

Substance Consumption Habits of Tea Garden Workers in Eastern Nepal

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Abstract: Substance consumption is common among tea garden workers in Eastern Nepal. The aim of the study is to assess in detail the substance abuse habits among the tea garden workers in rural Eastern Nepal. The study aims to find any correlation between substance abuse and family situation and daily income. The study was conducted in the remote villages of Jhapa District of Eastern Nepal from July 2019 to December 2019. A total of 152 attendees, men and women, were interviewed personally with prepared questionnaire in local dialects after obtaining their verbal consent. The study was conducted in 8 different villages in Eastern Nepal. The study included 152 participants, of whom 54 were female and 98 were male. The participants' age range is from 18 to 70 years. The 68.42% gave history of substance abuse and 28.95% had no history of substance consumption and 2.63% did not give any answer. 43.42% of workers drank alcohol daily. 28.95% did not drink and 27.63% did not answer. The study indicates that a lot of works has to be done to improve the life of tea garden workers.

Keywords: substance, consumption, tea garden, Nepal, population, agriculture

1. Introduction

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. The total population of the country is 26.5 million according to the census of 2011 and the main occupation is agriculture^[1]. Nepal is geographically divided into three main regions, Himalayan region, and hilly region and Terai region.

There are about 66576 workers employed in the tea estates as factory workers and tea pluckers^[8]. Most of the tea gardens are situated the far east of Nepal. The study is done in the rural area of Eastern Nepal where the tea garden workers migrated years ago from India. The tea garden labourers were paid minimum wages and were unable to get any education for themselves and for their children according to the times. They are also socially discriminated from the rest of the society. They could not purchase any land for themselves. Therefore they could not grow socially, culturally and economically. Many of these workers have no citizenship and no land of their own. Their main source of income is the low daily wages from plucking tea leaves and their monthly income is not sufficient to run the family. The frustrations and disappointments lead to substance abuse which further tilts the balance towards poverty and ill health and perpetuates the vicious cycle.

Aim and Objective

The objective of the study is to find out detailed information regarding substance consumption among tea garden workers in rural Eastern Nepal.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the remote villages of Jhapa District of Eastern Nepal from July 2019 to December 2019. A total of 152 attendees were interviewed in local dialects after obtaining their verbal consent. The questions were prepared and each participant was interviewed personally. The researcher collected the demographic details, level of education, family and sociocultural background of the participants besides their substance consumption

information including name of the substance, frequency of consumption, the expenses of the substance, brand and kind of substance. The participants were given choices and could mark more than one choice for each question. The findings are compared with published literature from Nepal and from other areas in other developing countries.

Study Design

A random sample of 152 workers were taken from 8 different tea gardens of Eastern Nepal. The places were chosen based on convenience and judgment.

Sampling

A random sample of 152 men and women tea garden workers from various tea gardens of Jhapa district. The tea garden workers were from Maheshpur, Bhadrapur, Salbari, Soniarjun, Haldibari, Jalthal, Kishabhitta and Birtamod.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was in the local dialect of the national language of the country. The prepared questionnaire was simple, easy to follow and was to find out the personal information, attitude and information regarding about the consumption of substance from the tea garden workers of different tea gardens. The questions were asked personally and confidentially. There were nine questions about demographic and general information and twelve closed – ended questions regarding substance consumption for which multiple choices were given and the participants had to choose the most appropriate response.

Data Collection

The data was collected in the month of July- December 2019 using a prepared questionnaire mentioned above. Each participant was personally interviewed after explaining about the study, ensuring confidentiality and after obtaining verbal consent. The respondents were given a choice to opt out of the study if they so wished. The respondents answers were coded, entered into Microsoft excel sheet, tabulated and analyzed. The findings are presented graphically and described.

Volume 10 Issue 3, March 2021

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3. Literature Review

Alcohol and tobacco are the two most prevalent substance abuse habits globally. A 2001 national survey in Nepal showed 67.5% of the sample consumed alcohol^[6]. Data from the 2003 World Health Survey showed that 3% of men and 4% of women were heavy drinkers (>40g of pure alcohol/day for men and > 20g for women)^[10]. 17.4% of children and youth between 10-17 years were current drinkers^[3]. In a community study in the Town of Dharan in Eastern Nepal, the prevalence of alcohol dependence was 25.8%^[4]. Heavy drinking (e" 2 CAGE) was found in 19.5% (male 28.4% and female 11.67%). The prevalence was higher among those with the status of increasing age, lower levels of education, widowers, divorcees and those from 'Matawali' community^[4].

Niraula SR et al (2002) reported prevalence of alcohol consumption in 17% of 2340 cluster samples of women of age more than 15 years in Dharan, with higher rates among women from hilly ethnic groups, divorcees and smokers^[7]. A striking proportion of pregnant women, i.e. 9% reported to drink alcoholic beverages^[7]. Alcohol use and abuse is a significant health problem in Eastern Nepal. In a meta-analysis by Shakya DR, the author quotes multiple hospital based and community based studies highlighting the prevalence of alcohol abuse across all ages and both genders^[9].

