

The relationship between women's attitudes towards unpaid family work and primary socialisation: A case study of a village in Sri Lanka

The labour within the household is clearly divided between males and females. Man is recognised as the breadwinner and woman as a housewife. However, this gendered division of labour differs according to the socio-cultural context. Although gender identity is not biologically inevitable, the gender division is identified as natural in many societies. Moreover, it is pervasive both in culture at large and in everyday social relationships. This paper examines the role of primary socialisation towards gender stereotypes in work among rural women in Sri Lanka.

The study is based on data collected through in-depth interviews in a traditional village in the Matale District. It argues that attitudes, cultural values and practices that are perceived through the primary socialisation process, shape adult women's occupational choice as housewives.

Findings show that attitudes behind women's choice of unpaid family work revolve around the basic role models on gender rooted in culture. Moreover, women encourage children to follow stereotype perceptions on this subject both intentionally and unintentionally. As a consequence, interactions between girls and boys are affected. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the social institution of family (*paula* or kindred) plays a prominent role in the socialisation process of the community studied. Although extended family has more potential in socialising its members, it seems that mothers and sisters in nuclear families also socialise younger members with regard to traditional household work. Finally, the study confirms that motherhood is more central in the life of a woman. It is evident that the greater emphasis on gender role models within the family during the socialisation process has compelled rural women to accept their ascribed role in the