



Does working in tea garden ensure a better socio-economic status among the women? An empirical study in Tinsukia district of Assam

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Abstract

Women play an important role in the overall development of family, society as well as country. Women worker are the major labour source in various tea garden of Tinsukia District of Assam. They play a significant role in the establishment of tea industry in this region. The present study reveals that the socioeconomic status of the tea garden women workers who are very poor and almost all the women workers are illiterate few of them had attend formal education till primary level. According to 2011 census report, the total population of Assam is 31169272 of which 15954927 are male and 15214345 are female. So the states has a huge man power (Economic Survey, Assam 2010-11). Women workers are the most potential labour force in the tea industry of Assam. In the present study respondents were mostly women specially those who are married from the tea gardens of Margherita block of Tinsukia districts, Assam.

Keywords: empowerment, tea garden worker, employment generation

Introduction

Women workers are the most potential labour force in the tea industry of Assam. They are the victim of circumstances and they are struggling for their existences. Tea garden women workers are mostly illiterate and they are not aware of the minimum standard of living prejudices, superstitious beliefs, alcoholism etc. are high among this underdeveloped community. Socially they are less exposed, economically hard pressed, educationally and culturally low which cast gloomy picture on their posterity.

According to Sergen's Medical Dictionary (2012) socio economic status implies the standing of a person or group in the community or society based on education, occupation and income which is often used as a benchmark for investigating health inequalities. Women workers in the tea garden comprise half of the total population of the tea garden. Women have been employed in the tea industry from its inception. Out of the tea labour employed more than 50 to 60 percent is engaged in crop harvesting. From among these crop harvesting about 80 percent are women. Assam is the oldest and the largest tea production in the country.

In Assam a women worker in the tea plantation generally leads a very leisure and relaxation. All tea garden women carried her day to day work along with all domestic activities. The role of women has been changing in modern time with rapidly changing norms of our society both inside and outside home. In addition to their role within the family the tea garden women are now having a large role in the labour market.

Literature Review

Phukan (1986) ^[1] throws light on the sociological aspect of the women labourers of Assam. Though they extended their hand

as earning member of the family, most of them are illiterate. Nag (1990) ^[2] observed that as the tea industry needed a low paid labour force to work in unhealthy conditions and since such labour was locally unavailable labour had to be recruited from other states. He also observe that some improvement had been made in the tea garden since the last decades but even so the wages in tea garden are still very low.

Hazarika (1999) ^[3] observed that majority of the women worker in tea garden are engaged in plucking activities, but during the lean season the workers are forced to be engaged in pruning, manuring, watering, digging weeding etc. while carrying out various tasks standing with forward bending posture is the most common, leading to musculo-skeleton problems especially in the age group of 36-45 years. As the years of involvement increases, increased musculo- skeleton problem occurs.

Badruddin (1990) ^[5] reports that in Assam 45% of women workers are employed in the tea plantations, while in the entire northeastern India, almost 60% women workers are engaged in plantation.

Bhadra (1985) ^[4] In his study the researcher covered almost all the aspect of working and social life of tea garden workers of NE India. The researcher also mentioned that there is a need to go into greater depth on socio-economic conditions of women workers to find out the solution of the problems that are faced by them.

Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic status of women's worker.
2. To study the health condition of women workers in tea garden.

Materials & Methods

In the present study, Tinsukia district of Assam was purposively selected. The present study deals with the women workers in tea gardens of Assam. The study was mainly comprised from primary data. In the district there are total 7 Blocks i.e. Guijan, Hapjan, Itakhuli, Kakapathar, Margherita, Sadiya and Saikhowa. Among the 7 Blocks of Tinsukia District data has been collected from Margherita Block, and a total number of 20 respondents were selected by following Simple Random Sampling technique, in order to obtain the representative sample, also a structured interview schedule was used as the main tool for collecting data in the present study.

Results and Discussion

Education and married women’s are the two important variables used to influence the socio- economic status of women tea garden workers. This is because the two above mention factors varies in their socio- economic status as well as in their health status, which are indirectly again the outcome of level of education and other economic factors.

