

# From Leaf to Livelihood: The Role of Welfare in Shaping Job Satisfaction in Tea Plantations

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## ABSTRACT

The tea plantation industry in India, a significant rural employer, heavily relies on a stable and satisfied workforce. This study investigates the role of employee welfare measures in shaping job satisfaction, with a special focus on Dollar Tea Industry, Kotagiri. Drawing on responses from 142 employees across departments, the research evaluates statutory and non-statutory welfare provisions and their correlation with job satisfaction. The findings indicate a strong positive relationship between welfare measures and employee satisfaction ( $r = 0.827$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), whereas the work environment, though correlated, had no significant predictive value. The regression model ( $R^2 = 0.685$ ) affirms that robust welfare schemes are key drivers of satisfaction in rural industrial settings. This study offers actionable insights for HR practitioners and plantation managers to align welfare strategies with employee needs.

**Keywords:** Employee welfare, job satisfaction, tea plantation, work environment, human resource management

## INTRODUCTION

Employee welfare encompasses various services and amenities provided to enhance the well-being of employees beyond statutory entitlements. According to the Committee on Labour Welfare (1969), welfare measures include "adequate canteens, rest and recreation facilities, sanitary and medical facilities, arrangements for travel to and from work, and accommodation for workers" all of which contribute to healthy industrial relations and overall productivity.

In labor-intensive sectors such as tea plantations, where work is often strenuous and geographically isolated, welfare plays a pivotal role in influencing employee morale and performance (Rao, 2020; Devi & Suma, 2021). These welfare measures both intra-mural (within the premises) and extra-mural (outside the workplace) are either mandated by law (statutory) or voluntarily initiated by employers. The Indian tea plantation industry is one of the country's oldest and most labor-intensive sectors, employing millions and contributing substantially to both the domestic economy and export earnings. Spread across the hills of Assam, Darjeeling, and the Nilgiris, tea plantations are not only economic hubs but also socio-cultural microcosms where generations of workers have lived and labored under often challenging conditions. These plantations rely heavily on manual labor, with tasks such as plucking, pruning, and processing requiring a dedicated and physically resilient workforce.

Within this demanding occupational environment, employee welfare emerges as a vital determinant of both workforce well-being and organizational performance. Welfare measures refer to a broad spectrum of facilities and services provided by employers to enhance the quality of life for their employees. These include statutory requirements such as safe drinking water, sanitation, housing, healthcare, and maternity benefits, as well as non-statutory services like recreational facilities, educational support, and transport. The effectiveness of these welfare initiatives is particularly critical in plantation settings, where workers often reside within estate boundaries and depend on employers for both professional and personal needs.

The concept of job satisfaction encompasses an individual's subjective evaluation of their job experiences. It is influenced not only by salary and job security but also by intangible factors such as dignity at work, health

infrastructure, and community integration. When employees perceive that their employer values their wellbeing and provides meaningful support, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Conversely, inadequate welfare support can lead to absenteeism, low morale, and high turnover.

Despite its significance, the relationship between employee welfare and job satisfaction in the Indian tea plantation context remains underexplored in empirical literature. Most plantations, especially in remote regions, struggle with implementing uniform welfare standards due to financial constraints, fluctuating market demand, and lack of policy enforcement. As such, there is a pressing need to evaluate how current welfare measures impact employee sentiment and operational outcomes.

