

## **A study of the factors determining change in the employment of women in Sri Lanka**

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Female labour force participation in Sri Lanka has increased due to socio-economic development of the country. Growth of female labour force participation was very low during the colonial era; prior to the independence in 1948. But with the socioeconomic development during 1948-1977, a substantial growth of female labour force participation was seen. But, it was mainly confined to the agricultural sector and some fields of the service sector. With the implementation of liberalized economic policies after 1978, female labour force participation in all the sectors of economy grew at an increased pace. This growth was mainly attributable to the interaction of a number of demographic and socio-economic factors. Therefore, correct identification of main factors is very important because it would help planners and policy makers to initiate policy measures to maximize favorable effects and minimize unfavorable effects. Thus, this study was carried out to examine the main variables that influenced female labour force participation in Sri Lanka and to measure their impact.

The sample was selected from the Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics in 2006. The dispersion of conditional female labour force participation at the total sample is investigated by running multiple regressions. In Sri Lanka's female labour market, female-headed household and never married female are the most significant factors for the change in women's employment. Several implications resulted to emerge a comparatively slow growth of female labour force participation in Sri Lanka. Size of the never married female population, educational attainment and the size of the segment of female-headed households seem to be very important factors than a number of other demographic and socio-economic factors. There is substantial scope for increasing female labour force participation in Sri Lanka if appropriate measures are taken.

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