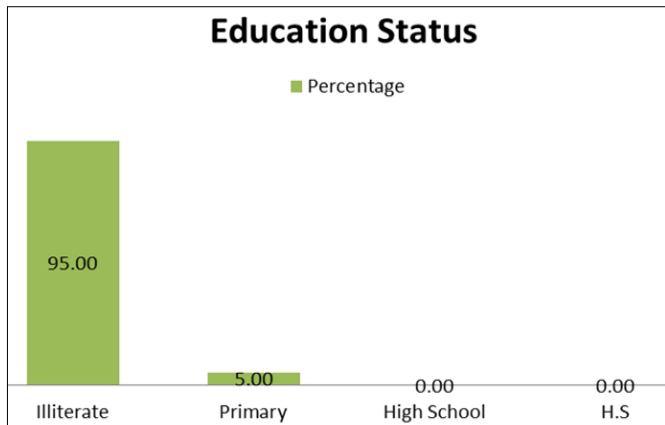


Fig 1: Education status of tea garden women workers:

In Figure 1 indicates Education status of the respondents and it revealed that all the women respondents those who are married, amongst them 95 per cent of the respondents are illiterate and only 5 per cent of the respondents are literate who attained only primary level education in the study area.

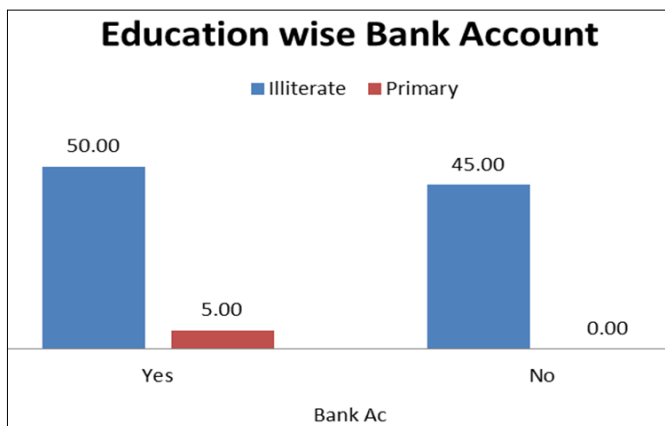


Fig 2: Education wise bank account

Figure 2 showed the result that 55 per cent of the total respondents they have their own bank account amongst which 50 per cent was found to be higher in the study area whose educational qualification was illiterate, only 5 per cent respondents have their bank account who is literate. The results doesnt show much diffence of having bank account according to their educational qualification. Because most of the respondents are illiterate.

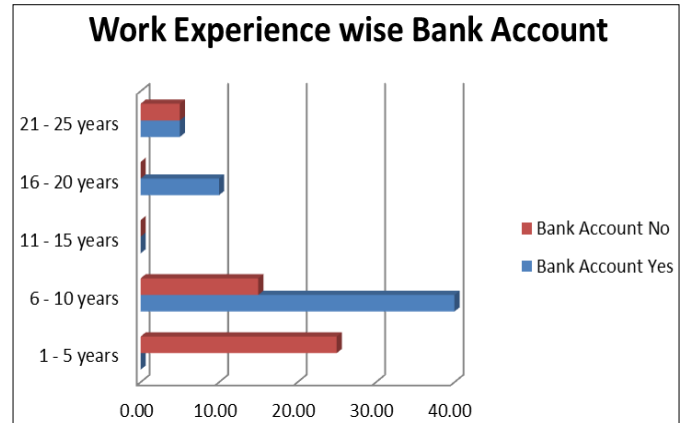


Fig 3: Work experience wise bank account

In the above Figure 3, Results revealed that those who have their bank account, among them 40 per cent was found to be higher amongst all and those respondents work experience was under 6 to 10 years. Again only 5 per cent of the respondents have their bank account whose work experience was more than 20 year, this may be due to the respondents age factor or lack of awareness.

