

Exploring the Determinants of Migration Intention of IT Professionals: Evidence from Sri Lanka

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Abstract - International IT professional migration occurs beyond national lines because of globalization and internationalism, with the goals of information sharing, obtaining higher living standards, as well as for economic reasons. This study aims to explore the factors influencing to the outflow migration of IT professionals in Sri Lanka. This study is the first of its kind in Sri Lanka during the time when the country was dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak and the economic crisis since it rests its originality on information acquired from the local arena. Higher migration rates is a significant concern to Sri Lanka, since second-largest export revenue generating industry is the IT sector. Researchers examined the connections between different factors' effects on migration intention. These studies illustrate some variation in worldwide migration intention factors and trends. They concluded that while the migratory intentions of some countries and identified variables are positively connected, others are negatively connected. Thematic analysis leading to a factor analysis were used in this study to collect data from Sri Lankans. Researchers have conducted interviews for this specific research objective which were followed by a questionnaire using mixed methods. In the results, rotated component analysis, which includes information about the relationships between each variable and the estimated components, is one of the most important outcomes of principle component analysis. As the conclusion, certain policies could encourage innovation, growth, and long-term economic development in Sri Lanka's IT sector.

Keywords: Information Technology, IT Professionals, Migration and Sri Lanka.

I. INTRODUCTION

Migration is the act of moving from one location to another, which can occur both within and between countries. War, natural disasters, high living cost and lack of educational opportunities are some of the push factors and better healthcare, higher wages, safety, and political stability are some of the pull factors. People have been moving around the world for decades. In other cases, people and other nations support both in favor of and against this migration. And as a result, organized migration started taking place after the intervention of the government (Pécoud, 2010). The International Migration Office (IMO) shows that migration is a cycle that is made up of pre-departure, where all the factors cause migration decision-making, entry, where the exact migration is happening, stay, where the migrants decide to stay or not, and lastly, return, where migrants return to their home country (IMO, 2023).

Human migration has occurred continuously since the beginning of time. Various types of migration have been prominent at various points throughout global history (Fisher, 2013). However, managing the complex system of international migration demands a broad and integrated strategy. The last few years of the 20th century have been referred to as the "migration era" (Klevanskis, 2001). Migration has a major and significant effect

since it affects all nations as a source, transit point, or destination. As a result of contemporary transportation networks and economic globalization, migration outside national borders is expanding. Various nations have encouraged migration to attract the most skilled, creative, and resourceful individuals while reducing the impacts of aging populations and labor shortages. Over 200 million people are currently believed to reside outside of their home country (Ekelund, 2009). People migrate because they believe it would better their lives or the lives of their family. Economic migration is motivated by the knowledge that greater economic possibilities exist in a different country. As a result, if there is significant regional and local economic inequality, individuals are more willing to migrate if it is possible for them to do so. Poverty, lack of economic opportunity, land scarcity, and low living standards at home all play a role, whereas affluence, opportunity, accessible jobs, and higher living standards in the destination all play a role (Davin, 1999).

People migrate from one region of the world to another for common causes due to full and push forces. Migration to other parts of the world where the situation is better and the amenities are present, attracting them to their place. These are sometimes referred to as pull factors. Most individuals migrate from rural to metropolitan areas to countries where employment is available. Similarly, push factors such as poor health care, inadequate education, terrorism, and village disputes are the key drivers that drive individuals to metropolitan regions and other parts of the world where possibilities for employment are greater (Hassan et al., 2020).

By taking the below knowledge into account, it shows that these common factors have a major influence on brain drain. The definition of brain drain is the movement of various professionals, often from one country to another, in the pursuit of a better quality of life, a higher standard of living, better technology, and more stable political situations (La Porte, 2005). As a result, developing countries may struggle to survive since their best and brightest are leaving the workforce. The most prevalent reasons for this are a lack of a job or a need for a higher salary, political instability, and a desire for a better life. Due to these circumstances, highly skilled and brilliant professionals are abandoning their native countries in quest for fresh opportunities. Companies and industries that are unable to keep up with the fast changes in technology and society see an exodus of their best people, resulting in organizational and industrial brain drain. The source nation loses its trained, educated, and talented human capital, which would otherwise be the clear leaders in economic, social, and technical growth. This is referred to as brain drain migration.

Many poor countries will gain from achieving the Sustainable Millennium Development Goals (SMDG). Specific national aspirations are jeopardized or impeded due to a shortage of qualified human capital, such as physicians, engineers, academics, nurses, and technicians, who migrate to more developed countries (Bradley & Thébault, 2019). High economic growth leads to more individuals realizing the value of competent human capital in conducting business in the global economy. If a country wants to enjoy long-term economic growth and development, it must invest significantly in the development of skilled human capital. Internationalization encourages skilled human capital to relocate from one region to another in order to share knowledge and gain social and economic benefits. The international movement of educated human capital who have gained advanced training, education, and skills in their home country to seek socioeconomic benefits in another host country is a prominent effect of this tendency (Frličková, 2021).

