Factors Affecting the Labor Force Participation of Married Women in Sri Lanka: A Study Based on Ambalantota Divisional Secretariat

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Participation of married Sri Lankan women in the labor market has been receiving greater attention. It has a crucial contribution to socioeconomic development by providing an additional income to maintain the standards of living, children's education, health, consumption and other expenditure and the pressure of family debts. Therefore, a married woman in the labor market is an important driver of household economy. The study identifies various individual factors and demographic factors that influence the labor force participation of married women in Sri Lanka in Ambalantota Divisional Secretariat. This study is based on a field survey conducted in the Hambantota District. A sample of 209 married women of ages 18-65 living in the Ambalantota Divisional Secretariat is selected using convenience sampling method by conducting the questionnaire. The Logit model is used to identify the factors affecting labor-force participation of married women and a regression model using several explanatory variables is used to estimate the decision of married women partaking in the labor-force. The dependent variables consist of two binary values: 1 if the married woman is employed and 0 if the married woman is not employed. The results indicate that age, education, number of children in the family of married women have positive and significant impact on the labor force participation. Among these variables age and education are perceived as major characteristics for the decision of the married woman participating in the labor force. Variables such as depending on the husband, number of family members, number of children under 5 years of age and number of prime-age children in the household, act as barriers for women to join the labor force. Furthermore, this study analyzes the reasons behind low participation rates of women in economic activities. The factors affect the reduction of married female labor force participation are looking after children and elders, traditional family background, lack of child care facilities, traditional gender role attitudes and housework.

Keywords: Labor force, logit model, married women