

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN TEA ESTATES OF MUNNAR

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ABSTRACT

The study entitled Human Resource Management in Tea Estates of Munnar was undertaken to evaluate the nature of Human Resource Practices in the tea estates of Munnar. The study also includes the perception of employees towards various welfare amenities, the efficiency of tea plantation workers and the causes of their inefficiency. The study shows that, most of the workers in Munnar region are illiterates and unskilled. The workers are paid only nominal wages and they are compelled to do 6 days per week and 8 hours per day. The Management is obliged to undertake various welfare facilities like safe drinking water, proper toilets, proper electricity and school for their children. But in this region, the management is not in a position to implement such facilities in a sound manner. This creates a negative impact on workers. The major issues in this region are Inadequate Compensation System, Lack of proper Medical Facilities and Lack of Safety Equipment.

The majority of the workers are unaware of Plantation Act- 1951, Minimum Wage Act-1948, Maternity Benefit Act-1961. The workers efficiency was assessed by using variables like Absenteeism Rate and Productivity. The main causes of inefficiency found in workers are over time work, genuine personal issues, Personal rift between workers and management, Occurrence of accidents, Lack of welfare amenities, inadequate compensation system, and improper working conditions.

It is the duty of the Government machinery to undertake awareness programmes to educate the workers and the management regarding various Acts and Rules of Plantation and Factories Act.

Key words: - Welfare amenities, Labour efficiency

Tea is an aromatic beverage, commonly prepared by pouring hot or boiling water over cured leaves of the *Camellia Sinensis* and is considered as next to water. Some teas have a cooling, slightly bitter and peculiar flavour, while others are prepared to give sweet taste. Tea originated in China as a medical drink it came to the west via Portuguese Priests and merchants, who introduced it there during the 16th Century *Camellia Sinensis* is an evergreen plant that grows mainly in tropical and subtropical climates. The optimum temperature necessary for tea cultivation ranges between 16⁰ Celsius to 25⁰Celsius. Some varieties can also tolerate marine climates and are cultivated as far north as Cornwall in the United Kingdom, Perth shire in Scotland, Washington State in the United States, Vancouver Island in Canada. Also as far south as Hobart on the Australian island of Tasmania. Tea plants are propagated from seed cutting about 4 to 12 years are needed for a plant to bear seed and about 3 years before a new plant is ready for harvesting. Tea plant require rain fall of at least 127 cm a year. High quality tea plants are cultivated at elevations of up to 1500 m (4900 ft.) above sea level. Tea is one of the most popular hot beverages. It consumed daily in almost all homes, offered to guests consumed in high amounts in domestic and official surroundings and is made with the addition of milk. Tea has been declared as national drink since April 2013. The Indian Tea industry as the second largest employer in the country has enjoyed the attention of the Indian Government in terms of exports, the Indian tea industry enjoys the fourth position. Whenever the exports went down, the government has been sympathetic to the demand of the industry and its cultivators. It has passed resolutions supporting the Tea industry domestically and has also lobbied extensively with organizations like the WTO internationally. India is the second largest producer of Tea in the world after China. But over 70 % of the tea being consumed with in India itself. Assam continues to lead the nation's five growing regions with an April – December harvest of 607 million kilos, up 5% compared to the previous year. The southern growing regions of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka showed a 16% increased for the period to 196 million kilos. Speaking about domestic consumption, it had reached 856 million kilos in 2015 and 875 million kilos in 2016. Final numbers are not available but the Tea Board estimates consumption will top 850 million kilos.

The India tea association declared that overall production grows on an average of 6% every year. Small growers contribute to more than 30% of the total according to Indian Tea Board estimates.

India exports mainly to Egypt, Pakistan, and UK with orthodox production to Iraq, Russia. In terms of area under Tea plantations on an average during the last two decade China lead (45%) the world followed by India (21%), Srilanka (7%), Kenya (5%), Vietnam (3%). India's tea plantations can be largely grouped in to two regions, North India and South India occupying 77.68% and 22.32% respectively of the total areas under Tea in India. Assam and West Bengal are the important Tea growing states according for 67.87% and 27.84% respectively of area under cultivation in North India. The remaining 4.29% is located in Tripura, Bihar, Utter Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Orissa and Meghalaya. In South India Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka are the major Tea growing states contributing 65.66, 32.48 and 1.86 percentages respectively.

