



## **Paid Employment and Empowerment of Women Tea Plantation Workers: A Qualitative Inquiry**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

### **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/SAJSSE/2020/v6i330167

#### Editor(s):

(1) Dr. John M. Polimeni, Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, USA.

#### Reviewers:

(1) Dickson Adom, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana.

(2) Hussin Jose Hejase, Al Maaref University, Lebanon.

(3) Che Su Mustafa, Universiti Utara, Malaysia.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/56228>

**Original Research Article**

**Received 22 February 2020**

**Accepted 27 April 2020**

**Published 12 May 2020**

### **ABSTRACT**

This explorative study is an assessment on empowerment of female tea garden workers through capabilities approach analysis. This study is conducted in a tea estate in Sylhet named Dholdoli. This study has shown that empowerment, in most cases, is found affirmative. Besides reviewing related literature and past research reports, the study is mainly based on primary field data. This study has collected qualitative data following an in-depth interview method of research. The tea garden has been selected purposively. For acquiring qualitative data, the study has involved a number of research participants, such as workers, management staffs, employers, union leaders, buyers and other local stakeholders. The study will mainly focus on in-depth interview techniques. Results show that most of the respondents have control over their own income (including expenditure and saving) but as they have been paid in low amounts, they can hardly save anything, also they exhibit very explicitly that they have a participation in the decision of their child schooling, family planning, and other facts in social and political issues. They can participate in their local panchayet at or even in national election without any pursuing of a male member of their family.

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*Keywords: Female tea garden worker; employment; empowerment.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the major tea producing and exporting nation is South Asian Country and Around 300000 workers are employed in the tea estates, of which more than 75% are women in Bangladesh. Employers prefer to engage women to harvest tea leaves, as they are more skilled and cheaper labor than men [1]. The tea industry annually earns roughly Tk. 1.777 billion (around 0.81 of GDP) in foreign currency, export nearly 18 million Kilograms of tea (1.37% of export of the global tea trade) [2]. Tea industry, at present stands as the third largest exporting goods and a great source of earning revenue of Bangladesh. Tea is the second highest foreign exchange earner agro-based commodity of Bangladesh. The share in world export is 3%, average earning is around 1500 to 2000 million Taka, share in national export is 1.2% and contribution towards GDP is 0.81% [3]. This present position of the tea industry has been acquired by the hard work of labor who are mostly women but they are as good as captives and live in near servitude. Although female workers of the garden in Bangladesh have been discharging their duties by exercising tremendous physical labors and causing the prosperity of the country but they led a very miserable condition of life, didn't get full scope to avail all kinds of basic demands in full phase. Neither are they well known about their rights such as hierarchical right of property, suffrage (right to vote) taking decision, Moharana or right of divorce, job facilities, nor have any consciousness about the feelings of suppression and oppression or sexual harassment elimination policy, nor having any comprehensive knowledge about sexually transmitted diseases. Still there is no statistical data, about the numbers of laborers in terms of registered, non-registered, age group, sex, race, etc. They are deprived off some basic legal rights of the workers like appointment letter, identity card, service book, labor registration, ending owner work relationship, leaves according to law, fair wage and allowances, proper education, housing and entertainment. The tea workers do not have any land or house of their own. After retirement they are supposed to leave the labor line (residence) unless any family member has joined the garden work. The garden owners take advantage of this weakness of the workers. The owners deprive the workers of their gratuity or service benefit by offering their children work and allowing them to stay in the labor lines after retirement. Unlike other industrial

workers, the tea workers get no casual leave. They have been living with many such malpractices and injustice for generations. Bangladesh labor act, 2006 article 183 is highly discriminatory and also a contradictory with the ILO convention No.87, Article 183 which allows the tea workers to form a union only at the national level and the law makes it mandatory that to form a union [4]. Thirty percent of the total workforce will have to be its members. However, Tea industry and employment opportunity in tea industry in Bangladesh are on the rise.

