

Labour Cost Management: Role of non-monetary factors at Indian Tea Plantation Sector

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ABSTRACT

Indian Tea Plantation Sector is Labour intensive. Labour cost is one of the important cost instigating factors in total cost of production in Indian Tea Sector. Optimizing labour cost by enhancing labour productivity is a challenging task, however; it is imminent in the existing scenario. Currently, Indian Tea Plantation sector is in doldrums' due to increasing cost of production and international competition. This paper on labour cost management explores the role of non-monetary factors in optimizing labour cost considering the dimensions of labour shortage and low productivity of labour. This study on south Indian Tea plantations identifies significant impact of non-monetary factors namely labour shortage and low productivity of laborer on labour cost. This situation is a setback and impacts on improving competency of the sector with mounting total cost of production.

Keywords: *Labour cost, Motivation, Hygiene factors.*

INTRODUCTION

Human resources generate an idea of formation and manage organizations with an intention to create wealth to the society. The rapid growth of industrialization and globalization increased the mobility of workforce and in turn resulted in shortage of skilled workforce in Tea plantation sector. As Tea Plantation is mostly labour intensive, it is becoming a herculean task to the top management for attracting new and retaining skilled workforce for plantation activities. The management, therefore, has to formulate personnel policies and principles focusing to ensure safety and healthy working environment, consistent and fair treatment, motivating and building loyalty for optimising labour cost.

The management in an organized sector remunerates employees with both monetary and non-monetary benefits. The non-monetary benefits include recognition of merit, growth prospects, competent supervision, comfortable working environment, flextime etc. These benefits increase earnings and generally motivate employees for higher efficiency and output. It would also result in mitigating fatigue, labour unrest, labour turnover, and satisfying employee benefits. The effective

human resources management practices facilitate employees to achieve their personal goals by working in an organization. Hence, the working environment should be congenial and should assist employees in achieving personal goals to enhance their positive contribution towards organizational objectives (K.Aswathappa, 2009). It is, therefore, personal objectives of employees must be fulfilled as they are supreme factors for motivation and retention. Otherwise, employees' performance and job satisfaction would decline and result in higher labour turnover. This labour turnover affects productivity and results in higher cost of recruiting and training new workers resulting increase in total costs. The negative impacts of labour turnover can be minimized with attractive wages and fringe benefits, satisfactory working environment, improving working conditions, hours of work, creating good working atmosphere between workers, supervisors and managers, recreational facilities, retirement benefits, housing and transportation etc.,

The cost of labour turnover as a component in the labour cost has two types, namely preventive cost and replacement cost. The preventive costs are incurred to reduce labour turnover eg., the amount spent on accommodation, transport facilities,

holidays, welfare schemes, pension scheme etc. Replacement costs are costs incurred on advertising, recruitment, selection, engagement medical examination, training of new workers and the costs incurred due to abnormal breakage of tools and machines, defective and low output accidents etc., caused because of inefficient and inexperienced new workers. It is, therefore, essential for an organization to spend adequate amount to keep labour turnover at low level otherwise it is required to spend more on replacement cost, which ultimately results in increased labour cost. In theory, it is clear that, a part of the labour cost can be minimized through employee motivation, creating sound organizational environment and enhancing productivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The labour cost is defined as the total expenditure borne by employers in order to employ workers, a concept which has been adopted in the Community framework and complies broadly with the international definition of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 1966). The business dictionary defines labour cost as wages paid to workers during an accounting period on daily, weekly, monthly, or job basis, plus payroll and related taxes and benefits (if any). The term labour turnover is concerned with movements of individuals into jobs (hirings) and out of jobs (separations) over a particular period (OECD). It is depending upon several independent variables including the expansion and contraction of establishments or firms, and the movement of workers into and out of ongoing jobs in establishments or firms. The employees' productivity indicates the higher workers output at the given resources by optimizing cost. It results in enlightened human resource management with lower employee turnover, better productivity; loyal, efficient workers; higher quality work. Further, the organizational environment with a range of external factors affects its operation and influences on the labour cost. A review of definition clearly makes and establishes direct relationship between effective management (i.e., providing a work environment that simultaneously achieves company goals and employees' goals) and modern human resource management.

