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Volume 01, Issue 01, March 2024

Published by Department of International Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya  
Sri Lanka

## **Spectrum- Journal of Global Studies**

Spectrum is a refereed biannual journal published by the Department of International Studies aimed at providing scholars, young academics, and subject experts with a platform to share and disseminate their invaluable research findings in the field of international relations.

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ISSN 2420-7314

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## **Effect of Government Debt on Gross Domestic Product with Special Reference to Sri Lanka**

P. T. Shyamanthi<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the relationship between government debt and gross domestic product in Sri Lanka. Objective of this study is to find the relationship between these two variables and the impact of government debt on economic growth. Data was collected through Central Bank of Sri Lanka and the data set was proven to be normally distributed. Correlation, scatter plot and Linear Regression Model is used to find out relationships. Data sample represent annual time series data for the period of 26 years starting 1990 to 2016. Results of the study is consistent with the neo- classical view which proves that there is a negative impact of government debt on economic growth.

**Keywords:** *Government Debt, Gross Domestic Production, Neo-Classical View, Economic Growth, Public Debt to Ratio*

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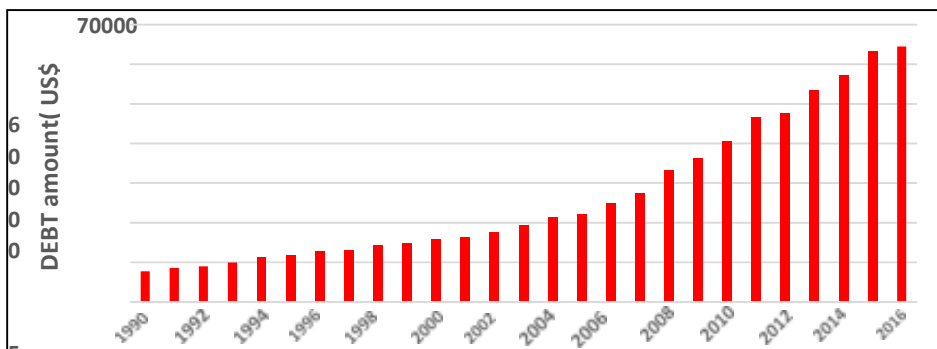
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**Introduction**

Sri Lanka, the island nation in the Indian Ocean with a population of nearly 22 million, has plunged into a deep economic crisis. With more than \$50 billion (€46 billion) (central bank, Sri Lanka,2022) in external debt and a shortage of foreign exchange reserves, the country is currently struggling to pay for essential imports. This has led to sharp increases in the price of essential commodities like rice, fuel, and milk. A fuel shortage recently left much of the country suffering through a power cut.

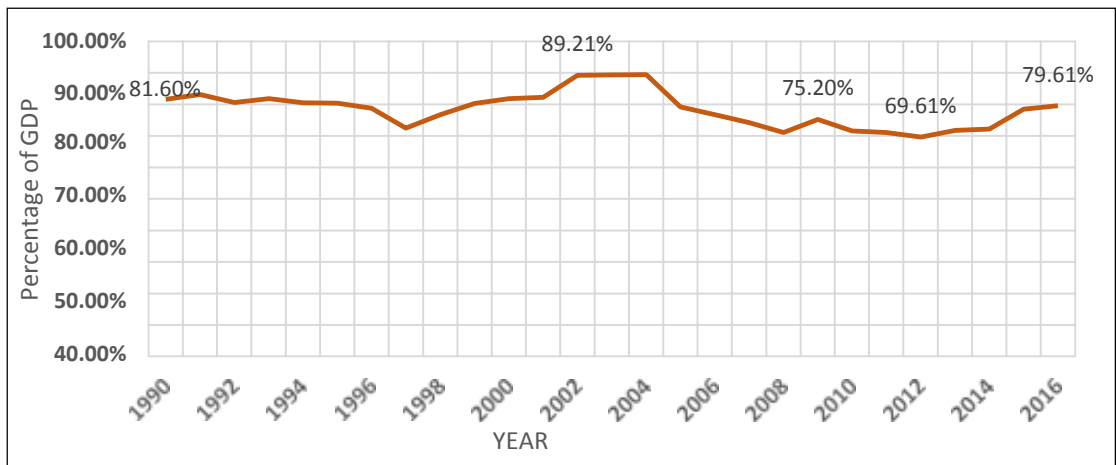
Similar to many other developing countries Sri Lanka has been dependent on foreign finance for many of its infrastructure projects. Continued borrowings by developing nations increases the public debt stocks of those countries and create difficulties in their debt servicing. As a result of the continuously large fiscal deficit, the total public debt stock, in Sri Lanka has rapidly accumulated since 1950.

*Figure 1: Evolution of public debt in 1990-2016*



*Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report (various issues)*

Figure 2: Percentage of Public Debt in GDP 1990-2016



Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Annual Report (various issues)

According to the central bank report in year 1990 total debt of the country was 7,726 US\$ million. In this year debt per capita was 475\$ and debt in GDP percentage was 81.60%. When we observe the year 2000 and 2010 total debt of the country was 15,855 US\$ million and 40,551 US\$ million respectively. As well as debt per capita was 859\$ and 1961\$ respectively. Comparing these 2 years we can analyze amount of public debt was increased by 24,696 US\$ million. During this decade debt per capita was increased by 802 US\$. When we consider debt in GDP percentage higher percentage recorded in 2004. In 2016 Sri Lanka public debt was 64,483 million dollars has increased 1,377 million since 2015. This amount means that the debt in 2016 reached 79.61% of Sri Lanka GDP a 1.12 percentage point rise from 2015, when it was 78.49% of debt.

Sri Lanka's foreign debt has reached proportions when its servicing is a serious problem. It has to borrow to service the massive foreign debt around 47 US\$ billion that has accumulated mostly over the last decade.



Foreign debt increased significantly between 2000 -2009. It doubled from 9 dollar billion in 2000 to 18.6 dollar billion in 2009. In the next five years it more than doubled and at the end of 2014 foreign debt had risen to 42.9 dollar billion or 53.6 percent of GDP. The foreign debt continued to grow in the last two years under the new government. At the end of 2015 the foreign debt reached 44.8 dollar billion or 54.4 percent of GDP and by July 2016 it reached

47.7 billion at the end of year January.

In addition, the government of Sri Lanka began obtaining loans from the World Bank in 1959. At present The Asian Development Bank, The World Bank, The United Nation Agencies, The European Investment Bank, The International Fund for Agricultural Development bank, and the OPEC fund are the major multilateral donors that provide financial assistance to Sri Lanka, while China, Japan, India, South Korea and Iran are the leading bilateral donor countries.

In year the total external debt of the country which consists of medium and long term and short-term debt decreased to 43.3 per cent of GDP in 2010 from

44.4 percent in 2009. However total external debt increased by 14.9 per cent to 21.4 dollar billion 2010 from 18.7 dollar billion in 2009. When we analyze year 2012 loan inflows to the government moderate in 2012. Medium and long-term loan inflows to the government amounted to us 2,869 dollar million compared to 3,026 US\$ million in 2011 (including the proceeds of the sovereign bond issue of 1 US\$ billion each in 2012 and 2011). Most of these inflows were directed to the continuation of major infrastructure projects which commenced in 2010 and 2011. Out of the total debt inflows 2,869 dollar million in 2012, 1460 dollar million were obtained



on concessional terms and conditions while the remainder consisted of non-concessional loans and report credits.

In year 2017 Sri Lanka's total external debt rose in 2017 mainly with the increase in the external debt of the general government. Total external debt of the country increased by 5.4 dollar billion to 51,824 dollar million by end 2017. The government raised around 4 dollars billion in 2017 raising a foreign currency term financing facility and project loans. With the increase in government external debt the total outstanding external debt of the country as a percentage of GDP increased to 59.5 percent by end 2017 from 56.8 percent at end 2016.

In year 2017 according to the foreign loan liability position increased from 26,342 dollar million at end 2016 to 28,912 dollar million at the end of 2017. Sri Lanka's total external debt rose in 2017 mainly with the increase in the external debt rose in 2017 mainly with the increase in the external debt of the general government. With the increase in government external debt the total outstanding external debt of the country as a percentage of GDP increased to 59.5 percent by end 2017 from 56.8 percent at end 2016.

The objective of this paper was to examine the relationship between external debt and the gross domestic production of Sri Lanka for the period of 1990 to 2016.

### **Literature Review**

There are three debatable theories behind the impact of government debt on economic growth, which are the Keynes theory, Ricardian theory, and Neo-Classical economist view. From Keynesian point of view, expansionary fiscal policy leads to higher debt level and simultaneously stimulates GDP growth, especially through the mechanism of expenditure multiplier. Keynes view

states that there is a positive consequence of budget deficit and debit finance on economic activities. In Ricardian point of view, they imply that government debt is not burden to the economy. Neoclassical economics would imply that any enlargement of the public debt increases wealth, whether or not it also decreases capital, and this increase of wealth boosts consumption and squeezes investment. Simply neoclassical theory explains, there is a negative correlation between debt and economic growth.

Silva and Perera (2020), prove that there is a positive impact of government debt on economic activities. Kotovic concludes that there is statistically correlation between public debt to ratio and the rate of unemployment. Atapattu and Padmashri find domestic debt, external debt and educational expenditure significantly affect economic growth in long run. Ajayi and Oke concluded that external debt is a burden to economy in Nigeria.

## **Methodology of the Study**

### **Data collection and Sample**

This study examines the relationship between Economic Growth Rate GDP and Public debt to ratio in Sri Lanka from 1990 to 2016. The data which is purely secondary data was sourced through the Central Bank of Sri Lanka in various years.

### **Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between External debt and EconomicGrowth Rate GDP

H<sub>1</sub>: There is an impact of External Debt on Economic Growth Rate GDP

### Model Specification

To test the stated hypothesis researcher under used the following linear regression Model

$$GDP = B_0 + B_1 DEBT$$

GDP =

Economic

Growth Rate

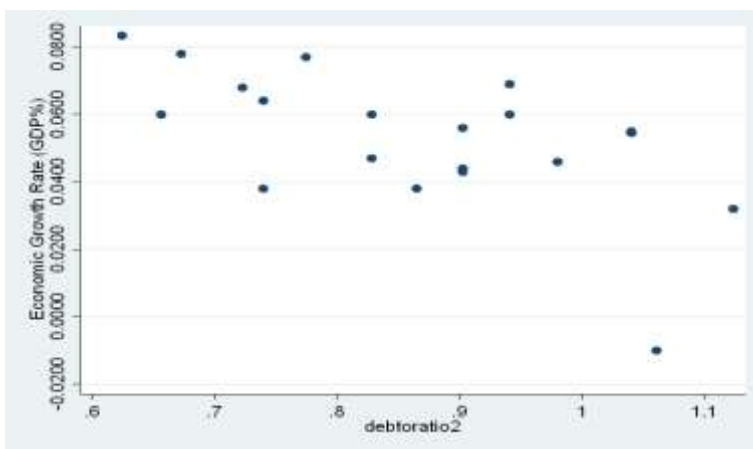
DEBT=

external debt

$B_0, B_1$  = coefficients

### Scatter graph

```
. twoway (scatter EconomicGrowthRateGDP debtoratio2)
```



Dependent Variable = Economic

Growth Rate GDPIndependent

Variable =External Debt

According to this Graph we can see negative linear relationship

### Correlation

```
. pwcorr EconomicGrowthRateGDP PublicdebttoGDPratio, sig star(0.05)
```

	EconomicGrowthRateGDP	PublicdebttoGDPratio
EconomicGrowthRateGDP	1.0000	
PublicdebttoGDPratio	-0.6023*	1.0000
	0.0039	

In statistics the correlation coefficient  $r$  measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables on a scatterplot. According to above statistics we have negative correlation coefficient 0.6023. A negatively correlation is a relationship between that move on opposite directions. In other words, in this situation when we increase the External debt it may cause to decrease the Economic growth rate.

### Regression Result

```
. reg EconomicGrowthRateGDP PublicdebttoGDPratio
```

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	21
Model	.002911069	1	.002911069	F(1, 19)	=	10.82
Residual	.005113837	19	.000269149	Prob > F	=	0.0039
				R-squared	=	0.3628
				Adj R-squared	=	0.3292
Total	.008024906	20	.000401245	Root MSE	=	.01641

EconomicGrowthRateGDP	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
PublicdebttoGDPratio	-.1577497	.0479666	-3.29	0.004	-.258145 - .0573545
_cons	.1996174	.0446385	4.47	0.000	.1061878 .2930469

From the regression result above, the constant or intercept is 0.1996174. This implies that when all the model parameters are zero there will still be an effect of 0.1996174 on the economic growth rate. The coefficient of external debt is

-0.1577497 which implies that when external debt increase in one unit it may cause to decline economic growth rate in 0.1577497. The coefficient determination  $r^2$  is 0.3628. This is an indication that the independent variable specified in the model are adequate in explaining about 36.28% of total variations in the external debt

To test hypothesis considered the value obtained from the estimation of the model with the table value. The p value of external debt is 0.004 which less than 0.05 and is there for significant. The t static for the external debt obtained from the estimation is -3.29. For the F statistic, which apart from the  $r^2$  also talks about the overall significance of the model.

Since the estimated value is lesser than table value, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between economic growth rate and external debt.

### **Conclusion**

Some economists said that public debt is also an indirect instrument of financial policy to help government to promote economic growth and stabilize social security. Because of that they said public debt has positive impact on economic growth. But if a country is unable to pay its debt it defaults, which could cause a financial crisis in the domestic and international markets. The higher the debt to GDP ratio, the less likely the country will pay back its debt and the higher its risk of default. A study by the World Bank found that if the debt to GDP ratio of a country exceeds 77% for an extended period of time, it slows economic growth. When we observed the Sri Lankan Debt to GDP ratio in between 1991-2016 it exceeds the 77% of the public debt to GDP ratio. It proves that there is a negative impact of government debt on economic growth.

Results of the study is consistent with the neo- classical view which proves that there is a negative impact of government debt on economic growth.

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# The Impact of Aging Population on Economic Growth in Sri Lanka

T. R. Prebuddhika Madhumini<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The growth of the aging population in any country affects the growth of the country's gross domestic product. That effect can affect the economic growth of a country both negatively and positively. Therefore, it is important to study the population aging process and its socioeconomic aspects. Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of the aging population on the economic growth of Sri Lanka during the period 2011-2022. The estimated result of this study shows that Sri Lanka's aging population has a positive impact on economic growth. This confirmed that the growth of the aging population is not a major obstacle to economic growth. In this way, this research has been presented analytically in a way that fulfills the purpose of the study. This is important for policymakers to better understand the effects of population aging and to formulate better policies for the country.