In Kerala tea growing districts are Idukki, Wayanad, Kottayam, Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur, Malappuram and Palakkad. Though tea is grown in all these districts there is considerable special concentration in two districts, Idukki and Wayanadu. They account for about 87.24% of the total areas of Kerala. Against the total area of 3.28 lakh hectares under tea cultivation in the country. Kerala accounts for only 0.28 lakh hectares. In respect of production. Kerala retains only 8%. Tea plantations are owned by big companies who employ a huge labour force. Kerala has tea cultivation spread over the High Ranges. The Western Ghats run along the length of Kerala, from north to south, and there are a number of beautiful hill stations on these ranges. Some of the prime estates and plantations in Kerala come in hill ranges of Munnar, Ramakelmedu, Charalkunnu and Vilangakunnu. The presence of numerous hill stations and estates add to the natural splendor and beauty of Kerala.

Munnar is the charming chunk of the lofty Western Ghats of Kerala. Munnar is situated at an altitude of 6000 feet in Idukki district. It has tea growing elevations ranging from 1050 meters to 2600 meters and rainfall varies from 1200 to 6500mm annually. The total area covered under tea in Munnar is 38500 hectors and produces 25 million kilograms tea per year.

Human Resource Management is a process of bringing people and organizations together so that the goals of each one are met. It tries to secure the best from people by winning their whole-hearted co-operation." Human Resource Management is the art of procuring, developing and maintain competent workforce to achieve the goals of an organization in an efficient and effective manner. The scope of Human Resource Management is very wide. In fact, no organizational activity is completely removed from humans. Even automatic processes and equipments are designed and implemented by someone, capable and motivated people can have profound impact on everything an organization does.

Human Resource Management is the management of Organisations workforce efficiently and effectively in order to magnify effect of changes in an organization. HRM includes acquiring adequate number of workers, developing their skill and talents, judicious utilization, maintaining and compensating their services in consistent with the organizational environment. In an organization management has a herculean task to handle major issues in connection with workers of different dimensions. A sound management system should be adopted to obtain worker's commitment towards the organisations.

Tea plantation industry has dual effect- agriculture and industry. Plucking of leaves and other allied activities are agriculture in nature while its processing is an industrial activity. The management in plantation sector need large human resource requirements from farm level to the processing of tea leaves.

Human Resource Management has a major system concerned with the acquisition of labourers, effective utilisation of labourers, assessing their performance standard provision of incentives and other benefits, grievance redressal mechanism, handling rift among different category of workers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Boje Doni (2012) in her study HRM in Tea Gardens of Arunachal Pradesh explain the issues of human resources in tea gardens in Arunachal Pradesh. The study found that women workers constitute 50% of the total workforce in all the studied estates, the workers are paid low wages and they are compelled to work in 6 days per week. The author use Tabular Analysis, Percentages, Garrett's rank Method for the analysis of Data

Ananda Das Gupta (2017) in his study Improving Labour Productivity through HRD, Observed low productivity hinders all activities in tea gardens of Assam region. In ability to expand the area of cultivation, ageing the tea bushes, in adequate replanting of bushes, absence of adequate welfare measures create low productivity in this region. The author suggest various measures to improve productivity in this region.

Rajalaxmi Kamath (2017) in her study Women Tea Plantation workers strike in Munnar, Kerala: Lesson for trade unions in contemporary India, author observed about the impact of strike

exercised by the women tea worker of Kannan Devan Hill Plantations Limited. As a result of the strike, the plantation management compelled to hike the wages of Women according to the stand norms.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The compromise in the human resource management especially security and welfare measures by the various tea organisations in Kerala have affected the quality and quantity of tea production. The fall in quality of tea has resulted in fall in demand, both foreign and domestic. The fall in quantity has undermined the full potential of the industry.