Since the brain drain elaborates the migration of professionals, IT professionals also fall under that category. Who are these IT professionals? An IT professional is

someone who works on the development of computer system applications or on the formulation and implementation of standards and specifications for network computer systems (Insider, 2023). According to Ken in 2013, the most basic definitions of an IT professional, which restrict them to certain education, skills, and training, provide a narrow view of their field (Metcalf, 2013).

The term "IT professionals" in this study refers to academics in the IT stream, staff members of IT companies, and staff members who work in the IT functional departments of non-IT firms and have at least three years of professional experience (Uruthirapathy & Grant, 2015). Sri Lanka has also experienced the same movement for many years, so it is clear that Sri Lanka is not a new destination for migrants. Due to the economic and social unrest that the COVID-19 pandemic in Sri Lanka has produced, a sizable number of individuals are migrating. A poll done in November 2021 by the Institute for Health Policy, a non-profit research organization with offices in Colombo, found that there are now twice as many migrants in Sri Lanka as there were three to five years prior. It also demonstrates that, in addition to the other difficulties caused by the pandemic, the COVID-19 pandemic has a considerable impact on migration (Rannan-Eliya, 2021).

The skills of the employee market could be considered one of the most significant factors and also a foundation that consistently contributes without declining to social well-being. In today's knowledge- and technology-based global economy (Kenton, 2022), He claims that investing properly in skilled workers is one of the finest investments a country can make if it wants to compete with the economies of other countries. Because of the aforementioned competitive character of nations, they attract competent individuals, which may also become an easy reason for migrating employees if the host country does not satisfy their expectations. Globalization is the lubricant that enables migratory workers to select countries or opportunities that meet their socioeconomic demands and areas where they may best use their skills (Triumph, 2021).

Huge labor market crisis was caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which also drastically affected the Sri Lankan labor market by decreasing the working hours as well as the current and potential job opportunities. The Sri Lankan government also implemented major restrictions in order to prevent COVID-19 virus outflow and inflow, which led the country to many border restrictions and curfews. Sri Lanka has faced numerous crises, the most recent one was the COVID-19 outbreak. Unfortunately, this resulted in an economic crisis unlike any in the country's 70-year history, leaving many of its 22 million citizens unable to get basic necessities such as food, medication, and fuel. Sri Lanka had to struggle with a major critical study. Despite the country's economic troubles, it has been seen that a large number of people in pursuit of possibilities, mainly from younger age groups, are leaving the country to assist their families. This unprecedented exodus has left the country vulnerable, with growing inflation rates and a lack of petroleum, cooking gas, and foreign exchange. According to World Bank data in 2022, the ongoing crisis resulted in the loss of more than 500,000 jobs in Sri Lanka, as well as an increase in the number of people living below the poverty line. Increased personal taxes have added to the country's burden on middle-class income, and as a consequence, Sri Lanka has set a new record by issuing about 900,000 passports in 2022, an all-time high. According to government figures, this figure is much higher than the previous high of just over 650,000 in 2016.

The Sri Lankan IT sector is also one of the places where it loses employees due to the crisis. In Sri Lanka, business process management (BPM) and information technology (IT) have lately been shown to offer enormous potential to boost the country's economic

growth (ICTA, 2021). Sri Lanka was progressively becoming Asia's most desired ICT hub due to the availability of the world's most valuable resource, known as "talent." It will also be the country's second-largest export earner by 2022 (EDB, 2023). The whole ICT business in Sri Lanka, including IT and telecommunications, will generate USD 1.8 billion in revenue. It intends to achieve a USD 3 billion market by 2024 by combining export income, innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital technology adoption, while also creating over 300,000 direct jobs and aiding 1,000 Sri Lankan start-up businesses (EDB, 2023).

The Information Technology (IT) sector in Sri Lanka is rising faster than the country's GDP. The cumulative yearly growth rate of the IT/BPM (business process management) industry was 13% from 2013 to 2019, which was much greater than the annual GDP growth rate in Sri Lanka. According to World Bank data, the annual change in GDP growth rate in 2019 stayed at 2.3%. Revenue is generated by US dollar inflows, and employees in the aforementioned business are paid more, resulting in profitability. As a result, that money might be used to fund domestic consumption, such as entertainment, domestic tourism, financial services, and home construction. This emphasizes the need to work on this subject because there are several advantageous choices, and the IT industry may indirectly generate 2.5 jobs in each connected sector. According to the Sri Lanka Association of Software and Services Companies (SLASSCOM), the IT sector generated \$1.5 billion in sales in 2019. Rafi stated that the IT/BPM industry has the ability to grow, and SLASSCOM predicts that the industry will produce \$5 billion in sales by 2025 (The Morning, 2022). The IT sector has grown significantly and gained global prominence, providing additional opportunities for IT employees to move. Sri Lanka, too, experienced regulated migration until the COVID-19 virus hit in the first quarter of 2021. The economic collapse caused many individuals to lose their jobs or live in perilous conditions, ending in a major economic disaster. As a result, by May 2022, employee migration has increased by 286 percent (Chaturmaga, 2022). It was also referenced by the President of the Computer Society of Sri Lanka (CSSL), where it stated that since the beginning of the economic crisis, at least 10,000 of the country's best Information Technology (IT) engineers have moved out of the country (Chaturmaga, 2022).

