

# Push and Pull Factors Influencing International Migration Intentions among Private Sector Employees: A Study of Selected Employees in the Western Province, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Volume 5 Issue 2, August 2025: 11-21  
ISSN: 2773 692X (Online), 2773 6911 (Print)  
Copyright: © 2025 The Author(s)  
Published by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka  
Website: <https://www.sab.ac.lk/sljssh>  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4038/sljssh.v5i2.132>



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**Received:** 14 January 2025, **Revised:** 18 May 2025, **Accepted:** 23 June 2025.

**How to Cite this Article:** De Mel, L.V.S.K. & Priyanath, H.M.S. (2025). Push and pull factors influencing international migration intentions among private sector employees: a study of selected employees in the Western Province, Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 5(2), 11-21.

## Abstract

Human resources are a key factor in national development. However, the migration of skilled human resources to other countries poses a significant challenge to a country's progress. Due to various conditions in Sri Lanka's political, social and economic fields, many people are motivated to migrate to other countries to improve the living standards of their families. Therefore, it is very important to study this phenomenon to grasp what factors influence migration intention. Accordingly, this study attempts to examine the pull-push factors influencing migration intention among private sector employees in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, utilising an explanatory sequential method. Employing snowball sampling, the study collected primary data from private sector employees for the purpose of quantitative analysis through a structured online questionnaire by utilising literature-based constructs and five-point Likert scale questions, resulting in 351 samples. The collected data were analysed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling. In addition, qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with nine purposively selected private sector employees to validate the quantitative results. Mainly, data were collected through in-depth interviews using interview guidelines as voice recordings and transcribed into scripts, and the analysis was done using thematic analysis. The quantitative analysis tested six hypotheses, and only five hypotheses were accepted. The quantitative results disclosed that economic, social, and political pull factors have a positive and significant effect on the migration intention, while economic and social push factors also have a positive and significant effect on the migration intention among private sector employees in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. The results of the study further revealed that political push factors do not significantly affect migration intention. The qualitative result reveals push factors based on Sri Lanka's economic challenges, labour market issues, and systemic issues. On the other hand, pull factors are based on attraction factors in other countries. These findings help policymakers develop targeted strategies that reduce labour migration by improving working conditions and employment opportunities in key sectors, while reducing the push factors that cause skilled workers to migrate.

**Keywords:** Migration Intention, Pull-Push Factors, Private Sector Employees, Skilled Human Resources

## INTRODUCTION

The migration of skilled human resources from their home country to another country is a matter of worldwide concern (Sabti, 2022). The phenomenon of people leaving their birthplace to become residents, permanently or temporarily, in other countries is known as migration (Urbański, 2022). Hagen-Zanker (2008) also stated that migration is the permanent or temporary movement of individuals or groups from one place to another for specific reasons. According to the Annual Statistics of Foreign Employment 2023, 297,656 workers registered with the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) have migrated from Sri Lanka to another country for employment purposes (SLBFE, 2024). Wijesinghe et al. (2023) reveal that the human capital in Sri Lanka intends to migrate in search of good salary scales and job opportunities, indicating that they

are looking for job opportunities in other countries rather than Sri Lanka, as Sri Lanka is currently in an economic and political crisis. Therefore, nowadays migration is a critical issue in the Sri Lankan context and Sri Lankan people mainly migrate to developed countries in search of a better quality of life (Joseph & Dissanayake, 2022).

Shakir (2022) stated that in the age of globalisation, migration is a rapidly developing challenge, and to overcome this challenge, it is necessary to improve the growth of the economy and political stability in the home country. Urbański (2022) highlighted that migration has been occurring for centuries due to economic opportunities, urbanisation, natural disasters, population growth, and political issues. Sabti (2022) also reveals that instability in

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the economy and political sectors, financial constraints, and corruption make people leave their home country.

Due to considerable changes made in line with the open economic policy initiated in 1977, migration is a significant phenomenon in Sri Lankan history (Wijesinghe et al., 2023). Jayasuriya (2014) highlighted that one person in every ten households in Sri Lanka is considering migrating to other countries either regularly or irregularly. According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) (2022), the Sri Lanka Immigration and Emigration Department issued an average of more than 75,000 passports every month in 2022. Dissanayake and Samarakoon (2021) revealed that in the Sri Lankan estate sector, working-age younger women emigrate for employment purposes. Therefore, it can be recognised that migration intention is a critical issue as many people in Sri Lanka wish to migrate for various purposes. Also, the current economic downturn and political crisis in Sri Lanka are severely affecting the migration intentions of skilled employees who are Sri Lanka's future assets. Hence, it is very important to study this phenomenon in the current Sri Lankan context, as many people face obstacles due to economic and political reasons.

There is a lack of studies related to migration intention in Sri Lanka, and a lack of significant contributions to research and development (R&D) in Sri Lanka. Also, most studies focus on professional-level employment as the unit of analysis instead of considering employees across different job levels and income categories. Moreover, scholars have utilised different sample sizes for analysing the emigration issue quantitatively. Therefore, the current study aims to fill these gaps by using both quantitative and qualitative data to produce new empirical knowledge. Therefore, this study aims to examine pull-push (economic, social, and political) factors affecting overseas migration intention among private-sector employees in Sri Lanka.