Kanungo R N & Misra Sasi B (1984) found

organizational determinants of low work motivation among Indian employees. The determinants are poor manpower planning inappropriate recruitment methods, lack of induction, training and lack of job maintenance and performance improvement programmes. In addition, low work motivation due to socialization influence, management's attitude towards labour, and inappropriate analysis and administration of reward system in organizations. Kanungo R N & Misra Sasi B (1994) in their scholastic work, they found that, (i) research in the area of work motivation and leadership in organizations in order to be meaningful must be theory driven (ii) programmatic as contrasted to fragmented research in these areas must be initiated (iii) research dealing with measurement of variables must demonstrate construct and criterion related validities and finally (iv) indigenous approaches to problems and measuring instruments developed in the Indian context are necessary.

Joseph A. Ritter & Lowell J. Taylor (1997) found that, piece rates or incentive pay plans provide powerful direct incentives, but have limited applicability. The performance-bonding concept adds a valuable general perspective on employment practices, such as job ladders, promotion tournaments, mandatory retirement, and pension policy.

Snellman, K. (1998) studied on the appointments of referred workers as a way of motivating employees. The study showed that it can be profitable to appoint new employees according to the suggestions of old employees even though it means that the employer deliberately appoints applicants with lower ability.

Joseph Blasi & others (2004) found that, human resource policies, nominally controlled by management, is positively related to employee reports of co-worker performance and other good workplace outcomes including perceptions of fairness, good supervision, and worker input and influence.

Josse Delfgaauw & Robert Dur (2004) developed a model of an economy in which workers differ in laziness and in public service motivation, and characterize optimal incentive contracts for public

sector workers under different informational assumptions. When civil servants' effort is unverifiable, lazy workers find working in the public sector highly attractive and may crowd out dedicated workers. When effort is verifiable, a cost-minimizing government optimally attracts dedicated workers as well as the economy's laziest workers by offering separating contracts, which are both distorted.

Dewettinck, K. & Buyens, D. (2006) revealed that employee's psychological empowerment fully mediates the relationship between job motivating potential and the outcome variables. Their findings confirm the importance of job design approaches

to empowering employees.

Goerg, Sebastian & others (2009) studied on reward mechanisms and production technologies relating to team efforts. The study demonstrated unequal rewards can potentially increase productivity by facilitating coordination, and that the effect strongly interacts with the exact shape of production function. The study highlighted the relevance of production function for organization construction and suggested that equal treatment of equals is neither a necessary nor a sufficient prerequisite for eliciting high performance in teams. Saradindu Bhaduri & Hemant Kumar (2009) considering the 'grass root' innovators in India, the

Popular Theories of Motivation

Theory	Profounder	Remarks
Hierarchy of needs	Abraham Maslow	Five needs rank in an hierarchical order from lowest to highest: physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. An individual moves up the hierarchy and, when a need is substantially realized, moves up to the next need.
Theory X/Theory Y	Douglas McGregor	Proposes two alternative sets of assumptions that managers hold about human beings: motivations – one, basically negative, labeled theory X; and the other, basically positive, labeled theory Y. McGregor argues that theory Y assumptions are more valid than theory X and that employee motivation would be maximized by giving workers greater job involvement and autonomy.
Motivation – Hygiene	Frederick Herzberg	Argues that intrinsic job factors motivate, whereas extrinsic factors only placate employees.
Achievement, affiliation, and power Motives	David McClelland	Proposes that there are three major needs in workplace situations: achievement, affiliation, and power. A high need to achieve has been positively related to higher work performance when jobs provide responsibility, feedback, and moderate challenge.
Equity Theory	J. Stacey Adams	An individual compares his or her input/outcome ration to relevant others. If there is a perceived inequity, the individual will augment his or her behaviors, or choose another comparison referent.
Expectancy theory	Victor Vroom	Proposes that motivation is a function of valence (Value) of the effort – performance and the performance-reward relationships.

