

**FACTORS INFLUENCING SKILLED MIGRATION:  
A STUDY ON PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Globally, the issue of migration has gained attention because it is a logical social concern. Sri Lanka is a developing nation, and graduates have a comparatively high unemployment rate. Access to tertiary education is constrained in public universities. On the other hand, with the impact of new private university start-ups, dynamic changes in its educational system can be seen throughout time. Yet, the number of Sri Lankan students moving to affluent nations keeps rising. Upon graduation from their degree programs, many undergraduates want to emigrate. How come they move? What elements affect their intent to migrate? This professional and skill leakage impedes the nation's economic development. This study provided information on the political regimes, social and economic instability of Sri Lanka and push factors and pull factors that influence skilled migration. Despite the substantial expansion of study in this area, there are not many works that expressly address the Sri Lankan context.

Migration is widely described as a change of residence that is either permanent or semi-permanent. There are no limitations on the move's length or on whether it was a deliberate or involuntary action (Lee, 1966). Today, there is no single definition of this concept. (Oliinyk et al., 2021). At present, the world is undergoing globalization very rapidly. Many individuals are migrating to other nations as a result of globalization for a variety of reasons. Therefore, there is a tendency for humans to migrate with more tendencies towards secondary needs rather than primary needs. In a developing country like Sri Lanka, the migration of skilled people to foreign countries for some reason is not a new phenomenon. It is not only in recent times but also since colonial times highly educated people in executive positions migrated to British Empire and other countries for employment (Collyer et al., 2009). Because of this, the migration of highly skilled people has become increasingly important in migration studies worldwide. Due to the continuous migration of highly qualified people from developing to developed countries, migration studies have also emerged as a major field of study. The number of Sri Lankans moving abroad for higher education opportunities as well as for employment is increasing. The existing secondary data confirms that there is an increase in the migration of students from Sri Lanka between 2013 and 2017 (UNESCO, 2020). But in the context of this subject, migration has increased very rapidly, especially in the years 2019 2021 2021. As Sri Lanka was facing some difficult times mainly due to COVID-19 epidemic and its effects on economic and political instability problems. Due to this, skilled migrants are increasing rapidly. This can also be interpreted as a problematic situation for the country.

The objective of the research was to determine identifying and investigating the impact of the push and pull factors influencing skilled migration. The concept of skill migration has been growing in recent times. Thus, university graduates can be identified as the people who will contribute a lot to the skills migration. Thus, since no research study has been done on the concept of skills migration based on public universities in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. The researcher is conducting this research to fill that empirical gap.

## METHODOLOGY

To get findings and identify what is real or false, research methodologies are used. The most popular research methodologies are inductive and deductive. Inductive researchers create a hypothesis after their investigation is complete, and deductive researchers test the theory (Saunders et al., 2000). Since the present study is based on a positivistic and deductive approach, it chooses to utilize a quantitative and deductive approach to examine the impact of these specific factors on skill migration. Because of the research plan, this study's data were gathered using a questionnaire, and it was carried out using a survey strategy. In addition, the data collection was done at the discretion of the individual, and the graduates who completed their degree in 2019 from 5 major public universities in the Western Province Sri Lanka have been made the unit of analysis. The researcher was selected 384 out of 7903 population of, 5 major government universities in the western province university in Sri Lanka using the Morgan table (Krejick & Morgan, 1970) according to a simple random sampling method and data was collected using a structured online questionnaire. With a view to ascertain the validity of data, the dependability of the inter-item consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the level of skill migration and each factor that affects skill migration among the sample while performing regression analysis for identifying the extent to which skill migration is determined by each specific factor. Also, the person correlation test has been done to identify the correlation between the two independent and dependent variables.

Considering the push, pull Factors and Skill Migration the following hypotheses were established in this study.