Thowfeek (2021) states that a considerable amount of Sri Lankan skilled professionals are expecting to migrate, with an estimation ranging from 20 to 40 percent. The author further highlights the interdependency of the Sri Lankan IT sector and how rival countries seek the talents and expertise of their workforce. Thus, it is clear that the IT industry of Sri Lanka would face severe disruptions if its highly skilled professionals migrated on a larger scale (Thowfeek, 2021). Prior to the pandemic, Sri Lanka's IT industry employed over 146,000 people and was the country's fifth-largest export earner. Within the next five years, it intends to more than increase its workforce and become a major exporter (Thowfeek, 2021). As previously stated, the IT industry in Sri Lanka was predicted to be the country's second-largest export earner in 2022. According to Dharmrajah, the COVID-19 epidemic will have a major impact on Sri Lanka's export industry in 2020–2021. The country's key export sectors have suffered severely as a result of unprecedented global lockdowns and travel restrictions. Factory and port closures, disruptions in the supply chain, and a reduction in demand from traditional export markets have all led to a drop in export profits. The government has also had difficulty accessing raw materials and technology as a result of global supply chain disruptions (Rishandani, 2021). Authorities must emphasize retaining IT talent in Sri Lanka and identifying the factors that cause Sri Lankan IT personnel to migrate. While prior studies have examined the migration of IT specialists from Sri Lanka in recent years, there has lately been an

unexpected spike in the number of IT workers leaving the country. This significant trend has yet to be addressed in previous research, prompting the execution of a study to fill the knowledge vacuum about the causes of this increase in migration.

Although several studies have been conducted on these IT professionals' migration intentions, only one study by Kumari (2017) has been carried out to investigate the factors that motivate the migration of IT professionals in Sri Lanka. Recent research has focused on studying the migration patterns of doctors and engineers, but little attention has been given to IT professionals (De Silva et al., 2014; Pécoud, 2010; Wijesinghe & Jayawardane, 2021). However, the fact that the factors change from time to time motivates the purpose of this study, and many factors that influence migration are difficult to predict. While social, political, and economic developments are exceptionally difficult to predict precisely, judgments can be made based on current situations. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to find out the factors and analyze the current determiners which influence the migration of IT Professionals in Sri Lanka. The past literature explains more about how the factors have influenced migration in different countries, in different time periods, and in different ways.

A. Migration

By presenting empirical data on the impact of IT professionals' migration intentions, this section adds to the literature by a variety of experts from different countries. Countries are grouped together based on the findings of the global survey. Over time, migration has become simpler as globalization has increased. People began to move from one country to another country beginning with the end of World War II. Today, migration is a contentious topic that is frequently discussed in politics and that has played a role in the radicalization of people. In truth, there is a knowledge gap surrounding the topic, particularly in terms of numbers and statistics.

Although the moderating effect of migration intention has been investigated, not much research has focused on the perspective of IT professionals in Sri Lanka. Migration and the relationship between factors influenced the migration intention described below. With globalization and the internationalism of the world, migration has become a topic that many academics extensively explore. According to Sriskandarajah (2003), there are typically two distinct migratory trends in Sri Lanka. People migrate for political reasons during conflicts, while labour migration is a voluntary movement that takes place for economic reasons. In 2003 his objective was to investigate the connection between migration and development in Sri Lanka, a nation that has received a lot of development aid and has been the source of a lot of migration.

B. Factors Influencing the Migration Intention

Dustmann and Okatenko (2014) concluded the relationship between out-migration brought on by financial limitations and a decline in the standard and accessibility of local facilities in rural areas to investigate how the level of local amenities in rural communities is impacted by migration because of financial restrictions. In 2015, Ester Gallo Gallo (2015) said, because of migration, there is a distance between the topic and the stories' emotional connection. His conclusion was, to demonstrate how an emphasis on irony might enhance our comprehension of migrants' emotional lives by highlighting the "grey zones" that form family relationships.

In 2016, Saraiva et al. (2016) described the push factors behind Portuguese emigration in Portugal. They defined the migration as the term "brain drain" refers to the

rising migration of medical experts to developed nations. According to Ferreira et al. (2020), they said as the conclusion, the study's political implications back up the contention that any policy response aimed at retaining or better integrating the workforce must be best matched to the intended target group. This fits in with the discussion of how to improve workforce governance.