(Compiled from different sources)

study examined the motivations behind innovative behavior. The study draws upon the literature on reflectance motivation theory to construct operational indicators of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. It is found that, pure extrinsic forms of motivation drive only a fraction of individual innovative behavior. Also, importance of intrinsic motivation in guiding innovative behavior is found to high when uncertainty is high.

The above literatures emphasized that, effective human resource management plays an important role in enhancing employees' productivity and retention. The empirical studies documented that, higher productivity of employees reduces wastages and results in lower cost of products/services as well as output per employee would increases. Similarly, labour retention would reduce replacement cost of labour and results in prevention of break in the operation cycle of production. Finally it would result in enhancement of labour productivity with cost optimization. The management of plantation companies, especially, in the Indian Tea Sector is facing heat of labour cost in production due to labour shortage and low productivity of labors. In addition, monetary benefits to labour force are also not yielding sufficient results in addressing the issue. Further, there is a dearth of research in ascertaining the reason for labour shortage and low productivity of labour force impacting labour cost at Tea sector. It is, therefore, this study is proposed to address the issue of labour cost as well as to add new dimension of labour cost management to existing literature of cost management.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study intended to achieve following objectives –

- a. To ascertain the role of non-monetary factors on labour shortage and low productivity at Indian Tea Plantations.
- b. To suggest a framework for labour cost management in Tea Plantation Sector.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

- 1 – There is no significant impact of non-monetary factors on workers performance at plantations. (*H₀*)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This exploratory research study used both primary and secondary data from different sources. The primary data was collected by a personal interview method as most of workers were illiterates. The secondary data was gathered from several empirical studies, journals, Tea Board website and other published works. The survey has been carried out at Tea Gardens of Southern India as per the sample.

Sample Design

Population – All Grassroots work force of Tea Plantations (South India)

Sample unit – Worker at Corporate Tea Garden

Sample Size 1064 workers at Tea Plantations of southern India. The study covered 3 states of Tea Cultivation in south India (viz., Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka). The sample size is based on the population of 3, 61,500¹ at 95% confidence level with 4% confidence interval.

Table 1: Sample Size

Plantation State	Labour employed ¹	Sample	
		Number	Percentage
Karnataka	4540	14	1.32%
Kerala	90575	266	25.00%
Tamil Nadu	266385	784	73.68%
Total	361500	1064	100.00%

Sampling technique – The study chosen multistage stratified proportionate sampling technique. Accordingly, the total sample size of 1064 sample units were chosen as under –

DATA COLLECTION

The study collected data through personal interview method using structured questionnaire. As respondents were not able to understand, read and write English, the study used interview method of data collection. The study, while collecting data from each estate of the concerned state, size of estates workforce was given importance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Indian Tea Sector has been accelerated by the Tea Board of India from 1st April, 1954. Indian Tea has great demand due to its quality and flavor in the international and domestic market. However, Tea sector started bleeding due to many issues of concern including labour cost. The workforce in the sector is also on declining trend. Table no. 2 states that, there is no substantial increase of labour employed from 2000-2006.

Profile of Grassroots workforce of the study:

Plucking of Tea leaves being the first activity in Tea manufacturing process, the study, defines Grassroots workforce as workers working at Tea gardens in plucking and related activities like application of fertilizer, pruning etc., The Grassroots workforce under the sample of study to the extent of 97% were females. Out of total 1064 respondents, 46% were in the age group of 45-55

and 5% were below the age of 25 years. Further, it is observed that, the number of young workforce at all the sample estates was found to be scanty and male workers were significantly involved in leaf transportation and other processing activities at the estate.

Table no. 3 shows the workers employed in Tea Plantation from 2003 to 2007. Women workers on an average, being more than 52% were normally found at garden level. Further, it is evidenced that, there is no substantial increase in the workforce from 2003.