4. Findings

Demographic findings: A total of 152 respondents were interviewed of which 98 were males and 54 were females. There were 33 respondents between 15 to 25 years of age and 74 respondents between 26 to 45 years of age and 47 participants above 45 years of age. The number of family members of respondents are listed in Table 1. The total number of children in the family reported include single child (n=23), 2 children (n=33), 3 children (n=40) and 4 children (n=41) and 15 participants did not give an answer.

Earning members: 83 respondents were the sole earning member of their families and 64 respondents had another earning member in the family. 5 did not give an answer. 15 of the respondents had another member of their family working in the tea garden. 5 respondents said that other earning member of their family is occupied by agriculture and 30 respondents reported that other earning family members were doing daily labour. 5 of the respondents said that another family member had a regular paid job and 3 respondents reported that another family member was running a small business as a profession and 6 participants said other family member did unspecified jobs. The respondents belonged to different ethnic groups and tribes as indicated in Table 2.

Consumption Habits of Participants

112 (73.68%) of 152 respondents drank alcohol and 36 (23.68%) did not. 4 (2.63%) did not give an answer. 104 (68.42%) consumed tobacco (smoking or chewing). 23.68% did not. 12 (7.89%) did not give an answer. Of the 112, 31 (27.68%) drank alone, 72 (64.29%) drank with friends and 9 (8.04%) drank with family members. 66 of the 112 (68.93%) drank daily, 44 (39.29%) did not drink alcohol daily and 2

did not give an answer. 34 of 112 (30.36%) started before 15 and 37 (33.04%) after 15 and 42 (37.5%) started recently. 45 (40.18%) drank once a day. 37 (32.17%) drank twice and 9 (8.04%) more than twice a day. 12 (10.71%) drank less than 1 bottle per day, 55 (49.11%) drank one bottle per day, 17 (15.18%) drank more than 1 bottle per day. 63 (56.25%) drank home-made liquor, 42 (37.5%) got from nearby shop and 3 got from town (2.67%) expensive brands. 83 (74.11%) spent less than 50 rupees per day and 20 (17.86%) spent between 50-100 per day and 5 (4.46%) spent more than 100/day. Patterns of smoking habit is given in Figure 1. 70 (67.31%) spent less than 50 rupees (US\$1=NC 116) on tobacco per day and 34 (32.69%) spent more than rupees 50 per day on tobacco.

5. Discussion

The tea garden labourers contribute significantly to the economy of Eastern Nepal, although they are often underpaid and live in very poor conditions. There is no published literature on prevalence substance abuse habits among tea garden workers of Eastern Nepal. However, there are some studies published on the substance abuse habits of tea garden workers of neighboring Indian state of Assam. In a study by Medhi GK et al, Age-adjusted prevalence of alcohol use was 59.2% (male- 69.3%; females- 54%). Smoking was prevalent in males (13.2%) more than females (2%)^[5]. However, use of non-smoked tobacco was widespread in both genders, female (71.9%) and males (75.3%). 54.7% were users of alcohol and tobacco. Prevalence of alcohol use, non-smoked tobacco use, and smoking in the 15-24 years group was 32.2%, 52.5%, and 2.2%, respectively^[5]. Bhuyan B et al studied substance abuse among adolescents among tea garden workers in Assam found that 43.1% of males were and 82.7% were consuming alcohol. 19.6% of females were consuming alcohol occasionally^[2]. 91.4% of males were using chewing /smokeless tobacco in and 41.3% of females using it.^[2]

6. Conclusions

The study was aimed at finding the prevalence of substance abuse in rural area of tea garden workers in Nepal. The current study found that the rates of substance consumption among the tea garden workers in Eastern Nepal is very high (68.42). 30.36% of those who gave the information started consuming alcohol before the age of 15. 74.1% of those who drank alcohol spent around 50 Rupees per day for alcohol. This study indicates the magnitude of the problem of substance abuse among tea garden workers, resulting in a vicious cycle of poverty and ill health. The fact that nearly a third of those who gave the information started drinking before 15 years of age highlights the urgent need for counseling, health education and awareness among the youth.

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Table 1: Family size of respondents

Number of family members	No. of respondents	Percentage
1-3	54	35.53
4-6	54	35.53
7-9	27	17.76
10 and above	10	6.58
No answer	7	4.61

Table 2: Ethnicity of respondents

Ethnic groups/ tribes	Number of respondents
Urao	46
Rajebhansi	20
Santal	31
Khadia	9
Rai	5
Gurung	4
Limbu	7
Madhesi	30
Total	152

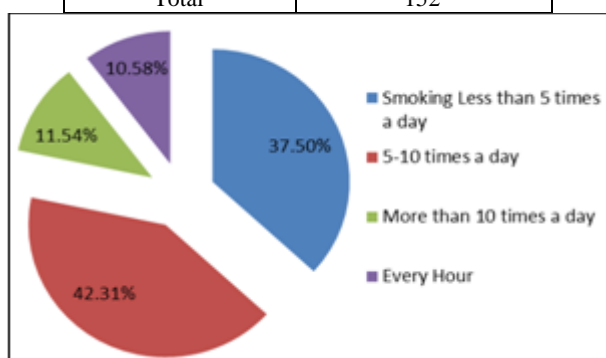


Figure 1: Frequency of smoking among those with the habit