**Keywords:** *Aging population, Population Growth, GDP Growth, Malthus' Theory*

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## **Introduction**

The social and economic implications of an aging population are becoming increasingly apparent in many industrialized countries around the world. With populations aging faster than ever in places like North America, Western Europe, and Japan, policymakers face several interrelated issues, including declining working-age populations, rising healthcare costs, unsustainable pension obligations, and changes

Population aging is an increase in the proportion of elderly people in the total population. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division reports, 60 years can be considered as the age at which a person becomes an adult. Although population aging occurs regularly in developed countries, it is now common in developing countries. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division reports in 2012, 258 million of the elderly population lived in developed countries and 512 million lived in developing countries. This situation is expected to grow further in the future. Quantitative and qualitative changes in population have various effects on the country's economy. Population as child population, labor force, and elderly are the main groups and children and elderly are considered as dependents. The impact of the elderly on the dependency ratio is a major influence on the economy. Demographers are declaring the 21st century to be the age of the aging population due to the pressures faced by the world's population. Population aging is a cause of economic problems for a developing country like Sri Lanka.

Some Economists assume that as the population ages, the number of working-age people will decrease relative to demand, which will increase wages. Higher wages give firms an incentive to invest in technologies that

make labor more productive. This increase in productivity increases overall economic growth by reducing or suppressing economic growth from an aging population. Economists hypothesize that as the population ages, businesses will be more likely to use technology to help increase productivity.

### **Research Question and Objectives**

The increasing percentage of the world's elderly population is a topic that is being discussed and researched in many countries. What appears on the surface in the rise of the aging population is the increased life expectancy of people. While this may seem like a good thing, it is important to study this because the rapidly increasing aging population is the root cause of many other problems.

Accordingly, the main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of the aging population on the economic growth of Sri Lanka. In addition, the objectives of this study include identifying the relationship and effects of GDP growth with employment, unemployment, and foreign investment factors.

### **Literature Review**

Population aging is one of the few certainties about Sri Lanka's long-term future. Although aging does not operate in isolation from other social and economic forces, it is one of the few areas of the future for which meaningful and reasonably accurate projections can be made into the next century. An aging perspective based on demographic forecasts can provide policymakers with valuable insights into future challenges and potential policy options.

From a theoretical framework, economic theory argues that an aging population can hinder the growth of the economy. Modigliani and Brumberg (1954), through their life cycle hypothesis, support the view that an aging population can slow down economic growth. The life-cycle hypothesis suggests that the aging of the population at an early stage affects the rise in national savings. However, as the population continues to age and some relative proportion of the population reaches their retirement age, this hypothesis predicts a decline in aggregate savings due to the increase in the aging population.

Moreover, Solow's growth theory states that it becomes difficult for a country to achieve stable economic growth in an aging population economy. Stable growth conditions or steady state growth can only be achieved if the age structure of the population remains constant. However, an economy with an aging population has an uneven age structure. So this can only be done when the economy transitions to its steady state. Based on this theory, population aging has a negative impact on economic growth.

Additionally, the Malthusian Catastrophe by Thomas Malthus in his book *An Essay on the Principle of Population* describes a world where uncontrolled population growth exceeds the resources necessary for survival. Therefore, says Malthus, humanity is condemned to live in perpetual poverty because growth in agricultural production is always outpaced by population growth. Malthus' theory raises a question regarding recent arguments about the consequences of an aging population.

Ramanayake and Kumara (2021) highlight that the Sri Lankan population has irreversibly increased by 8 times in terms of gender and age structures in recent decades. The paper shows that by increasing women's employability and knowledge of technology and art, the economy can reduce the

pressure of a growing population.

Menike (1998) has shown the growth of aging and its associated economic and social impacts as a global population challenge. The main objective is to identify the economic problems caused by the elderly population and evaluate them at the rural and urban levels. The paper points out that as a developing country, Sri Lanka cannot cope with an aging population.

Based on the research done by Maestas (2016), it was found that aging leads to a decrease in economic growth in the United States. Between 1980 and 2010, the 16.8% increase in the population aged 60 and over led to a 9.2% decrease in GDP.

Shariful Islam (2020), shows the effects of updating the age dependency ratio. In 1975, according to the formula used to update the old-age dependency ratio, it was 10.5%, according to the second updated formula, it was 17.8%, while the traditional formula was 5.9%. Based on estimates from the traditional formula, updated formulas showed that it underestimated 1.5 million older people. The 2020 updated formula shows 12% of the adult dependent rate while the traditional formula shows 7.7%. The updated formula also projects the percentage to double in 2040, while the traditional formula underestimated it at 9.6 million. However, the study did not focus on whether the older population could continue to work and the fields in which they could work.

Population aging has adverse effects on overall economic growth. However, between 1980 and 2014 in the United States, he has conducted a study on the economic impact of population aging using different aging behavior patterns at the state level. This study has been undertaken to assess the impact of population growth and population aging on the growth of gross

domestic product and its component forces. According to this study, many reasons have been found for the aging of the population and through that there may be direct effects on economic growth. Accordingly, it has been concluded that population aging has a statistically significant negative relationship with economic growth.

Some studies found positive relations between the elderly population and economic growth that raised Brendon and SK. They found that Japan had the highest age dependency. Thus, it had entered the stage of the long time. To overcome these issues, Japan uses various policies and adults who serve the workforce policies to overcome these issues. The initiative will reduce the negative impact of age and will have a positive impact on their economy. Since labor is a relatively unfair manufacturing factor, human capital can lead to productive growth by increasing investment. The push of this productivity cannot reduce economic growth. For this reason, policymakers should focus on the development of policies for long-term care, education, and health.

Scarth (2002), argues that population aging could lead to productivity growth by motivating increased investments into human capital, as labour becomes a relatively scarce production factor resource. For this reason, policymakers should focus on improvising policies on long-term care and investments in technological advancements, education, and health.

Furthermore, Futagami and Nakajima (2013), found positive effects of population aging on economic growth, such as the development of labor-saving technology and increased investments in human capital.

Prettner (2013), combines endogenous growth models with semi-endogenous growth models by Romer (1990), and finds that increased

longevity has a positive effect on economic growth. Declining fertility rates adversely affect economic growth. Furthermore, the positive long-term effect dominates the negative fertility effect. Population aging creates long-term growth within the endogenous growth framework. The main conclusion of Prettnner (2013) is that constant demographic changes do not hinder technological progress and lead to economic prosperity. He also argues that lower birth and death rates can lead to higher economic growth rates.

According to Statner, the increase in economic growth has a positive impact on economic growth. Reduce fertility rates can adversely affect economic growth. According to him, the constant demographic difference is not necessarily technological progress and economic prosperity. Reducing births and mortality rates can cause the economic growth rate of growth.

### **Methodology of the Study**

Using secondary data, previous research books, papers, etc. are used to compare their information, and how the growth of the elderly population in Sri Lanka affects the economy is analyzed here. Accordingly, in data collection, the Population and Statistics Department quantitatively obtains data using secondary sources such as the reports of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the Department of Health and Forestry, etc. The study examines the gross domestic product rate, rate of population 60 years or older, Employment rate, Unemployment rate, and Foreign Direct Investments rate from 2011 - 2022. The model is created with reference to the objective of identifying the field of study.

$Y = \text{Gross Domestic Product}$   $X_1 = \text{Population 60 years or older}$   $X_2 =$

Employment

X<sub>3</sub>= Unemployment  
 X<sub>4</sub>= Foreign Direct Investments

can be indicated. Correlation among these variables is examined and variables without the multicollinearity problem are used for the model. Accordingly, the model,

$$Y^{\wedge} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + u_i$$

can be arranged as.

H<sub>0</sub> -60>= an aging population does not have an impact on gross domestic product.

H<sub>0</sub> - 60>= an aging population has an impact on gross domestic product.

Data analysis and goodness of fit tests using SPSS software.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

The main objective of the study in the design of the model is to examine the impact of aging population growth on GDP.

**Model Summary<sup>a</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig F Change	
1	.954 <sup>a</sup>	.910	.859	1.51916	.910	17.696	4	7	.001	1.983

a. Predictors: (Constant), FOREIGN\_INVESTMENTS, ADULT\_POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT

b. Dependent Variable: GDP

It can be determined from the value of the coefficient of determination that the regression model explains 95% of the total variation in the dependent variable, gross domestic product.

$$Y^{\wedge} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + u_i$$

$$Y^{\wedge} = -286.030 + 0.53X_1 + 3.417X_2 - 6.795X_3 - 4.882X_4$$

The major finding of this research is that there is a positive relationship



between ageing population and GDP growth in Sri Lanka.

Here, keeping  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  constant, when the population aged 60 and over increases by one unit, the gross domestic product increases by 0.053 units. Also  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_3$  and  $\beta_4$  constant, when employment increases by one unit, the gross domestic product increases by 3.417 units. Also, it can be concluded that while  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_4$  remain unchanged, when unemployment increases by one unit, GDP decreases by 6.795 units. Also  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  constant, when foreign investment increases by one unit, the gross domestic product decreases by 4.882 units.

t Test

$H_0$  -60>= an aging population does not have an impact on gross domestic product.

$H_1$  -60>= an aging population has an impact on gross domestic product

The area where the t value is rejected is located. (12.368) Thus the slope coefficient is statistically reliable. So, 5% is under significant level. Accordingly, it can be observed that population aging has an effect on the dependent variable, gross domestic product.

## Conclusion

The life cycle hypothesis and human capital theory are concepts well-known to all economists. While they have had a large impact on empirical research at the microeconomic level over the years, their impact on macroeconomics has been small. Over the past two decades, research focusing on the relationship between macroeconomic variables and age structure has intensified, and the main objective of this study is to examine

the relationship between GDP and population based on theoretical predictions from the life cycle hypothesis and human capital theory.

Much of the current discussion on the consequences of population aging by Sri Lanka's senior policymakers and international financial institutions focuses only on reforming the existing pension system. However, population aging has implications for all sectors of the economy and society. This study examines the impact of the aging population on Sri Lanka's economic growth over a 12-years period. Its estimation result shows that the aging population has a positive effect on economic growth. This indicates that the increase in the aging population is not a major obstacle to Sri Lanka's economic growth. This study is consistent with the endogenous growth model by Prettner (2013). He argues that increased longevity has a positive effect on economic growth.

The Sri Lankan government is focused on providing care, financial assistance and health insurance to the elderly population of Sri Lanka. In addition, it is important for government or private institutions to introduce suitable economic activities for people who can engage in economic activities among the elderly. Improving knowledge about future personal savings and insurance policies among economically active adults is also important.

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## **Ukraine-Russia War and the Neighborhood: Understanding Russia-Eastern Europe Relations through Constructivist Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of this study is to understand and examine Russia's aggressive foreign policy approach in the immediate neighborhood and at the same time the response of the East European countries from a social constructivist perspective. Russia's invasion of Ukraine which can be identified as the climax of Russia's aggressive foreign policy in its immediate neighborhood is often looked at from a realist perspective i.e., the outcome of a quest to maximize power to deter an imminent threat. This is also considered to be a setback for the liberal school of thought for whom this aggression was to be a total surprise. However, this research paper intends to examine both the aggressive foreign policy of Russia as well as the response of the East European countries from a constructivist perspective. The study predominantly looks at Ukraine and Poland's response to the foreign policy behavior of Russia. This qualitative research is predominantly based on secondary data. This research is significant for the fact that it provides a different dimension as well as a different perspective to one of the widely spoken themes in the field of international relations. As per the findings, Russia's current behavior in its immediate neighborhood and the response from the neighboring countries are an outcome of history, norms, cultural linkages, and perspectives. On one hand, Russia's claim for authority over the neighborhood comes from historical linkages and the response from the neighboring countries comes as a result of their perspective of Russia as a non-democratic, authoritative imperialist power. Here, special attention is given to the perspectives of the general public of countries that challenge the offensive foreign policy approach of Russia. Accordingly, the ongoing crisis in Eastern Europe is to a greater extent a result of the past and perspectives of the public which plays a decisive role in shaping the foreign policy of democratic states.

**Keywords:** *Social Constructivism, Russia, Ukraine, East Europe, Poland*

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## **Introduction**

The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was preceded by unprecedented geopolitical developments. It represented not only the collapse of one of the superpowers but changed the geopolitical landscape of the entire Europe. It led to a new world order led by the United States of America. While the dissolution of the USSR made Russia less powerful, it hasn't by any means hindered Russia's rise to one of the most influential powers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 have made the world to be more cautious of a sort of rebirth of a new version of the Cold War. With Russia being the largest country among the former USSR members and given its military capacity, Western Europe and the USA have identified this rise as a threat to the existing world order that is shaped by democratic values. The role of contemporary Russia is seen by many as an attempt by the largest country in the world to maintain its authority over the former Soviet Republics. This growing Russian influence in Eastern Europe is often looked at from a realist perspective and for some, it's a triumph of realpolitik. However, this research looks at Russia's relationship with its immediate neighborhood from a constructivist perspective and argues that these ongoing tensions in the regions are not given but socially constructed. In other words, this research reiterates the fact that Russia's relationship with its immediate neighborhood is not entirely about realpolitik, but rather a socially constructed phenomenon based on opinions, history, culture, and interactions between people. Constructivism, unlike the mainstream theories in international relations, involves a sociological and social-psychological form of system theory in which identities and interests are the dependent variables (Wendt, 1992). According to Adler (1997), constructivism is the view that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by

human action and interaction depends on the dynamic normative and epistemic interpretation of the material world. Constructivists hold the view that state conduct is shaped by elite beliefs, identities, and social norms (Mingst & Arreguin-Taft, 2017). Constructivists understand power in discursive terms- the power of ideas, culture, and language (ibid). The main objective of this research is to examine Ukraine's relations with its immediate neighborhood from a constructivist perspective. It tries to evaluate the significance of non-material aspects such as ideas and perspectives in shaping interstate relations in the region. It looks at Russia's relations with Ukraine and other East European countries and examines how their relations are shaped by perspectives and beliefs. This research argues that Russia's contemporary relations with its immediate neighborhood are not determined only by economic strength, geopolitics, and military capabilities. Looking at the current context, perceptions of state leaders and citizens, largely shaped by history remain at the core in explaining the nature of relations among the parties. Looking at the vast majority of the research on this area looks at this issue from a materialist perspective. For example, it is often believed that the core reason behind the ongoing crisis in Eastern Europe is the outcome of the balance of power among the major players such as the United States, Russia, Ukraine, and Western Europe. However, this research looks at this crisis from a different perspective.