ROLE OF NON-MONETARY FACTORS

Initially, during 1st Phase, the study explored the reasons for increasing labour cost at Tea Plantation sector. It was found that decreasing labour productivity, increasing labour shortage, burden of social cost and State Governments policies were

Table 2: District wise Estimated Average Daily Number of Labour Employed in Tea Plantation in South India

Districts/States	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Coimbatore	25281	25407	26171	28746	29969	30045	30067
Kanyakumari	167	174	179	202	206	204	208
Madurai	3078	3117	3211	3286	3412	3406	3365
Nilgiris	225440	237136	244276	233975	230235	230572	230647
Tirunelveli	1814	1831	1886	2142	2205	2156	2098
Total Tamil Nadu	255780	267665	275723	268351	266027	266383	266385
Coorg	647	656	676	810	829	815	833
Chickmagalur	2531	2552	2629	2879	2975	3245	3005
Hassan	611	629	648	714	704	709	702
Total Karnataka	3789	3837	3953	4403	4508	4769	4540
Kottayam	1109	1109	1142	1325	1357	1312	1369
Idukki (c)	58399	58457	60218	65749	68086	67963	68119
Palghat	1958	1952	2011	2381	2464	2470	2492
Quilon	546	552	569	674	693	690	699
Trichur	1539	1550	1597	1903	1973	1982	1995
Trivandrum	829	829	854	967	1010	1008	1024
Wynaad	12706	12749	13133	14185	14775	14723	14877
Total Kerala	77086	77198	79524	87184	90358	90148	90575
Total South India	336655	348700	359200	359938	360893	361300	361500
Total All India	1210055	1232150	1255100	1256210	1257610	1258800	1259500

(Source: Tea Board of India, database)

Table 3: Estimated number of Labour employed in Tea Plantation (All India)

Category	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Women Workers	6,18,630	6,20,750	6,23,727	6,30,642	6,34,214
Male Workers	5,89,854	5,97,835	6,00,035	6,00,180	6,00,549
Adolescent	47,726	39,025	35,038	28,678	25,187
Total	12,56,210	12,57,610	12,58,800	12,59,500	12,59,950

(Source: Tea Board of India database)

Table 4: Simple Tabulation of Labour Shortage

Sl. No.	Particulars	Yes	No	Do not know	Chi-Square
1.	Lack of awareness on healthy living & food habits	729(68.5)	189(17.8)	146(13.7)	595.242
2.	Lack of awareness about prospects of children's education	719(67.6)	189(17.8)	156(14.7)	562.930
3.	Attitude of supervisory estate staff	735(69.1)	157(14.8)	172(16.2)	612.103
4.	Conflicts amongst co-workers	578(54.3)	258(24.2)	228(21.4)	212.218
5.	Lack of knowledge on financial empowerment	634(59.6)	197(18.5)	233(21.9)	331.829
6.	Lack of knowledge on child care and rearing	722(67.9)	183(17.2)	159(14.9)	571.491
7.	Easy availability of Alcohol	767(72.1)	175(16.4)	122(11.5)	723.024
8.	Availability of alternate job in the immediate vicinity	668(62.8)	199(18.7)	197(18.5)	415.231

Source: Field survey

(Figures in parentheses are in percentages)

important factors influencing on labour cost. This study, therefore, identified two important factors influencing on labour cost namely, labour shortage and low productivity of labour. Primary survey of the study identified hygiene factors influencing on labour shortage and productivity of grassroots workforce. The survey data was subjected to statistical analysis through SPSS software. The detailed analysis of each component of labour cost is discussed in the following paragraphs.

LABOUR SHORTAGE

The labour shortage is key factor in labour cost management. The tabulated data of preliminary survey is as under –

The above table no.4 shows the significance of chi-square test of all variables towards labour shortage. The simple tabulation of respondents' acceptance level was also highlighted. In order to further explore

the significance of important variables, the data was subjected to factor analysis. The output of factor analysis is as under -

Table no. 5.1 reveals communalities, eigen value, percentage of variance and cumulative percentage of variance. Here, the study used extraction method with principal component analysis to identify factors contributing to labour shortage.

