

Grappling with Live-in-relations: respectability, dtifulness, and sexual desire among migrant young middle class women in Bangalore / Swati Mishra

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20488783&lokasi=lokal>

Abstrak

Much of the past research on the sexual behavior of Indian women has characterized them as subjects of patriarchy, who are passive bodies and embrace the codified gendered values unquestioningly. In contrast, this ethnographic study explores the emergence of new sexual practices among migrant young middle class women working in transnational call centers (TNCs) in Bangalore, in the form of live-in relations. This goes against the expectations of their families that daughters should abstain from pre-marital sex, which is considered to be a non-normative and shameful practice. Drawing on theories of practice and situated reflexivity, I demonstrate how these women negotiate the ambivalences and contradictions that they experience as dutiful, respectable middle class daughters and modern sexual partners. Both ruptures and continuities between the modern and traditional forces are revealed as these women voluntarily assume the homemakers role, aspire to marry their partners, and re-claim respectability in an innovative way within their modern live-in relations.