ABSTRACT

The study entitled “Employment of Women in the Service Sector in Kerala: A case study of Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha Districts” examines the determinants and key dimensions of women employment in the service sector in Kerala. It consists of seven chapters. The status of women and the pattern of women employment in Kerala were analyzed by comparing the position of women at the all India level and in some major states of India with a focus on the service sector. An attempt was made to explain the problems and prospects of women employment using some of the important theoretical perspectives in the context of the household.

The peculiarity of women employment in Kerala is the high proportion of women in service sector, while majority of them are still in agricultural sector at the all India level and in some major states. An earnest effort was made to identify the determinants of women employment in the service sector in Kerala using the factor analysis. The education and motivation of parents, especially father, was emerged as a key determinant of women employment in Kerala. Interest in a particular job after education and the eagerness to serve the community were also found to be in top priorities for women in Kerala at the time of their entry in a service sector job.

A woman employee, in most cases, has to play the dual role as a homemaker and an earning member and so the support she receives from the family towards her employment is crucial. Even though almost all married women employees in the service sector were able to give improved services to their family as a result of their employment, the extent of such services depended upon the monthly income of the employees. The women employees with high educational qualifications engaged in service sector employment with high remuneration were able to make positive changes in her family to a great extent when compared with those employees in the lower hierarchies of employment. A vast majority of women employees in the service sector were able to contribute to the well-being of the society. However, the role of employed women in the society becomes more evident when the education level of the respondent or the household members rises.

It was found that women employees in Kerala are still not enjoying equal status with men employees due to their laxity in acquiring skills and restriction in mobility or social involvement. More than a quarter of post-graduate women employees opined that they have engaged in an employment not suitable according to their educational qualifications. Hence, job oriented
education and training programmes to update skills are essential to enable women in Kerala to grab preferred jobs from the labour market. Women with lesser educational qualifications employed in lower ladders of employment were never allowing their children to accept the same type of job as theirs.

The Christian employees in the study had attained better educational qualifications and were in a better position in the labour market, while most of the SC/ST employees were in lower categories of service sector employment due to their low levels in education. It was found that the empowerment of women employees is directly related to the levels of employment. Even though there was no religious difference in women empowerment, differences in empowerment was seen across caste categories. The empowerment of SC/ST women employees were the lowest probably because of their concentration in lower ladders of employment and lower educational level. Women employees with higher education level or those belonging to households with high HEI were seen to be more empowered due to the positive link between education and empowerment.

Based on the findings of the study, some policy measures were suggested to address the issues faced by women in service sector in Kerala. In order to implement these measures for the benefit of women, sufficient funds are required. The government should propagate the concept of gender budgeting and allocate funds in the state budget to realize some needs of the women employees. Institutions and other employers in the state should also be persuaded to spend a fraction of their revenue to support the disadvantageous women workforce as a social commitment by adopting gender sensitive budgeting. The initiatives of government in tune with the recommendations of the study may hopefully help the women in Kerala to enhance their participation in economic activities which in turn result in equitable and sustainable growth of our state.

Key words:- Kerala, service sector, women employment, dimensions and determinants, status of women, gender equity, household, income-expenditure pattern, lower hierarchies of employment, work-life balance, effect on family, well-being of society, job satisfaction, laxity in acquiring skills, restriction in mobility, levels of employment, empowerment, policy measures, gender budgeting, sustainable growth.