The above table no. 5.2, finds three variables contributing to the extent of 47.6% of the total variance as against the original 8 variables. The table 5.3 shows the output of factor analysis through principal component analysis and specifying rotation method. The study, therefore, reduced the number of variables from 8 to 3 underlying factors.

The above table no. 5.3 shows that, the variables financial empowerment and availability of alternate job have loadings of .671 and .557 on factor 1.

Table 5.1: Initial statistics

Variables	Communalities	Factor	Eigenvalue	Pct of Var	Cum Pct
Healthy Living and Food habits	1.000	1	1.450	18.131	18.131
Children's Education	1.000	2	1.198	14.980	33.111
Attitude of superior's	1.000	3	1.158	14.481	47.592
Conflict amongst co-workers'	1.000	4	.999	12.482	60.074
Financial empowerment	1.000	5	.962	12.028	72.102
Child care and rearing	1.000	6	.875	10.938	83.040
Addiction to alcohol	1.000	7	.729	9.119	92.159
Availability of alternate job	1.000	8	.627	7.841	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 5.2 Final Statistics

Variables	Communalities	Factor	Eigenvalue	Pct of Var	Cum Pct
Healthy Living and Food habits	.538	1	1.450	18.131	18.131
Children's Education	.735	2	1.198	14.980	33.111
Attitude of superior's	.471	3	1.158	14.481	47.592
Conflict amongst co-workers'	.375				
Financial empowerment	.526				
Child care and rearing	.614				
Addiction to alcohol	.213				
Availability of alternate job	.336				

Table 5.3: Rotated Factor Matrix

Variables	Factors		
	1	2	3
Healthy Living and Food habits	-.178	.662	-.261
Children's Education	.210	-.183	-.810
Attitude of superior's	-.548	-.412	.017
Conflict amongst co-workers'	.148	-.164	.571
Financial empowerment	.671	-.265	.072
Child care and rearing	.236	.708	.238
Addiction to alcohol	-.413	-.023	.204
Availability of alternate job	.557	.104	.123

Therefore this factor together represents the lack of financial empowerment at Tea plantation sector and easy availability of alternate job at the immediate vicinity has significant impact on labour shortage. The 2nd factor in the table no. 5.3 evident that, the variables child care and rearing as well as healthy living and food habits have loadings of .708 and .662 respectively. This factor interprets the reason for labour shortage due to limited awareness about child care and rearing as well as healthy living inputs and food habits.

The factor 3 in the above table (no. 5.3) shows the conflict amongst co-workers resulting labour shortage with the highest loading of 0.571.

LOW PRODUCTIVITY OF LABOUR

Labour cost is indirectly related with labour productivity. Empirical evidences showed that,

lower labour productivity results in increase in the labour cost. It is, therefore, considering the significance in cost management; the study collected the data through preliminary survey. The output through simple tabulation and chi-square test is stated in the table no. 6.

From the above table no. 6, it is clear the all variables of low labour productivity are significant as per the chi-square test. However, to further streamline and to identify the contributing factors of low productivity of labour, the survey data was subjected to factor analysis. The output of factor analysis is discussed in the following tables.

The above table no. 7.1 & 7.2 extracted four factors with highest eigen values together contributing to the extent of 70.46%. Accordingly, it has high loading on four factors as against original 8.

Rotated factor matrix of Table No. 7.3 shows the

Table 6. Low labour productivity

Sl. No.	Particulars	Yes	No	Do not know	Chi-Square
1.	Un-healthy practices	635(59.7)	271(25.5)	158(14.8)	350.370
2.	Stress	777(73.0)	186(17.5)	101(9.5)	764.551
3.	Work Recognition by estate management	740(69.5)	201(18.9)	123(11.6)	636.555
4.	Attitude of Supervisory Estate Staff	678(63.7)	237(22.3)	149(14.0)	453.070
5.	Climatic conditions influencing work output	507(47.7)	345(32.4)	212(19.9)	123.081
6.	Old age of workers	610(57.3)	256(24.1)	198(18.6)	280.474
7.	Lack of self-motivation	697(65.5)	263(24.7)	104(9.8)	531.284
8.	Lack of knowledge on skill management	586(55.1)	290(27.3)	188(17.7)	241.000