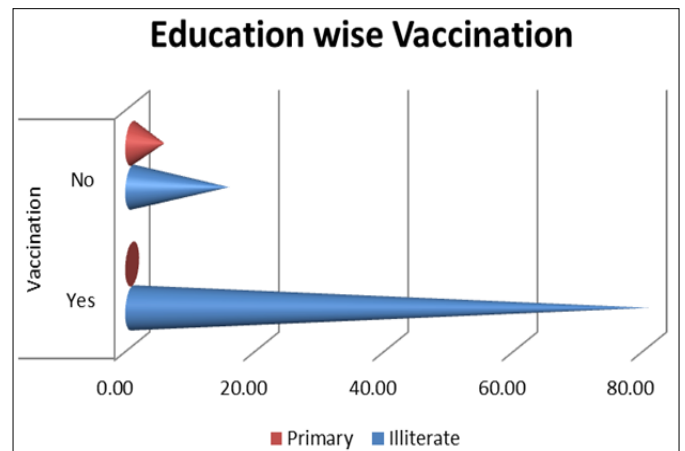


Fig 4: Education wise Vaccination

Figure 4, showed the result that 80 per cent of the total respondents they use to take vaccination timely, amongst which all the respondents (80.00) whose educational qualification was illiterate, only 20.00 per cent respondents was reported that they are not taking vaccination timely among which 5.00 per cent respondents was litterate whose educational qualification was up to primary level. The results doesnt show much diffence of taking vaccination timely according to their educational qualification. Because most of

the respondents (95.00 per cent) were illiterate.

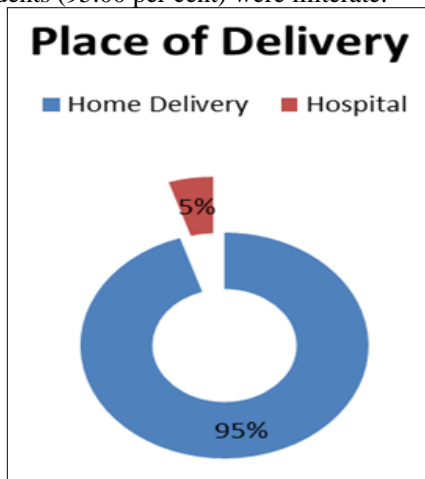


Fig 5: Place of Delivery

Figure 5, indicates place of delivery of the respondents, the results showed that 95.00 per cent of the total respondents they prefer home delivery, amongst which all the respondents (95.00) were illiterate, on the other hand, 5.00 per cent respondents was reported that they prefer hospital for delivery, among which 5.00 per cent respondents was literate whose educational qualification was up to primary level. The results does not show a significant difference between education and place of delivery, Because 95.00 per cent of the total respondents were illiterate and all of them prefer home delivery though they use to visit hospitals for vaccination and post natal check up but still they don't preferred hospitals for their delivery.

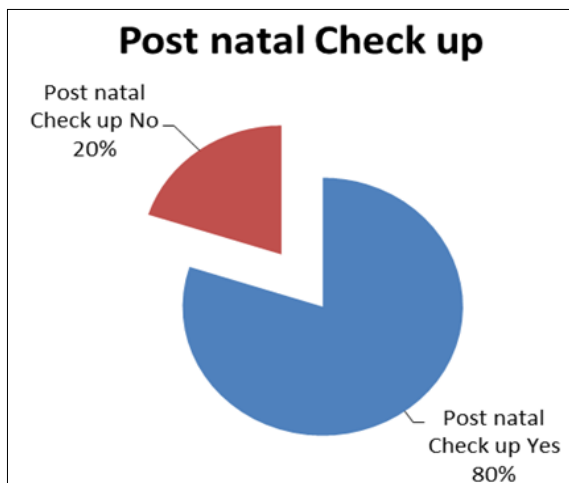


Fig 6: Post Natal Check up

Figure 6, indicates post natal check up of the respondents, the results showed that 80 per cent of the total respondents they use to go for post natal check up timely though they prefer home delivery during pregnancy, amongst which all the respondents (80.00) whose educational qualification was illiterate, on the other hand, 20.00 per cent respondents was reported that they are not aware about this post natal check up, among which 5.00 per cent respondents was literate whose educational qualification was up to primary level. The results

doesnot show much diffence of post natal check up timely according to their educational qualification. Because most of the respondents (95.00 per cent) were illiterate.