### **Literature Review**

While the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the latter's overall aggressive foreign policy approach displayed over the last two decades certainly had a profound impact on contemporary international relations, there are diverse opinions on the causes of such aggressive foreign policy behavior. As per Fukuyama (2022), Vladimir Putin has been driven by the fear of NATO



expansion and seeking a neutral buffer to protect his country while Mearsheimer (2014) holds the West accountable for the crisis in Ukraine. From a theoretical perspective, the crisis in the East can be identified as a triumph for political realists for whom international politics, like all other politics, is a struggle for power, but, unlike domestic politics, a struggle dominated by organized violence (Keohane & Nye, 2012). For them, the war could not be avoided completely given the anarchic nature of the international system (Steans et al., 2010). On the other hand, this behavior of Russia is indeed a great setback for the liberals. Liberal institutionalism believes that domestic and international institutions facilitate cooperation and peace among countries (Johnson & Heiss, 2018). Liberals further reiterate the fact that in an interdependent world, military force is not used by governments toward other governments within the region or on the issues (Keohane & Nye, 2012).

Social constructivism is identified as an approach coming to the center stage of discussion during the 1990s as an alternative to mainstream theories and approaches of international relations. At the outset, it should be mentioned that while rationalist neo-neo theories try to explain certain outcomes in international relations, social constructivists describe their task as understanding (Steans & al., 2010). According to constructivists, world politics is a product of intersubjectively shared ideas that shape behavior by constituting the ideas and interests of actors (Copeland, 2006). As per Alexander Wendt (1992), anarchy is the outcome of a process and not structure. For him, anarchy is what states make of it (ibid). While the constructivists oppose the static nature of international relations, their analysis is based on the belief that there is no objective social or political reality independent of our understanding of it (Heywood, 2011), and for them, identities are the basis of interests (Wendt, 1992). As far as the

foreign policy of Russia is concerned, Lo (2018) identifies several sets of drivers that will shape Russia's international relations over the coming years. They are Putin's interpretation of the national interest, ideology, and notion of identity; Russian strategic culture; and improvisation in response to events. For him, Russia's great power identity is an enduring legacy of its imperial past (ibid). Looking at Poland-Russia relations, scholars identify mutual distrust as a major reason for the deteriorated relations (Samorukov, 2021). Samorukov (ibid) highlights the importance of perceptions and identities for strong relations among countries. Sharing a similar stance, Gabuev (2023) emphasizes the fact that if Russia had worked out a strategy of strengthening its ties with the West, it would have many chances to strengthen its position in the West. For him, Russia's window of opportunity to redefine itself in the world order closed when the first Russian bombs and missiles hit Ukraine (ibid).

### **Methodology of the Study**

This empirical study is based on secondary data sources such as books, journals, various speeches, and annual reports analyzed through a qualitative approach. Unlike most of the research on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war analyzed through a positivist approach, this given study uses interpretivism to analyze the data. The main argument of the study is that war, peace, or any other development in the international system cannot be fully comprehended through a scientific approach rather it can be better understood through interpretivism. This research attempts to comprehend the developments in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine from a constructivist perspective which underscores the significance of perspectives in understanding and evaluating international relations.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

Looking at the reports and analysis on Russia's invasion of Ukraine in particular and the former's aggressive foreign policy in general, the majority have made Russian Leader Vladimir Putin the main culprit while others have made the West accountable for the crisis. Contemporary research on Russia's foreign policy approach concerning its immediate neighborhood has often failed to take into account the significance of the element of identities, opinions, and discursive power. For realists, the present-day developments in Russia and its immediate neighborhood are nothing but the imminent outcome of the anarchic nature of the international system. Many perceive NATO's eastward expansion as the immediate cause for Russia's aggressive foreign policy approach. However, as per this paper, a major cause behind Russia's aggression and the response of its immediate neighborhood is the conflict of perceptions of the leaders as well as the public of both sides. The ongoing crisis is nothing but the outcome of the miscellany perspectives some of which have roots running back for centuries. From a historical perspective, the present-day capital of Ukraine-Kyiv was from the ninth through the twelfth centuries the capital of Kievan Rus, the forerunner of the Russian state (Tsepcolo, 1998). In his article 'On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians, Russian President Putin tries to highlight the longstanding historical ties between the Russians and Ukrainians. According to him, a major cause for the drift between Russia and Ukraine is being forced not only to deny its roots, and generations of their ancestors but also to believe that Russia is their enemy. Going back to the 2013/2014 Maiden revolution in Ukraine, it was the general public who stood against Viktor Yanukovich's decision to enter into an economic deal with Russia. If the general public in Ukraine had decided to accept Yanukovich's decision, the situation would have been completely different. It was the conflict of

perceptions which has prompted the ongoing situation in Ukraine. Here what is important to understand is the significance of public opinion in directing and shaping the foreign policy of Ukraine. According to a poll carried out in December 2022, the Ukrainians’ trust in President Zelensky had risen to 84% which was only 27% exactly a year ago (Mathers, 2023). In a democratic governance setup, the voice of the public plays a vital role. Thus, Ukraine’s resistance to Russian aggression is an outcome of the overwhelming support of the populace of Ukraine. If not for this overwhelming support, the situation would have taken a different turn.

It is also important to note that the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia has deteriorated the public opinion of people throughout Europe and the USA.

*Table 01: % who have no confidence in Russian President Vladimir Putin to do the right thing regarding world affairs (2021 and 2022).*

Country	2021	2022
Poland	81	97
Sweden	68	95
Spain	57	94
United States	47	92
UK	57	90
France	77	89
Germany	55	85

*Source: PEW Research Center*

As indicated in illustration 01, the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine has created a negative perception of Russia among the public in a number of Western countries. In the case of Poland, a former member of the Warsaw Pact, today remains a key ally against the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

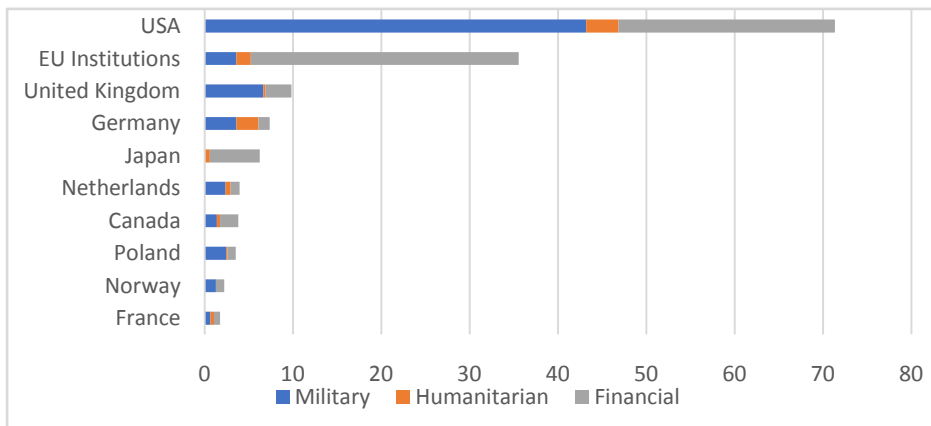
Poland is among the leading contributors of military aid to Ukraine and diplomatically, Poland calls for tougher sanctions against Russia (Francis, 2023).

As indicated in Graph 01, Poland remains one of the major providers of financial, military, and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Here, looking at the fundamental causes behind Poland’s stance on the Russia-Ukraine war one may argue it’s nothing more than national security. However, a deeper understanding of the situation would provide a better explanation of the situation. Poland’s stance on this matter to a greater extent has been shaped by mutual distrust and history. As per Francis (2023), Poland’s leading role in the European response to Putin’s invasion reflects the country’s extensive experience of Russian imperialism in both its Czarist and Soviet forms. Furthermore, since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, most of the Polish people view Russia as a major threat and support NATO sending arms to Ukraine (Graph 02).

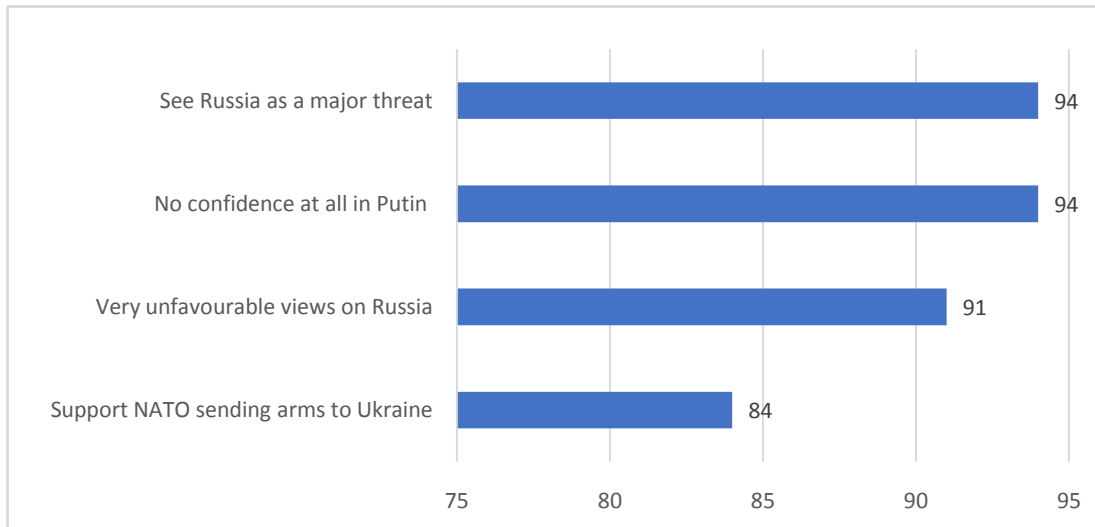
*Graph 01: Government support to Ukraine: Type of assistance, € billion (Commitments Jan. 24, 2022, to Feb. 24, 2023)*

*Source: Kiel Institute*

*Graph 02: % of the Poles who (have)*



Source: PEW Research Center



Neoliberals hold the view that in a highly globalized and interdependent world, the possibilities of war and conflicts remain unlikely. Common interests would often prevent states from resorting to violence. However, looking at Russia's today's foreign policy, it has proved otherwise. Poland for example relies heavily on Russia in its energy sector. Looking at the numbers, the country currently imports 15% of its coal, 43% of its natural gas, and 73% of its crude oil from Russia (Hillebrand, 2022). In such a situation, Poland's stance on the Russia-Ukraine war should have been supporting The Russian cause or remaining neutral at least.

The recent developments in Russia and Eastern Europe highlight the significance of the constructivist approach in understanding the foreign policy approaches and responses of the states involved in the Ukraine-Russia war. Constructivists, as noted earlier, define the structure in terms of social relationships and shared meanings (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012) and for constructivists, people act towards objects, including other actors based on the meanings that the objects have for them (Wendt, 1992). They emphasize identities as the basis of interests (ibid). As explained with reference to the

cases in Ukraine and Poland, it is evident that how people observe and interpret things plays a massive role in a Country's decision-making process. For Putin, Ukraine is part of Russia, and they share the same identity. Under such a situation, Ukraine cannot and should not be driven out of Russia's sphere of influence. Putin's invasion of Ukraine was widely considered a warning for other prospective candidates who are willing to join NATO and the EU. However, what followed the invasion was exactly the contrary. Now there is growing criticism of Putin's aggressive policy among the general public of the neighboring countries. Now these countries are trying to move further away from Russia's sphere of influence. Most of the countries that hold a negative perception of Russia's aggression are democratic countries. Their leaders are democratically elected. The government reflects the opinion of the public. Thus, for Russia, it is vital to understand the importance of how the country is comprehended not only by the leaders of the neighboring countries but also by the population of these countries.

### **Conclusion**

The ongoing Ukraine-Russia war emphasizes the relevance of social constructivist theory in explaining the current developments within the international system. Looking closely, what triggered this crisis was the negative perception held by the public over Russia and the Russian leadership. It is not only the Ukrainians who hold a negative perception of Russia but several countries in the immediate neighborhood. In the case of Poland, just like Ukraine, relies heavily on of Russia, especially when it comes to the energy sector. Yet, the country is against Russia's aggressive approach and continues to support Ukraine's resistance. This foreign policy approach to a great extent is shaped by the opinion of the public. As the

constructivists emphasize, the world we live in is always contextual. The main objective of this study was to bring out the significance of constructivist approach in understanding the developments in the world. This provides an alternative approach to understanding the developments in the international system. Generally, positivist theories emphasize a set of given hypotheses to explain the international system, but the question is whether such universal laws are on one hand eternal and on the other hand, are they really universal? For instance, looking at Ukraine and Russia, both countries rely heavily on Russia, especially when it comes to energy sectors. Yet, both countries do not accept Russian influence in the region. Thus, as discussed in the paper, it is evident that an alternative approach in the form of social constructivism can be used to better understand the ongoing crisis in Russia and the immediate neighborhood.



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## **The Influential Role of Cultural Relativism on the Universalism of Human Rights: A Case Study on Sri Lankan Human Rights System**

Anuththara Kodikara<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Human rights can simply be defined as the basic rights that are inherent to every human being despite any diversification. These human rights are based on shared values such as dignity, fairness, equality, independence, and respect as they try to ensure better lives for every human being. Similarly, these rights contribute to the establishment of global justice and peace. When considering the theoretical aspect of human rights, there can be identified a conflict between universalism and cultural relativism. The main objective of this analysis is to analyze what kind of different cultural norms and regulations within the Sri Lankan context influence on the idea of the universalism of human rights. This study is a quantitative analysis. Here, the study is conducted using secondary data, collected from different sources such as books, journals, magazines, annual reports, websites...etc., and data analysis is conducted based on content analysis. This study reveals some cultural aspects within the Sri Lankan context that influence the universality of human rights. Therefore, gender inequality of Tesawalamai law, Male/Female Genital circumcision, Minor Marriages under the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, and Discrimination and social stigma faced by the LGBTI Group can be identified as the findings of this study. This study is significant as it extensively reveals what kind of cultural aspects contradict the universality of human rights within Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is essential to implement government-based reforms to mitigate those clashes and ensure equal opportunity for everyone to enjoy their basic rights. However, these implementations should be done by using balanced, harmonizing mechanisms as these kinds of cultural aspects and relativities are very sensitive.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Relativism, Genital Circumcision, Human Rights, LGBTI, Minor Marriages, Tesawalamai Law, Universalism*

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## **Introduction**

Human rights can simply be defined as the basic rights that are inherent to every human being despite any diversification like nation, race, gender...etc. As it is defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, those rights are "universal legal guarantees protecting individuals and groups against actors which interfere with fundamental freedoms and humans". Therefore, human rights are equal to everyone in the world, and they have a legal status also. Similarly, from another perspective, these human rights can be interpreted as a set of moral principles and values that maintain human behavior to a certain standard. These human rights are based on shared values such as dignity, fairness, equality, independence, and respect as they try to ensure better lives for every human being. Without these rights there would be the law of the jungle and the world would become more vulnerable. Therefore, human rights play a vital role in establishing a peaceful, well-secured place for everyone to live independently.