Source: Field survey

(Figures in parentheses are in percentages)

Table 7.1: Initial statistics

Variables	Communalities	Factor	Eigen Value	Pct of Var	Cum Pct
Unhealthy Practices	1.000	1	1.939	24.237	24.237
Stress	1.000	2	1.394	17.421	41.657
Work recognition	1.000	3	1.285	16.068	57.725
Attitude of superiors	1.000	4	1.019	12.738	70.464
Climatic conditions	1.000	5	.824	10.305	80.768
Old age	1.000	6	.603	7.534	88.303
Self-motivation	1.000	7	.521	6.508	94.810
Skill management	1.000	8	.415	5.190	100.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 7.2: Final Statistics

Variables	Communalities	Factor	Eigen value	Pct of Var	Cum Pct
Unhealthy Practices	.782	1	1.939	24.237	24.237
Stress	.541	2	1.394	17.421	41.657
Work recognition	.730	3	1.285	16.068	57.725
Attitude of superiors	.734	4	1.019	12.738	70.464
Climatic conditions	.611				
Old age	.630				
Self motivation	.691				
Skill management	.919				

Table 7.3: Rotated Factor Matrix

Variables	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
Unhealthy Practices	.155	.083	.853	.153
Stress	.316	-.527	.392	-.100
Work recognition	.407	-.110	-.667	.327
Attitude of superiors	.096	.843	.117	.032
Climatic conditions	-.777	-.056	-.061	.016
Old age	.772	.150	-.034	-.102
Self-motivation	.293	.745	.130	-.184
Skill management	-.108	-.037	.011	.952

underlying four factors –

On factor 1 the variable, old age of workforce have the highest loading of 0.772 signifying old age of workforce on low labour productivity. The Factor 2 with variables, attitude and motivation have loading of 0.843 and 0.745. This interprets the influence of attitude of estate superiors and lack of self-motivation amongst workforce contributing to low labour productivity. The workforce's unhealthy practices with loading of 0.853 at factor 3 interpret the reason for low labour productivity. The fourth factor with the highest loading on skill management (0.952) signifies poor skill management of workforce contributing to low labour productivity.

SUGGESTIONS & CONCLUSION

The study through field survey identified important eight variables influencing labour shortage and lower productivity of labour as labour cost instigators at Tea Plantations. The simple tabulation and chi-

square test showed the significance of all variables at respective dimensions of labour cost management. Further, the factor analysis identified highly significant three and four factors pertaining to labour shortage and low productivity of labour respectively. Therefore, study finds that there is a need for addressing such issues of concerns in optimizing labour cost at Indian Tea Plantation Sector by reducing labour shortage and enhancing labour productivity. A suggested framework, addressing to the identified factors, facilitate to optimise labour cost through non-monetary measure: Further, it would also bring appropriate change in the existing system of labour management by an awareness campaign and educating workforce on identified factors by training.

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Questionnaire

State:

Sl. No.	Variables affecting Labour Cost	Yes	No	Do not know
A.	Labour Shortage	3	1	2
1.	Lack of awareness on healthy living & food habits			
2.	Lack of awareness about prospects of children's education			
3.	Attitude of supervisory estate staff			
4.	Conflicts amongst co-workers			
5.	Lack of knowledge on financial empowerment			
6.	Lack of knowledge on child care and rearing			
7.	Easy availability of Alcohol			
8.	Availability of alternate job in the immediate vicinity			
B.	Low productivity			
1.	Un-healthy practices			
2.	Stress			
3.	Absence of Work Recognition by estate management			
4.	Attitude of Supervisory Estate Staff			
5.	Climatic conditions			
6.	Old age of workers			
7.	Lack of self motivation			
8.	Lack of knowledge on skill management			