Tea garden workers especially female workers who are engaged with plucking tea leaves belong to an assumed, marginalized community through which they have been contributing economically not only in family but nationally as well. The involvement of women in earning activities considered as a cooperative instrument of empowering women as well as to bring a positive change to their whole life span, especially in terms of boosting self-esteem, dignity, self-resilience, freedom of choice, but the question is whether economic activities enhance the sense of women or increase their capacity of voice to ensure their development. This can be considered as a special case that a large proportion of female tea plantation workers of Bangladesh are marginalized as well as are illiterate or educationally backward. Many empirical studies have shown that tea garden workers in Bangladesh in general, and women in particular, have, long been at disadvantage, deprived, under-served, exploited and an alienated group [5]. Female literacy is less than that of male workers, as the attitudes of parents towards female education is very much negligible due to the poor economic condition of their family and the unavailability of government opportunities. The main objective of the study is to explore the self-consciousness, self-reliance, and freedom of speech in decision making level of women workers in their family and even in their working place. In fact, this is an explorative study which will investigate the real scenario of raising their voices to overcome the miserable condition and improving the quality of work that they are in. Many studies have been conducted on related issues focusing on women empowerment, but none have been found on the livelihood and empowerment patterns of women tea workers using capability approach. Empirical evidence about the situation of labour rights and empowerment of women tea workers is required

to make this industry a viable option for women empowerment [6]. However, this sector has still not received much attention by the scholars. This study will impart more knowledge to the academia and will also represent a new dimension of understanding women empowerment.

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

Divers study has been conducted on the issues of socio economic conditions of the tea gardens community. The housing facilities of the tea workers are very poor and inadequate did not improve much. Poor and inadequate housing has been seen in various tea garden [7]. The tea garden community also continue miserable life due to the lack of utility facilities remarkably water supply and sanitation capacities .Human rights is violated in terms of wage, housing and sanitation, forced and compulsory labor ect.in tea garden [8]. Tea garden workers in Bangladesh in general, and women in particular, have, long been at disadvantage, deprived, under-served, exploited and an alienated group. Female literacy is less than that of male workers, as the attitudes of parents towards female education is very much negligible due to the poor economic condition of their family and the unavailability of government opportunities [9]. Capability deprivation in various spheres of life remains the most important cause of poverty and vulnerability among the tea garden workers [10]. In Indian society women only have a secondary role to play with society and often suffer discrimination in most spheres of life [11]. They also suggest that the government formulate measures for the uplifting of women, without this, economic development of the nation will decrease. They have reported an important matter that women have no control over resources and regulatory institutions including education, employment and technology and even physical drudgery and mental agony. To overcome this situation and to improve their status, proper attention is needed to eradicate illiteracy among women. Through constitutional provisions women have equal right with in all spheres of life, however plans and programs should be formulated not only for educated women but also for new responsibilities. They also claim that a number of industrial sectors don't offer higher positions for women upon various reasons. In terms of educational qualification, clearly women employees in the credit sector possessed better educational qualification. They have studied the personal profile of the women employees, their

position at home and work and also investigated the reasons of their involvement in the work force, and the result shows that most of the married women get involved when their husband's income no longer is enough. Despite of the women's dual role as employee and housewife, they are dominated by the male. In terms of job satisfaction, women work to get economic independence and individual status. Women not only contribute to economic activities e.g. agricultural sector and animal husbandry but at the same time they have important contribution in fisheries. The contribution of women in the economic activities have increased. However, historically the contribution of women in agricultural activities has been ignored significantly [12]. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2008) the women's labour force has increased from 5.4 million in 1995-96 to 12.1 million in 2005-06. Although the inclusion of women in employment is increasing, but during the off season the supply of women workers is very low. Most of the time when the family's income is not enough, women are allowed to work. When the income increases women are asked to stop working.

However, all of the studies that have been reviewed seem like a pencil sketch of general issues like socio economic conditions, health and sanitation problems, problems of education, law and order situation of tea industry in Bangladesh but some crucial issues specially women's wellbeing and empowerment conditions, labors benefits, challenges of raising workers voice at work place, the status of women workers after being involved in economic activities, their families and their communities have not been investigated in depth. This study will explore all the fundamental concerns.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- a) To investigate the role of female workers in decision making in the intra-household sector.
- b) To explore the capacity of women to control over their own income.
- c) To study the women participation in election and panchayet committee
- d) To understand the resistance process of violence against women workers.

