Majority (49.6 percent) of them are getting employment 2-4 months, 27.4 percent of them are having 4-6 months, 17.9 percent of them are having more than 6 months and only 5.1 percent of them getting employment below two months per year.

Table 4
Distribution of respondents basing on their period they engaged in work

Period of the time	Frequency	Percent
Initial stage of the cultivation	64	11.7
Harvesting season-month	199	36.3

Whenever the demand arises	51	9.3
After seed collection	67	12.2
All days	167	30.5
Total	548	100.0

Table 4 is about period that workers are engaged in work. Out of the total respondents 11.7 percent of them are engaged in initial stage of the cultivation, 36.3 percent of them are engaged in harvesting season- month, 12.2 percent of them are engaged after seed collection, 30.5 percent of them are engaged in all days and remaining 9.3 percent of them engaged whenever the demand arises in coffee plantation.

Table 5

Distribution of respondents basing on their working shifts in their plantation

Working Shifts	Frequency	Percent
5 am – 1 pm	230	42.0
9 am – 5 pm	263	48.0
11 am – 7 pm	55	10.0
Total	548	100.0

Table 5 is about working hours in coffee plantation. Majority (48 percent) of them have stated that they are working for 9 am – 5 pm shift, 42 percent of them are working for 5 am – 1 pm shift and remaining 10 percent of them are working for 11 am – 7 pm shift.

Table 6

Distribution of respondents basing on the existence of difference between permanent and temporary labourers in case of working hours

Existence of Difference	Frequency	Percent
Yes	446	81.4
No	102	18.6
Total	548	100.0

Table 6 is about the difference between permanent and temporary labourers in case of working hours of the sample respondents. Out of the total respondents 81.4 percent stated that there is a difference and remaining 18.6 stated that there is no difference between permanent and temporary workers in coffee plantation as far as working hours are concerned.

Table 7

Distribution of respondents basing on their status of relationship with their owner

Relationship with owner	Frequency	Percent
Personal	97	17.7
Work related	451	82.3
Total	548	100.0

Table 7 is about status of relationship between workers and owner at workplace. Around 80 percent of them are having only work related relationship and remaining 17.7 percent of them opined that there is a personal relationship between owner and workers.

Table 8

Distribution of respondents basing on their type of control by owner

Type of control on worker	Frequency	Percent
Autocratic	36	6.6
Democratic	191	34.9

Supportive	222	40.5
Benevolent	99	18.1
Total	548	100.0

Table 8 is about type of control by the owner on their workers. Out of the total respondents 40.5 percent of them stated that they are experiencing Supportive behaviour, 34.9 percent of them experienced Democratic behaviour, 18.1 percent of them Benevolent behaviour and remaining 6.6 percent of them are experiencing Autocratic type of control at workplace by the owner.

Table 9**Distribution of respondents basing on their Weekend Holidays**

Availability of Weekend Holidays	Frequency	Percent
Yes	458	83.6
No	90	16.4
Total	548	100.0

If Yes, Whether Paid

Whether Paid for Weekend Holidays	Frequency	Percent
No	458	83.6
Total	548	100.0

Table 9 depicts the opinion of the sample respondents on their availability on Weekend holidays and whether paid or not for availing weekend holiday. It shows that 83.6 percent of the respondents can avail holiday during weekends and they have no wages for weekend holidays. Remaining 16.4 percent of cannot avail weekends ever.

Table 10**Distribution of respondents basing on their Festival Holidays**

Festival Holidays	Frequency	Percent
Yes	471	85.9
No	77	14.1
Total	548	100.0

If yes, Whether Paid

Whether paid for Festival Holidays	Frequency	Percent
No	471	85.9
Total	548	100.0

Table 10 depicts the opinion of the sample respondents on the availability of Festival Holidays and whether paid or not for availing Festival holidays. It shows that 85.9 percent of the respondents can avail festival holidays and do not receive wages for festival holidays. And remaining 14.1 percent of them cannot avail festival holidays ever.