This study aims to bridge this research gap by focusing on the Dollar Tea Industry in Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu a region noted for its high-quality Nilgiri tea. The research evaluates the extent to which welfare facilities influence job satisfaction, taking into account demographic factors such as education, income, and experience. Through a combination of statistical analysis and theoretical grounding, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the strategic role welfare can play in human resource management within the plantation economy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee welfare encompasses statutory and voluntary initiatives aimed at safeguarding employees' health and improving working conditions. These include healthcare, sanitation, education, safety, and housing. Job satisfaction, meanwhile, is defined as a positive emotional response resulting from job evaluation (Skelton et al., 2019).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1966) explains that job satisfaction is influenced by motivators (e.g., recognition, advancement) and dissatisfaction by hygiene factors (e.g., working conditions, pay). Locke's Range of Affect Theory (1976) posits that the gap between expectations and actual experiences determines satisfaction. Mullins (2005) adds that job satisfaction is a complex emotional state influenced by individual expectations, workplace conditions, and interpersonal dynamics. Numerous studies affirm that well-implemented welfare programs lead to higher employee satisfaction, especially in labor-intensive sectors: Mohanraj and Vasanthi (2019) found that access to housing and healthcare significantly improved job satisfaction among plantation workers in the Nilgiris region. Devi and Suma (2021) highlighted the role of basic welfare provisions like sanitation and education for workers' children in raising morale in Kerala plantations. Selvi and Dhanasekaran (2022) linked poor infrastructure such as broken housing and unsafe water to job dissatisfaction and higher attrition rates in the Western Ghats. George and Ramanathan (2021) examined pandemic-era welfare policies, showing that paid quarantine leaves, vaccination drives, and PPE distribution sharply increased worker trust and perceived organizational support. Lakshmi and John (2023) emphasized the role of occupational health measures in reducing risks and boosting satisfaction. Anand and Thomas (2022) underscored that involving employees in welfare planning through welfare committees or surveys results in more relevant and trusted interventions, increasing both job satisfaction and employee retention. Gendersensitive approaches are particularly important in plantations, where a significant share of the workforce is female: Josephine and Raj (2023) found that crèche facilities, maternity leave, and menstrual hygiene management significantly impacted satisfaction and retention among women workers. Ramesh and Thomas (2021) showed that emotional well-being and counseling services had a marked positive effect on the mental health and performance of plantation workers. Comparative analyses reveal regional disparities in welfare implementation: Das and Joseph (2020) compared Assam and Kerala plantations, finding that Kerala estates with participatory planning and additional non-statutory benefits had higher satisfaction levels. Vinod and Meera (2022) linked intergenerational welfare policies such as scholarships for children and school transport to greater family security and employee loyalty. Patel and Bhat (2021) observed that estates aligning welfare measures with CSR goals and public policies achieved better organizational outcomes and employee satisfaction. Welfare's impact extends beyond the physical to the psychological domain: Beuren et al. (2021) and Sesen & Ertan (2021) emphasized the role of welfare in boosting employee self-esteem, morale, and organizational citizenship behavior. Boamah et al. (2018) found a positive relationship between supportive workplace policies and job satisfaction, especially among younger and less experienced workers. Hilton et al. (2021) and Ahmad (2018) stressed that emotional well-being, workplace autonomy, and respectful treatment are as crucial as financial rewards in determining satisfaction. The COVID-19 pandemic has

accelerated innovation in welfare delivery: Shankar and Pillai (2023) reported that the use of mobile apps and digital dashboards in large plantations helped track service delivery, allowing employees to register grievances and monitor welfare schemes transparently. Souza (2009) showed that eight core welfare areas education, health, recreation, safety, housing, subsidized food, loans, and leave benefits had positive and significant correlations with employee satisfaction. Overall, the literature clearly demonstrates that welfare initiatives, particularly when inclusive, participatory, and responsive to employee needs, play a central role in determining job satisfaction. In labor-intensive sectors like tea plantations, where workers often depend entirely on employers for basic services, the need for comprehensive and empathetic welfare planning is especially critical.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between welfare measures, work environment, and job satisfaction.
2. To analyze differences in job satisfaction across demographic variables.
3. To determine the predictive strength of welfare measures on job satisfaction.
4. To suggest improvements in existing welfare practices.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Methodology

This section outlines the methodology adopted for the study, including the research design, data sources, sampling strategy, questionnaire development, data collection methods, and tools used for analysis.

### Research Design

The study employs a descriptive research design to systematically investigate the relationship between employee welfare and safety measures and job satisfaction within the tea plantation sector. This design allows for the examination of variables as they exist in the natural work environment without manipulation.

### Methods of Data Collection

- **Primary Data:** Acquired through surveys and interviews conducted among employees using a pretested, structured questionnaire designed to capture demographic data, welfare provisions, safety measures, and job satisfaction levels.
- **Secondary Data:** Collected through desk research involving the review of internal documents and relevant literature.

### Sampling Design

A **quantitative research approach** was adopted with a descriptive framework. The study surveyed 173 employees out of a total workforce of 450 at Dollar Tea Factory, covering departments such as production, maintenance, quality control, and administration.

- **Sampling Unit:** Employees of Dollar Tea Factory, Kotagiri
- **Sampling Technique: Stratified Random Sampling** was used to ensure proportionate representation from each department, thereby reducing sampling bias.