## 4. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This qualitative study attempts to understand the effect of earning on the empowerment of tea

plantation women workers following a qualitative data collection method. The Doldholy tea garden of Shahi Eidgah, Sylhet has been selected purposively considering accessibility and convenience of data collection. The study involved multiple research participants, such as women workers, management staffs, union leaders and NGO workers for acquiring qualitative data. The study will mainly use in-depth interview techniques as data collection tools. A checklist has been prepared for each type of research participant. Three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) have been conducted in the residential areas of workers involving different types of respondents. Two FGD have been conducted at the beginning of the data collection to understand the situation and one FGD has been conducted at the end to crosscheck the data. Data was also collected through informal conversation with the local people and using the Key Informant Interview (KII) technique. Observation techniques were used to assess the condition of their workplace and residential areas. The field work for this study was conducted in three phases: Kick-off phase, Middle phase and End phase. In the Kick-off phase, FGD and KII technique was used to gather initial information for preparing the checklist, and other data collection tools for the study. The main part of the field work was accomplished in the second phase. In-depth interviews and was prepared at this phase. The field work in the third phase was carried out to cross check the data to avoid inconsistency and confusion in the data. In addition to qualitative techniques, some secondary sources of data, particularly documents reviews, were used.

## 5. THEORETICAL FRAMWORK

Empowerment of women has been widely discussed among the scholars over the last few decades. Accordingly, many approaches have been emerged for better understanding about the concept and process of women empowerment. However, capability approach is mostly used and well-articulated for understanding gender inequality and empowerment of women in the context of world of work.

Capabilities approach was first introduced by Amartya Sen. Sen [13,14] uses this term in many of his work in explaining the inequality and gender discrimination, however an elaborate discussion has been presented in his book, 'The Idea of Justice. Sen stated capabilities as real opportunities. He has also argued that the

promotion of women's agency is essential not only for improving the economic and social power of women, but for challenging and changing ingrained values and social practices. These values and practices support gender bias in the distribution of basic goods such as food and healthcare and in the treatment of women and girls within families [15]. This theory focuses on the enhancement of people's capabilities, i.e. their real freedom to choose that they reason to value. Recently, this theory has been viewed as an important approach for explaining numerous socio-economic issues including gender inequality, empowerment and labor rights.

This theory argues that the real freedom of people is in what they have for leading a valuable life, that is their capabilities of undertaking activities such as reading, working, or being politically active or of enjoying positive state of being, such as being healthy and literate. It is immediately clear that the capability approach has enormous potential for addressing feminist concerns and questions. Since its inception, women movements have focused on many issues that are not reducible to financial welfare, such as reproductive health, voting rights, political power, domestic violence, education and social status. Martha Nussbaum applied this approach for explaining women capabilities and social justice. She has claimed this theory as fully universal and the capabilities are important to each and every citizen, in each and every nation. Nussbaum defined capability as what people are actually able to do and to be [16]. Alkire also used this theory for explaining welfare economics [17].

For using the capability approach in the world of work, two essential features can be identified: capability of work and capability of voice. While the first one focuses on the individual wellbeing of the workers, the later emphasizes on individual capacity of raising their voices against injustices both at workplace and home.

## 6. PAID EMPLOYMENT AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: PERSPECTIVE BANGLADESH WOMEN TEA PLANTATION WORKERS

Empowerment is a widely used term in different context and power is the root of the term. Power also can be understood in different ways. Such as 'power over', 'power to', 'power with', and 'power within'. 'Power over' involves with the

relationship of domination or subordination. 'Power to' relates to having decision-making authority, power to solve problems and can be creative and enabling. 'Power with' involves organizing people with common goals to achieve collective goals. 'Power within' refers to how individuals can recognize through analyzing their experience, how power operates in their lives, and gain the confidence to act, influence and change this [18]. In this study, 'power to' and 'power within' will be emphasized, focusing on women's control over their own earnings, participations in familial decision-making, voting behavior and maintenance of microcredit.

### 6.1 Women's Participation in Household Decision Making Process

It is important that all household members take part in the household decision-making as familial decisions potentially affects the welfare of the individual member and the household as a whole [19]. The study attempted to know the decision-making role of the tea garden women in family planning and education of their children. To this end, they were asked how they take part in the family's decision-making and to what extent do they feel their participations are respected. The responses were also found almost similar in both gardens in both aspects.

