

**WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A STUDY ON THE
PLANTATION SECTOR**

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Foreign employment is an important economic activity in Sri Lanka today affecting the social, cultural and economic setup of the country.

The increasing number of women employed abroad, particularly in the Middle East, is a recent trend and a factor which has had a deep impact on society. The employment of women as housemaids in the Middle East had both positive and negative results. While they draw relatively high incomes from such employment, they also face problems and issues that have to be tackled by the authorities concerned in order to make their condition a satisfactory one.

The objectives of this study are to examine the existing situation with regard to their problems in order to guide policy makers. Few researchers have worked on this theme. My present study is an examination of the aftereffects of women's employment in the Middle East with particular reference to the women of the plantation sector in the Matale District.

The study is based on a sample of 3 estates which I have identified. The Research methodology includes a Literature Survey and the administration of a questionnaire, interviews, and participant observation. I shall be interviewing women employees (returnees), their families, and some agencies dealing with this activity. My main interest will be the issues of women, such as child care, child welfare, family relationships, cultural impact, in addition to the positive effects on the economy of the family.