### Questionnaire Design

The structured questionnaire consisted of both close-ended and Likert-scale questions. It was designed to collect information on:

- Personal and demographic details
- Employee perceptions of statutory and non-statutory welfare measures
- Safety provisions and workplace environment
- Levels of job satisfaction and organizational support

### Tools for Data Analysis

Data collected were processed and analyzed using SPSS software. The following statistical tools were employed:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Means, frequencies, and percentages to summarize demographic and response variables.
- **Inferential Statistics:**
  - **Chi-square test:** To examine associations between categorical variables.
  - **T-tests:** To compare group means where applicable.
- **Correlation Analysis:** To assess relationships between variables such as welfare measures and job satisfaction.

### Research Hypotheses

To test the core relationship of the study, the following hypotheses were framed:

- **Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant relationship between welfare measures and job satisfaction among employees in Dollar Tea Industry.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant relationship between welfare measures and job satisfaction among employees in Dollar Tea Industry.

### Research Model

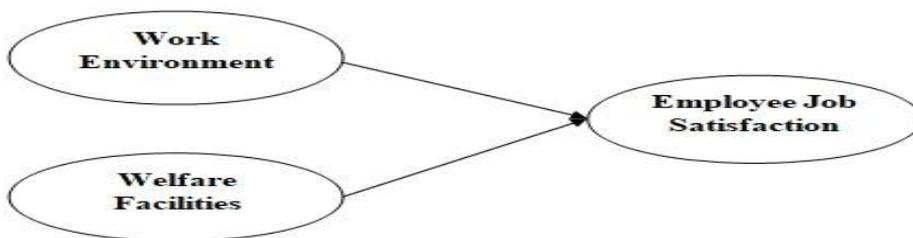


Figure 1: Welfare–Work Environment–Satisfaction (WWS) Framework

### Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 5.1.1 Age of the Respondents

AGE			
Age		Frequency	Percent
	20-30	78	54.9
	31-40	32	22.5
	41-50	32	22.5
	Total	142	100.0



Interpretation: From the above table age distribution of the respondents indicates that the majority fall within the 20–30 age group, accounting for 54.9% of the total sample. This suggests that more than half of the workforce in the tea plantation industry surveyed comprises younger employees, possibly indicating recent recruitment trends or a younger labor force preference. The next two age brackets, 31–40 and 41–50, are equally represented, each comprising 22.5% of the respondents. This balanced representation in the middle age groups suggests a moderate level of experience among employees, but the relatively lower proportion compared to the younger group may also point to attrition, migration, or retirement patterns in the sector. Overall, the data reflect a workforce that is predominantly young, with a significant presence of mid-career employees.

**Relationship between welfare measure, work environment and Job Satisfaction**

Table 5.1.2 Relationship between welfare measure, work environment and Job Satisfaction

	WELFARE	WORKENVIR	JOBSATIS
WELFARE	Pearson Correlation	1	.923**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	142	142
WORKENVIR	Pearson Correlation	.923**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	142	142
JOBSATIS	Pearson Correlation	.827**	.747**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	142	142

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation: Table shows that welfare measures, work environment, and job satisfaction are all significantly and positively interrelated. Specifically, the analysis reveals that the correlation between welfare measures and work environment is exceptionally high ( $r = 0.923$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that improved welfare provisions are strongly associated with a better work environment. Similarly, there is a robust positive relationship between welfare measures and job satisfaction ( $r = 0.827$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that employees who perceive superior welfare benefits are more likely to express higher levels of job satisfaction. In addition, the work environment is positively correlated with job satisfaction ( $r = 0.747$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), demonstrating that a favorable work setting contributes significantly to how satisfied employees feel in their roles. Overall, these findings underscore the

critical role that both welfare measures and a conducive work environment play in enhancing job satisfaction within the tea plantation industry.