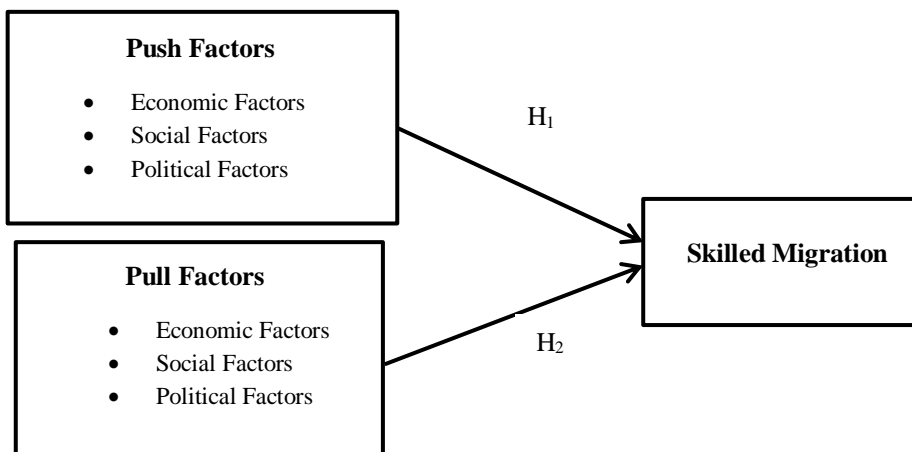
*H<sub>1</sub>*: There is a significant impact of push factors on skill migration.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: There is a significant impact of pull factors on skill migration.

The following conceptual framework was proposed for this study according to the research variables.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework*



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis was commenced with an evaluation of the dependability of the inter-item consistency using Cronbach's Alpha, which resulted alpha values for all the constructs ranging from 0.779 to 0.839, indicating a satisfactory level of validity.

**Table 1**  
*Reliability Analysis of the Study*

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Push Factors	16	0.839
Pull Factors	10	0.811
Skill Migration	07	0.779

And also, the suitability of data for the analysis was assured by running statistical tests for descriptive statistics. The push and pull factors exist to a moderate level among the selected sample with mean values of 4.44, 4.56 respectively. The perceived skill migration of among university graduates in selected public universities in the western province of Sri Lanka were observed as fairly high ( $u=4.41$ ).

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics*

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Push Factors	3.44	5.00	4.484	0.321
Pull Factors	3.30	5.00	4.565	0.318
Skill Migration	2.86	5.00	4.417	0.400

N= 314

The Pearson's correlation value (not tabulated) for Push Factors and Pull Factors and Perceived Skill Migration was 0.568, 0.402 and it was a positive relationship. According to the above data, the significant value (P) was 0.000 and which was less than 0.05 ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). The value should be less than 0.05 and then the correlation is considered to be significant. Therefore, it was statistically proven that there was a significant and positive relationship between push and pull factors and perceived skill migration.

The results of the multiple regression analysis clearly highlighted the impact of push factors and pull factors on skill migration. According to the results of the multiple regression model of the study, the value of  $R^2$  was revealed as 0.333. It confirmed that the model fitted the data closely and that the two independent variables accounted for 33% of the variance in perceive skill migration (PF, PL). The results of the multiple regression according to the ANOVA result, significant level of regression line is less than 0.05 ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). It means than regression line is strong enough to explain the impact of independent variables (Push and Pull factors) on dependent variable (Perceive Skill Migration).

**Table 3**  
*Coefficients of Regression Model*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.925	.298		3.110	.002
	Push	.623	.070	.500	8.929	.000
	Pull	.153	.070	.122	0.031	.031

a. Dependent Variable: PSM

According to the Regression Analysis of Coefficient Results mentioned above, unstandardized coefficients for push factors and pull factors significantly affect Perceive Skill Migration. Its B values are respectively, 0.623, 0.153 and p are 0.000 and 0.031.

