

# Occupational Mobility of Tea Garden Labourers of Assam

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Date of Submission: 05-05-2024

Date of Acceptance: 15-05-2024

## ABSTRACT

Occupational mobility is the ability of labour to switch between different occupations. Occupational mobility is affected by the level of transferable skills and educational requirements of jobs. Since 1841, the tea garden labourers have been working simultaneously in the tea sector with a very low wage as compare to other plantation labourers in India. In present time, they hardly get Rs. 850 per week, which is very less for the running of a family. They have been doing almost the same activities from one and half centuries back and is continuing generation after generation.

But in present time it can be seen that they tend to shift from wage occupation to other occupation or any self-employment to achieve minimum standard of living. The main objective of this paper is to see the occupational mobility among the tea garden labours of Assam. In this context, this paper attempts to find out the factors that brings mobility in the occupation of the labourers in the particular tea garden. In order to achieve the specific objectives of the study, researcher will use descriptive research design and quantitative research method. Researcher will collect the required primary data by using structured interview schedule and non-observation participants. The secondary data will collect from garden management office, books, journals, website etc.

**Key Words:** Occupational Mobility, Tea Garden Labour, Tea Estate, Assam

## I. INTRODUCTION

Research is defined as careful consideration of study regarding a particular concern or problem using scientific methods. Research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict and control the observed

phenomenon. It involves inductive and deductive methods (Babbie, 1998)

Occupational mobility is the ability of labour to switch between different occupations. Occupational mobility is affected by the level of transferable skills and educational requirements of jobs. Since 1841, the tea garden labourers have been working simultaneously in the tea sector with a very low wage as compare to other plantation labourers in India. In present time, they hardly get Rs. 850 per week, which is very less for the running of a family. They have been doing almost the same activities from one and half centuries back and is continuing generation after generation.

Generally, Occupational mobility is of two types: (a) Horizontal Mobility (b) Vertical Mobility. When a labour moves from one occupation to another in the same grade or level, then it is called Horizontal Mobility. And when a worker of a lower grade and status in an occupation moves to another occupation in a higher grade and status, it is Vertical Mobility. There are many factors which determine the mobility of labour. Education and Training is a basic factor of occupational mobility. The more a person is educated and skilled, the greater are his chances of moving from one occupation or place to another. Social set up is another factor which determines mobility of labour. A society dominated by caste system and joint family system lacks in mobility of labour but where the joint family and caste system do not exist or have disintegrated the mobility of labour increases. Means of transport is an important cause of occupational mobility.

In Global Scenario Occupational mobility in United States is much more as compared to other countries. In US, the occupations of the people were changing as compared to the previous generation. the author mentioned that the mobility in the occupations occurred as because of work

requirement and social status. In conventional status of occupation, upward mobility is consistent then downward mobility and it is the result of transition from agricultural to industrial economy. In present time, many workers moving out due to heavy influx of works and those works need less formal training than others as: labourers, service workers, sales workers etc. In the article the author talks about different reasons for the mobility of workers. The reasons may be better wage, standard working conditions, better prestige etc. And some change their job due to less employment opportunity. Man is mostly affected by mobility as compared to women. And both men and women single workers were more occupationally mobile as compared to married workers. In the conclusion of the article, it is mentioned that the mobility patterns of the occupation had been stable over time. The mobility rate for all workers was 8.7%, is as same as in 1965. workers change their occupation to improve wages over their career. One's change in occupation can be a negative or positive aspect based on the cause of change. Between both employed and unemployed job seekers the probability of finding a new job in the same occupation as the previous job is relatively low (around 30%), at the same time more than one half experience a major occupational change (i.e. across occupations that are too different). change in the occupation of unemployed people is likely to have a negative impact on future wage growth while for employed people; change in occupation is more often associated with better prospects for wage growth. So, change in occupation can be an opportunity for employed job seekers but it can rise as a constraint for the unemployed job seekers.

In India, occupational mobility plays a significant role. The job reservation policy is termed as effective if the chances of representation in public sector jobs increase for those individuals who belong to the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes category. Using the mobility measures. found that sons belonging to the scheduled caste (SC) are significantly more mobile than the sons belonging to the General category or scheduled tribe (ST). Between SC and ST, the latter shows greater persistence in father's sector of employment if father is a public sector employee.