A valuable resource that may be used to develop or support other things is skilled and experienced human capital. The economies, societies, and cultures of both the source and recipient countries are severely impacted by this outflow of human capital brought on by brain drain. By using logistic regression, identified the determinants and current development of migration intentions in China in 2021. The lack of social security and protection has a negative relationship with future migration intentions in China (Iqbal et al., 2021). Cirillo et al. (2022) described a person's desires for international migration as a statement of their capacity and desire to permanently leave their own country. In 2022, by using Regression analysis they analyzed past internal migration can influence future international migration intentions using data from 21 Sub-Saharan African nations. Because the study's data came from a large-scale survey, the results are more broadly applicable. Hidayat et al. (2023), defined migration as a necessary component of socioeconomic life, its pattern might continuously evolve. The objective of this study was to investigate how internet use affects young people in rural areas of developing countries who are developing migration intentions. It concludes that there isn't enough empirical data to determine how Internet use specifically.

A variety of factors affect the decision to migrate. According to earlier literature, these components vary depending on the host country and the employee's industry of employment. People are attracted to one place and pushed away from another by push-pull factors. Numerous push-pull factors have an impact on the migration or immigration of specific populations between countries (Rosenberg, 2020). Take action as a whole to reverse the brain drain and turn it into a brain gain. The various conditions that cause someone to migrate from one place to another are known as push factors (Iqbal et al., 2021). They encourage or push people to emigrate from their place of origin.

Similar to push factors, pull factors are things that attract migrants to move to another country (Thet, 2012). Wijesinghe and Jayawardane (2021) intended to determine what pulls and pushes young engineers from Sri Lanka to migrate to Australia by using descriptive statistical approach. Their conclusion was Sri Lankans should take action as a whole to reverse the brain drain and turn it into a brain gain. (Kumari, 2017), said that the key variables influencing the migration of IT professionals are economic, social, political, and technological. According to her, social variables that influence migration include career advancement, a pleasant working environment, excellent living standards, and technological capabilities like improved education systems and easier access to current technologies that developed countries have. The data analysis shows that pull factors rather than push factors have a huge impact on the migration of Sri Lankan IT professionals.

Many previous studies have proved there is a positive relationship between brain drain and education (Waite & Smith, 2017). At the same time, there may also be instances of well-educated professionals returning to their home countries, and this brain drain migration may be seen as a brain gain for their home countries. (Iqbal et al., 2021). According to previous authors, students prefer to study in countries with high educational standards but low wages (Hammerbauer et al., 2021). They also find that high tuition rates seem to have a favourable effect on inward student migration. But according to Hooker (2022), many Asian countries, mainly China and Singapore, have made significant

investments in domestic higher education at the home country with the goal of training and retaining their brightest and best students while also attracting students from other countries. Many developing countries' educational quality has suffered as a result of these migration issues. According to them, Africa has seen skilled and talented people relocate to richer countries in their urge for more hope and a higher standard of living. So, skilled teachers and instructors undertake this required move to better their lives, rather than to address academic faults in their location. This immigration has only made developed countries more successful while making their parent countries less successful.

Poor economic and social conditions in a country have a significant impact on outbound migration. According to Urbański (2022), they can be considered as push factors and also as pull factors considering the country. As per him, there are four pillars of reasons individuals move: personal, geographic, interfering, and matters pertaining to the home country and country expect to migrate. The objective of this study was to compare the push and pull factors influencing migration between Poland and Romani communities by using Factor analysis and multiple regression analysis. According to He et al. (2022), they try to investigate the relationship between Chinese urban live ability and migration intention using binary logistic model. They conclude "Resource depletion, environmental degradation, weak economic and population growth, and limited employment possibilities present threats to China's resource-based cities. In China, this study looked at the relationship between out-migration and residential satisfaction with live ability. This study has added to discussions on the causes of population loss in older cities, particularly resource-based cities (He et al., 2022).

Students' positive opinions regarding urban development are shaped by opportunities to realize their future aspirations, better pay, and more plentiful employment options. On the other hand, assumptions of expensive housing, high living expenses, and strong family ties discourage students from settling in premier cities. Additionally, through the mediating impacts of the TPB constructs, being male, not being an only child, studying in premier cities, and enrolling in top universities had positive influences on migration intention. By using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Theory of Planned Behaviour. Jin et al. (2022) investigate the factors that influence university students' desire to live in first-tier cities in 2022.

Common Internet usage appears to have a negative impact on how rural youth develop their migratory intentions, but particular Internet usage has beneficial effects. The negative effects pale in comparison to positive impacts. As a result, Internet usage continues to have a generally positive effect on the desire to migrate. Hidayat et al. (2023), conclude that there isn't enough empirical data to determine how Internet use specifically affects rural migration, particularly when rural adolescents are developing their migratory intentions. To look into how Internet use affects young people in rural areas of developing countries who are developing migration intentions they have used stepwise multiple regression.