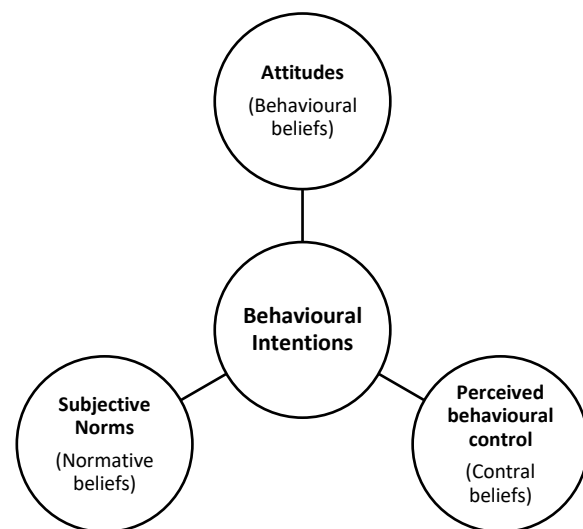
## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Migration in Sri Lanka:** Migration is the movement of people to another country, either permanently or temporarily (Lee, 1966). Migration is the movement of people from their primary home to a new place of residence, either internationally or domestically, while international migration occurs when people cross state borders to live in another country for a minimum period of time (International Organization for Migration, 2025). Joseph and Dissanayake (2022) revealed that migration to other countries for employment is a notable characteristic among Sri Lankans, and is resulting from economic and labour market changes. According to CBSL (2023), compared with the 2022 second quarter, in 2023, the total departures from Sri Lanka for other countries for employment have declined slightly. Also, it highlighted that approximately 60% of individuals who depart for foreign employment purposes comprise the semi or low-skilled groups. Moreover, it is revealed that most males comprise the skilled group while most females comprise the semi-skilled group when compared in terms of gender, and females dominate in the international labour migration in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, it is mentioned that passport issuance grew in the first quarter of 2023, in accordance with higher departures for overseas employment (CBSL, 2023). Additionally, Sriskandarajah (2002) mentioned two forms of migration in Sri Lanka: political migration and labour migration. The author explains

that labour migration is a voluntary movement driven by economic factors, while political migration is a forced movement driven by conflict.

**Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB):** As per the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), there are three considerations which guide human action: "behavioural beliefs", "normative beliefs", and "control beliefs" (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), behavioural beliefs are beliefs about understanding the effects of performing behaviours, normative beliefs are beliefs about the expected norms of key individuals or groups, and control beliefs are beliefs about the availability or lack of resources/barriers to behaviour performance. Cui et al. (2016) highlighted that behavioural beliefs generate attitudes of behaviour, normative beliefs create subjective norms, and control beliefs lead to perceived behavioural control. The following Figure 1 represents the TPB. Accordingly, the current study employs this theory to measure migration intention.

Figure 1: Theory of planned behaviour



Source: Ajzen (1991), Cui et al. (2016)

**Theory on Push and Pull Factors of Migration:** The theory of push and pull factors of migration provides a flexible framework for understanding different migration patterns (Wijesinghe et al., 2023). This theory provides an understanding of why humans try to make decisions regarding migration to different destinations (Urbański, 2022). Urbański (2022) noted that conditions that force people to leave their home countries are called push factors, and these factors can be categorised as political, social, and economic factors. Different factors that lead to attracting individuals to a particular destination or location are called pull factors to migration, and these factors can also be categorised as political, social, and economic factors. Most scholars identified various kinds of pull-push factors that affect migration intention. Economic push factors are mainly identified as a lack of job opportunities, population differences (Ibrahim et al., 2019), limited standard of living, natural disasters that lead to an impact on food and shelter, a lack of basic education, and high fertility (Urbański, 2022). Also, considering the social and political push factors, limited health care facilities, social insecurity, limited facilities in the education system etc. (Urbański, 2022), can be considered as social push factors impacting migration intention. On the

other hand, biased legal systems, corruption, and war situations can be considered as political push factors impact on migration intention (Doerschler, 2006). Furthermore, Zoelle (2011) mentions that expectations of job opportunities, high income and standard of living are economic pull factors while a better education system and religious freedom are social pull factors. Also, Urbański (2022) mentions that freedom of the political system, safety and security, and political stability are the main political pull factors for migration intentions.

**Dual Labour Market Theory:** Another major theory used to explain international migration behaviour is the dual labour market theory. This theory argues that the main reason for labour migration is the demand for workers in developed countries. Thus, immigration is not mainly caused by push factors in home countries, like low wages or high unemployment, and it happens because of pull factors in foreign countries, such as a strong and ongoing need for foreign workers (Massey et al., 1993). Simply, the dual labour market theory suggests that international migration is not primarily due to personal choices, but rather because modern industrialised societies have an inherent need for foreign workers.

### Empirical Literature

Worku (2021) studied the identification of demographic and socioeconomic factors that affect migration intention among individuals from the eastern zone of Tigray. The results reveal that young individuals who belong to the age group of 15-25, are single, and have primary-level education, are more likely to migrate. The author also identified push factors such as poverty, natural disasters, unemployment, scarcity of agricultural land, and limited access to credit that affect migration, while good salary scale and job opportunities that affect migration as pull factors. Wijesinghe et al. (2023) highlighted factors that impact migration intention among Sri Lankan graduates, and the study found that economic pull, social and political push factors significantly impact the migration intention, while economic push, social and political pull factors have no impact on the migration intention among Sri Lankan graduates.

Urbański (2022) compared Romania and Poland on how pull-push factors impact migration decisions, and the results demonstrated that there is a greater impact of pull factors rather than push factors in Romania and Poland. The study also stated that political, economic, and social pull factors in Poland and political and economic pull factors in Romania were shown as significant factors for migration. Sabti (2022) discloses that economic instability and barriers to finance have a positive and significant impact on migration intention among medical doctors in Iraq. Hajian et al. (2020) studied the factors affecting migration intention of dental and medical graduates, and the results emphasised that disadvantageous economic factors, limited education system, lack of income, and politically unfavourable situations are highly affecting migration decisions. Li et al. (2014) found that socio-economic, demographic, and eco-environmental factors have a significant correlation with migration intention.

