



CIPRIANI COLLEGE
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



WORK MATTERS

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COLUMN

The Family and Woman Employment

In Trinidad and Tobago, the family has an important role in determining a woman's place in the labor market, something in which the women's two roles are recognized but generally go unnoticed. Women's participation in the labor force is affected by whether or not they have children and is most affected by the age of the youngest child.

Whether or not a working-class woman does 'pay work', or whether she works full-time or part-time, and the kind of job she does, determines her status in the community. Today workers are overwhelmed with the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in caring for the elderly, handicapped and other vulnerable people in the community, including teenagers. In the absence of adequate facilities for caring for the vulnerable, children, elderly and handicapped, citizens, it can be argued that we are all exposed to a recipe for disaster.

As a backup plan of action, the social services both formal and informal must work assiduously to eliminate corruption which can disrupt the free-flowing of assistance to all those individuals in need. Further, it has become increasingly difficult for women who have responsibilities for caring for others, to work full-time in the face of the day-to-day challenges that have become more pronounced and arduous in recent times.

Women today have two recognized roles. One at home and the other in the formal workplace. But rather than these being alternatives, the domestic role is assumed to be the natural part of being a woman in many societies, including ours here in the Caribbean. It is envisioned that other activities such as having a 'paying' job are then performed as additional work, to that which is expected of our females. Working-class women perform never-ending tasks of cleaning, cooking, washing up, washing clothes, and all the cultural repetitive activities that maintain the home.

As human beings, mothers have the most exhausting demands from children, and to make it worse, domestic

housework seems very far away from the business production sector. As such, housework is not recognized and accepted as 'real work' because it is unpaid and done in the privacy of the home. Mothers create a reality of their own in organizing their daily workload.

In today's modern society, housework is not insignificant, and mothers may have to work long hours both at their place of employment and then do the same in their homes. Housework has become easier and less time-consuming with the use of technology, but there is no consumer product to make children less demanding; further, our mothers have the additional responsibility of being primarily responsible for housework and child care.

Throughout the democratic world, this is true about unpaid domestic work which is perceived as woman's work, and the woman's responsibility. Culturally, it is important and vital work. Food must be cooked, infants fed, clothes washed and dried, and making sure there is always potable water. Even in 'First World' countries, where water comes from taps and water heats at the flick of a switch, a housewife is still very busy, especially if she has small children.

Domestic work is not the only work women do. Very few women all around the world can claim to be 'celebrated housewives'. In Trinidad and Tobago, married and single women have jobs but have to perform dual roles of housewives and mothers. With the introduction of digital platforms, gender work dynamics are changing at an accelerated speed. There are more women than men working in the production and manufacturing in the service industries, not only locally but also internationally. The COVID-19 pandemic has ecologically transformed our social environment into a perceived new normal environment.

At home, the teaching and learning process has become radicalized. Mothers and fathers have to adapt to the virtual classroom present ideology framework of 'no need to see your face' and forget that cognitions formed by the

sensation of receptor cells in the brain that enable us to interpret and perceive our home and work environments.

Women's primary place is still at home, with work running a close second-place, which undoubtedly puts additional stresses on the females as well as the households. Yet, many women especially the working class, have been doing two jobs for many years, and the present realities make their tasks and responsibilities even more arduous; and these facts must be recognized by all responsible individuals and entities in our society.

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