The degree to which skilled employees perceive pollution risk unquestionably influences their migration intention is supported by the strong explanatory power that perceptions of physical health risk, mental health risk, and government control have for skilled workers' migration intentions (Lu et al., 2018). Lu et al. (2018) aimed to explore the factors of professional employees who intend to migrate in the Chinese region of Jing-Jin-Ji. They used correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis and conclude as this study expanded the application of social exchange theory from the initial micro-organizational level to the macro-social level.

Romdhane et al. (1985), indicated that the real interest rate, deposit interest rate, exchange rate, annual GDP growth, and broad money GDP are all conventional factors that influence inflation in Asian countries. By using regression model, they describe how Fintech has affected Asian economies using two key metrics: inflation and unemployment (Ben Romdhane et al., 2023). In 2019, Duszczuk and Matuszczyk (2019) explained the influence of labour market security on decisions relating to migration, particularly in terms of the idea of push-pull considerations. Martineau et al. (2004) said that industrialized countries' extensive hiring of medical personnel has a detrimental effect on the quality of healthcare in some developing nations.

To determine the factors related to human and social capital that significantly affect young people from rural areas' intention to stay in their current communities in the future, García-Arias et al. (2021) used Binary logistic regression analysis and correlation coefficient in 2021 and conclude the majority of young people in a failing rural town in the Empty Spain still see their future in migration. According to Ma et al. (2023) exogenous daily variations in air pollution boost the urge for foreign migration among Chinese citizens. They said the possibility of air pollution has made China's migration deficits worse. This paper identifying the relationship between air pollution and migration by using regression analysis in 2023.

By using regression analysis, Dustmann and Okatenko (2014) identified key factors influencing migration intentions include satisfaction with various local amenities, such as public services and security. To investigate how the level of local amenities in rural communities is impacted by migration because of financial restrictions they used survey data in 2014 and conclude the relationship between out-migration brought on by financial limitations and a decline in the standard and accessibility of local facilities in rural areas. International migration aspirations have a positive relationship with urban living. Cirillo et al. (2022) analyzed how past internal migration can influence future international migration intentions using data from 21 Sub-Saharan African nations using Regression analysis.

Cui et al. (2016) say, peer pressures and perceived parental have significant direct effects on intention formation and indirect effects by influencing positive views toward relocating to the city. In 2016 using Theory of Planned Behaviour they identified the influence of peer and parental pressure, respectively, in mediating the migration intentions of university graduates in Nanjing China. Liu et al. (2018) discovered the factors which influenced migrants' intention of settlement in 2018 using linear regression analysis. As the conclusion they said, the intention to settle was influenced by city characteristics. Nardi and Huysentruyt (2022) they examine how exposure to social issues may influence enterprises' CSR portfolio decisions. Raghuram (2009) determined the factors which affect brain drain migration in postcolonial world. The brain drains debates to ignore the interdependent relationship's interdependence.

In 2020, to investigate the potential for applied research focused on creating "healthy publics" and alleviating food poverty in a variety of social, political, and geographic context, Carney and Krause (2020), used a survey and said that they should be more aware of how food insecurity may explain the millions of individuals who are currently displaced from their countries of origin. To investigate the relationship between immigration and political stability, Gebremedhin and Mavisakalyan (2013) used an empirical model in Europe in 2013. By using the two-step estimation strategy Ozden et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between migration and wages. Also, Boffy-Ramirez

(2013) investigated how minimum salaries affect where businesses choose to locate in the US by using regression in 2013.

It seems that the home country of the migrants can have both positive and negative impacts because of their migrations. Although brain drain is quite worrying, Azam (2015) argues about a positive relationship between moved workers remittances and the economic growth of that particular country. Remittances can be known as the main advantage of move for the country (DharandSamanta, 2014). To identify the relationship between globalization, hunger, and rising agricultural productivity and migration internationally, in poor countries (Bizikova et al., 2017). conclude donors should concentrate on making investments in agriculture and food systems above and beyond the farm level if they want to help individuals' access economic opportunities in their own country.

In conclusion, a lot of researchers have studied how push and pull factors effect on migration intention and how they are related. These studies show some variance in determinants of intention of migration in worldwide. They came to the conclusion that although some countries' migration intention and identified push and pull factors are correlated in a positive way, others are correlated in a negative manner. Future studies will be able to adapt the research topics addressed in this study to a global scale as the research population grows. There aren't many studies exploring the migration of IT professionals. This study will use updated components gathered through factor analysis to examine the current migration intentions of IT professionals. This study explores the impact of specified push and pull variables on migration intention in order to fill this knowledge gap. Based on the study's conclusions and findings, other researchers will be able to further investigate this topic.

II. METHODOLOGY

As developing concepts and theories based on IT professionals, the approach of this study is an inductive study. The target population of this study is the IT professionals who work for ICT companies that are registered with the Sri Lanka Economic Development Board. Based on the EDB's estimation there are 140 registered IT enterprises in the exporting subcategory of "Software Development Services" (EDB, 2023) and 146,000 individuals have been assumed to be the population. Then 384 were chosen as the sample size for the analysis from Krejcie and Morgan Table. In order to gather data for the investigation, 384 randomly selected IT professionals who work for Sri Lankan Software Development companies registered with the EDB will be contacted (EDB, 2023).