Gouda et al. (2015) focused on how pull-push factors affect migration intention among Irish medical students and the

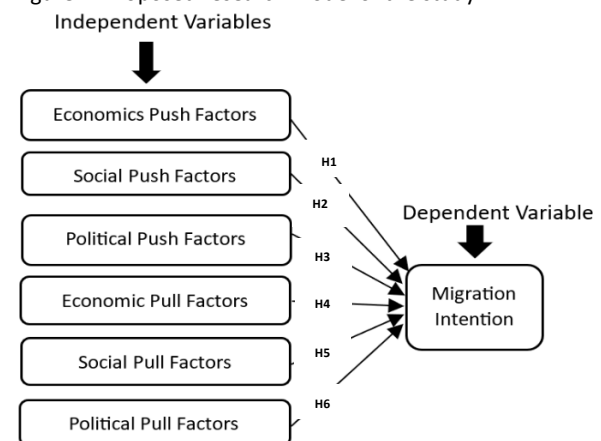
results of the study found that push factors such as negative feelings about jobs, life and working conditions impact migration intentions, and qualitative findings reveal that personal, job, and financial areas related factors impact migration decisions. Abdelwahed et al. (2020) expose that factors like gender, age, employment and marital status affect migration intentions. Gannum et al. (2024) studied what factors affect migration intention among Syrian farmers as a result of the Syrian conflict, and the study found that migration leads to a reduction due to factors such as land size, education level, and income of the household. Dodanwala et al. (2024) identified determinants regarding migration intention among software engineers in Sri Lanka, and the results disclose that attitudes and perceived behavioural control affect migration intention significantly.

### Hypotheses

This study investigates how pull and push factors influence migration intentions among private sector employees in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the study uses six pull and push factors as independent variables covering economic, social and political aspects. Migration intention is the dependent variable of the study. Different scholars have discussed how different kinds of factors affect migration decisions. According to past studies, there is a positive and significant relationship between these factors (pull-push factors) and migration intention.

Thus, Wijesinghe et al. (2023) reveal that there is a positive and significant relationship between social push factors, political push factors, and economic pull factors on migration intention; that is, as political-social push factors and economic pull factors increase, the migration decision among Sri Lankan graduates will increase during the crisis recovery period. Sabti (2022) points out that there is a positive and significant relationship between how economic push factors affect the migration decision; that is, if economic push factors in the home country increase, the migration decision will also increase. Urbański (2022) reveals that social and political pull factors affect migration intentions positively and significantly. This means that political and social pull factors in foreign countries influence people's decision-making about migrating to foreign countries. Accordingly, the present study proposes the following conceptual framework based on the logical relationships discussed in the literature.

Figure 2: Proposed research model of the study



Source: Developed by author, 2024

After reviewing appropriate existing studies relevant to the current study, hypotheses were formulated to assess the

connection between push-pull factors and migration intention. Accordingly, the hypotheses prepared using the available literature can be stated as follows, with a literary basis.

#### **H1: Economic Push Factors Significantly Affect Migration**

**Intention:** Zanabazar et al. (2021) reveal that economic push factors in Mongolia significantly and positively influence migration among Mongolians to the Republic of South Korea. Hajian et al. (2020) also point out that economic push factors such as unfavourable economic factors, a limited education system, and a lack of income lead to migration. Sabti and Sri Ramalu (2024) highlighted that economic push factors, such as economic instability and low income, lead to the migration of individuals to other countries. Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) highlighted that economic pull factors significantly affect migration intention among doctors in Sri Lanka. In this way, taking several studies that presented statistically significant relationships between migration intention and economic push factors, the study developed the first hypothesis of the study.

#### **H2: Social Push Factors Significantly Affect Migration**

**Intention:** Social push factors like limited medical facilities, population increment, insecurity in social aspects, and social inequality are major factors among Poles that impact migration intention, and these indicators significantly affect migration (Urbański, 2022). Wijesinghe et al. (2023) reveal that social push factors such as social discrimination, ineffective social welfare, a poor education system, and social insecurity significantly affect migration intentions among Sri Lankan graduates. Zanabazar et al. (2021) demonstrated that socio-cultural push factors significantly and positively affect migration among Mongolians to the Republic of South Korea. Moreover, as a social push factor, Sabti (2022) notes that issues of family well-being are significant determinants of migration. Thus, it can be noted that social push factors significantly affect migration intention. Therefore, hypothesis two was developed to assess this behaviour in the present study.

#### **H3: Political Push Factors Significantly Affect Migration**

**Intention:** Wijesinghe et al. (2023) revealed that political push factors such as political corruption, conflicts between political parties, weak administrative systems, human rights violations, and lack of transparency in the political system significantly affect migration intentions among graduates in Sri Lanka. Hajian et al. (2020) mention that political instability leads to increased migration intention. Ghimire et al. (2024) highlight that “political instability” is a sub-theme of “Socio-political currents shaping career pathways” in their qualitative study. This indicates that political instability influences migration intentions among undergraduate nursing students. Urbański (2022) demonstrates that political push factors such as conflict, weak governance, corruption, and terrorism significantly and positively affect migration intentions in Romania. Thus, the study developed hypothesis three to examine the relationship between political push factors and migration intention to test the validity of the hypothesised relationship.

#### **H4: Economic Pull Factors Significantly Affect Migration**

**Intention:** Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) reveal that economic pull factors affect migration intentions among Doctors in Sri Lanka. Also, Urbański (2022) notes that

economic pull factors, such as finding a better life and job opportunities, a higher salary, standard living conditions, and facilitating personal development in foreign countries, are the main determinants of migration intentions in Poland and Romania. Moreover, Urbański and Khalid (2021) reveal that economic pull factors significantly impact migration decisions. Zanabazar et al. (2021) reveal that economic pull factors in the Republic of South Korea significantly and positively affect migration among Mongolians. Therefore, it can be concluded that economic pull factors affect migration intention. To examine this relationship, the study developed hypothesis four.

