

**FACTORS EFFECTING OUT MIGRATION OF ESTATE  
COMMUNITY IN LOW COUNTRY TEA ESTATES IN SRI  
LANKA**



**S.N.C.W.M.C.N.B. Hulugalla**

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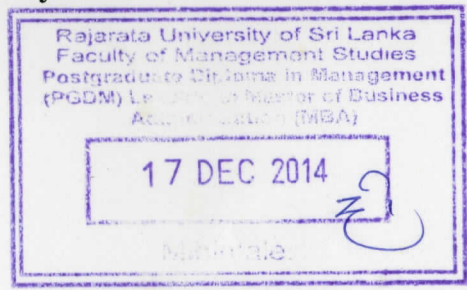
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**Supervisor**

**Dr.M.G. Kularatne**

**Faculty of Economics**

**University of Kaleniya**



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## ABSTRACT

The estate sector in Sri Lanka accounts for a history of almost 150 years and it has remained the mainstay of the Sri Lankan economy owing to its economic, social and political positioning. The Tea plantation sector in Sri Lanka is classified based on the elevation of the plantation as up country, mid country and low country whilst the low country cultivation accounts for the majority of tea produced in Sri Lanka. From a socio-economic point of view, the estate workers are a uniform group of people with significant differences in their attitudes, according to the geographical location where they reside.

At present the Sri Lankan estate sector faces a looming labour shortage due to out-migration and voluntary youth unemployment. The labour situation on plantations has changed from a surplus to a deficit with an annual decline rate of 10 – 20% being recorded during the last two decades. However the prevalent labour shortage and annual decline of plantation labour is currently being discussed at a national level, since the labour shortage and the annual rate of labour decline is alarmingly higher in low country plantations wherefrom the majority of produce is sourced, in comparison to other elevational zones. The best known quality of Sri Lankan tea is mainly dependent on selective plucking that requires intensive use of human labour, and therefore the shortage in labour as a result of worker out migration has become a significant problem in the tea plantation sector.

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors contributing to out-migration of labour in the low country tea estate community. By reviewing various studies, evidence and experiences, a variety of reasons were identified that affect the out-migration of the low country estate community which are classified into three

categories as personal factors, pull factors and push factors- named as P3 Factors for the purposes of the study. Meanwhile, a sample survey was undertaken utilizing a pre-tested questionnaire to collect data, whilst descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze data.

The results revealed that all three aspects of P3 bears a significant relationship and contribution towards out-migration of labour in the low country tea estate community. Meanwhile, of the P1 factor (Personal factor), the most influential areas which influence the out-migration intention are Social stigma (SS), 'Family related issues' (FRI) and Education (ED). Likewise, of the P2 factor (Pull Factor), the most influential factors resulting in out-migration intention are financial and non-financial benefits (FNB), a high degree of autonomy (HAD), (EW) and easy work. However, Organizational reputation (OR) bears a negative influence on OMI. Meanwhile, of the P3 factor (Push factor), the most influential facets which have a bearing on out-migration intention are poor social recognition (PSR), lack of motivation (LM), Poor working environment (PWE), the absence of a system of fairness/justice (NF), and rigidity of rules and regulations (RRR). However, a poor working environment (PWE) is the least influential factor on out-migration.

Results suggest the need to implement programmes to change the attitudes of the low country estate community, strengthening welfare activities, providing food stuff, developing self-managed teams, introduction of a financial incentive system based on productivity, HRM training for management whilst a national level programme should be introduced to redefine the social concept of the estate worker and thereby reduce outmigration of the low country estate community and re-attract them towards remaining in the estates they reside.

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