A mixed methodology was used with the probability sampling strategy in this investigation. All information gathered through the interviews was recorded in accordance with the results of a thematic analysis that was done in order to conduct the qualitative analysis. It was conducted manually using the pen and paper approach. In order to determine the factors that influence IT migration in Sri Lanka, a factor analysis was conducted as part of the quantitative analysis to figure out the components of the questionnaire. Eleven interviews with IT professionals were conducted and these individuals were identified as the participants after utilizing snowball sampling. The factors for the online questionnaire were gathered based on past literature and the responses from those interviews. This questionnaire consists of three major components, which were a basic introduction, demographic information, and a Likert scale with 28 factors. This section contains all the points examined that have an impact on the migration intentions of IT professionals.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research's findings are presented in this section, beginning with a factor analysis of the 303 participants' questionnaire responses to determine potential influences on IT professionals' migration intentions. By reviewing the findings of the factor analysis, which revealed potential variables influencing the migration intention of IT employees, the study's goal is addressed. In the latter half of this section, the study's conclusions are contrasted with past debates in the literature. The investigation was conducted to pinpoint the variables that may influence IT professionals' aspirations to relocate. 28 questions on a Likert scale with seven alternatives each were used to explore them.

The data was acquired through in-person and online interviews with IT specialists in order to obtain the crucial information, and the questions were developed based on that data. The following Table 1 was created from the cleaned data based on the results of the replies to the online survey. The questionnaire was developed with the assistance of earlier research and elements identified through thematic analysis of data collected from 11 interviews with professionals who are considering or have already made the transfer.

Table 1. Demographic Data

Demographic Parameter	Count
Age, n (%)	
25 - 30	79 (26%)
31 - 35	114 (38%)
36 - 40	66 (22%)
Above 40	44 (14%)
Gender, n (%)	
Male	153 (50%)
Female	150 (50%)
Educational qualification, n (%)	
Diploma/Higher Diploma	7 (2%)
Bachelor's degree	111 (37%)
Master's degree	152 (50%)
PhD	33 (11%)
Experience, n (%)	
3 - 6 Years	143 (47%)
7 - 10 Years	106 (35%)
More than 10 Years	54 (18%)
Marital Status, n (%)	
Married	230 (76%)
Unmarried	73 (24%)
Number of Kids, n (%)	
None	102 (34%)
1	94 (31%)
2	68 (22%)
More than 2	39 (13%)
Thought of migration, n (%)	
Yes	261 (86%)
No	42 (14%)
Temporarily	29 (10%)

Demographic Parameter	Count
Permanently	259 (85%)
N/A	15 (5%)
Migrate Within, n (%)	
Not decided	51 (17%)
Beyond 2 years	6 (2%)
Within 1-2 years	35 (12%)
Within 3-6 months	76 (25%)
Within 6 to 12 months	77 (25%)
With immediate effect (within 3 months)	58 (19%)

Source: Author's compilation.

According to the demographic data, the bulk of the participants—38%—were between the ages of 31 and 35. There was no discernible difference between the percentages of male and female responders. The majority of participants (152, or 50%) are those with a master's degree or more as their highest level of education. The majority of participants (47%) have three to six years of professional experience in the IT industry when professional experience is taken into consideration. Table 1 shows that there is no appreciable difference between married and single individuals, and that 66% of married participants have at least one kid. The majority of participants (86 percent) reported having thought about migrating to another country at some time, whereas the rest participants disagreed. This finding is connected to the immigration choice. 29 respondents indicated they only wanted to travel briefly, whereas 85% of respondents claimed they intended to relocate permanently. Of the 303 participants, the same amount (25%) stated they would relocate within the next 3-6 and 6-12 months. It is important to keep in mind that 19% will move within three months.

The questionnaire was undergoing a reliability test to confirm its correctness and consistency. The reliability level is measured by Cronbach's alpha, a metric used to assess dependability. If the Cronbach's alpha value is more than 0.6 or less than 0.6, it might be considered extraordinary or low. An excellent value might be considered to be between 0.60 and 0.80. An evaluation between 0.8 and 1.00 is seen to be excellent. In order to assess the validity of the developed questionnaire, Cronbach alpha values were utilized in this study, as shown in Table 2 (Daud et al., 2018).

Table 2. Questionnaire's Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.885	28

Source: Authors' compilation.

The result received from the test was a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.885. This questionnaire can be considered credible because the result is more than 0.6. The degree to which a technique achieves its objectives is referred to as its validity. Strong correlations exist between the features, characteristics, and variances seen in the actual world and the results of research with high internal consistency. Researchers can judge validity by using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value. If the sample adequacy is at least 0.5, the significance level is less than 0.05, and the KMO and Bartlett's test values are better than 50%, the

results from these tests can be deemed acceptable. Table 3 shows the results received from the validity test.