#### **H5: Social Pull Factors Significantly Affect Migration**

**Intention:** Urbański (2022) highlighted that social pull factors such as good medicare facilities, welfare benefits, and lack of discrimination are social pull factors, and these factors significantly affect migration intention in Poland. Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) also demonstrate that social-political pull factors have significant impacts on migration intention. Additionally, Zanabazar et al. (2021) indicate that socio-cultural push factors significantly and positively affect migration among Mongolians to the Republic of South Korea. Therefore, it can be concluded that social pull factors affect migration intention. Accordingly, the study developed hypothesis five to evaluate this relationship in the current study.

#### **H6: Political Pull Factors Significantly Affect Migration**

**Intention:** Urbański (2022) disclosed that factors such as political freedom, political stability, safety and security, and democracy influence migration intentions between Poland and Romania, and that these factors significantly and positively influence migration decisions. Also, Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) reveal that factors such as equality and democracy in a good political environment, a stable future, and better education and living standards have a significant impact on migration intentions. Therefore, it can be concluded that political pull factors affect migration intention. Thus, to investigate this relationship, the study developed hypothesis six.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In this study, the research problem is examining the push and pull factors that influence international migration intentions among private-sector employees. Thus, the nature of reality (i.e., ontology) of the research problem is practical realism since there is insufficient evidence in the Sri Lankan context on how the pull-push factors affect migration intentions among private sector employees. Using empirical measures and techniques, the critical reality can be ascertained and measured using the pragmatism paradigm. Accordingly, the study was conducted using both deductive and inductive approaches, quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, this study was conducted using an explanatory sequential mixed method.

The population of this study is private sector employees in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. According to the Department of Census and Statistics' (2022) Labour Force Survey - Annual Report 2022, there are 1,179,348 private sector employees in the Western Province in Sri Lanka. The reason for choosing this province as the research area is that there are more employees in the private sector in this province, compared to other provinces. Based on Krejcie

and Morgan's (1970) table with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the sample size of this study could be determined as 384, but the result was only 351 responses. For quantitative analysis purposes, the study utilised primary data through the online survey method and used the snowball sampling technique to collect the sample size. There are a considerable number of migration-related past studies that adopted snowball sampling (Amuakwa-Mensah & Nelson, 2014; Kazlauskienė & Rinkevičius, 2006; Balu, 2018; Cheong, 2020; Theodoropoulos et al., 2014). Due to the lack of a sampling frame and difficult-to-access populations, the current study uses snowball sampling, which allows the researcher to find a network of people who share common characteristics or experiences.

The first portion of the questionnaire collected demographic information regarding the respondents' demographic information: gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, education level, and monthly income. Both dependent and independent variables were measured using five-point Likert scale questions ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Accordingly, the dependent variable, migration intention, is measured by the three dimensions: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, which are allied with the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) using 12 items adopted by Cui et al. (2016) and Wijesinghe et al. (2023). To measure the independent variables, pull-push factors, the study utilised the proposed model by Urbański (2022). Accordingly, the study used 13 items to measure push factors adopted by Urbański (2022) and Wijesinghe et al. (2023) on migration intention, and 14 items used by Urbański (2022) and Wijesinghe et al. (2023) to measure pull factors on migration intention.

Previous scholars and authors have employed the PLS-SEM model in various studies where the snowball sampling technique was also utilised (Azad, 2018; Dewi et al., 2020; Sapuan & Zeni, 2021). Furthermore, this research mainly analysed the relationship between the dependent and independent variables using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using the latest version of Smart PLS. In this way, with the help of PLS-SEM, the measurement model evaluates the reliability and validity of the dependent and independent variables. After checking the required reliability and validity criteria, the study examined the VIF values to check for multicollinearity and then the derived structural model to test the hypothesis of the study.

In addition, qualitative data were gathered using in-depth interviews with nine purposively selected private sector employees. Mainly, data were collected through in-depth interviews using in-depth interview guidelines as voice records and transcribed. Analysis was done using thematic analysis. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, forming codes, categories, and themes from narratives with the consultation of peer groups. Accordingly, the researcher first created basic codes that highlighted important points in the data. These codes were then grouped into broad categories that shared similar ideas. From these categories, major themes were developed to represent the main findings of the study. The study ensured the trustworthiness of the whole qualitative process by considering credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The

purpose of the qualitative approach was to further confirm the quantitative results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the sample, 62% were women (218) and 38% were men (133). It was revealed that more than 80% of them belonged to the age group of 21-27 years (Z Generation). The majority of the respondents were Sinhalese (318), while others were Muslim (17) and Tamil (16). More than 80% of the sample of private sector workers were unmarried (309). Moreover, more than 70% of them had graduate qualifications, while others had professional qualifications (71) or A/Ls (25). Also, according to the data, employees earned between Rs 20,000 - 80,000 monthly.

A new measurement model was derived after removing items that did not represent indicator reliability. Thus, Table 1 below represents the outer loadings of the new measurement model, and it represents all indicators that are greater than 0.7. According to Hair and Alamer (2022), outer loading values should be greater than 0.7. Therefore, it can be concluded that all indicator loadings are at an acceptable level and are statistically significant, indicating indicator reliability.

Table 1: Analysis of the indicator reliability of the new measurement model

	Loadings	T-Statistics
<b>1. Migration intention</b>		
<b>Attitudes Toward Migration (ATM)</b>		
ATM_1. I expect to migrate to another country	0.768	14.162
ATM_3. I intend to migrate to another country	0.799	17.734
ATM_4. Migrating to another country is pleasant for me	0.828	32.301
ATM_5. Migrating to another country is good for me	0.794	17.313
ATM_6. Migrating to another country is beneficial to me	0.824	31.378
<b>Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)</b>		
PBC_1. For me, moving to another country is easy	0.808	19.927
PBC_2. I am sure I can migrate to another country	0.814	20.512
PBC_3. I have the resources to migrate to another country	0.815	20.537
<b>2. Economic Push Factors (EPushF)</b>		
EPushF_1. Income distribution among citizens in Sri Lanka is unfair	0.853	26.731
EPushF_2. It is difficult to find suitable jobs in Sri Lanka	0.823	21.106
EPushF_3. Salaries paid for jobs in Sri Lanka are inadequate	0.858	26.742
<b>3. Social Push Factors (SPushF)</b>		
SPushF_1. Social discrimination in Sri Lanka is high	0.959	115.080
SPushF_2. Social welfare facilities in Sri Lanka are inadequate	0.968	175.719
<b>4. Political Push Factors (PPushF)</b>		
PPushF_2. Conflicts among major political parties in Sri Lanka are high	0.716	14.209
PPushF_3. The administrative system in Sri Lanka is poor	0.814	26.847

