



**THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA  
COMMONWEALTH EXECUTIVE MASTER OF BUSINESS/PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION  
FINAL EXAMINATION – 2014  
MCP 2698 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY  
DURATION: THREE (03) HOURS**

**Date: 12.08.2014**

**Time: 9.30 am – 12.30 pm**

**Answer Question Number ONE (01) in Part A and any THREE (03)  
Questions from Part B**

**Part A**

01. Stated below is a summary of writings-both historical and contemporary that focus on the 'gendered aspects of work' within the context of plantation estates of Sri Lanka. You are required to answer the questions given at the end of this description drawing on the views as stated here.

**Gendered Aspects of Work in Colonial/Post-Colonial Tea Plantations of Sri Lanka**

During the early years of migration the majority of workers recruited to work in plantations were male with a small number of unattached women also migrating with the male gangs (Twynam, 1869). However, during later years planters as well as colonial officers made an attempt to recruit as many women as possible to work as estate labourers (Kurian, 1985). "The mortality rate among the workers was very high (about one in every four migrants) due to the harsh conditions on the journey and the problems of acclimatization as well as the work regime" (Kurain, 2000:6). Thus, planters were keen to retain the workers who survived the initial period and figured out if more women were made to migrate, the workers would stay for longer periods and the estates would have a more settled population (SLNA/CO, 1859). Another important reason for recruiting women was that female labour was cheaper than male labour, as women were paid less than men even for equal tasks (Jayaweera, 1991). Also as Kurain identifies ... "women from these low castes and classes occupied the lowest position in the Indian hierarchical order and this has forced them into accepting hard and menial tasks" (2000:7). Thus women were seen as 'more steady and regular labourers', more adaptable to the hard life on the estates. These attitudes resulted in colonial officers issuing instructions to agents in India to look for more women to recruit as labourers. Thus, more and more women began to migrate with men, causing a shift in the sex composition of the estate workforce (Kurian, 2000), and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the number of women workers were almost equal to

that of men. "In 1932 of the Indian estate population of 650 576, 209 788 were men, 200 518 were women and 240 270 were children, indicating that family life was almost universal among adult Indian estate labours in Ceylon" (SLNA/AR, 1932: 122).

A situation emerged where household units were maintained in the estates with women working both in the field and at home. This was an arrangement quite lucrative for the planters as they benefited both from women's productive work in the field and unpaid reproductive work in the households. In the field, women were primarily employed for the labour intensive, repetitive, time consuming task of plucking tea leaves; the rationale for this being 'women had nimble fingers'. In the households women were primarily responsible for caring for the needs of the children since they were more 'patient'. Thus, with the increase in the number of women workers, a clear sexual division of labour, based on so called 'natural principles' was also established in the estates (Kurian, 2000).

As discussed above, the issues of why women are employed as tea pluckers in estates and the conditions under which they work, had already been addressed by researchers to some extent. However, there are other aspects of women's work in estates that, apart from being briefly addressed by a few scholars over the recent past (e.g. Wijayatilake, 2001), remain mainly hidden. One such issue relates to the nature of estate life that requires these workers to live and work at places located in close proximity to each other. Wijayatilake (2001) explaining this situation says, the working and living environments of these women workers is such that they find it difficult to have clear boundaries of 'work' and 'home'. Their work environment is not limited to the field or the factory. As Wijayatilake (2001) further explains, the entire estate, "including their dwelling places, foot paths to the crèches and estate hospital, the paths they tread upon for plucking/tapping and the distance to the weighting shed and factory comprise their working locale" (2001: 122). This workplace - homestead interface is a reflection of the multiple roles, the estate women are burdened with; which often impinge upon one another. Their household work is invariably combined with their work in the field or factory. Thus, the reproductive role of female plantation workers appears to revolve and impinge upon their productive roles, unsettling the workplace - homestead interface. 'Women often found it difficult to de-link one role from the other; and thought that taking the children to the crèche and going to muster were all part of their work' (Wijayatilake, 2001: 122).

Wijayatilake's argument gives valuable insights into the nature of estate life and explains, to some extent, the unusual manner in which 'estate women' perceive their work roles. However, her work also gives rise to certain questions that neither she nor any other scholar writing after her seems to have addressed.

**Questions:**

- i) Drawing on the above description, formulate a research problem focused on seeing the 'unseen' aspects of female plantation workers work and family lives within the colonial/post-colonial plantation estates of Sri Lanka.
- ii) Write down the specific research questions that would help you to address the research problem as stated in i) above.
- iii) Specify the research objective(s) that you intend to achieve through your study.
- iv) What would be the most appropriate methodological approach for your intended research study? Explain your answer.
- v) Describe the philosophical foundation underlying your chosen methodological approach.

(05 x 08 = 40 Marks)

**Part B**

02. Human Resources Manager of Beta Ltd. has recently observed that individual performance of the employees in the company is below the expected level. He thinks that training; appropriate supervision and better working conditions will increase the individual performance of the employees. However, he also believes that employees over 45 years of age do not derive much benefit from the continuous training programmes.

- i) Define the problem prevailed in Beta Ltd. (03 Marks)
- ii) Write three research questions in relation to the above issue. (03 Marks)
- iii) Develop a conceptual framework for the above issue. (03 Marks)
- iv) Establish at least three objectives for the above situation. (03 Marks)
- v) List and label the variables as independent, dependent and moderator and provide reasons for labeling them as such variables. (04 Marks)
- vi) Develop at least four hypotheses based on the conceptual framework you have developed under (iii) above. (04 Marks)

03. "The literature review is an integral part of the research process and makes a valuable contribution at almost every operational step of your research study. In the initial stages of research it helps you to establish the theoretical roots of your study clarify your ideas and develop your research methodology. Later in the process, the literature review serves to enhance and consolidate your knowledge and helps you to integrate your findings with the existing body of knowledge" (Kumar, 2011:31-32).

Elaborate the above statement. Use examples from your own research study to illustrate your answer.

(20 Marks)

04. "A hypothesis is a speculative statement that is subjected to verification through a research study. In formulating a hypothesis it is important to ensure that it is simple; specific and conceptually clear; able to be verified; rooted in existing body of knowledge; and able to be operationalised".

Discuss the above statement drawing examples from research studies related to management.

(20 marks)

05. i) "The task of formulating a research problem often follows a process of sequential steps". Explain this statement using an example.

(12 Marks)

ii) Discuss the major factors to be considered in selecting a research problem.

(08 Marks)

06. Write short notes on any four (04) of the following.

- i) Anti-Positivism
- ii) Participant Observation
- iii) The Nominal Scale
- iv) Intervening Variable
- v) Nominalism

(04 x 05 = 20 Marks)

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