In the context of Assam, it can be seen that the tea industries are still in the same phase. talked about that labourers are still working with a very low wage which is not in a level to fulfil their daily needs. Generally, it can be seen that the tea garden labourers follow their age-old occupation generation by generation. They don't want to

change their occupation. So, through this study an attempt is being made by the researcher to observe whether the tea garden labourers tend to change their occupation or not. talked about the socio-economic and political situation of the tea garden labourers in Assam. This article basically highlights the labourers' condition and unionization and movements from colonial and post-independent period till date in tea plantations of Assam. The labourers were employed in Assam tea plantations during colonial period through the 'indenture' system. They were recruited two systems known as the 'contractors' system and 'sardari' system. The labourers who came from different places and varied socio-economic and cultural background formed a new mixed society separately in the plantation regime. Socio-economic condition of tea garden labourers in Assam during the phase of colonial period created many social and economic problems. They were lacking proper housing facilities, health and other amenities of life and women had to manage home with limited resources. The article also mentioned that during the colonial period, the wage of tea garden labourers was very low. this article basically highlights the labourers' condition and unionization and movements from colonial and post-independent period till date in tea plantations of Assam. The labourers were employed in Assam tea plantations during colonial period through the 'indenture' system. They were recruited two systems known as the 'contractors' system and 'sardari' system. The labourers who came from different places and varied socio-economic and cultural background formed a new mixed society separately in the plantation regime. Socio-economic condition of tea garden labourers in Assam during the phase of colonial period created many social and economic problems. They were lacking proper housing facilities, health and other amenities of life and women had to manage home with limited resources.

The particular study area of the researcher is Kamrup (R) and Sonitpur district of Assam. There are many significant tea estates in Sonipur such as: Narayanpur Tea Estate, Phulbari Tea Estate, Durrung Tea Estate, Dhekiajuli Tea Estate, Tulip Tea Estate, Sonabheel Tea Estate etc. Similarly in Kamrup (R) tea estates like Mandakata Tea Estate, Madhupur Tea Estate, Baruanagar Tea Estate, Bishnupur Tea Co Pvt Ltd etc. are playing a significant role. But the fact is that in these particular districts also occupational mobility is not occurring. Most of the people are following the age-old tradition of tea plucking and tea factory

work. And most importantly their wage is very low which is not sufficient to fulfil their basic needs.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review is a comprehensive summary of previous research on a topic. The literature review surveys scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to a particular area of research. The review should enumerate, describe, summarize, objectively evaluate and clarify the previous research. For getting an overview of the topic, "Occupational Mobility among Tea Garden People of Assam". The researcher has gone through some relevant materials of different writers. Those are as follows: has talked about the pattern of occupational mobility among the tea garden labourers. While describing inter-generational occupational mobility, author explains that any change in social position of family members that takes place from one generation to next. A situation of low mobility across generation may be favourable for families that are in fortunate socio-economic circumstances, but in the case of families that are less fortunate, low mobility often entails Social exclusion, material and human capital impoverishment and restriction on the opportunities and expectation that would otherwise wider their capabilities to make choices (Hancock et al, 2007) While collected data through primary sources researcher observed and analyzed various factors on intergenerational occupational mobility among the tea garden people. The paper categorized the parent's occupation on the basis of wage rate. Different occupations based on wage rate are as follows: Private salaried, clerical worker in the tea, factory worker in the tea, business holder, agricultural labour, daily rated tea labour, non-farm casual labour. The intergenerational occupational mobility among the labourers was analyzed through transition matrix. The article mentioned that 30% of tea labourers due to lack of education are not willing to leave the garden. And the study observed that the labourers, who want to go outside the tea garden for different occupation, they try to educate their children for better future. In conclusion, the article mentioned that within the tea garden horizontal mobility is stronger than vertical mobility as because horizontal mobility can be seen in almost all occupations but vertical mobility can be observed only from business holders to daily rated labour.

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Talks about the socio-economic status of tea garden labourers of Assam since the British era from present time. The article states that the tea garden labourers were bought to Assam as slaves first by the East India Company. According to Wikipedia the Tea Tribe of Assam is backward and most exploited tribes in India but, the article also stated that in the context of time their new generation is comparatively educated and except from wage working, they are involved in different fields. The tea garden workers have to live with the basic facilities provided by the tea planters. The study area Jorhat is called the "Tea Capital of the World". The first tea garden of Assam was established in Jorhat itself by Maniram Dewan in the year 1850. The study tries to investigate how the economic performance of tea gardens (in the study area) determines the well-being of the labourers working in them. The researcher used stratified random sampling as his sampling design and collected the required data by using interview schedule.

tries to analyze the factors and distributive efforts of occupational mobility in Brazil, based on data obtained from the Monthly Employment Survey. The article stated that workers may be using occupational mobility to obtain wage increases, and also as a way of exiting

from precarious employment situations, involving informality or a high rate of involuntary unemployment. The basic objective of the study is to understand the factors that determine occupational mobility, the barriers that exist, the wage premium obtained from mobility, and the effects of that mobility on the distribution of income from work. And the specific objective is to analyze the wage differential effect of mobility, in terms of labour-market segmentation and differential returns to mobility, observing whether or not occupational movements alter the income distribution by reducing wage differentials. The research set out to analyze the effect of mobility on wages and on the income differential between the richest and poorest workers, seeking data on the role played by that mobility in the recent reduction in inequality in the country. The article added that although Brazil is one of the most unequal countries in the world, since the start of new century income inequality has been gradually but almost continuously decline, which leads to mobility in the occupation of the people.