PPushF_4. Human rights violations in Sri Lanka are high	0.780	15.567
PPushF_5. Accountability and transparency in decision-making in Sri Lanka is not satisfactory	0.749	18.547
<b>5. Economic Pull Factors (EPullF)</b>		
EPullF_1. I am expecting higher wages in the migrated country	0.988	215.107
EPullF_3. I migrate for career development in the migrated country	0.991	304.648
EPullF_4. I migrate for high job opportunities in the migrated country	0.990	262.179
EPullF_5. I migrate expecting enhanced welfare standards in the migrated country	0.992	349.775
EPullF_6. I migrate expecting favourable work conditions in the migrated country	0.988	233.083
<b>6. Social Pull Factors (SPullF)</b>		
SPullF_1. I migrate to be free from discrimination in the migrated country	0.823	20.345
SPullF_2. I migrate expecting better medicine and healthcare in the migrated country	0.781	19.160
SPullF_3. I migrate expecting enhanced social welfare facilities in the migrated country	0.759	22.218
<b>7. Political Pull Factors (PPullF)</b>		
PPullF_1. I migrate expecting political security in the migrated country	0.831	27.923
PPullF_2. I migrate expecting political freedom in the migrated country	0.793	21.601
PPullF_3. I migrate expecting democracy in the migrated country	0.758	18.304

Source: Outcomes of survey data, 2024

Cronbach's Alpha (Cro.α) and Composite Reliability (CR) were used in the study to test the reliability of the latent variables of the study. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) was used to assess convergent validity. As per Table 2, the reliability of all latent variables is at an acceptable level as all values of Cro.α are greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2012). Moreover, the composite reliability values are at an acceptable level, revealing a value greater than 0.7, indicating the reliability of latent variables. Fornell and Larcker (1981) noted that the AVE value should be greater than 0.5 to achieve convergent validity. Accordingly, it can be concluded that all latent variables represent convergent validity

Table 2: Analysis of reliability and validity of latent variables

Variable	Reliability		Validity
	Cro.α	CR	AVE
Migration Intention	0.923	0.937	0.650
Economic Push Factors	0.800	0.882	0.714
Social Push Factors	0.923	0.963	0.928
Political Push Factors	0.764	0.850	0.586
Economic Pull Factors	0.995	0.996	0.980
Social Pull Factors	0.708	0.831	0.622
Political Pull Factors	0.708	0.837	0.631

Source: Outcomes of survey data, 2024

To measure discriminant validity, the study employed the HTMT criterion. Hair and Alamer (2022) state that a value below 0.9 is considered acceptable when establishing discriminant validity. Therefore, as shown in Table 3 below,

except for three, all other values fall within the acceptable range

Table 3: Discriminate validity - heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

Discriminate validity	HTMT
Economic Push Factors <-> Economic Pull Factors	0.420
Migration Intention <-> Economic Pull Factors	0.522
Migration Intention <-> Economic Push Factors	1.028
Political Pull Factors <-> Economic Pull Factors	0.362
Political Pull Factors <-> Economic Push Factors	0.618
Political Pull Factors <-> Migration Intention	0.837
Political Push Factors <-> Economic Pull Factors	0.372
Political Push Factors <-> Economic Push Factors	0.569
Political Push Factors <-> Migration Intention	0.636
Political Push Factors <-> Political Pull Factors	0.507
Social Pull Factors <-> Economic Pull Factors	0.370
Social Pull Factors <-> Economic Push Factors	0.563
Social Pull Factors <-> Migration Intention	0.817
Social Pull Factors <-> Political Pull Factors	0.869
Social Pull Factors <-> Political Push Factors	0.598
Social Push Factors <-> Economic Pull Factors	0.401
Social Push Factors <-> Economic Push Factors	1.019
Social Push Factors <-> Migration Intention	0.986
Social Push Factors <-> Political Pull Factors	0.638
Social Push Factors <-> Political Push Factors	0.583
Social Push Factors <-> Social Pull Factors	0.583

Source: Outcomes of survey data, 2024

Before deriving the structural model and after checking reliability and validity criteria, the study checked the multicollinearity among variables using the VIF values. Hair and Alamer (2022) pointed out that less than 5 is the acceptable level for having no multicollinearity issue. Table 4 below represents the VIF values, and all values less than 5 reveal that there is no multicollinearity among variables.

Table 4: VIF values in the inner model

Multicollinearity	VIF
Economic Pull Factors -> Migration Intention	1.235
Economic Push Factors -> Migration Intention	4.421
Political Pull Factors -> Migration Intention	1.806
Political Push Factors -> Migration Intention	1.452
Social Pull Factors -> Migration Intention	1.779
Social Push Factors -> Migration Intention	4.960