Human rights cover nearly every facet of human action. These human rights include civil and political rights, which refer to a person's right to engage in civil and political life in their society without discrimination or persecution. These include the right to vote, the right to privacy, the right to expression, and the freedom from torture. Economic, social, and cultural rights are also included and are concerned with a person's ability to thrive and grow, as well as engage in social and cultural activities. This area includes rights such as the right to health, education, and employment. Similarly, third-generation rights, such as the right to self-determination and the right to benefit from humanity's common heritages, can also be identified.

While analyzing the evolution of human rights, one may trace it back to people's attempts to eradicate slavery, genocide, discrimination,

government oppression, and so on. The first and most important record was the United States Declaration of Independence, signed in 1776, followed by the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens, written in 1789. These encompassed essential democratic ideas such as free expression, property ownership, equality, and so on. As a result, the two statements can be characterized as the first stages in the creation of contemporary human rights. Following it, many human rights crimes occurred during the World Wars, including persecutions in Germany and atomic bomb assaults on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a result, following the end of World War II, international leaders sought an effective strategic mechanism to safeguard them from future atrocities. As a result, in 1945, certain nations banded together to form the United Nations, with the goal of preserving peace and harmony in the international system by defending basic human rights and protecting them from abuse. This can be considered a watershed moment in the growth of human rights. The United Nations General Assembly then adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 to promote human rights. This was the first international document that was codified to ensure civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Following the UDHR, many other international human rights standards were formed such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities.

In addition to the development of global human rights institutions, regional human rights measures can also be recognized. Regional organizations work to develop regional treaties and set up tribunals and commissions to protect human rights in their own regions. A multilateral legal instrument, a state monitoring system, and a judicial or quasi-judicial body are the primary



components. These regional human rights mechanisms are extremely important because they attempt to safeguard human rights while paying close regard to regional concerns such as regional customs, traditional values, cultures, and practices. As a result, these specialized regional frameworks are far more capable of dealing with local conditions by proposing alternative ways of human rights protection than global-level organizations.

With the above-mentioned ideas of the universality of human rights and the regional basis of human rights mechanisms, there occur contradictory aspects in views. If human rights are universal, then the need for a regional human rights mechanism is doubtful. This conflict can be identified with a close analysis of universalism along with cultural relativism. The universality of human rights can be identified as that human beings are endowed with equal human rights merely by virtue of being human, regardless of where they live or who they are, regardless of their status or any unique qualities. On the contrary, cultural relativism holds that a person's ideas and actions should be understood considering their own culture. Cultural relativists also claim that the norms and values of one culture should not be compared to the norms and values of another. Thus, it is evident that there is a struggle between the universalism of human rights and cultural relativism. Here, in this analysis, it is intended to analyze this collision providing a case study on the perceptions of human rights in Sri Lanka.

## Literature Review

### The Concept of Human Rights

Human rights can be defined as a collection of fundamental rights and liberties shared by individuals, regardless of race, gender, nationality, region, or other status (United Nations, 2022). Similarly, human rights are the rights that everyone enjoys merely by virtue of being human. Human rights are possessed by everyone, everywhere, and eternally. "Every human being is born free and equal in dignity and rights. People have reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood" (United Nations, 1948). These human rights encompass many other types of rights, such as the right to life and liberty, the right to labor and education, freedom from slavery, the ability to express oneself, and so on. In other words, these human rights are universal protections that protect individuals from actors that infringe on fundamental freedoms (Weston, 2019). Therefore, human rights are a broad set of principles that are inherent in all humans without distinction.

Moreover, these human rights include civil and political rights, which refer to a person's right to engage in civic and political life in their society without hostility or persecution. These include the right to vote, the right to privacy, the right to expression, and the right not to be tortured. Economic, social, and cultural rights are also included and are concerned with a person's ability to thrive and grow, as well as engage in social and cultural activities. This area includes rights such as health, education, and employment. (United Nations, 2022). Thus, it is clear that human rights appeared to be a versatile aspect that ensures the protection and freedom of mankind.

These rights contribute to the establishment of global justice and peace. Disregarding human rights can result in cruel deeds that hurt humanity's conscience (United Nations, 1948). Human rights, which are founded on common values such as dignity, tolerance, justice, equality, and independence, thus play a critical role in ensuring a peaceful, safe space for every human being in the globe. Therefore, human rights are those fundamental norms without which individuals cannot live in dignity. Human rights are vital for maintaining global harmony and fostering justice and societal well-being. Individuals and groups can suffer severe ramifications if these human rights are violated (Weston, 2019). Therefore, governments, international organizations, and civil society groups have a responsibility to preserve and ensure human rights on a national and worldwide scale.

### **Historical Development of Human Rights**

Before, human beings had no rights under conventional international law, which was defined as the law that governs inter-state relations. This idea regarding the nature of international law has a lot of implications as far as an individual is concerned such a treatment was restricted to the domestic authority of each State and Stateless persons do not enjoy any protection under conventional international law. However, human rights are not a recent invention. Its origin is traced back to the ancient civilizations of Babylon, China, and India (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019). From those civilizations, the idea of human rights spread quickly to Greece and eventually Rome.

Apart from that, there can be identified many documents asserting individual rights, such as the Magna Carta (1215), the Petition of Rights (1628), the US Constitution (1787), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, and of the Citizen (1789), and the US Bill of Rights (1791) can be

identified as written precursors to modern human rights documents (www.humanrights.com, n.d.). After that, many human rights violations occurred during the World Wars, including hallucinations in Germany and atomic bomb assaults on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As a result, following the end of World War II, international leaders desired an effective strategic mechanism to safeguard them from future horrors. As a result, in 1945, certain nations gathered to form the United Nations, with the goal of defending fundamental human rights and protecting them against abuses in the international system. This can be considered a historic moment in the growth of human rights (Kaur, 2014). Subsequently, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) for further promotion of human rights. This was the first international treaty to codify civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. Following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, many other international human rights standards were established, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (OHCHR, n.d.). In addition to the development of global human rights frameworks, regional human rights safeguards can be identified. Regional organizations work to develop regional treaties and set up tribunals and commissions to protect human rights in their own regions. Currently, the three most well-established regional human rights systems exist in Europe, the Americas, and Africa (Universal Rights Group, 2019). Therefore, it is visible that the modern development of human rights has undergone a very long process of evolution to be developed into its present status.

## **Theoretical Aspect of Human Rights: Universalism Versus Cultural Relativism**

When considering the theoretical aspect of human rights, there can be identified different theories based on human rights such as functionalism, intergovernmentalism, and neo-functionalism. However, here, it is intended to analyze only two theories: universalism and relativism as they are directly connected to the scope of this analysis.

Universalism can be identified as one of the common characteristics of human rights. Many scholars define it as a feature of human rights. However, it is difficult to define universalism as it is a complex concept that incorporates geographical, cultural, historical, and political dimensions. Therefore, there is no exact definition of universalism, and it can be identified from different perspectives (Arnold, 2012). Universalism suggests that universal standards, values, or conceptions may be applied to all people and civilizations, independent of their situations. These standards, which are founded on the assumption that all persons are basically equal, may include an emphasis on human needs, rights, or biological and psychological processes. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example, asserts specific rights for all persons (Kohfeldt and Grabe, 2014). Therefore, universalists believe that human rights should apply to everyone regardless of their culture or background.

However, cultural relativists have a completely different ideology from universalists. According to their arguments values are defined by local cultures as opposed to global ideology. According to their perspective, human rights were developed by Western countries and their foundation is based on Western morality. Due to that reason, they believe that human rights should not be applied to non-Western countries with completely

different historical backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, and development levels. Also, they believe that every culture and ethnic system is valid, and no system is noble in a way. At the same time, cultural relativism is criticized as a method for nations to choose which rights, they are willing to uphold. (Fuad Al-Daraweesh and Snauwaert, 2015). Therefore, according to cultural relativists, beliefs, values, and rights are products of culture, and due to that disparity, rights should vary from culture to culture and place to place. Thus, there can be identified that there is a collision between the idea of the universality of human rights and the cultural relativism of human rights (Universalism vs. Relativism: Human Rights, 2020).

Therefore, according to the ideas provided by the above-mentioned scholars, it can be perceived that there is a collision between the universality of human rights and cultural relativism. This collision is visible in different cultures in Africa, Asia, and South America and has been described based on different cultural backgrounds. Here, this analysis tries to examine how cultural relativism influences the idea of the universality of human rights based on the human rights system in Sri Lanka. Thus, it is intended to extensively analyze what kind of different cultural norms and regulations in the Sri Lankan background influence the idea of the universalism of human rights.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study has used some key methodologies to examine the above-mentioned objectives of the study. This analysis can be identified as a qualitative study. Here, in this analysis, secondary types of data have been used. It relies on the methods of documentary analysis of documentary sources. Thus, the study was conducted using secondary data collected from different sources such as books, journals, magazines, annual reports,

websites, and some research conducted by various scholars and institutions. Here, this case study is done based on secondary data related to the indigenous laws in Sri Lanka. Thus, here, it has focused on law-related documentary analysis including law reports.

Moreover, the data analysis of the study would base on content analysis. Using this research tool, it is intended to analyze perception related to the prevailing tension between cultural diversification and universal standardization of human rights. In this study, Sri Lanka has been selected to be taken as a case study to have an in-depth analysis of how cultural relativism has influenced the concept of the universalism of human rights. Therefore, data analysis is based on a content analysis along with an extensive case study of the Sri Lankan human rights system.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

Data presentation and analysis of this study mainly attempt to address how cultural relativism has influenced the idea of the universalism of human rights while making special concerns on the identification of prevailing tension related to the cultural diversity and universality of the human rights system in Sri Lanka.

When considering the cultural background of Sri Lanka, there is a multicultural background within the country. Its culture is mixed with modern as well as traditional elements. Similarly, it is a country where the Portuguese, British, Dutch, and Indians have left their cultural features. Moreover, it is a multi-religious country. There are four main religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Also, there are different races such as Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, Burgher, and Malays with their own cultures. Thus, there is a cultural diversification within Sri Lankan

context based on the above-mentioned categories. However, despite all these diversifications, it can be identified that Sri Lanka has ratified and accepted international conventions of human rights, although they are having a clash with some longstanding cultural practices. Here, it is intended to discuss some of those cultural aspects that influence on the universality of human rights in the light of international standards.

### **Gender Inequality of Tesawalamai Law**

Tesawalamai law can be identified as a system of law applicable to Tamil inhabitants of Jaffna. During the period of ancient kings, many Tamils from South India migrated to Sri Lanka, and they brought customs that they followed in their homelands. Thus, the Tesawalamai law contains a mixture of the customs of these different people inhabitants in the Jaffna peninsula and the Northwestern part of Sri Lanka. Similarly, during the period of the Dutch, these customs were codified and given specific recognition.

In general, although Tesawalamai recognizes women's property rights and economic independence, it must be acknowledged that, by section 06 of the Jaffna Matrimonial Rights and Inheritance Ordinance 1911 (as amended by Ordinance No 58 of 1947), some legal restrictions have been imposed on married women in Tesawalamai, preventing them from enjoying the full power of disposing and dealing with her separate property without the written consent of the husband. At the same time, the husband needs no consultation with his wife when he is intended to dispose of his inherited property. These conditions related to the property under Tesawalamai law contradict the idea of gender equality mentioned in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which was ratified by Sri Lanka in 1981. According to Article 5 (a) of the CEDAW, it says that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: To



modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women". Thus, it is clear that laws related to property devolution in Tesawalamai law conflict with international human rights standards.

### **Male/Female Genital circumcision**

Male/Female genital circumcision is a dangerous traditional practice that can lead to health issues. This is a kind of violence against women and girls that is performed in a variety of societies across the world, including Sri Lanka. This is practiced among some Muslim communities in Sri Lanka. This sacred tradition of both sexes can be identified as a violation of child rights according to the Convention on the Right of Children. However, in Sri Lanka, there is no particular law prohibiting circumcision. Nevertheless, under some domestic laws, such as Section-308(A)(1) of the Criminal Code refers that any kind of "injury to limb or organ of the body or any mental derangement" of a person under the age of eighteen "commits the offense of cruelty to children" and constitutes as child abuse. Therefore, it is evident that this religious practice within the local community goes against the idea of the universalism of human rights.

### **Minor Marriages under Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act**

Another example of a clash between culture and human rights is the minimum age for marriage under Muslim law. Under General Law, Tesawalamai, and Kandyan Law, the minimum age for marriage is 18 years for both parties. However, Muslim Law does not recognize a minimum age for marriage but does include a clause requiring the agreement of the Qazi

of the region when a marriage involving a girl under the age of 12 years takes place. This demonstrates that a girl under the age of 12 can be married with the Quasi's consent. This circumstance violates the criminal legislation of the nation.

Child marriages can be identified as the violation of international treaties and conventions such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on Rights of Children, the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discriminations against Women, the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery..etc. Similarly, early marriages, thus, have serious negative consequences for these children's right to education, health, protection, and development.

### **Discrimination and social stigma faced by LGBTI Group**

According to the Sri Lanka LGBTI Stigma and Discrimination Index, LGBTI individuals endure discrimination such as physical, emotional, verbal, and psychological assault. Moreover, various types of prejudice occur in family, religious, and societal situations. LGBTI individuals are also denied fundamental human rights such as appropriate housing, a meaningful job, education, and healthcare. In Sri Lanka, the LGBTI stigma is also deeply embedded. Individuals who identify as LGBTI or believe they live in dread, seek dangerous therapy in the hope of curing what is perceived to be an illness and even consider or attempt suicide.

Thus, these kinds of perceptions towards the LGBTI community due to the cultural and social background within the Sri Lankan context contradict the idea of universality in human rights. all states are obligated under

International Human Rights Law to promote and protect the human rights of all persons without discrimination. Protecting LGBTQ persons from violence and prejudice does not need the adoption of new human rights legislation or standards. Governments are legally bound to protect the human rights of LGBTI individuals as it is widely established in international human rights law. It is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights treaties.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is evident that cultural relativism is having a conflict with the universalism of human rights. Based on the Sri Lankan context, there can be identified some areas as illustrations to suggest this conflict. These above-mentioned perceptions clearly depict what kind of an influential role is played by cultural relativism on the universalism of human rights. Some may counter that a judgment based on cultural relativism would not be enforced because the basis of cultural relativism is laid on the equality of all cultures and sensitivity to various cultural traditions. Thus, cultural influences on human civilization are inalienable, as civil societies were produced by the effects of many sorts of moral and ethical forces, particularly fundamental traditions that belonged to each human being. However, it is critical to note that cultural relativism is a universal theory, much like universalism. Therefore, states are having a responsibility to harmonize these kinds of clashes with the state and ensure equal rights for every citizen. In Sri Lankan context also, the government has a responsibility to identify these sensitive aspects and address them by implementing suitable policies, and legislative enactments.