Talked about low socio-economic status of the tea garden women workers of Assam. Socio Economic status implies the standing of a person or group in a community or society based on education, occupation and income which is often used as a benchmark for investigating health inequalities. (Segan's Medical Dictionary, 2012).The required data collection was done with the help of socio economic status. in the article mentioned that the tea garden women workers are mostly illiterate and they are less aware of the standard of living. The article defines socio-economic status as the standard of a person or group in a community or society based on education, occupation and income which is often used as a bench-mark for investigating health inequalities. The objective of the study is to identify the factors that shows the socio-economic conditions of the women workers in the tea industry of Sonitpur District and to study the socio-economic backwardness of the tea garden women workers in the study area. While studying socio-economic status of the particular study area, it reveals that 72.25% of the respondents are illiterate. While studying the wage of the women workers, it is found that 92% women workers have their monthly wage Rs 1000-5000, which highlights their low socio-economic status. Also 63% respondents have Pacca house while 37% of them have Kaccha type of housing. Article stated that the women tea garden workers are busy with their garden works and have less time for leisure

and relaxation. Hence, they are less aware regarding their socio-economic condition.

in the article basically focuses on the importance of work place as a determinant of occupational mobility in Scotland 2001-2011.This article focuses on individual and place based determinants of occupational mobility and their relationship to spatial mobility. This paper talks about the importance of workplace location, rather than residential locations, on occupational mobility. This study tries to create a relationship between spatial mobility and occupational mobility of labours. This paper triesto find individual level characteristics associated with upward occupational mobility. The article mentioned that age is one important predictor of occupational mobility as because career progression is faster at early stages. And the careers stabilize later as the workers tend to reach occupational maturity. Occupational mobility may vary by place of work as well as place of residence. The research finds the level of upward mobility in Scotland into the top two main occupational categories. One is professional and another is managerial. Scotland's capital city Edinburgh has the highest upward mobility. The study found that living in particular places is not necessarily associated with better rates of career progression, but working in large urban area is.

Stated about mobility in occupation of employed along with unemployed job seekers. The article stated that workers change their occupation to improve wages over their career. One's change in occupation can be a negative or positive aspect based on the cause of change. The main focus of the paper is to identify and compare the occupational mobility of employed and unemployed job seekers. The study showed that between both employed and unemployed job seekers the probability of finding a new job in the same occupation as the previous job is relatively low (around 30%), at the same time more than one half experience a major occupational change (i.e. across occupations that are too different). The study also came to a point that change in the occupation of unemployed people is likely to have a negative impact on future wage growth while for employed people; change in occupation is more often associated with better prospects for wage growth. So, it is mentioned in the article that change in occupation can be an opportunity for employed job seekers but it can rise as a constraint for the unemployed job seekers. The study finds substantial difference as employed job seekers are most likely to move to occupations paying higher average wages relative to their previous



occupation, while unemployed job seekers are most likely to move to lower paying occupations. Employed and unemployed job seekers manifest different patterns of occupational mobility and they do not accept the same types of jobs. The articles stated that accumulation of occupation-specific human capital plays an important role in the wage determination process.

Talked about living condition along with socio-economic status of the tea garden labourers of Assam. The study highlights that though they are getting facilities from garden management the conditions of the tea garden labourers are very poor. The working class in the tea gardens of Assam is perhaps the most exploited class in the organized sector of economy. Among the tea garden labourers only 30-40% is permanent employees and a few engaged as casual workers with a low wage. Also there is no maternity benefit scheme for the tea garden workers. Besides poor socio-economic condition, illiteracy, unhygienic living conditions are major problems of tea garden community. The main objective of this study is to analyze the living conditions of tea garden labourers and to show the socio-cultural profile of tea garden labourers. The study also reveals the education of children, fuels used for cooking, source of available electricity, sanitation facility etc. In the conclusion of the study, authors states that the tea community is highly deprived in all aspects of their living conditions. They are in a very low socio-economic condition. Also they are less interested towards family management, health condition etc.