Source: Outcomes of survey data, 2024

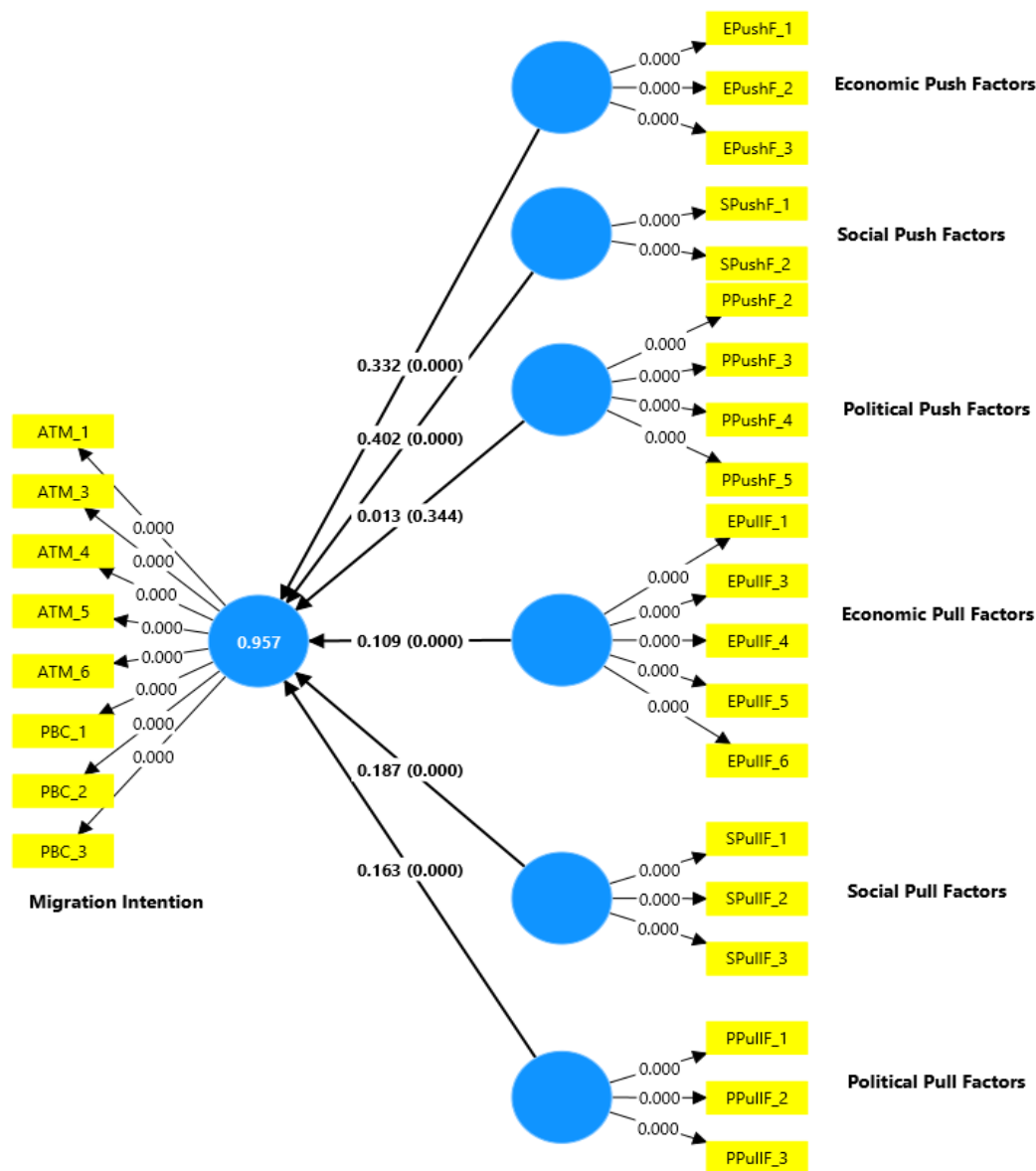
Table 5 and Figure 3 below disclose path coefficients (beta values) and their significance. Accordingly, it reveals that economic, social, and political pull factors and economic and social pull factors have a significant positive effect on migration intention, as all values are statistically significant by P-values (less than 0.05) and T values (greater than 1.96). However, political push factors are not supported by the study.

Table 5: Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Beta value	T statistics	P values	Statistical decision: reject H <sub>0</sub>
H <sub>1</sub> . Economic Push Factors -> Migration Intention	0.332	8.349	0.000	Supported
H <sub>2</sub> . Social Push Factors -> Migration Intention	0.402	9.049	0.000	Supported
H <sub>3</sub> . Political Push Factors -> Migration Intention	0.013	0.947	0.344	Not Supported
H <sub>4</sub> . Economic Pull Factors -> Migration Intention	0.109	5.737	0.000	Supported
H <sub>5</sub> . Social Pull Factors -> Migration Intention	0.187	8.830	0.000	Supported
H <sub>6</sub> . Political Pull Factors -> Migration Intention	0.163	7.220	0.000	Supported

Source: Outcomes of survey data, 2024

Figure 3: Path coefficients and their significance



Source: Outcomes of survey data, 2024

The goodness of fit of the model reveals that 96% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model. This indicates that the model fits the data well. The strength of the relationship among variables can be tested through the F-squared value. If the  $f^2$  value is less than 0.02, it indicates no effective size;

a value between 0.02 and 0.15 indicates a small effect size, a value between 0.15 and 0.35 means a medium effect size, and if it is greater than 0.35, it means a large effect. Accordingly, except for political push factors, all factors have more than medium effects on migration intention, showing an effect size above 0.2.

### Results of Qualitative Analysis

**Push Factors:** Thematic analysis revealed that economic and financial challenges are mainly considered economic push factors because respondents are struggling with high living expenses, inflation and lower economic growth and stability due to the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. For instance, a respondent mentioned, “I believe the lack of economic growth is the major reason for migration intentions. Other factors influencing migration intentions mainly stem from this reason”, revealing that Sri Lanka’s individuals face disputes because of lower economic development, which leads to the intention of migration. Another respondent highlighted that “many women from Sri Lanka migrate to countries in the Middle East for housekeeping jobs to support their families”, indicating they are struggling financially due to the present economic situation in Sri Lanka. Also, employment and job market issues are prominent economic push factors among respondents as they struggle with job scarcity, salary issues, and unemployment due to lower salary scales and lower development in Sri Lanka. Moreover, career development and growth are other significant factors that are pushing people to migrate to other countries due to the mismatch between jobs and skills and the lack of career advancement in Sri Lanka. Highlighting this situation, one respondent mentioned, “I’ve seen some people with degrees who end up working as garment workers.”