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## **Nexus between Academic Brain Drain and Higher Education in Sri Lanka**

R. A. C. Sewmini<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Academic Brain drain which refers to the phenomenon of emigration or immigration of skilled university academics is a censorious issue in the contemporary Sri Lankan Context which is hastening vigorously by obviously affecting the entire higher education system. The main research problem of this study is to examine how this academic brain drain affects the quality of higher education in Sri Lanka. The main objective of this study is to identify the reasons behind the surging academic brain drain in Sri Lanka at present and to examine how higher education has been impacted by the pertaining issue. This is qualitative research done by mainly using primary data following two phases, in-depth interview with ten university academics from different universities and in-depth interview with the thirty undergraduates from different government universities in Sri Lanka. Findings indicate that the surging academic brain drain has significant implications on higher education in Sri Lanka, particularly in the areas of the teaching-learning process and research fields. Findings suggest that the key factors of the academic brain drain such as unfavorable economic conditions in Sri Lanka, inconducive working conditions in the universities, and existing bureaucratic procedures in Sri Lanka need to be redefined by the Sri Lankan higher education system itself with the collaboration of policymakers. Sri Lanka, as a developing country whose modernization and development of the country largely depend on the education system is in dire need of restructuring the higher education scenario where the valuable educated elites never think of migration.

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## **Introduction**

Brain drain is defined as the departure of educated or high skilled workers (Docqueir,2014) on either temporary or permanent basis (Cerdeira et al, 2016). Among them, academic brain drain refers to the migration of university academics seeking better life standards. The phenomenon of Sri Lankan university academic migration has become more common in the contemporary Sri Lankan context, and it may affect the quality of higher education in Sri Lanka.

Quality of higher education is defined in terms of excellence, value, and the achievement of education goals (Feigenbaum,1951; Gilmore,1974) The growth of higher education arenas is associated with the quality of the higher education provided by them. The key factor that the quality of higher education mainly depends on is the academic and administrative facilities. Skillful and qualified lecturers and professors are the crux of the academic facilities. Migration of these qualified academics in Sri Lanka is a censorious issue that Sri Lankans endure at present. It is obvious that the quality of university academics directly impacts the quality of the research fields, teaching-learning process, and the development of the university, thereby affecting the quality of the output products in the entire university system.

World Bank (2009) stated that the qualified academic staff is a prerequisite of the nation.

“One of the prime objectives in many countries is to ensure that the large proportion of academic staff as possible have a doctorate since it’s the best form of academic training. One of the issues which concern universities in Sri Lanka is the large number of young staff who go overseas in seeking

better life standards or with the aim of Ph.D. studies which later reside in that respective foreign country.” (World Bank, 2009)

Even though Sri Lanka has been identified as one of the top five emerging countries of tertiary educated persons in South Asia (World Bank, 2009), the country is facing a vigorous phenomenon of brain drain which the bunch of intellectuals migrating leading to a dull future.

Mr. Karu Jayasooriya (former Speaker of the parliament, 2015-2020) emphasized that the brain drain signals a rapid decline of the country while speaking to ‘The Morning’ newspaper on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2022.

*“Hundreds of intellectuals are going abroad, facing severe disillusion and the disappointments, they are now leaving the country hoping at least provide their children with the best education possible. We are losing our future national resources. All these are individuals created through Sri Lanka’s free education system. These are the signs of the country’s rapid decline. A country cannot develop or prosper in this manner. Every citizen must have a deep understanding on this issue.”* (Jayasooriya, K., 2022)

Net migration rate of Sri Lanka was 6.85 per thousand populations in 2020 which was 6.75 per thousand populations in 2019. Among the drastic academic migration phenomenon, the medical sector has been threatened terribly, signaling the danger to both losing medical intellectuals to higher education as well as patient care. Over 50% of specialists have been migrated in 2021. Moreover, it has been reported that the amount of academic migration is increasing rapidly with a significant increase in the percentage. Moreover, the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) has revealed that the university lecturers who had gone abroad on study leaves were found to be in arrears on more than LKR 6 million due to the breach of the contracts and bonds with special referencing to the University of Moratuwa



that more than 35 university lecturers went abroad in 2021. Furthermore, COPE 07<sup>th</sup> parliament report emphasizes the issue of the University of Kelaniya, on the lack of university academics due to migration.

Depending on the increasing atrocious scenario of academic brain drain in Sri Lanka, the concern has been raised through the media massively. The issue has come to the common society which still the suitable solution couldn't find.

The main objective of this study is to identify the reasons and factors which have encouraged academics to migrate while examining the nexus behind academic brain drain and higher education referring to the influence that brain drain has on the quality of higher education. This study focuses on addressing the unprecedented academic brain in Sri Lanka, a critical issue with a lack of literature on how the academic brain influences higher education which will be relevant for the policymakers implementing the relevant policies, initiatives needed to be taken concerning the academic brain while focusing on the betterment of the entire higher education system preventing the academic brain without letting the emergence of “leaderless” or “headless” profession in Sri Lanka.

### **Literature Review**

The term, Brain Drain first came into existence in the 1950s referring to the immigration of specialized scientists from the United States of America from United Kingdom, Canada and the former Soviet Union. At present, the term has become familiar and well known emphasizing the transfer of high skilled human capital from developing to developed nations. (Rapport,2002)

Brain Drain has increased significantly since the 1970s with the emergence

and the introduction of “quality selective” immigration policies in many of the OECD countries (USA Immigration Act of 1990 and the Point System in Australia and Canada in 1980) But later the general trend of academic brain drain got momentum with the economic globalization.

Paradigms and the concepts of Brain drain, Brain exchange, and Brain Waste (Salt,1983;Bemstein and Shuval,1998) have become the core in many research studies mainly focusing either analyzing the amount of academic migrants or identifying the key factors for academic brain drain to occur instead of identifying how the quality of education impacted from the academic brain andthe suggesting the implications and the solutions for the existing issue.

Chandra Gunewardena and Rasika Nawarathne (2017) analyzed the academic migration distribution of all government universities in Sri Lanka from 1990-2012. Their contribution to the field of brain drain in Sri Lanka is immensely substantial. Even though they renew the Sri Lankan literature paradigms with regard to the brain drain issue, but the study was not deeply focused on how this academic brain drain impacted on the quality of higher education.

Many conclusions drawn from the studies related to the academic brain drain is that the optimal migration rate of the intellectuals of the respective developing country is more likely to be positive. This imply that the developed countries need not view themselves as the free-riding or exploitation developing nations. But viewing the issue from the top layer will not specifically identify how this brain drain affect in the destiny of the country and to what extent it has affected the entire higher education system in that respective country. If the issue needs to be addressed, then it must deeply focus on the root cause for the issue which vary according to countries

by examining the countries which have immensely impacted the academic brain drain.

Papademetriou and Yale-Loehr (1996) introduced the concept of “Priority Workers” focusing on the part played by the host country which obtained the advantages from the knowledge of the skilled labor more biasing towards the generalizing and justifying the brain drain not emphasizing the impact which the sending country has to face and how the quality of education and the development of that respective country is being shaped.

According to Lovell (2001), brain drain is created when the outflows are significant and he emphasizes that the transfer of knowledge of emigrants will increase the productivity and the economic growth of the sending states. By viewing the whole scenario from one angle, it might be true, but when viewing it as a whole, it won't be entirely true since the return of every migrant can't be predictable in the current economic, political, and social scenario in Sri Lanka instead it has a high possibility, where expatriates will remain abroad depending on the economic, social and political standard of the host country.

On the other hand, it's obvious that there must be remain large nucleus of expertise in the country that faces the brain drain, if not the deterioration of the entire country is certain where it can't always predict the brain drain will be significant for that respective country. Thus, it will also force students to go abroad in seeking better education standards will later persuade them to remain there forever. Instead of benefiting the economy of the country, brain drain will create a huge mess in the whole economic, social, and political system of the country if not the issue is uprooted.

Mountford (1997) advocated that positivity in the education sector depends on the positive probability of migration. But when deeply looking into it,

that theory itself embedded the encouragement to brain drain where possibility of temporary migration would remain permanent migration depending on the country they hope to reside. Such an incentive would definitely may result in greater acquisition of high skilled labor would end up staying in the host country forever. Following that, Cha and Stark (1999) emphasized that there would be a skill spectrum due to the return of the migrants in the country of origin. But the possibility of returning the migrant is uncertain especially in a country like Sri Lanka where the economy is melting down.

Beine (2001) emphasized that the education is one of the major factors of brain drain which would ultimately be beneficial for the country of origin with the immense inflow of education. He tested the theory utilizing migrants' sample of 37 developing countries and concluded that it would be beneficial, for the country fostering the investments. Moreover, he found that it would be negatively impacted on the country which the economy is entrapped by the underdevelopment mess which the probability of return of migration is not high.

Haque (2007) mentioned the "Knowledge Pyramid" framing every profession in the country. Base of the pyramid consists of the general practitioners and when top layer of the pyramid become vacant, it must need to be filled with the below layers consisting of the professionals which have deep knowledge on what their profession. If the large number of academics and research in the top layer of the pyramid migrated at once unprecedentedly, the ability to maintain the pace with the frontiers of the profession will be impeded and eroded. This would immensely influence on the entire development of the country which leading the way to become "leaderless" or "headless" nation.

George O. Odhiambo (2013) emphasized that the politics and the decline of intellectualism fuel the brain drain to surge more and more. Olga Kyvliuk and Suyrydenko(2017) emphasized that the brain drain is a trend of concurrent globalized world with special reference to the outflow of social capital.

Literatures which have been associated with the brain drain have significantly contrasting viewpoints with mainly biasing ideas. Moreover, many literature have been extensively discussed their point of view on the driving factors and the analyzing the academic distribution of the respective states. Angle that each writer view on the brain drain definitely differ according to the country and the era which they are experiencing the brain drain. Even though the literature related to brain drain fuel the literature paradigms, but none of the literature paradigm has identified the nexus between the brain drain and the higher education and how it influences the higher education. Crux of the entire issue is depending up on the relativity to higher education where the destiny of the whole country decided up on, where the nucleus of the country centered on the intellectuals of a certain country. No country will exist prosperously without intellectuals.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study is qualitative research done using primary data to elucidate a complex social phenomenon while retaining the holistic characteristics of real-life events. This study consisted of two phases: An in-depth interview with 10 university academics from government universities in Sri Lanka and an in-depth interview with 30 undergraduates from different government universities in Sri Lanka.

In-depth interview with university academics who are currently engaged in

academic works in Sri Lanka was conducted to identify the push and pull factors for the academic brain drain and to identify to what extent the university academic works have impacted the departure of the high skilled academics mainly to identify the influence on higher education. In the first phase, it was allowed interviewees to decide the place, time, and language of the interview either its Sinhala or English. After obtaining the consent, every depth interview lasted up to two hours. The interviewees were eight university lecturers and two university administrators in different fields from different universities. A PhD degree and together with research and more than seven years of teaching experience were the main criteria for the selection of teaching educators while two university administrators were included as to grasp the entire scenario of the problem as to perfectly identify how the higher education system was affected by the unprecedented brain drain. The interviewees were ten university academics from different government universities in Sri Lanka: University of Kelaniya (03), University of Moratuwa (02), University of Peradeniya (01), University of Sri Jayawardenapura (02), Sabaragamuwa University (02).

In the second phase, an in-depth interview with thirty undergraduates from different government universities in Sri Lanka was carried out to identify how higher education has been impacted from this academic brain drain. Since the undergraduates are the ones who are severely suffering due to the issue, the extent to which the Sri Lankan higher education system has been affected from the brain drain can be identified perfectly from the undergraduates. It allowed interviewees to decide the place, time, and the language of the interview either Sinhala or English. After obtaining the consent, every in-depth interview lasted up to two-three hours.

The interviewees were thirty undergraduates from different government

universities in Sri Lanka and from different fields of studies to identify how their academic life have been impacted by the academic brain drain. University of Kelaniya (03), University of Sri Jayawardenapura (03), University of Moratuwa (03), University of Colombo (03), University of Sabaragamuwa (03) and University of Jaffna (03) University of Peradeniya

(03) Uva Wellassa University (03) South Eastern University (03) Wayamba University (03).

This study mainly employs content analysis and thematic analysis. The responses derived through the interviews provide useful insights on the issue.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **Analysis from in-depth interviews with university academics in Sri Lankan universities**

To identify the extent to which the higher education of Sri Lanka is currently affected due to the loss of migrant academics, university academics must be interviewed since they are the ones who are very familiar with the situation which occur in the respective department after the migration of specific academics. Most of the academics that faced the interview answered that the gap created by the migration of high-skilled academics is irreplaceable since each one has a unique set of skills which well fitted for the specific field. One academic responded that even though the vacant position was filled by another lecturer, they would always not be the best fit for the gap created by the leaving of the former one. Out of the 10 academics interviewed, 07 responded that the workload became high due to the vacant position and

also the university also not in a position to hire a new academic since the government is not recruiting new academics.

According to the thematic analysis, their replies mainly narrowed towards four main criteria. They further elaborated on justifications for the criteria that they mentioned.

Responses of the academics were narrowed towards the four main criteria.

- 1) Conditions of the Sri Lanka are not favourable.
- 2) Conditions of the respective University are not favourable.
- 3) Conditions of overseas are attractive and favourable.
- 4) Bureaucratic Procedures in Sri Lanka are not favourable.

#### **1) The conditions of Sri Lanka are not favorable.**

As per the interview with academics, the fact that the existing conditions in Sri Lanka are not favourable to spend satisfactory life was the most recurrent. They elaborated on the cost of living in Sri Lanka, particularly the expenses such as food, housing, education, healthcare, and transportation consume a significant portion of their income making it more difficult to spend a decent standard of living. The most notable justifications that they mentioned for which the conditions of Sri Lanka are not favourable were,

1. Financial instability and Political instability in Sri Lanka
2. Limited career prospects in Sri Lanka
3. Lack of resources and funding

As per the analysis, financial instability and political instability are the main justification for the condition of Sri Lanka to become unfavorable. High cost of living, rising prices without parallel increases in wages, and limited financial security which is insufficient for planning the future and personal development have become the main push factor for the academics to migrate. Moreover, political instability arises with financial instability create



severe situations in Sri Lanka. This would further lead to social unrest and weakened social cohesion, further creating an unpleasant environment. This all leads to disruption of academic activities, academic pressure, restricted academic freedom, restricted academic funding when the government prioritizing security, and reduced international collaborations such as joint projects, and research. Limited career prospects in Sri Lanka are another justification for conditions of Sri Lanka to become unfavorable. Stagnation and lack of advancement of the career, insufficient funding and research infrastructure which impede the academic professional development, and lack of reputation and recognition in Sri Lanka fuel academics to migrate seeking better career prospects in other countries.