Has focused on the factors of occupational mobility. The article states that the occupational mobility in United States in much more as compared to other countries. In US, the occupations of the people were changing as compared to the previous generation. The author mentioned that the mobility in the occupations occurred as because of work requirement and social status. In conventional status of occupation, upward mobility is consistent then downward mobility and it is the result of transition from agricultural to industrial economy. In present time, many workers moving out due to heavy influx of works and those works need less formal training then others as: labourers, service workers, sales workers etc. In the article the author talks about different reasons for the mobility of workers. The reasons may be better wage, standard working conditions, better prestige etc. And some change their job due to less employment opportunity. It is mentioned in the article that man is mostly affected

by mobility as compared to women. And both men and women single workers were more occupationally mobile as compared to married workers. In the conclusion of the article, it is mentioned that the mobility patterns of the occupation had been stabled over time. The mobility rate for all workers was 8.7%, is as same as in 1965.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher took "Occupational Mobility among Tea Garden Labourers of Assam with special reference to Hirajui Tea Estate of Sonitpur District" as his topic. This is a primary research and researcher collected relevant articles from different e-journals, newspaper articles, publication etc.

### Research Question

A research question is the fundamental core of a research project. It focuses the study, determines the methodology and guides all stages of inquiry, analysis and reporting. While conducting this study, the researcher had also set some research questions. Those are as follows:

- What are the factors that play a role in mobility of occupation in tea garden labourers?
- What is the impact of occupational mobility on the tea garden labourers?
- Do socio-economic conditions of the tea garden labourers influence the occupational mobility of the Tea Garden Labourer?
- What are the causes of occupational mobility among the tea garden labourers?

### Objectives of the Study

- To study the socio-economic condition of the tea garden labourers
- To study the occupational mobility of tea garden labourers.

### Field of the Study

The field for proposed study is Hirajuli Tea Estate of Sonitpur District, Assam. The selected tea estate is situated in 5 Kilometer south from Dhekiajuli town.

### Research Design

Researcher used Descriptive Research design as the researcher is trying to describe change in the occupation of tea garden labourers of Hirajuli Tea Estate of Sonitpur District. While conducting this research researcher used Quantitative Research Method for the study.

### Universe of the Study

Universe consists of all survey elements that qualify for inclusion in the research study. The universe may be individuals, groups of people, organizations, or even objects. For this particular study, researcher took the households of Hirajuli Tea Estate as universe of study. The total number of households in the tea estate is 127. Researcher interviewed 40 households as per the requirement of the sample size.

### Sampling Design

A sample design is the framework that serves as the basis for the selection of a survey sample and affects many others important aspects of a survey as well. Sample is a part or portion of people drawn from a large population.

- a. Statement of sample size: Sample size means the number of sampling units selected from a population for a research process.
- b. Method of Sampling: Non-probability sampling design was used to carry out the said study.
- c. Non-probability Sampling: Under non-probability sampling, Convenience Sampling technique was used to select the target population.

### Tools of Data Collection

Researcher used Interview Schedule as the tool of data collection for this respective study. The researcher prepared the interview schedule based on the objectives taken for the study.

### Sources of Data

In this particular research, the researcher used both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected thorough filling up of interview schedule by visiting the households of the particular study area. And the secondary data were collected from garden management office, books, journals, website etc.

### Statement of the Problem

Assam is basically agro based industries state. It is known for its tea and also for oil. Though, tea industry plays an important role in the economic growth of the country, the tea garden labourers are the less paid labourers. In this particular study, the researcher intends to study the occupational mobility of tea garden labourers and

also tries to find the major causes of occupational mobility.

It can be seen that the tea garden labourers stuck in their common garden working occupation since generation by generation. Though the wage structure of tea garden is very less, they stuck in the same due to some common issue such as: low educational qualification, traditional rigid occupation, family issue, due to communication problem etc.

### III. CONCLUSION

In the conclusion of this respective study, it can be said that there can be seen a positive mobility in the occupation of the tea garden labourers of particular study area. The study revealed that out of 40 respondents' 29 respondents change their occupation and they are now in a satisfactory position. Also, most of them have the saving habit after joining new occupation. Because while they were in other occupation the wage, they got was not sufficient for their day-to-day life. So, they could not think of saving money. But after changing their occupation they are able to do so. But still there exist lots of barriers which stop them to change occupation to a higher position. Educational qualification is one of the major factors. The study revealed that out of 40 respondents 28(32.18%) respondents were never enrolled in any educational institutions which creates barrier for them to change their occupation. They are regarded as unskilled labourers and they stuck in the occupations such as: daily wage earning or casual worker of that respective tea garden since last 10-15 years with a minimum wage.

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