Moreover, structural issues in Sri Lanka are a major social push factor that affects migration intention due to discriminatory practices and institutional failures in Sri Lanka, as respondents face corruption in healthcare, education, and other social facilities. For instance, a respondent mentioned, “People migrate because they feel restricted in their current environment, want a better life for their families, and face issues like corruption in healthcare, like the drug mafia”. Also, societal influences and attitudes are another prominent social factor because respondents are struggling with external influences and pressures. Revealing this situation, a respondent mentioned, “in Sri Lanka, society often pushes people to migrate, saying things like, you have a degree, why are you still here? You should try to move abroad.”

Furthermore, as political push factors, governance and political corruption are major factors among respondents due to the lack of effective governance and accountability in policymaking in Sri Lanka. Emphasising this, a respondent stated, “I believe that economic and social factors are also caused by political factors. Political corruption led to the lack of foreign investment.” System failures and a lack of development due to poor decisions in Sri Lanka are also significant factors among respondents. Similarly, political instability is a major theme among respondents, with many of them revealing that Sri Lanka lacks political stability. Pointing to this, one respondent stated that “the government has led people to migrate, so there is no safe political environment for the people.”

**Pull Factors:** The thematic analysis revealed that economic stability and opportunities in other countries are considered major economic pull factors as respondents perceive other countries to have higher economic strength and growth, higher wages, better job opportunities and better policies

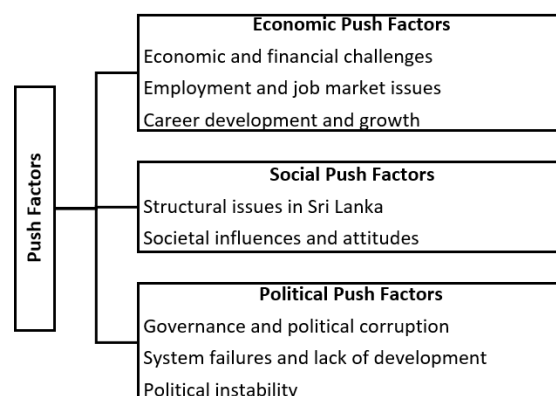
compared to Sri Lanka. For example, one respondent stated, “people migrate to countries like Australia and European countries because of their economic stability, where people can work and live as they want.” Also, the quality of life and standard of living in other countries are significant economic attractiveness factors, as the majority of respondents indicated that the standard of living in other countries is higher compared to Sri Lanka. Moreover, access to services and infrastructure is another pull factor for migration intentions among respondents, as respondents reveal that other countries have better infrastructure and services. One respondent mentioned that “it is very easy for people to achieve their preferences in terms of food and infrastructure, and people from other countries, other than Sri Lanka.”

Besides, good education and health systems are a major social pull factor influencing migration intentions due to better health and education in other countries compared to Sri Lanka. Highlighting this, one respondent revealed, “I think people can get better healthcare and education systems in other countries.” In addition, social equality and openness in other countries lead to increased migration intention decisions, as, compared to Sri Lanka, respondents perceive other countries to have more equal and open-minded societies. Confirming this, one respondent stated, “the society and people in other countries are very open-minded, they act and speak freely.”

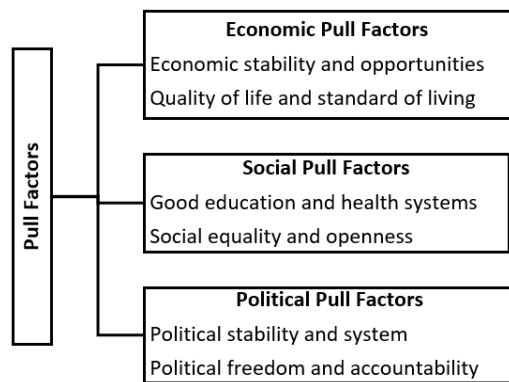
Furthermore, as political pull factors, political stability and system are a major factor among respondents, as they are the reason for them to leave Sri Lanka, because respondents think that other countries have a stable political system and political security. Emphasising this, a respondent reveals, “I think that the stability of the political system in other countries makes people’s lives peaceful.” Political freedom and accountability in other countries are also significant factors, as respondents think that other countries have political accountability, effective governance, and political freedom. Pointing to this, one respondent stated, “other countries have political freedom, freedom to express their opinions.”

The themes derived from the qualitative study can be summarised as follows.

Figure 4: Summary of the thematic analysis







Source: Outcomes of survey data, 2024

### Discussion

Considering Hypothesis 1 on the effect of economic push factors on migration intention, the P value of the path coefficient (0.332) is 0, and this value is less than 0.05, which means that there is a positive and significant relationship between economic push factors and migration intention. This current study's findings were also revealed by Hajian et al. (2020) and Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) in their studies, revealing a significant positive effect on migration intention due to economic push factors in the home country. This finding is confirmed by the qualitative analysis of the current study, indicating that economic and financial challenges, employment and job market issues, and career development and growth are dominant; that is, economic push factors affect migration intention among private sector employees.

In reference to Hypothesis 2 on the effect of social push factors on migration intention, the P value of the path coefficient (0.402) is 0, and this value is less than 0.05, which means that there is a positive and significant relationship between social push factors and migration intention. Urbański (2022) and Wijesinghe et al. (2023) also state that there is a positive and significant relationship between social push factors and migration intention. Confirming this, the thematic analysis of the present study reveals that social push factors, such as structural issues in Sri Lanka and social influences and attitudes in Sri Lanka, influence migration intentions among private sector employees.