Table 3. Questionnaire's Validity

Dimensions	KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity df
KMO Value	0.755	45

Source: Authors' compilation.

Results of the KMO test for the validity of the evaluated questionnaire indicate a value of 0.755. Because the questionnaire's value is greater than 0.5, it may be said to be accurate. Then the factor analysis was performed to reduce the number of redundant factors and the complexity of the large number of factors containing large amounts of data. One of the most important outcomes of factor analysis is the rotated component analysis and it shows the relationships between each variable and the estimated components.

A factor loading of 0.7 or higher in structural equation modelling can be interpreted as indicating that the factor significantly reduces the variance of the variable (Chetty, 2015). Therefore, Table 4 only contains variances and estimated component correlations that are bigger than 0.7. Factors influencing migration decisions of male and female participants were submitted to independent factor analysis to gain a better understanding and idea of how these factors might differ based on their gender and interests. Table 4 shows male factors with Table 5 showing female factors obtained as reasons for migration from factor analysis.

Table 4. Rotated Component Analysis (Male)

	Male Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
Higher prices for products and services		0.983			
Income taxes against government benefits		0.983			
Political instability and corruption in Sri Lanka		0.983			
Work life balance difficulties					0.785
Low pay scale,					0.912
Job insecurity					0.912
Less innovation opportunities			0.953		
Difficulties to establish startups			0.953		
Less technology in workplace			0.953		
Public facilities and infrastructure	0.754				
Social security social peace	0.869				
Difficulties in accessing basic necessities & resources	0.854				
Quality of the healthcare facilities	0.827				
Independency in decision making				0.954	
Opportunities for spouse in overseas				0.953	

Better Children's education in overseas	0.829
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Source: Authors' compilation.

Table 5. Rotated Component Analysis (Female)

Female Components					
	1	2	3	4	5
Higher prices for products and services					0.905
Income taxes against government benefits					0.906
Political instability and corruption in Sri Lanka					0.845
Work life balance difficulties				0.969	
Low pay scale,				0.969	
Job insecurity				0.922	
Less innovation opportunities		0.969			
Difficulties to establish startups		0.969			
Less technology in workplace		0.969			
Public facilities and infrastructure	0.823				
Social security social peace	0.858				
Difficulties in accessing basic necessities & resources	0.905				
Quality of the healthcare facilities	0.888				
Independency in decision making			0.959		
Opportunities for spouse in overseas			0.957		
Better Children's education in overseas			0.959		

Source: Authors' compilation.

There are significant differences between migration choices in each category. Male employees are more likely to experience problems with political instability, corruption, and beginning a business. They also consider the work-life balance when considering whether to relocate. Female employees are more concerned with the environment at work than male employees are. According to the responses, it is also possible to conclude that female employees seriously evaluate opportunities for higher education or for learning new knowledge or skills when considering whether to relocate. Limitations in technology at work and prospects for innovation affect people of both genders, and they admit that concerns about the quality of life and living standards have a big influence on migration. Based on the findings, the components for men can be sequentially named as 'macroeconomic conditions', 'financial stability', 'personal growth', 'family relationships' and 'career development', while for women they can also be seen as 'macroeconomic conditions', 'Educational Reasons', 'Family Relationships', 'Professional Development' and 'Financial Stability'.

The results of this study share some parallels with other research studies that have identified the elements influencing the intention of different employee types to migrate. The factor analysis for this study identifies factors related to economic and financial factors, such as higher prices for goods and services, lower pay scales, and income taxes

in Sri Lanka, which can be seen as the most important economic factors influencing migration intentions. These results are consistent with Byra's earlier research, in which he claimed that economic considerations like salary and better work possibilities are what influence migrations (Byra, 2013). Macroenvironmental factors, such as public infrastructure and facilities, social security and social peace, and difficulties in attaining necessities, were also identified as the primary factors of migrations. These results are aligned with some past studies that highlighted the influence of social conditions in a country, such as crime activities, health care facilities, public facilities, and a lack of social security, on migration decisions. Also, some were talking about the importance of having better living standards in order to prevent or reduce migration rates (Dibeh et al. 2017; Iqbal et al., 2021).

Factors related to relationships like independency people have in decision-making, opportunities for spouse, and better educational for children are other factors that affect migration intention. One of the past studies shows the importance of family factors in deciding to immigrate, such as the education and career opportunities for partners and children when they make their decision to migrate (Ferreira et al., 2020; Stewart, 2008). However, this study found that, depending on the Sri Lanka's economy and quality of life, there is a difference between the factors that identified in this study and the one prior to COVID-19. Therefore, it is possible to determine that the economic crisis and pandemic have had a substantial impact on variables between 2017 and 2022 (Kumari, 2017).