Apart from that, the lack of resources and funding in Sri Lanka is also another justification for the conditions of Sri Lanka to become not conducive as it hinders the academic pathway of their scholarly development. At the same time, restricted academic collaboration both domestically and internationally in Sri Lanka at present including the inadequate funding for workshops, conferences, foreign conferences, and knowledge exchange programs will eventually lead academics to find themselves better opportunities rather than substantial positions that they bear in the Sri Lankan universities. This all will lead them to imagine a perception of their career stagnation further seeking possible opportunities worldwide.

## **2) Conditions of the respective University are not favourable**

Interview analysis depicts that unfavorable conditions of the respective university were another recurrent factor. As per the thematic analysis, they elaborated specifically on the,

1. Excessive Workload
2. Lack of compensation
3. Lack of work-life balance
4. Toxic working environment
5. Lack of autonomy in decision-making
6. Inadequate facilities and infrastructure
7. Lack of growth and advancement

Consistently heavy workload due to the lack of academics depending on the government's low allocation on the education budgets including not gazetting vacancies frequently is one of the most notable justifications for the condition of the university is not favorable. Lack of compensation without considering their excessive workloads, toxic workplace culture full of favoritism and politics, lack of respect and civility which is extremely detrimental to well- the well-being of every academic, lack of autonomy in decision-making and the authority hindering individual freedom are the most significant justifications for conditions of the university are not favorable to working with. This will eventually make academics feel frustrated, disempowered, and dissatisfied hampering their career growth and advancement.

### **3) Conditions of the overseas are attractive and favorable**

As per the interview analysis, attractive and favourable conditions in the foreign countries is another factor for skillful academics to migrate. The most prominent justifications for the conditions of overseas to become attractive and favorable were mentioned by the interviewees were,

1. Higher salaries and better compensation
2. Research and networking opportunities
3. Facilities and resources
4. Standard of life
5. Career progression and the recognition

Higher salaries and better compensation packages are the main reasons among that lead to higher living standards and financial stability. Moreover, it is a reflection that their value for academic expertise and qualifications are recognized.

Research and networking opportunities including exposure to diverse academic backgrounds and environments are a significant element that always academics are finding on behalf of their progression. International visibility and the reputation of academics can boost the visibility and recognition in a global arena.

Apart from that, facilities and resources are notable prospects that attract academics overseas. Most of the foreign countries are equipped with state-of-the-art research infrastructure which provides specialized research facilities.

Adequate research funding including grants and fellowships, well-stocked databases of research, laboratories equipped with new technologies, interdisciplinary collaboration with foreign universities, fostering partnerships with businesses, industries, and other international organizations and well-equipped libraries with advanced technological equipment since it is more convenient than using orthodox methodologies in teaching and research works. Furthermore, countries that prioritize professional development of academics through workshops, conferences, and international discussions are a great choice.

The standard of life is an influential factor that Sri Lanka is lacking with the economic recession period at present. Countries with the highest standard of living, and recognition are always warmly welcoming.

Career progression and recognition are crucial factors that most academics

are seeking. Promotion and advancement opportunities, recognition on a global scale, mentorship, and guidance programs are some of the reasons for academics to migrate merely due to career progression and advancement by navigating the academic landscape and fostering personal growth.

#### **4) Bureaucratic Procedures are not favorable in Sri Lanka**

As per the analysis, bureaucratic procedures are one of the main factors which led academics to migrate. Among them, the most prominent justifications drawn from the interview were,

1. Administrative burden
2. Promotion and tenure process
3. Lack of academic freedom

The administrative burden is the most elaborated reason for the many lecturers. Time-consuming bureaucratic processes in Sri Lanka, and disproportionate division of administrative responsibilities are the main administrative burdens in Sri Lankan university processes which academics most of the time feel unvalued and overwhelmed.

Promotion and tenure process disparities are another bureaucratic reason for academics to migrate as per the interview analysis. Opaque, lengthy, and the lack of transparency in the promotion and tenure process almost always lead academics to be discouraged and frustrated fueling their reason to migrate.

Lack of academic freedom which arises from bureaucratic constraints restricts the autonomy of individual decision making and it further leads them to seek convenient working environments that helpful and improve their career development while facilitating their career freedom.

## **Analysis of the in-depth interviews with undergraduates from different universities**

To identify how the higher education system, affects the existing issue, it should be identified up to which extent undergraduates have affected from the unprecedented academic brain drain.

Among the thirty students who interviewed, many students mentioned that they need to adjust for the sudden changes of the academic process creating a pressure in their university tenure. Moreover, they emphasized that they need to adjust with the teaching techniques of lecturers quickly with the sudden change while some students determined that they were losing the essence of the university staff that specialized in their respective academic field which immensely effect on their academic disciplines.

Medical students mainly mentioned that they were losing the many of specialized surgeons which affected on their academic life immensely due to the current brain drain. Medical students have emphasized that many surgeons and specialists have migrated in 2021-2022. They were losing well-experienced and the talented ones which consider as assets for Sri Lanka. Even though new lecturers assign for the same course code, but migrated academics were irreplaceable.

Following responses which given by some undergraduate's witness that exactly.

1. "As a senior undergraduate, I was more focusing towards the research works. But the sudden migration of the senior professor specializes in the research area that I'm interested in, left me no clues with my research works a lot. Even though there are lecturers with regard to the same field, there is no person as talented and

well-experienced as him”

2. “Sudden change of the academic staff affected us a lot. Sudden change in the timetable, sudden change of the teaching techniques impacted us a lot where we have to adjust for every change in no time which later gives us immense pressure.”
3. “With the migration of the former professor, there was no single person to assign for our lectures. The same subject who was done by single lecturer earlier, now conducting two lecturers dividing the same time period assigns for the lectures. It’s really difficult for us and sometimes the lecture has to cancel with the unavailability of the lecturer.”

From the in-depth interviews conducted for the undergraduates from different universities it has concluded that all their responses narrow towards the specific criteria.

- 1) Teaching –learning process
- 2) Research Works

### **1. Teaching-learning process**

As per the analysis, teaching-learning process was impacted mainly by influencing the theoretical and practical lectures, communication methods, assignment structures, paper structure with the change of lecturing techniques and not complying with the way of teaching in an understandable manner. Departure of the academics affects the scope and the content of the student curriculum and leaving students an inconsistent learning changes affecting the continuity of the curriculum. Moreover, it impacts on the student-lecturer relationship which built on familiarity and the trust over years. Depending on that, it revealed that the departure of some specific

academics has already impacted on negatively affecting the students' motivation and the engagement.

## **2. Research Works**

Research Works negatively impacted by the absence of the experienced and the specialized lectures to that relevant field. Moreover, the thing that undergraduates' emphasis with regard to the research is that the academic staff is merely supporting on the research for their pursuit of academic promotions and not mainly targeting the betterment of the literature paradigms or improvement of the students. Apart from that, reduced research capacity and the quality, disruption of ongoing research education, impede research output are the main reasons for the way how brain drain affects the research works for undergraduates as well as for entire country.

As per the undergraduates, their curriculum was entirely affected from the surging brain drain at present. Teaching-learning methods and the research works are significantly disturbed from the brain drain leaving no clue for their future.

## **Conclusion**

Brain Drain is a phenomenon that has been discussed vividly in international context, but in the Sri Lankan context brain drain haven't discussed earlier extensively since the surging of the brain drain is much more emerging in Sri Lankan context at present than in the past. Although some international researchers mentioned that the brain drain as a positive phenomenon which indirectly or directly beneficial for the respective states. But the Sri Lankan context is entirely different from those literature paradigms where we are currently experiencing a vigorous economic recession period where it left with no hope for future. In this situation, it's an illusion to think that this brain

drain will be beneficial for Sri Lankans even in the future.

The analysis of the information provided will give the useful insight on the pertaining problem. All phases of the analysis will mainly provide the answers to the reasons of academic brain drain in Sri Lanka and how the higher education is impacted on the academic brain in Sri Lanka.

According to the analysis there are main reasons which drive academics to leave from the country, Conditions of the Sri Lanka are not favorable, Condition of the respective University are not favorable, Conditions of the overseas are attractive and favorable and the Bureaucratic Procedures are not favorable in Sri Lanka. Depending on these major reasons academics are migrating overseas thinking of their betterment of the family life.

The surging academic brain drain has impacted vigorously on the higher education especially on the teaching-learning process. According to the witness of the undergraduates, academic brain drains left undergraduates with no choice, instead pressurizing them a lot. The issue has mainly affected in the fields of researches were signaling a dull future of the academic paradigms.

Unprecedented brain drain in Sri Lanka, is vigorously reaching to its pinnacle at present. Policymakers of higher education as well as respective universities must grasp the issue from its roots. As its reveal from the findings, at first it must improve the condition in Sri Lanka including arranging a favorable working environment where every university academic is captivated to work with no exploitation, frustration or difficulty. Policy makers must implement policies as to encourage the university to generate income that could be used to fund expenses for the academic incentives such as promoting outreach activities. Employing of compensation model and a restitution mechanism would much



advantageable in handling the existing financial issues in the university. Moreover, it must take repeatedly assurance from the undergraduates about the current teaching-learning process by evaluation forms on the teaching-learning techniques of the lecturers. This would smoothen the teaching-learning process while enhancing the quality of the education in the country.

Brain Drain in Sri Lanka at present is a burning issue which haven't yet even get much attention of the respective authorities. Development of the whole country depends on the intellectuals in the respective country and how they are contributes in the nations' mechanism. Surging brain drain at present will not be recovered even for further decades. It's the duty of every Sri Lankan to realize that the development of the whole nation is substantially depend on the field of higher education including the both academics and the undergraduates. Ability to retain a valuable education structure immensely influence the destiny of the country where the entire nation is built up on.

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## Recent Trends in Tourism and Cultural Exchanges of the Indian Ocean Rim Association

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### Abstract

This study examines the current tourism and cultural exchange patterns within the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), a regional group that works to foster collaboration and growth among Indian Ocean nations. Additionally, it looks at the interactions and cooperative efforts of the IORA member countries as well as the difficulties they confront. The context of the study emphasizes the urgent need for economic and social development in developing countries in the IORA area due to the possibilities and difficulties presented by globalization. The methodology employed in this research is a qualitative case study. Data is collected through website analysis, review of research articles, and journal articles related to tourism and cultural exchanges in the IORA region. The research question that underlies this study is, How has IORA contributed to the growth of regional tourism and What are the most current trends in travel and cultural interactions within the IORA region? The objectives of this study are to determine the potential of the Indian Ocean's natural resources, sea routes, and air routes for the development of tourism, look at the initiatives made by the IORA and its member countries to promote tourism and cultural exchanges and evaluate how successful these initiatives have been. This study's significance rests in its addition to our understanding of current tourism and cultural exchange patterns in the IORA area. The results emphasize the value of cooperative efforts on the part of IORA and its member countries in exploiting regional resources for tourist development. Insights from this research are intended to support policymaking, promote economic development, and aid in the eradication of poverty and the building of social infrastructure in the IORA region. According to the study's conclusions, the natural resources, sea routes, and air routes in the Indian Ocean offer tremendous potential for the growth of tourism in IORA member countries. With collaboration between member countries playing a key role, IORA has taken several steps to improve tourism and cultural interactions within the area.

**Keywords:** *Blue Economy, Diplomacy, Ocean Strategies, Sea Routes*

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## **Introduction**

One of the most alluring marine locations on Earth is the Indian Ocean region. The Indian Ocean region is enhanced by the gorgeous scenery, islands, and beaches. The waters are turquoise. 2.5 billion people are living in the area of the Indian Ocean, which is bordered by Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Australia. It is made up of people of many ancestries, cultures, races, religions, and tongues. Also, there are differences in food, architecture, cultural events, clothes, and music, and these variations are constantly influenced by various sectors of the tourism business.

The world of today is becoming more and more globalized every day. This is a continuous process, and as a result, we live in a global village. The tourist industry is crucial for all nations, including established nations worldwide, developing nations, and other developed nations. because tourism contributesto the growth of the economies of all nations. As a result, everyone's attention has been on increasing tourism in the area in line with the United Nations sustainable development goals. So, it is possible to achieve excellent economic and environmental development if there is a regional focus on these tourism and cultural exchanges and they are managed efficiently. Resources in the Indian Ocean region have the potential to generate considerable development opportunities and sustainable tourist strategies, especially when attention is paid to them.

Accordingly, this study will examine how the region's nations conduct their tourism and cultural exchanges using the resources of the Indian Ocean region, as well as the obstacles they face, the successes they have had, and the programs they plan to implement in the future to promote these activities.

## **Literature Review**

“Tourism and Cultural Exchanges in the Indian Ocean Region” was written by “Jo Ansie Van Wyk” in 2018. This study has demonstrated how crucial tourism and cultural interchange are to the region as a whole, how they will impact economic development, and how much attention IORA’s 2017–2021 plan has been devoted to these issues. The development of interstate tourism sectors has also been stressed.

IORA’s website in 2017 explains This has demonstrated the significance of the Indian Ocean and the value of its continued interaction with the regional social countries and other conversation partner nations. There, it was demonstrated how the member nations of IORA go about things and how to further boost travel and cultural interactions.

The "Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development" explained "the impact of cultural tourism" in 2009. The O.E.C.D. has researched ways to more efficiently profit from the promotion of tourism in nations with which it has relations. Also, the national and regional uses of tourism and cultural exchanges have been examined. This has also allowed for the study of tourism promotion among one another, the procedures that need to be developed for it, and the governing laws.

## **Methodology of the Study**

This study focuses on “Recent trends in tourism and cultural exchanges of the Indian Ocean Rim Association”. This is a qualitative study and uses secondary data and data collected through research articles, journal articles, websites, books, and academic publications. Used only secondary data for analyzed content and purposes of the study will be taken by secondary data.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **Tourism and Cultural Exchanges from IORA's Perspective**

Promoting economic goals as much as possible through correctly improving the economy is one of every nation's key priority. A country's economy can always benefit from increased tourism. By bringing states together and fostering bilateral and regional collaboration between them, tourism and cultural exchanges are two examples of soft power strategies used in diplomacy.

IORA thus plays a very particular role in preserving collaboration amongst the governments in the Indian Ocean region, taking into account the significance of the Indian Ocean. And initiatives are being taken to successfully maintain them and keep doing so. To increase the number of partners, policies are developed here to sustain interstate cooperation, current policies are improved, and member states communicate to execute proposed policies. Additionally, through enlisting the aid of private institutions as well as international organizations, each member nation's tourist and cultural exchanges will be fostered. Also, the Heads of State and Government adopted the Jakarta

Agreement in March 2017 as one of the steps member nations have taken to accomplish these objectives. Although there are numerous goals in this case, the main one is to encourage and promote cross-border travel and cross-cultural interchange.