In light of Hypothesis 3 on the effect of political push factors on migration intention, the P value of the path coefficient (0.013) is 0.344, and this value is less than 0.05, which means that there is no significant relationship between political push factors and migration intention. However, various scholars emphasised that political push factors affect migration intentions (Samaraweera & Upekshani, 2020; Urbański, 2022; Urbański & Khalid, 2021). The qualitative analysis of the current study also revealed that governance and political corruption, system failures, the lack of development, and political instability were the most prominent factors that affect migration intention.

Based on Hypothesis 4 on the effect of economic pull factors on migration intention, the P value of the path coefficient (0.109) is 0, and this value is less than 0.05, which means that there is a positive and significant relationship between economic pull factors and migration intention. Confirming this current study's findings, Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) reveal that economic pull factors affect migration

intentions. Also, Urbański (2022) mentions that economic pull factors, such as finding a better life and job opportunities in foreign countries, are major determinants for migration intentions. The qualitative findings of the current study also confirmed that the economic stability and opportunities, the quality of life, and the standard of living in foreign countries are the main economic pull factors in other countries to increase migration intentions.

In consideration of Hypothesis 5 on the effect of social pull factors on migration intention, the P value of the path coefficient (0.187) is 0, and this value is less than 0.05, which means that there is a positive and significant relationship between social pull factors and migration intention. This finding of the current study was confirmed by Urbański (2022) and Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) in their studies, who stated that there is a significant and positive relationship between social pull factors and migration intention. Qualitative analysis also confirmed this nature, generating themes such as good education and health systems and social equality and openness.

Given the final Hypothesis 6 on the effect of political pull factors on migration intention, the P value of the path coefficient (0.163) is 0, and this value is less than 0.05, which means that there is a positive and significant relationship between political pull factors and migration intention. Urbański (2022) discusses factors like political freedom, political stability, safety and security, and democracy in other countries are factors that affect migration intention. Also, Samaraweera and Upekshani (2020) mentioned that political pull factors significantly affect migration intention. Confirming the results of the current and previous studies, the qualitative findings highlight that political stability and system and political freedom, and accountability are key themes leading to increased migration intentions among respondents.

### CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine pull-push factors on international migration intention among private sector employees in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. The study reveals that economic pull-push factors, social pull-push factors, and political pull factors significantly affect migration intention, rejecting the null hypothesis. However, the study also reveals that political push factors do not significantly affect migration intention accepting the null hypothesis. Accordingly, this study has contributed to the literature generating new empirical findings on factors influencing migration intentions in the Sri Lankan context.

Moreover, this study fills the gap of the lack of previous studies related to migration intention in Sri Lanka, and uses an explanatory sequential method to contribute to an in-depth study of migration intention. Furthermore, this study contributes new knowledge on the factors influencing migration intention among private sector employees, who play a key role in the economic and social development of Sri Lanka. Although quantitative analysis provides a good idea of the factors influencing international migration intentions, the qualitative results of this study also contribute to generating new knowledge about the factors influencing international migration. Accordingly, this study contributes to the literature on factors such as career advancement and career ladders, which have not been

extensively discussed in previous studies on migration intentions. In addition, this study will enhance the research and development field that is lacking in Sri Lanka, which is most important for making favourable policy decisions in Sri Lanka. Besides, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, most studies focus on occupational-level employment as a unit of analysis rather than considering employees across different employment levels and income groups. To fill this gap, the current study examined the relationship between private sector employees at different levels.

According to the study findings, economic push factors are the main determinants of migration decisions among private-sector employees. Sri Lanka does not have national policies, and policies change with the party in power. Therefore, introducing and maintaining national policies in all sectors of Sri Lanka can lead to improved economic growth and development, which in turn can reduce the migration of skilled workers from Sri Lanka. Also, organisations and the government should work to promote businesses and industries that create long-term employment opportunities by retaining workers, ensuring fair wages, and minimising economic migration to strengthen local economies and job opportunities in Sri Lanka. Moreover, to discourage Sri Lankan skilled workers from migrating to other countries, organisations should enhance their attractive career ladder while enhancing career growth and development.

The quality of education is a major factor in improving the living standards of people. Therefore, the government should invest more in education, research and development by providing opportunities for higher education to local skilled workers in Sri Lanka under easy payment schemes. This can lead to the retention of workers by migrating to other countries. Also, Sri Lanka needs to expand its healthcare system by attracting people to Sri Lanka and developing the infrastructure related to the healthcare system. The government needs to invest more in this. Moreover, to improve the family and community, the government and NGOs should implement community-based programs by promoting family and community support systems such as childcare assistance, elder care programs, and youth assistance programs. Furthermore, the government should implement policies that promote social inclusion and equality for all social, ethnic and religious groups.

Sri Lankans are attracted to other countries due to the pull factors in other countries. Therefore, it is necessary to retain skilled workers who migrate to other countries to improve the economic, social, and political aspects of Sri Lanka. In this way, to improve the economic sector of Sri Lanka, it is necessary to ensure higher wages and employment opportunities, better living standards by implementing a technology-based environment, and incentives for skilled workers (e.g. tax benefits). Also, to improve the social profile, it is necessary to improve social services such as health care and social security in Sri Lanka by improving educational opportunities and improving the quality of life. Countries with stable governments, strong institutions and fair legal systems tend to attract migrants seeking safety and security. Therefore, it is necessary to improve and invest in the safety and security of Sri Lanka. Accordingly, in order to retain private sector workers migrating from Sri Lanka, the

above proposals must be implemented by improving the economic, social, and political sectors of Sri Lanka.

Given the limitations of this study, future research could improve the generalisability of the results by including a more diverse and randomly selected sample of participants. In addition, since this study focused only on private sector employees, it may have introduced selection bias. Therefore, future researchers should consider recruiting participants from different networks, sectors, and areas in Sri Lanka to better understand the factors influencing international migration. Moreover, future studies could focus on collecting data from employees with more diverse characteristics, minimising overlap between participants.

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