Some women described that their male counterparts solely decide familial matters. Usually, they are not asked for opinions and only informed about the decision. Furthermore, some of them do not feel they shall be involved in familial decision-making that their husbands know better. On the other hand, several women reported that their husbands usually seek their opinions and suggestions in deciding important familial matters. As one woman was saying—

*He wants to know my opinion when he wants to start a work. (He asked me) How the work would be if it be done. Whether the work would come out as good or bad?*

In such families, women were found very active in deciding the schooling of their children. Although the mother's role in continuing their children's education has no evidence. Mothers were found playing a vital role in the education of their child at early ages. One woman explained that her decisions get priority over the other family members in selecting school and private tuition of children. She also added that her husband also supports her. As she was saying—

*My words are given more importance. If I tell my husband to enroll the children in a school than the other school where children would get a good education, he will accept it.*

The descriptions of interviewed women about their participation in family planning did not reveal any factual data. Several women simply stated that they jointly decide on family planning with their husband, though none of them explained further. However, some women reported that they can decide the contraceptive that best fits their individual needs in discussions with their husbands. One woman explained that the use of a contraceptive lies with a woman and that she should feel her necessities and inform her husband. As she was saying—

*These (use of particular contraceptive) are advantages and disadvantages to me, because I will use it. I have to understand my aspects. If I tell my husband that I do not feel comfortable with it (particular contraceptive), then he tells me to use the one that feels good to me.*

In widow-headed families, widows actively participate in the familial decision-making process. Widows explained that the absence of male counterpart left them as the only guardians as well as sometimes the only bread earners of their families. Hence, they act as the key role in deciding familial issues. Furthermore, widows living with adult children described that they discuss with their children in deciding familial matters and their children also obey and respect their decisions. As one widow was saying:

*As my husband has passed away and I have a son, I discuss with my son (regarding familial issues). I should talk with my son what I want to do, should not I? ..... Why he does not accept it? When the mother is alive, he must accept it (opinion or suggestion in regarding familial issues).*

### 6.2 Control over Own Income

The physical labor of female tea gardeners is the only means through which they get access to credit. The day-long hard physical labor is paid with a miserable daily wage (weekly pay of BDT. 595). However, this wage is crucial for their survival as well as contributing to reduce the male-female disparity in economic productivity. Even so, it is found that all women do not have equal control over their own income. To explore

the extent to which tea garden women have control over their own wage, women were asked to what extent are they able to spend their earning independently. However, a woman may receive some suggestions from her husband, or parent in spending the earnings yet maintains a certain degree of control. The responses were almost similar for both tea gardens. While several women reported that they hand over their earnings to their husbands, only a few women reported that they can spend their earnings as per their wishes.

In widow headed families, widows can keep their earnings with them, and they can spend it as they wish. Their entire earning is spent to purchase food and other necessary commodities. They also reported the absence of male counterpart as the reason behind their sole control over own earning. As one widow was saying:

*“My husband passed away; No one is there to ask me anything (about my spending). I give my take to my son, my daughter, my grandchildren (as I wish).....”*

Other widows claimed:

*I can spend which I have earned, no other member of my family can interfere on this matter. My husband don't take part about the decision of my earning and spending”*

At the same time, they rejected that all working women in tea garden would be able to exercise the same amount of control over own earning. The rejection becomes evident when women reported that they hand over their income to their husbands who spend the cash as per their decision. In addition, some women explained that they do not even feel to ask how or where their earnings would be spent.

Several women reported that they spend their earnings in discussion with their husbands in various familial needs. Some of them also believe that the money they earn shall be spent in discussion with their husbands. As one woman said:

*It (earning) is required to be spent in discussing with my husband. How much to be spent in different household needs ...like installment debt..... electricity bills, etc. are decided by both of us.”*

In contrast, some women reported that they can exercise their liberty in spending their own

income. Their husbands usually do not ask them about their spending. Furthermore, women also reported that their husbands' handover a part of their earnings to them for family expenditure. They generally decide together how to spend the entire amount. One woman said that her income stays with her, while husband also handed over his income to her. They, then spend the total following joint discussions. As she was saying—

*My husband hands over his income to me. My income also stays with me. Then we spent (it) discussing with others.*

The interviews with tea garden management revealed that women's control over their own earnings has improved over the years and more couples now spend their earnings after discussing with each other. Spending money after discussion with their husband demonstrates the existence of women's control over own earnings to a certain degree as well as their participation in family decision-making.