The basic factors like adequate and fair compensation, bonus, incentives etc. are below the standards. In some organisations they are below than what is mentioned in the statute. There are other issues like poor basic amenities - drinking water, fresh air, first aid; faulty security measures towards accident prevention, sanitation, ventilation, health care; irregular work shifts; welfare measures like pension, housing facilities, medical aid, and children's education. Also the workers complain on the lack of opportunity for their development like job rotation, promotion, training, motivation and work freedom. These problems have resulted in strained employer – employee relationship, employee – employee relationship and employee – superior relationship. Meandered relationship will directly affect the working environment of the organization which will negatively influence their performance. This will lead to fall in productivity and quality of job. So these are the serious problems that will be addressed through this study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess workers perception towards various welfare measures provided by the management
- To assess the efficiency of the workers and identify causes of inefficiency

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

- Selection of the study area: Munnar was chosen for the study because it is the leading tea producing area in the state of Kerala
- Selection of tea estates: Tea estates was selected on the basis of size of tea plantation and the number of workers employed, ten estates was selected for the study.
- Selection of Workers: 30 semiskilled and unskilled workers from each of ten tea estates of Munnar.

Source of Data: The primary data was collected from different category of workers through personal interview schedule. The data consists of status of workers, working environment, problems in working conditions, causes of in efficiency of workers. The data collected from different sectors is in inconsistent with the purpose of the study.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

- **Awareness level of workers towards various employment policies and procedures:**

There are many social security measures to protect workers from risk or contingencies such as old age, invalidity, unemployment, death, sickness, etc. It is generally regarded as a measure of ensuring justice.

With regard to this system majority of the workers are unaware of such social security measures. A certain percentage of sample population has some knowledge about this kind of provisions. The workers are not in a position to know about such provisions due to their illiteracy.

- **Perception of workers towards various amenities provided by the management:**

Labour welfare work is undertaken by various groups within and outside an organization to improve the living conditions of workers. The objective is to make the worker happy, healthy, committed and loyal.

- 56% of the workers are not satisfied with the housing facilities offered by the management. 26% of workers are moderate satisfaction regarding this aspect, remaining 22% of them are satisfied with housing facilities offered by the management

-With regard to education facilities 36% of workers are satisfied but remaining 64% of workers are not satisfied

- With regard to medical facilities, 25% of the workers are highly satisfied with medical assistance provided by the management, 20% of workers having moderate satisfaction regarding this facility. But 55% of workers are not satisfied with this facility offered by the management.

- **Perception of workers various incentives provided by the management**

Skill – based payment plans and performance –linked rewards have gained popularity since early 60s. The current craze for a variety of employee- oriented incentive scheme may be traced to the trend towards quality improvement teams and employee commitment programmes.

In this regard workers may be classified in to satisfied and dissatisfied. The study shows that 60% of the workers are dissatisfied with the incentives provided by the management. But 40% of them are satisfied in all respects.

- **Labour efficiency of the workers in tea estates of Munnar and causes of in efficiency**

The efficiency of workers plays an indispensable role of every organization irrespective of size and financial structure. Efficiency enhances production and productivity. In tea plantations the workers capacity to undertake activities have major role, while inefficiency creates total upset of entire system.

- **Efficiency in terms of Absenteeism:**

The study reveals that six out of ten estates have high absenteeism rate and three estates have medium absenteeism rate. Only one estate has low absenteeism rate.

The study shows the causes of absenteeism among plantation workers are:

- Reliable personal problems and sickness
- Personal disparity with co- worker
- Drinking habits of workers

- Bonafied personal issues
- Occurrence of accidents
- Lack of welfare amenities
- Laziness

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

- Proper awareness should be given to both workers and owners regarding Plantation Labour Act and other labour acts relevant to the labour working in tea estates
- Implement sound Human Resource Development Programme to this Sector
- Wages of the workers should be fixed in accordance with the Minimum Wage Act-1948
- Welfare officers should be appointed in every tea estates to look after the interest of the workers
- Bonus should be distributed in accordance with the Provisions of Bonus Act
- Adequate Welfare measures should be adopted to safe guard the interest of the workers

CONCLUSION

Munnar is a major tea growing estate among non- traditional tea growing estates. The majority of the workers in Munnar region are illiterate and unskilled. The management is not ready to provide adequate remuneration to the workers. The workers of this estates are dissatisfied with the facilities offered by the management. Neither the worker nor the management are aware about the various laws and acts relevant to plantation work. Management faces certain problems regarding the human resource mainly because of irregularity of workers. The Governmental Machinery should take necessary steps to aware both workers and management regarding various Acts and Rules relevant to the plantation labour act.

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