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The study on migration intentions among information technology professionals in Sri Lanka's Western Province had limitations, including a small sample size of 384 workers and a hybrid technique that comprised surveys and interviews. Future studies require bigger and more geographically varied samples to represent the different experiences and opinions of IT workers in Sri Lanka, in order to increase the research's comprehensiveness. There is also the possibility of bias starting off, particularly from interviewers, and it is proposed that more broad approaches be used to minimize this. The study also focused on human aspects that affected migration intentions, such as family relationships, financial stability, and macroenvironmental conditions. However, it didn't give a further explanation on complicated connections between these factors. The study's conclusions are intimately related to the particular context of Sri Lankan IT workers, and extending the findings to other locations or sectors of the economy can be done carefully. Future study should use a comparison that includes cross-national studies and IT workers from varied backgrounds to give a more detailed knowledge of how different environments and industries impact professionals' migration decisions.

The study emphasizes the importance of gender-based methods in the IT business to meet the individual demands and aspirations of both male and female IT professionals. Future-oriented governments as well as business partners should create professional development campaigns, provide educational opportunities for spouses, and encourage an inclusive work the environment. Encouragement of entrepreneurship in the IT business could help in the retention of IT personnel while also contributing to the country's economic growth and creativity. This initiative requires strong support structures, such as mentorship programs, cash availability, and faster regulatory procedures. Improved data-driven decision-making is critical for businesses, researchers, and politicians to stay up with changing trends, contribute to the growth of Sri Lanka's IT industry, and decrease

brain drain. This ongoing investigation acts as an outline for navigating the ever-changing IT industry in Sri Lanka.

V. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The IT sector in Sri Lanka is crucial for the country's economic stability and growth, as it plays a significant role in various aspects such as employment, economic growth, technological innovation, and improvements in society. However, the migration of skilled IT professionals to other countries has become a serious problem that can have serious consequences on the country. Despite being planned to be the second largest export revenue-generating industry by 2022, Sri Lanka has remained in fifth place due to the decisions of IT professionals to migrate. The IT industry is significant to Sri Lanka, as it improves efficiency, encourages innovation, and uplifts productivity. It also creates new employment opportunities, attracts foreign investment, and improves access to education, healthcare, and living standards. However, the migration of highly skilled IT professionals has negatively impacted the country's ability to develop and apply advanced technologies, economic growth, and job openings. A loss of economic opportunities can result from a shortage of IT professionals slowing down investment and job openings.

Businesses could relocate operations to countries with a more reliable and secure talent pool, which could harm the competitiveness of the country as a whole. A knowledge and innovation deficit in Sri Lanka may result in a lack of innovation and knowledge, leaving it difficult to keep up with global developments. Therefore, it is essential to monitor migration trends and identify them accurately. Future economic and technological goals of the country must be achieved, and methods to encourage employee retention and track IT professionals' movement to other countries are required. To enhance IT professionals' financial situation, job satisfaction, the feeling of belonging, social well-being, long-term plans, and all-encompassing approaches are required. Governments and businesses should work together to implement extensive skill- and career-development programs to retain IT experts and decrease their intention to migrate. These programs should be customized to the needs of IT professionals, offering chances for higher education, recognition, and access to modern technology.

Governments and businesses should support career progression and diminish the need for immigration by investing in the ongoing development of the domestic IT workforce. Improving educational and training programs can also contribute to employee retention. Governments and companies should work together to build high-quality educational programs related to the IT sector, including having a plan to meet the needs of businesses, employees, and providing specialized training programs. Partnerships between institutions and IT companies can increase practical experience and improve employability. Strengthening governments should actively engage in dialogue with the IT industry to understand their needs and concerns.

The connection between government and industry is important for the creation of rules, regulations and policies related to migration which also meet the needs of the industry. Governments should allocate more money for research and development in the IT sector and encourage technological innovation, and to create better intellectual property. A positive workplace that supports innovation, professional growth, and job satisfaction should be highly prioritized. For that they can do offering competitive salaries and other benefits, opportunities for skill development, encouraging work-life balance and much more. Investing in infrastructure and public facilities to uplift the living standards of IT professionals is essential to retain IT Professionals in Sri Lanka.

Improving collaboration between academic institutions, business organizations, and IT sector is essential and also improving networking opportunities, bringing down foreign knowledge and technologies, having professional development opportunities, and knowledge exchange can improve the regional IT industry and promote a thriving professional community are really important to keep Sri Lanka IT Brains within the country. Not only that but also employers are important to retain the IT professionals. Work-life balance policies and flexible work schedules or remote work options can help IT workers better balance their personal and professional obligations. Finally, the importance of career growth, economic factors and quality of life in determining the migration intentions of IT professionals is confirmed by the determinants of migration intentions of IT professionals. In order to address these issues, policymakers should focus on providing financial incentives, work-life balance programs, training initiatives, cooperative efforts, and infrastructural upgrades to promote a positive work environment for IT professionals in Sri Lanka. Developing IT industry, promote innovation, and ensure long-term economic plans by collaborating with governments, organizations, and stakeholders, implementing updated policy ideas can help retain IT human capital in Sri Lanka.

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