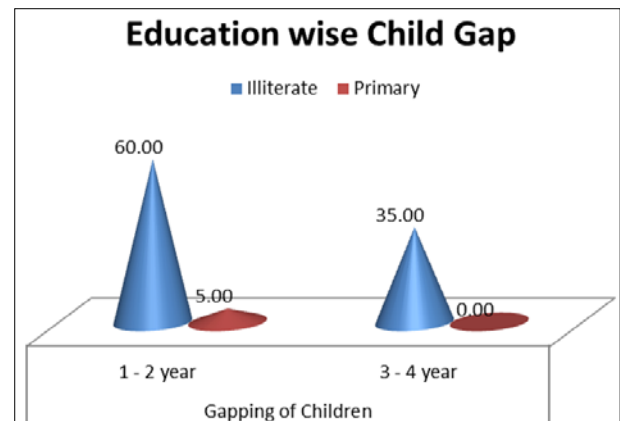


Fig 7: Education wise Child Gap

Figure 7 indicates the important part of the study which is education wise child gap, the results showed that 65.00 per cent of the total respondents child gap was between 1 to 2 year and it was found to be higher in the study area. On the other hand 35.00 per cent of the total respondents has reported that their gapping of children was between 3 to 4 years. Results also revealed that 60.00 per cent of the total respondents whose child gap was between 1 to 2 years they are mostly illiterate, which was found to be highest. Results doesnt show much difference between education and child gap because it is clearly visible from the above table that only 5.00 per cent respondent was literate whose educational qualification was up to primary level they also did not have a proper gap between the children's.

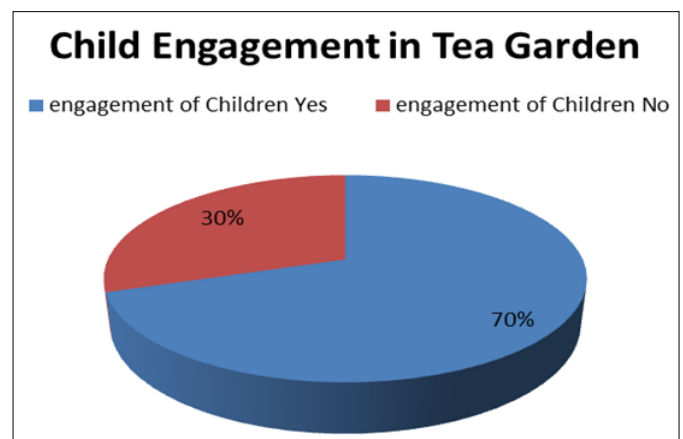


Fig 8: Child Engagement in Tea Garden

Figure 8 indicates the engagement of respondents children in the tea garden, the results revealed that 70.00 per cent respondents engage their children in tea garden which was higher in the study area, on the other hand 30.00 per cent respondents denied the engagement of children in tea garden.

Conclusion

In the study 95% of the respondents were found to be illiterate

and only 5% of the total respondents was literate who attained only primary level education in the study area. Therefore the results doesn't depend upon the education as a variable. From the research it is found that the health scenario of the women workers seen to be worst, as they give more importance to their work instead of education and health care. It is clear that 95% of the total respondents prefer home delivery whereas 80 percent of them use take the vaccination and post natal check ups as well. From the above conclusion, it can be concluded that the tea garden women workers are still lagging behind in term of socially, economically and culturally. Improper attainment of adequate education is a major reason for lagging behinds in all the fields. Education makes women more competent in the process of socio- economic and political development which empower women in decision making in the society and in achieving the goals of equality and development. Imparting an adequate formal education to girls child should be encouraged as doing so will bring a change in the society and also in the health status of the women. As most of them are illiterate and for that they are working only for their livelihood of the family.

Recommendation

- Women education should be given importance at all levels. Education gives liberation to them to act independently to some extent.
- The management and trade unions should organize the literacy campaign among tea garden workers to their own time to improve their level of education.
- The management and government should organised the family planning programmed among the women workers.
- As the women workers are less conscious about their health and food they eat, the mortality rate is much higher within the women workers in tea garden, so they need to be more conscious. Moreover NGOs and government agencies should take measures so that they can be conscious about their health.

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