The Indian Ocean region needs to develop the necessary infrastructure to support regional economic growth, enhance internal activities among the populace, encourage the development of social and environmental aspects of tourism sustainably, promote the state's existing cultural heritage, and



take advantage of its economic conditions for tourism. Other goals include raising the necessary funds and correctly managing regional ties to strengthen relations.

### **IORA Action Plan (2017-2021) and IORA's Challenges**

To accomplish IORA's fundamental goals, the action plan from 2017 to 2021 is crucial. Here, the IORA member nations helped to achieve their development objectives. This plan has several specific objectives, each of which accomplishment has been tailored to a particular action plan. The goals for this action plan that IORA prepared are broken down into short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. In the short term, core group formation for tourism and core group development for fostering cultural exchanges should be undertaken. The neutral art plan calls for researching the history of cruise tourism as well as developing a website and IORA Tourism Resource Center in the Sultanate of Oman. In line with the long-term artistic plan, they should create their businesses, integrate environmental and cultural tourism, and reduce poverty in communist nations.

In IORA, there are several obstacles and goals to consider while promoting tourism and cross-cultural interactions. The main issues are the relative paucity of cultural contacts, the major lack of cooperation, and the dearth of practical training amongst member nations. Also, as there are developing nations, the main obstacles to boosting tourism are a lack of foreign currency, a lack of local business infrastructure, and poverty.

Through supporting local industries like handicrafts, proper communication techniques, agricultural development, and the wise use of natural resources, it is possible to build a friendly society and a new capitalist philosophy.

Using unconventional strategies like sports tourism and movie tourism, it is possible to promote this tourism very quickly. And realistically, these obstacles can be overcome by developing tourist plans in IORA, making joint investments in the growth of tourism exchanges between member nations, and fostering regional integration devoid of political considerations. Also, the government and partnerships between the public and private sectors are both highly beneficial in this.

### **Recent trends in tourism and cultural exchanges in IORA**

Recent trends in tourism and cultural exchanges are unique because they are one of the primary categories that IORA is focusing on. This is because of all the adjustments that have been made there and the recent successes in putting them into practice. The main objective of IORA has always been to cooperate with its member nations to achieve its objectives. The advancement of women in all facets of tourism is among the significant accomplishments and trends that have occurred here. The implementation of goals and finding new chances for the welfare of women were among the topics covered there. Here, collaboration with WGWE has been the main method used to attain these goals.

Also, Plans to reach ambitious goals are implemented with worldwide backing, which is another distinctive aspect. These plans are not restricted to one's community or location. The online course on women's economic empowerment being offered in the Indian Ocean region from May 11, 2021, is a chance to use the current collaboration with UN Women more effectively. Australia has contributed to the success of this event, which was co-hosted with the UN's Women's Tourism Division. IORA has also put into place a promotion initiative to strengthen women's economies, which will last from 2018 to 2021, with the assistance of the UN.

Furthermore, the Registry Office of IORA and the Republic of Italy have organized a Webinar on Sustainable Tourism in IORA on October 21, 2020, as part of the ninth edition of the "Diplomacy Festival," which will be held in Rome from October 20 to 30, 2020. Also, the first IORA tourism meeting took place on August 31, 2020, in the United Arab Emirates. Participants in this initial meeting included both partner nations and IORA member nations. This meeting covered the geographical danger that COVID posed to the tourism sector as well as issues that came up during the execution of work plans.

IORA also took the special action of creating the "Group on Tourism" as a formal institutional structure and adopting its work plan at the second IORA Tourism Ministers' Conference, which was held in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. This event took place in 2018, and it has sparked a positive new vigor to promote and strengthen regional tourism interchange and collaboration. The Secretariat of IORA will also start a newsletter for tourism news and inform the public about IORA's decisions and initiatives in the field.

### **Tourism and Cultural Exchanges: The IORA Declaration**

The first IORA Minister of Tourism meeting took place on November 21, 2014, in "Bend Vallon," Seychelles, with participation from ministers of tourism from member states and representatives of IORA. Australia, the Comoros, India, Madagascar, Madagascar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Sultanate of Oman, the Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Thailand took part in this. The fundamental actions that can be taken to develop the tourism industry, together with their goals, were covered in this discussion.

Given the significance of the Indian Ocean, the focus was also given to reaffirming the function of IORA as a regional forum that interacts with nations bordering the Indian Ocean from a variety of backgrounds. There, the need to boost the Indian Ocean region's tourism industry and to support IORA partner nations was discussed along with the country's economic, cultural, and historical changes. Also, through fostering a shared vision for tourism and advancing sustainable tourism promotion in the Indian Ocean region, IORA's dedication and contribution to regional social development were confirmed. Also, there were thoughts on developing the "concept of Blue Economy" in IORA by utilizing the resources of the Indian Ocean with support from the local community. To accomplish specific tourism goals in IORA, it is crucial to join the local, national, and worldwide organizations that provide help.

Here, several guidelines were formed that serve as a guide for the social countries of IORA and help them advance their tourism development goals in a way that is more profitable, sustainable, and growth-oriented. It was mentioned that numerous facets of the Indian Ocean region may be developed responsibly through tourism by those ideals. There are many different types of travel, including ecotourism, corporate travel, coastal travel, cruise travel, medical travel, and spiritual travel.

Also, IORA's contribution is required as a crucial tool for the economic and social development of tourism to conduct new research on it, travel to the area to become aware of new tourism trends, and provide regional new trends, new opportunities, and challenges to the knowledge of tourism in social countries. It is also stressed that their research ought to be supported. Also, strategies

should be established to give women and young people new work

possibilities and training in the tourism and hospitality industries. It is anticipated that doing this will give them power and end unemployment. One further factor that stands out in this discussion is the importance placed on other member nations' infrastructure and support for the benefit of emerging nations.

Moreover, the blue economy idea that originated in the Indian Ocean was also brought up during the discussions, and it was noted that this may enhance tourism activities and introduce new services to the area. It has been noted that to grow the tourism industry, particularly for a small island state, member countries must improve their air and maritime connections. As a result, it has been stressed and drawn attention to the need for the IORA member nations to give tourism a high priority and develop a new system for tourism to boost regional competitiveness and foster regional collaboration.

## **Tourism and Economic Growth**

In the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) member nations, tourism has been a major factor in their economies' growth. A summary of how tourism and economic development are related in various IORA member nations is given below. In IORA member countries, the tourist industry has been a key employer. For instance, almost 20% of job possibilities in the Maldives are related to tourism (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). From 2015 to 2019, Seychelles had a 25.6% rise in employment associated with tourism, demonstrating the industry's significant contribution to job creation (Source: National Bureau of Statistics, Seychelles). Also, For IORA member countries, tourism is essential for generating foreign cash. Approximately 60% of the foreign exchange profits in Mauritius were produced by the tourist industry in 2020 (Source: Bank of Mauritius).

In addition, we can see IORA member countries have made considerable expenditures in the construction of tourism infrastructure. For instance, Indonesia plans to invest over USD 70 billion in infrastructure projects connected to the tourism industry through 2024 in an effort to increase tourism and stimulate the nation's economy (Source: Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Indonesia). An important tactic to promote tourism and spur economic growth has been the creation of special economic zones and tourism clusters, such as the Duqm Special Economic Zone in Oman (Source: Special Economic Zone Authority, Duqm). The contribution of Sri Lanka's tourist industry to total foreign exchange profits in 2019 was around 44%, underscoring the industry's importance to the national economy (Source: Central Bank of Sri Lanka).

## **Conclusion**

The social states of IORA will receive attention because, through it, the nations of the Indian Ocean region have been able to exchange their shared historical experiences, contemporary trends, and general issues. This region has adopted regional integration, interregional tourism areas, interregional cooperation, regional investment possibilities, and development promotion initiatives. Here, consideration has been given to the colonies that belonged to socialist countries and their post-independence experiences, as well as the culture and tourism of socialist countries in IORA. Also, the Nelson Mandela Be the Legacy programs were put into place at the meeting of the 18th South African ministers to enhance Nelson Mandela's South African history. The program's initiatives, however, have been put off until only recently to support global travel and foreign health projects.

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## **Sino-Indian Power Struggle in the Indian Ocean and Its Impacts on Sri Lanka**

R. S. P. Rupasinghe<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

The Indian Ocean region is the third largest and busiest ocean region in the world. Since the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, the rise of China has become a major concern for major powers, because of rapid economic development. Therefore, India plays a crucial role in the Indian Ocean region to maintain its hegemonic status while controlling the Chinese influence. Sri Lanka, located in the middle of the Indian Ocean, will be involved in this power struggle. Therefore, the main objective is to explore the positive and negative impacts of the Sino-India power struggle on Sri Lanka's political and economic factors with a particular focus on the period since 2013. This research is based on a qualitative research approach that rely on secondary data from reports, books, online journals, online videos and journal articles. This power struggle is examined, along with the role of regional organizations such as IORA, BIMSTEC, IONS, Quad, BRI and Sagarmala in contributing to this struggle. While the study acknowledges that other countries in the region are also affected by this power struggle, its analysis focuses primarily on Sri Lanka. Limitations of the research are acknowledged, particularly in terms of time, methodology and content selection. Overall, this study provides insight into the complex dynamics and consequences of the power struggle between China and India in the Indian Ocean region, with a particular focus on Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** *Power Struggle, Indian Ocean, Impacts, Geographical Significant, BRI*

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## **Introduction**

The Indian Ocean region holds immense strategic importance as a major trade route connecting continents and hosting key ports. Sri Lanka, located at the crossroads of the Indian Ocean, plays a critical role in the geopolitical dynamics of the region. The Sino-India power struggle in the Indian Ocean has elevated Sri Lanka's significance, as both China and India vie for influence and control. Sri Lanka's strategic positioning, hosting vital sea routes and ports, makes it a focal point of this competition.

Sri Lanka's unique geopolitical position in the Indian Ocean places it at the heart of the Sino-India power struggle. Its strategic location, sea routes, and port potential make it a significant player in the region. Sri Lanka aims to navigate this power struggle by utilizing diplomatic strategies and maximizing economic benefits while minimizing the negative impacts.

Sri Lanka's geographical location and extensive sea routes passing by its shores make it an economic asset. The country's ports, such as Colombo and Trincomalee, have the potential to become crucial maritime hubs. Sri Lanka's role as a power projection for major global players adds to its geopolitical significance. The research focuses on analysing the impacts of the Sino-India power struggle on Sri Lanka, considering its own perspective and utilizing diplomacy theory and geopolitics.

## Literature Review

Geopolitics is the study of the relationship between geography, politics, and international power. Mackinder (1904) declared that "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island commands the world." The Rimland Theory was developed in the 1940s and Spykman argued that "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." The organic theory was developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and Ratzel states that "The state is a natural organism which is subject to the same laws as all organic life."

According to Padmakumara and Senanayake (2019), some of the important indications have been highlighted. According to them, India- Sri Lanka relationship creates numerous mutual benefits. Singh (2018) explains the same idea about important information on the bilateral relations between these two. Although India - Sri Lanka relations were tied in the post-independent period, it deteriorated with the escalating of civil war in Sri Lanka. In 1987, the Indo- Sri Lanka Peace agreement was concluded with President Jayawardena and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and it helped to establish a provincial council system based on the devolution of power for nine provinces in Sri Lanka. And, "Indian Peacekeeping troops" (IPKF) came to Sri Lanka to disarm the Tamil militant groups in Jaffna but they failed.

Ranjan and Senevirathna (2022) say that Admiral Zheng He, a Chinese explorer, led seven voyages to Sri Lanka during China's Ming Dynasty. According to Jayarathna (2017), China helped Sri Lanka in numerous ways. According to Jayarathne (2017), since the period of Prime Minister Mrs.

Sirimavo Bandaranayake (1957), the official economic relationship was started. After the independence, there was a rice shortage in Sri Lanka and China faced the problem of importing rubber. The Sino-Lanka agreement was the first China - Sri Lankan Agreement and it solved the rice and rubber shortages.

According to Arunoda, and Pranidhi (2022), the Indian Ocean connects with Africa and Australia and it covers almost one-fifth of the world's total ocean. It consists of 28 states which cover 17.5% of the global land area. The Indian Ocean was home to 35% of the world's total population in 2017. The sea trade routes connect the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe and they transit over 50 percent of the world's maritime oil trade. According to Cordner (2010) (cited in Bopagamage & Bopagamage, 2022), the sea routes carry more than half of sea-borne oil and host 23 of the world's top 100 container ports in facilitating maritime trade. As a rich energy reserve, the Indian Ocean produces nearly 40% of the world's offshore petroleum. Not only that but also, coastal beach sands, heavy mineral deposits, and fisheries can be mentioned. According to British Petroleum (2017, cited in *ibid*)), this holds 16.8% of the world's proven oil reserves and 27.9% of proven natural gas reserves.

### **Methodology of the Study**

This research is based on both Qualitative and Quantitative research approaches. Secondary data will be utilized to collect reliable data for the research such as Reports, Books, Online magazines, and Journal articles. On the other hand, quantitative statistical documents which were premade by other researchers will be used. The majority of data consists of articles and statistical material. Therefore, this study is used descriptive analysis.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

### **Geographical Significance of Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka's geographical significance is truly remarkable, encompassing a range of factors such as its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, along with its diverse landscapes and unique features, has played a pivotal role in various aspects of its development. Sri Lanka's geography has supported trade and commerce through its extensive coastline, natural harbours, and proximity to major maritime routes. Its position as a crossroads between East and West has facilitated cultural exchanges, making Sri Lanka a melting pot of influences from diverse civilizations throughout history. The country's geographical diversity has fostered exceptional biodiversity and abundant natural resources. From its rainforests and wetlands to its coastal areas and coral reefs, Sri Lanka is home to a wealth of flora and fauna. These resources not only contribute to the country's ecological balance but also provide opportunities for sustainable agriculture, tourism, and the conservation of natural heritage.

Tourism and recreation are also greatly supported by Sri Lanka's geography. The country's stunning beaches, ancient cities, and breathtaking landscapes attract travelers from around the world. Whether it's exploring ancient ruins, embarking on wildlife safaris, or indulging in water sports, Sri Lanka's geographical features offer a diverse array of recreational opportunities. Sri Lanka's proximity to major international shipping lanes and its historical connections have contributed to its role in fostering diplomatic relations and trade partnerships with various countries, particularly India and China. The geography of Sri Lanka influences its climate, with varying temperatures, monsoon seasons, and microclimates. This diversity supports agriculture, water resources, and the overall well-being of its population. The lush central

highlands, the coastal plains, and the interplay of trade winds contribute to the distinct climatic patterns experienced across the island.