### **6.3 Women's Participation in Election and Panchayat Committee**

Women's political activism is ignored in the developing country. They usually vote either as per preference of their father in natal house or as per preference of their husband in in-laws house. Furthermore, their poor financial conditions may force them to sell their vote to vote brokers in return of small extra money [20]. Given the a fore mentioned vulnerabilities, this study attempted to explore how women in tea garden decide their vote and participate in community issues.

In both tea gardens, women were found conscious about their voting. Almost all interviewed women reported that they vote in both local and national elections as per their own preferences. They also explained that whether they were pressured or offered to vote for a candidate, either by family members (e.g., husbands) or vote brokers (e.g., influential community members), but they vote as per their own preferences. As one woman was describing—

*I will give my vote. The person who seems good to me, I will vote for him. Why should I take the money from other people? If I find you (pointing finger toward researcher) as a good candidate, and there is another candidate... I will consider it with my conscience. I am illiterate, but my*

*conscience is not illiterate. If I find you as a good candidate, why should I vote for someone else?*

Another woman said that she would not vote as per what the other persons tells her to vote. As she was saying—

*You say, and I will; there is no such thing. I will vote for him whom I think as good (candidate).*

Women's active participation was also found evident in the tea garden Panchayat Committee<sup>1</sup>. Women reported that they would participate in the Panchayat Committee's election, both as voters and candidates. Any women of the tea garden would run for any position as she wants and would vote for any candidate of her preference.

The Panchayat committee of the Doldolly tea garden at present has a total of four women members, of whom one is vice president and the rest are general members. Interviewed women who occupy membership position in the Panchayat committee reported that their opinions and views are valued and sometimes they play a key role in decision making.

#### **6.4 Women's Involvement with Microcredit Activities**

Several NGOs were found operating in both gardens in the field of education, health, water and sanitation, energy and microfinance. The present study focuses on the involvement of women with available microcredit programs of NGOs. Microloans are given exclusively to women to help them become self-employed undertake income generating activities. The role of microcredit in empowering has been attributed worldwide in several dimensions of a woman's life including increased participation in familial decision-making, access to resources, broaden network, greater bargaining power, and freedom to mobility [21]. These empowering aspects of microcredit have also been found true for Bangladeshi women by 'overwhelming majority' literature [22].

<sup>1</sup>The tea garden Panchayat Committee is a functioning body made up of people living in tea garden. Each garden has one specific Panchayat Committee consisting of 12 members. The committee members are directly elected by the voter for three years. The Panchayat committee represents the tea community and negotiates with tea garden management as necessary. The committee also manages their internal community affairs.

In the studied gardens, women were found largely involved with the microcredit services. Most interviewed women reported that they borrowed money from microcredit at least once. However, the decisions associated with taking out loan are usually decided at household level where all members take part in the decision. They jointly decide whether the loan is to be taken out or not, and how the borrowed money would be spent or invested and repaid. Actually, in the case of collecting and repaying the loan the women worker jointly decide with their husband and with others members of the family as they can easily repaid the installment. As one woman described how they decide to take out loan—

*We (the respondent and her husband) jointly decide to take any loan from NGO. If we both (husband and wife) do not decide together (to borrow), and if I fail to repay the installment of one week, my husband have to give it, have not he? Therefore, if we both decide jointly, it would make the payment of installment easier.*

The loan is repaid through several weekly installments which are also jointly maintained by the family members who earn money. Usually, both husband and wife contribute in repaying through weekly installment following the receipt of their weekly wages. This help woman, as they reported, reduces the burden associated with loan repayment. As one woman was saying,

*(We decide) together. In our family, husband, wife, children, everyone take part in deciding to take out the loan. We do not do these things separately. For example, I have eldest son, the eldest daughter, we discuss what would happen if we do it (investing money in a business), whether it would be better or not if you do it. This way, we all members of the family decide these works together.*

Majority of the women reported that the borrowed money is invested in different income generating activities. The mentioned areas of investments include small grocery business and cattle rearing. For grocery business, they open small grocery store inside the tea garden area. These stores mostly sell food items (e.g., rice, local spices, snack, & candy), and some toiletries (e.g., soap and washing powders). In cattle rearing, they invest the money in buying bull calves and raise them for meat. They usually buy one bull calf (sometimes two), raise and fatten

them on just pasture (sometimes supplemented with grain) available inside the garden, and sell in the local market. The huge demand for beef and good price for pasture raised bull make this venture profitable to them.

