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Analyzing Migration Factors of IT Professionals in Sri Lanka: A Gender-Based Comparison

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Background: The migration of highly qualified talent poses a serious difficulty in developing countries, and Sri Lanka's IT sector is increasingly becoming affected by it. While the IT sector contributes a considerable amount to GDP and delivers much of the innovation in a country, there is a high rate of outmigration with few studies looking at the differences in the reasons behind males and females migrating. Understanding the differences between male and female is critical to developing retention mechanisms.

Objective: To identify and compare the most influential push and pull factors shaping the migration intentions of male and female IT professionals from Sri Lanka.

Methods: A cross-sectional quantitative survey was collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed through snowball sampling. Data were collected from 336 Sri Lankan IT professionals working overseas comprised of 198 males and 138 females. Descriptive statistics and mean ranking analysis in SPSS were used to assess the relative importance/attractiveness of economic, political, social, and tech push and pull factors for migration.

Results: Study findings highlight clear differences between genders. For males, the most attractive push drivers were political instability (mean=3.99) and inflation (mean=3.86), while, for pull factors, it was relaxed working conditions (mean=4.25) and higher pay (mean=4.03). In contrast, female respondents reported work-life imbalance (mean=3.97) and inflation (mean=3.96) as the two most important push factors and reported perceived quality of life (mean=4.22), better pay (mean=4.09), and career advancement (mean=4.07) as more attractive pull factors.

Conclusion: Overall, the study supports research on the gendered reasons for IT migration from Sri Lanka. In general, males were influenced by political and economic stability, while females were more concerned with work-life balance, social supports, and career progression. These findings should be considered by policymakers, and industry leaders in Sri Lanka. Identifying strategies based on the needs of each gender, such as workplace flexibility to ensure working conditions are hospitable, tutelage on macroeconomic and political stability are integral to retaining talent and building a sustainable IT workforce.

Keywords: Gender, Information Technology, Migration