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Abstract

As a small labor-short country, Singapore has a large number of foreign domestic workers. In the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, the government has implemented a policy of state intervention in the labor market. This case study of a country with a large number of foreign domestic workers explores the impact of this policy on the social consequences and the labor market. In the context of transnational labor migration relating to female domestic workers, this article goes on to explore the debates within public discourse as well as private accounts on the impact of foreign maids on a range of issues, including female participation in the workforce; the social reproduction of everyday life including the delegation of the domestic burden and the upbringing of the young; the presence of “enclaves” of foreign nationals in public space; and bilateral relations between host and sending countries. It concludes that the transnational labor migration is a multifaceted phenomenon with important repercussions on all spheres of life, hence requiring dynamic policy intervention on the part of the authorities concerned.



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