*The case of default in the garden area is very rare. We do not have any default case yet.....They regularly pay their weekly installment. Their weekly wage helps them to repay them on time.*

Among the available microcredit services of various Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), women frequently mentioned about BRAC's microloans (dabi)<sup>2</sup> services from where they borrow money. Interview with a microfinance branch manager of BRAC reveal that women in tea garden are fully regular in paying their weekly installments. He explained that the case of default is rare in tea garden as the provided weekly wage helps them to repay.

### **6.5 Resistance against the Violence on Women**

The incidences of violence against tea garden women in the form of rape, flogging, verbal abuse, poor treatment, sexual threat (violation of 'honor'), and confinement had been documented extensively in various research and news articles [23]. However, the women in present study were found very reluctant to share the violence scenario that they face in their everyday life both in home and workplace.

In contrast, researcher's observation and interview with management revealed that woman's subjection to both mental and physical abuse is a common issue in tea garden area. Their male counterparts would scold them in public and even do not hesitate to slap or beat them with whatever available around. In response, women usually remain silent fearing associated social stigma, dissolution of marriage as well as getting hurt again.

The present study identified several ways in which working women in tea garden are

<sup>2</sup>In studied garden, BRAC provides women with collateral-free microloans (dabi) through group lending. This includes microloans ranging from USD 170-2,500 and mandatory saving. The borrower shall repay the money through weekly installments. To receive loans, woman is required to become member of local borrower group, called 'village organization' (VO). A VO is usually made up of 15-25 women that act as guarantor that if one person in the group defaults, the other members of the group maintain the payment amount.

vulnerable to violence both in their domestic and workplace life. Alcoholism habit of husbands, widespread illiteracy, role-conflict resulting from multiple role expectations, and colonial managerial attitude are among the first causes responsible for their vulnerability.

Women were found as the primary sufferers of the alcoholism of their husband. Manager of both gardens explained that men drained away whatever they earn including their wives' earning in alcohol. If wives denied giving money, they snatched it away from them. Furthermore, under the influence of alcohol they beat their wives inhumanly. Widespread illiteracy among tea garden women happens to be another important cause behind their backward conditions. They failed to protect their rights and duties and get exploited in all areas of life as silent scapegoats.

Women in tea garden are subjected to multiple role expectations. Apart from traditional family role as homemaker, wife and mother, they are also worker at their job. They remain busy from dawn to bed doing laborious work both at home and job. This plurality of role expectations leads women in tea gardens to live a complicated life. They are too busy or too tired to take active part in fulfilling multiple role expectations. Therefore, their family lives are far from satisfactory with continuous role-conflict which often turns to violence in failing to perform the role as expected.

Asking about violence by management as well as by male counterpart at workplace, almost all women reported that they are active against any violence from their part. They were also found aware about sexual harassments at workplace. One woman explained that they are conscious about any sexual harassments at work. Therefore, they picked up a good Sardar so that there would be no dishonest work in their group. As she was saying—

*We all are always careful about harrasment . We also chose our leader carefully to take our section as we run and continue our work without any practicing any male activities. The leader is defined by company for a section but if some one request for anyone to take their section, the authority allow this.*

Asking about what they do if any harassments or violence happens against them in their workplace, women reported they usually complain to their garden Panchayat Committee.

The Panchayat committee then investigates and settles the dispute. As one woman was describing—

*“He or she (Victim) should complain to our Panchayet committee then the committee investigates and finds out the culprit, and give sits judgments.”*

## 7. CONCLUSION

Tea industry is one of the largest and important source of earning of foreign exchange where the vast majority of the workers happen to be women. Nearly 358,550 workers are employed in tea estates of which 75% are women but they get less attention as compared to the investigation of their socio economic and political condition. In the exploration of wellbeing and empowerment pattern, it is found that in several cases they have reported positively but in the crucial issue of life, such as education, housing, water and sanitation facilities are very pathetic and miserable. Though the television and satellite facilities are available to many, they are far from the touch of modern amenities. Women are not happy in their workplace as well. Despite of their major contribution in the labor force, the authorities and government are very reluctant to fulfill basic demands of female workers. Female workers have power to making choice in some extent, but they are not able to control the situation and achieve their rights. So this study shows women employment doesn't ensure their complete empowerment. Rather to understand empowerment we need to consider other social factors.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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