Thus, analysis has made advantage of multiple regressions. The following regression equation may be obtained from the data.

$$Y (\text{PSM}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{PF} + \beta_2 \text{PL}$$

$$Y (\text{PSM}) = 0.925 + 0.623\text{PF} + 0.153\text{PL}$$

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The researcher created two specific objectives, two research questions, and two hypotheses based on prior literature. The main objective of this study was to determine the Identifying and investigating study of the factors influencing skill migration among university graduates in selected public universities in the western province of Sri Lanka. This broad goal was accomplished via a multiple regression analysis. According to multiple regression analysis, it was shown that the following type of correlation exists between the independent and dependent variables. The researcher formulated the two hypotheses the study that push factors, pull factors have a significant impact on skill migration. The results of the correlation analysis revealed that there is a positive relationship between the independent and dependent variables. According to the regression results, push and pull factors were found to have a positive and significant effect on perceived skill migration. Therefore, the both hypothesis was accepted. Push factors and pull factors can be identified as the main factors that affect the migration of people in this country. Moreover, the study can identify that influencing these "push factors" can reduce the migration of skills to some extent in order to avoid the unwanted consequences of migration. It is also clear that the Sri Lankan government should address these push factors. These factors include, among others, Quality of education should be brought up to worldwide standards to retain skilled manpower/skilled personnel. This will encourage many skilled people to stay in their home country as they are happy with the quality of education provided to themselves and their children. Crime and violence and safety and security are factors that require more immediate attention by the government. It can be identified two main factors contributed to the mass exodus of skilled labor. Therefore, it should be done at the percentage level. Currently economic instability and political uncertainty are the other main driving factors. These are the challenges that the government has to face in order to retain skilled labor in the country. Professional opportunities and good international job opportunities are two factors that pull skilled people out of the country. These factors relate to affirmative action as the highly skilled perceive that career opportunities are diminishing due to the government's

arbitrary action policy. This policy implies that their skills have not been properly recognized by the government. Therefore, the government should be careful in implementing this policy and pay special attention to future investments. It should be investigated whether the salary received by an employee working at the workplace in Sri Lanka is reasonable and it should be formalized. The majority of people who are inclined towards domestic work are of the opinion that this trend has arisen due to the relatively low salary for the service. Therefore, to find out whether their salary is fair, this research suggests that salary policies should be humanely prepared.

The researcher found some limitations that should be considered in future studies. In this research, the researcher only considered the main public universities of Sri Lanka in the Western Province and their graduates. There are many other universities in Sri Lanka that cover every province. It can be considered as a limitation to carry out this study by focusing only on the Western Province. This study is based on public universities and talented people are produced not only from public universities but also from private universities and private institutes. Accordingly, it is a limitation that those people are not mentioned in this sample. In this study, only the inclusive dimensions of push and pull factors related to skill migration were studied, but many other unique factors affect skill migration. But those factors were not investigated in this study.

The results of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge already available and lay the groundwork for additional research. As a result, the following research areas are suggested. After considering the problems and limitations of this study, the researcher was able to identify some recommendations for future researchers. Here, this research has been done considering only the skills migration of recent graduates of five major public universities in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Therefore, the study findings are only covered on a specific geographical area. Therefore, I will improve the quality of the research. The examiner suggests that this kind of study is practically successful by considering other parts of the country and increasing the number of participants. There, the skill level, knowledge level, attitude level, etc. of each person who has studied in different universities and become graduates can be studied at an optimal level. In this study, the researcher used only public universities in Sri Lanka to study, but here the graduates are not only from public universities, but also from private universities and other private institutions and institutions. They migrate abroad as skilled people. The brain drain also takes place by referring to them. For that reason, the researcher suggests that it is successful to use those private universities and private institutions for these studies. The study found that not only the influence of push and pull factors on skill migration but also other factors can lead to skill migration. The researcher here suggests that by focusing on those other factors, future research can be successful

**Keywords:** Perceived skill migration, pull factors, push factors

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