### Relationship between Welfare measures and Work Environment

#### Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.828 <sup>a</sup>	.685	.681	.14293

a. Predictors: (Constant), WORKENVIR, WELFARE

#### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.189	2	3.094	151.468	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	2.840	139	.020		
	Total	9.029	141			

a. Dependent Variable: JOBSATIS

b. Predictors: (Constant), WORKENVIR, WELFARE

#### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.248	.287		-.865	.389
	WELFARE	1.205	.161	.924	7.491	.000
	WORKENVIR	-.147	.173	-.105	-.849	.397

a. Dependent Variable: JOBSATIS

**Interpretations:** The regression analysis reveals that welfare measures and work environment together explain 68.5% of the variance in job satisfaction among tea plantation employees, indicating a strong model fit ( $R^2 = 0.685$ ). The model is statistically significant ( $F = 151.468, p < 0.001$ ), confirming that the predictors meaningfully influence job satisfaction. Among the two variables, welfare measures have a significant and strong positive impact on job satisfaction ( $B = 1.205, p < 0.001$ ), making it the most influential predictor. In contrast, the work environment shows a negative and statistically insignificant effect ( $B = -0.147, p = 0.397$ ), suggesting it does not contribute meaningfully to job satisfaction when welfare is considered. Overall, the findings emphasize that improving employee welfare is a key driver of job satisfaction in the tea plantation industry.

## FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Findings

#### 1. Strong Positive Correlation Between Welfare Measures and Job Satisfaction

A significant positive relationship exists between welfare measures and job satisfaction ( $r = 0.827, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that enhanced welfare facilities are directly linked to higher employee satisfaction.

## **2. Work Environment Is Positively Related But Not a Significant Predictor**

Although the work environment correlates with job satisfaction ( $r = 0.747$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), regression analysis shows it is not a statistically significant predictor when welfare is considered ( $B = -0.147$ ,  $p = 0.397$ ).

## **3. Welfare Measures Are the Key Driver of Job Satisfaction**

Welfare measures alone account for a significant portion of the variance in job satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.685$ ), with the regression model confirming a strong predictive strength ( $B = 1.205$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## **4. Demographic Analysis Shows a Young Workforce**

The majority of respondents (54.9%) fall within the 20–30 age group, suggesting a predominantly young workforce with implications for welfare planning and career development strategies.

## **5. High Interrelationship Between Welfare and Work Environment**

Welfare and work environment are highly correlated ( $r = 0.923$ ), indicating that improvements in welfare measures tend to enhance perceptions of the overall work environment.

## **Suggestions**

### **1. Enhance and Prioritize Welfare Programs**

Focus on improving both statutory (housing, sanitation, healthcare) and non-statutory welfare measures (recreational facilities, educational support, transport). These have the strongest influence on job satisfaction.

### **2. Reassess Workplace Environment Strategies**

While the work environment is important, its impact appears secondary to welfare. However, integrating workplace improvements with welfare initiatives may yield compounded benefits.

### **3. Strengthen Employee Participation in Welfare Planning**

Establish welfare committees that include employee representatives to ensure the welfare needs reflect real concerns and promote trust.

### **4. Implement Gender-Sensitive Welfare Policies**

Given the high percentage of female workers in plantations, special provisions like crèches, maternity support, and menstrual hygiene facilities should be enhanced.

### **5. Invest in Digital Tools for Welfare Monitoring**

Following the example of other plantations, introduce mobile apps or dashboards to track service delivery, lodge grievances, and ensure transparency in welfare management.

### **6. Target Welfare Schemes to Younger Workforce Needs**

With a younger workforce, welfare schemes should also focus on career growth, skill development, and long-term incentives to retain talent and reduce attrition.

### **7. Align Welfare Measures with CSR and Government Schemes**

Tap into CSR funds and government welfare initiatives to expand the scope and quality of benefits without overburdening plantation finances.

## 8. Conduct Regular Impact Assessments

Periodic evaluations of welfare effectiveness should be conducted to adapt policies and practices in response to changing worker expectations and industry dynamics.

## CONCLUSION

This study clearly highlights that employee welfare measures are central to enhancing job satisfaction in the tea plantation sector. The analysis reveals a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between welfare provisions and job satisfaction, establishing welfare as the most influential factor affecting employee morale and retention.

While the work environment also shares a positive correlation with job satisfaction, it does not significantly predict satisfaction levels when welfare measures are accounted for, suggesting that employees prioritize tangible welfare benefits over environmental conditions in this context. Furthermore, the study found that welfare measures account for 68.5% of the variation in job satisfaction, confirming their strategic importance in human resource management.

The demographic analysis points to a young and evolving workforce, emphasizing the need for dynamic and inclusive welfare policies that can address both current and future workforce expectations. In an industry where workers often reside within the plantation premises, employee welfare extends beyond the workplace and deeply impacts their overall quality of life.

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