Table 11**Distribution of respondents basing on their Casual Leaves**

Availability of Casual Leaves	Frequency	Percent
Yes	81	14.8
No	467	85.2
Total	548	100.0

If yes, Whether Paid

Whether paid for Casual Leaves	Frequency	Percent
Yes	81	100.0
Total	81	100.0

Table 11 depicts the opinion of the sample respondents on the availability of Casual Leaves and whether paid or not for availing Casual Leaves. It shows that 85.2 percent of the respondents cannot avail casual leaves and only 14.8 percent of them can avail casual leaves. They have wages for availing casual leaves.

Findings based on their Working Environment of Plantation Workers

The present study reveals that, the type of work carried by most of the respondents is in seed collection are equal in percent of people are involved in planting, manuring, cleaning, and weeding all together. The occupational status of the respondents reveals that most of them work on contract basis, some of them are involved in daily work and only less number of them are permanent workers and most of the respondent's relationship with their owner is purely work related. Moreover, most of the respondent's owners are supportive in nature, followed by democratic and a few number of them are autocratic in nature. A vast majority of the respondents do not have the availability of weekend holidays and even if they get weekend holiday they are not being paid for that. Further it is found that majority of them get festival holidays but they are not being paid for those festival holidays. As per The opinion of the respondents reveals that majority of them do not get any casual leaves and those who avail the casual leaves are being paid for that. With regard to the welfare facilities that are provided at the work place, it is found that more than half of the respondents are provided with drinking water facility, all the respondents stated that they work in a clean hygienic conditions, however none of them is having latrine cum bathroom facility, majority of them feel that they are provided with sitting facility and all of them agreed that there exists rest intervals for all of them.

The respondents opinion on health and safety measures at the workplace, the study reveals that majority of them do not receive any frequent medical checkup, a vast majority of them do not receive any emergency services but they receive accident treatment and all of them receive snake bite referral service and for most of them first aid facility is provided but for most of them blood test is not done. With regard to the frequent usage of equipment that changes the nature of work it is found that most of them feel that there exists change in the nature of work due to usage of equipment. The tribal workers face lot of problems at the work. In this connection most of them stated that they face lot of technical and health problems at work, all of them stated that they are provided with low wages, most them agreed that lot of work is extracted from them, moreover there are not regular works and a vast majority of them are exposed to job insecurity. However, most of them do not face any physical abuse and verbal abuse at the work except for the few and they also stated that they majority of them do not face any sexual harassment which is a good sign and there is no there is no wage deductions except in few cases.

With regard to the occupational risks and its impact on health it has been identified that out of several problems all of them encounter with wasp bites and majority of them face the problem due to snake bites, skin disorders and wild animals threat. Other than these, they also face the problems relating to Ligament problems and body & limb pains and a

considerable number of them suffer with arthritis, age related problems and so on. With regard to the respondents opinion towards job security it has been revealed that most of them were neutral and feel that they are not being provided with fair amount for the work, most of them are not satisfied with the nature in which they are doing their work, more than half of them did not express any opinion whether they get bored with their present job or not and most of them were neutral in expressing their opinion whether they feel dignity in doing the job.

Conclusion

Coffee is a labour intensive plantation crop. The productivity and quality of coffee depends largely on the labour force. Hence the responsibility is on the management of the coffee plantations to provide good working conditions, adequate wages, housing, education facilities, health and nutrition to their workers. The government, non-governmental organizations, representative groups should emphasis on improving the quality of work life in the coffee plantations. The legislations enacted for the plantation workers must be reviewed regularly and a follow up of its implementation.

The results of this study reveals and enlighten the Working Environment of tribal coffee plantation workers. There are many shortcomings in their work related issues. To improve their living standards and status in society, the Government & Owners of the coffee plantation should take steps to improve Their living standards as Coffee Plantation working environment is far worse what they exist today. This study will be useful to the farmers, large and small growers, processors, researchers and policy makers, and would serve as a base for further study related to labourers and Coffee plantation.

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