Assessing the Factors Affecting Labour Productivity of Tea Harvesters in Up Country Tea Plantations in Sri Lanka

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Recently tea sector in Sri Lanka has experienced diminishing labour productivity and profit. Improving profitability by increasing the labourers' efficiency is a way to maintain tea productions for long term sustainability. The objective of the study was to estimate the current level of labour-productivity and to identify the factors affecting labour-productivity of tea harvesters as it brings a paramount importance to the tea sector. The primary data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire based personal interviews carried out with 350 individual tea pluckers. Secondary data were collected from administrative units from the tea estate located in Nuwara Eliya district in August 2018. As a core part of the study, five different indices were developed namely Household and Housing (HH), Worker Skills Development (WSD), Individuals' Health Level (IHL), Availability of Finance (AF), Working Environment and Conditions (WEC) by considering major areas affect on productivity which are bound with their livelihood. Quantile Regression was used to assess the differing impacts of these five indices on labour productivity with respect to three different quantiles (*i.e.* 25th, 50th and 75th). The outcome of the analysis suggested that HH and WSD were able to make a significant effect on all three different productivity levels. The contribution of the HH and WSD were higher with the percentage of labour-productivity. IHL and AF indices were significant only in 25 % productive category and WEC index was significant in 75 % productivity group. Results claimed that, different productivity levels should be addressed to uplift the labour-productivity since their desires are quite different. Administrative unit of the estate should focus on encouraging labourers' performance by addressing productivity intervention areas as offering incentives for the highly productive pluckers, providing training opportunities and encouraging to participate in training programmes, influencing them to obtain medical aids from the estate and to maintain a good health condition.

Keywords: Labour productivity, Principal component analysis, Quantile regression, Tea industry