### **Political Impacts on Sri Lanka**

India and China have had significant political involvement in Sri Lanka, impacting the country's political landscape and dynamics. Both countries have engaged in mediation efforts during political crises and taken an active interest in Sri Lanka's domestic politics. This involvement has led to both positive and negative consequences.

During President Mahinda Rajapaksa's administration, there was a close political relationship between Sri Lanka and China. Rajapaksa maintained a friendly relationship with China, and China became a key partner for Sri Lanka. President Mahinda Rajapaksha's visit to China in 2013 marked a significant milestone in bilateral relations. The leaders discussed cooperation and signed agreements, including the aim to reach a free trade agreement. Chinese investors explored potential investments in Sri Lanka, such as car manufacturing plants and oil exploration.

China's military cooperation with Sri Lanka has also deepened. China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) gifted a ship and an auditorium to the Sri Lankan military, and military aid agreements were signed. The two countries held defense cooperation dialogues, and China's naval hospital ship visited Sri Lanka. These developments aimed to strengthen military ties and expand China's influence in the region. China's military engagement has been driven, in part, by concerns about India's military capabilities in the South Asian region.

India, as a neighboring regional power, has been involved in initiatives to support post-war reconciliation and development in Sri Lanka. India has

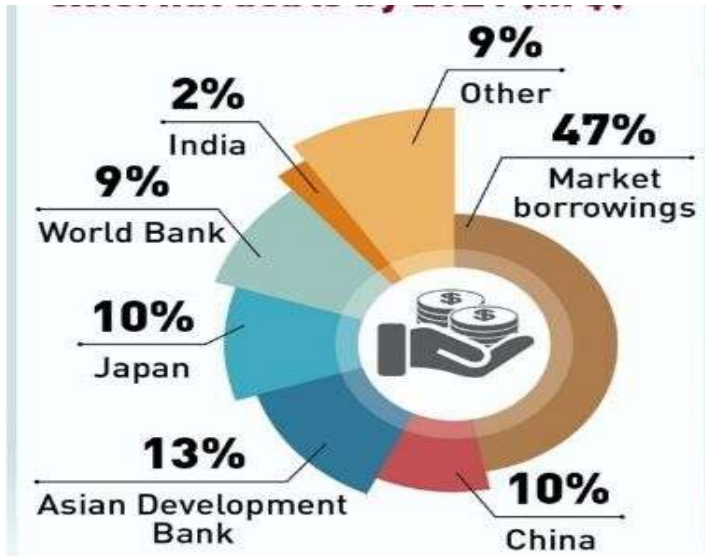
provided development assistance, including infrastructure projects and vocational training centers, to promote stability and economic growth in war-affected areas. India has also called for accountability and justice for human rights violations during the conflict and supported ethnic reconciliation and political devolution in Sri Lanka. However, India's actions and efforts regarding human rights allegations affected to lose the GSP+ trade benefits for Sri Lanka in 2010.

China has generally taken a non-interference stance on human rights allegations in Sri Lanka and supported the Sri Lankan government in international forums. China has opposed external interventions and resolutions criticizing Sri Lanka's human rights record, emphasizing respect for Sri Lanka's sovereignty. China's support for Sri Lanka at the United Nations Human Rights Council and its cooperation in infrastructure development have been appreciated by Sri Lanka.

India has consistently viewed Sri Lanka as a strategically important neighbor, while China has sought to expand its influence in the region. The presence of Chinese submarines in Sri Lanka's ports has caused concern in India, leading to diplomatic engagements and discussions on China's presence. The approaches of India and China in Sri Lanka are influenced by their geopolitical interests, historical ties, and diplomatic considerations.

## Economic Impacts on Sri Lanka

Figure 1: Sri Lanka's Outstanding External Debts by 2021 (in \$)



*Source: erd.gov.lk*

Sri Lanka has deep economic ties with both China and India, with significant investments and infrastructure projects funded by both countries. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has made it a major trading partner and investor in Sri Lanka, financing projects such as ports, highways, railways, airports, and power plants. Chinese FDI in Sri Lanka has seen substantial growth over the years, with billions of dollars invested in infrastructure development. The Hambantota Port, Colombo Port City, and Norocholai Coal Plant are notable examples of Chinese-funded projects in Sri Lanka.

India, with its historical and cultural connections, is also an important trading partner for Sri Lanka. It has supported infrastructure projects, including road networks and power plants, and the Colombo Port plays a crucial role in transshipments from India. However, the power struggle between China and India has the potential to impact trade and investment flows in Sri Lanka. Both countries are vying for influence and economic



interests in the region, which may lead to technology transfers, knowledge-sharing, and access to advanced technologies for Sri Lanka, contributing to its technological advancement and economic development.

On the flip side, the power struggle between China and India may also have negative consequences for Sri Lanka. If trade tensions or restrictions arise between the two countries, Sri Lanka's trade with them could be disrupted. This could result in reduced trade volumes, increased costs, and economic uncertainties for Sri Lanka. Moreover, the power struggle may create uncertainty for investors, leading to delays or reduced investments in the country. Potential investors may adopt a more cautious approach, affecting the overall investment climate in Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka's deep economic ties with China have not been without challenges. The country has heavily borrowed from China to fund infrastructure projects, and the high interest rates associated with some of these loans have pushed Sri Lanka into a debt trap. This has caused economic instability and raised concerns about the country's ability to repay its foreign debt. India has expressed concerns about Sri Lanka's growing debt burden and has offered financial assistance, loan refinancing, and development grants to help manage the debt and ensure economic stability. India aims to counterbalance China's influence and encourages Sri Lanka to diversify its sources of funding and engage in transparent and sustainable economic practices.

The Sri Lankan government faces the challenge of striking a balance between its engagements with India and China. It must navigate the intricate dynamics of its relationship with these two major powers, taking into consideration their respective economic and geopolitical interests, while addressing the urgent need for economic recovery and debt management in

Sri Lanka. Attracting investments rather than relying heavily on loans becomes a more important focus for the government. The diversification of funding sources, transparent economic practices, and regional cooperation are key aspects that Sri Lanka should consider to ensure sustainable economic development and stability in the face of the power struggle between China and India.

### **Conclusion**

Sri Lanka finds itself caught in the power struggle between China and India due to its strategic location in the Indian Ocean. This positioning makes it a valuable asset for both countries, but Sri Lanka aims to maintain autonomy and avoid overdependence on either side. The country faces security concerns as China and India vie for influence and naval presence in the region. Sri Lanka's decisions and alignments can impact regional power balances and alliances, affecting bilateral relations and the stability of neighboring countries.

Sri Lanka's politics are influenced by Indian Ocean geopolitics, given its proximity to India and major maritime routes. The rivalry between China's "String of Pearls" strategy and India's Indian Ocean Strategy directly affects Sri Lanka's position and decision-making. Sri Lanka plays a crucial role in ensuring maritime security and addressing security challenges in the region. Maintaining neutral and balanced relations with both China and India is essential for Sri Lanka to achieve its strategic objectives.

On the economic front, Sri Lanka can benefit from increased market access, trade, investment, technology transfer, skills development, and job creation resulting from engagements with China and India. However, negative impacts such as unequal market access, job displacement, revenue loss, and dependence on both countries pose challenges to domestic industries.

The international community recognizes Sri Lanka's strategic importance in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka must leverage its assets for long-term development goals instead of sacrificing them for short-term needs. As China- Sri Lanka relations deepen and the Sri Lankan economy grows, Sri Lanka becomes a significant market for Chinese goods and services. Sri Lanka must carefully navigate engagements with China and India to protect its sovereignty and national interests while benefiting from mutually beneficial relationships with both countries.

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This research is to fulfill the literature about the China- Sri Lanka Economical relationship and find out its benefits challenges and future prospects.

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## 21st-Century Children's Rights Violations in Afghanistan

Y. S. A. Wickramasinghe<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

Children's rights violations in Afghanistan during the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a hot topic in International Relations. Afghanistan has faced numerous challenges in recent years, including armed conflicts, political instability, and social upheaval, which have had severe repercussions for the rights and well-being of its children. This paper critically examines the various dimensions of children's rights violations in Afghanistan, considering the impact of armed conflict, terrorism, gender inequality, poverty, and lack of access to education and healthcare. The analysis begins by exploring the direct consequences of armed conflict on Afghan children, including their recruitment as child soldiers, exposure to violence, displacement, and physical and psychological trauma. The study also addresses the pervasive threat of terrorism, which targets schools, educational institutions, and public spaces, thereby depriving children of their right to a safe and secure environment. It sheds light on child marriage, forced labor, limited educational opportunities, and gender-based violence, which perpetuate a cycle of discrimination and violation of children's rights. The impact of poverty on children's well-being is examined, emphasizing the lack of access to necessities, healthcare, and nutrition, leading to malnutrition, illness, and child mortality using qualitative and quantitative, mixed methods to collect data. The paper mainly discusses the children's rights violations in Afghanistan and existing international legal frameworks and initiatives aimed at protecting children's rights in Afghanistan. It emphasizes the importance of comprehensive and sustained efforts by the Afghan government, civil society organizations, and the international community to address these violations effectively.

**Keywords:** *Afghanistan, Children's Rights, Violations, Conflicts*

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## **Introduction**

With more than 12 languages and 13 ethnic groups represented across the country, Afghanistan is a multicultural nation. Estimates of the overall population of Afghanistan range from 28.1 million to 32 million, with 50 percent of the population being under the age of 17, and 12.2 million people being under the age of fifteen. Afghanistan is still rated 169th overall out of 187 countries despite slight improvements in the 2014 Human Development Indicators (Poyesh et al,2015). However, Millions of Afghan children's lives have been damaged by the country's 30-year war. Children have suffered greatly from the war in many different ways. Untargeted bombing and shelling of people's homes, schools, or playing fields have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Hundreds, probably thousands, have been tortured and/or killed on purpose and arbitrarily by different armed political organizations. The millions of landmines that are strewn around the nation have resulted in many more deaths or injuries that's why Afghanistan is still one of the most difficult countries in the world for children to grow up.

Over the past ten years in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there has been a significant improvement in child rights, particularly in the fields of child health and education but Children in Afghanistan face a wide range of protection issues, including poverty, a lack of government services, and corruption, low birth registration rates, child marriage, honor killings of girls, health issues and drug addiction, limited access to secondary education, especially for girls, and sexual exploitation and abuse, Children have experienced rape and sexual assault, sometimes even boys including the customs of baad (offering a girl as payment for an offense) and bacha bazi (the tradition of dressing in traditional Afghan garb). They have been kidnapped by the

leaders of the local fighting factions, either for their own sex or to be sold for prostitution. The majority of Afghan children have witnessed acts of violence and destruction that have torn apart the social fabric of society, even if they have not directly been the objects of violations of human rights. Families' capacity to give children the emotional and monetary support they need as they grow has been impacted by death, relocation, and loss of income.

The infrastructure, healthcare, and educational institutions have all crumbled, and children have suffered more than anybody else. Particularly for individuals, disruptions to the food supply, healthcare system, water supply, and cleanliness have resulted in avoidable and premature deaths. However, there are only a few things that can be done to stop the violence. Evidence implies that this is largely due to the court system's demise during the armed conflict. Police treatment of both boys and girls, reliance on the informal court system, and a lack of specialized facilities to house various types of juvenile offenders are major issues. The paper examines the violations of children's rights that still occur in Afghanistan in the 21st century and the steps that are being made to stop them.

### **Literature Review**

A literature review is a thorough summary of earlier studies on a particular subject. The literature review looks at academic books, papers, and other sources that are pertinent to a certain field of study. For this literature review, researchers used electronic books, journals, articles, and other sources. This literature review lists, describes, condenses, impartially assesses, and makes clear prior research. It contributes in establishing the study's theoretical framework and limits its application. The literature

review acknowledges previous researchers' work, assuring the reader that the research was well-conceived. The study's literature review will primarily focus on Children's Rights violations in Afghanistan.

A child is any human being below the age of eighteen unless the majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to the child (United Nations, 1989). Children are marginalized as a class that is silenced and denied rights when they are seen as weak, dependent, naive, and innocent people in waiting (John, 2003). Freeman (2002) asserts that rights, especially those of children, are crucial because "if we have rights we are entitled to respect and dignity." He defines children's rights as "just claims or entitlements that derive from moral and/or legal rules." According to Collins et al (2021), The concepts of child participation and child protection were explored. The difficulties and possibilities related to the actual and potential participation of children and young people in efficient child protection are then highlighted. Violence against children (VAC) is a serious issue that requires immediate attention on a global scale (Hillis et al, 2016). The World Health Organization (WHO) and Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children launched significant, interconnected plans to eliminate VAC globally in July 2016 as part of Agenda 2030 (World Health Organization, 2016). The United Nations defines child violence as "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (UNICEF, 2008), and the WHO defines it as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity"(Krug et al, 2002).

According to Save the Children (2013) Afghanistan is still one of the most

difficult countries in the world for children to grow up. Over the past ten years, there has been a significant improvement in child rights, particularly in the fields of child health and education. But there are still many significant obstacles. Children continue to be recruited into the armed forces and are frequently victims of armed conflict. Despite notable accomplishments, 21 percent of boys and 60 percent of girls who should be in school are not. One in ten kids pass away before turning five, most often from preventable causes including pneumonia, diarrhea, or birth problems. Millions of kids are compelled to work, frequently under risky conditions, to support their families, destroying any chance for a good upbringing. By engaging in harmful cultural behaviors that encourage abuse and exploitation, girls' rights are often violated.

According to Catani et al (2009), VAC has a disastrous effect on children, families, communities, and countries in general, and particularly on children's well-being and ability to realize their full potential. VAC is linked to poor mental health outcomes. Given that Afghanistan has experienced violent violence and terrible poverty for more than 30 years, VAC there is particularly complicated, and Children are a particularly vulnerable group in society and are at risk for child labor, early and forced marriage, the worst types of neglect and exploitation, physical abuse, and violence. In 2013–2014, 39 percent of the population reported living below the poverty line, with rates in rural and remote areas being noticeably higher (Wieser et al, 2018). Afghanistan has one of the highest percentages of people under the age of 18 in the world, with more than half of the population being under 18 (AIHRC, 2011). According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in 2015, 25 percent of Afghan youngsters between the ages of 7 and 14 are employed to help support their families. Studies already in

existence frequently rely on displaced Afghan refugees to recount their memories of childhood (Mufti et al, 2007). In a study conducted by the current authors, 71 percent of participants from three districts of Afghanistan between the ages of 12 and 18 reported directly experiencing physical violence, primarily in the home or at work (O’Leary et al, 2018). The lives of boys and girls in Afghanistan were turned upside down when the Taliban seized control of the country in August 2021. Following the withdrawal of international forces, the Taliban quickly assumed de facto authority for the first time since 2001. Almost overnight, gains in children’s survival, access to learning, and economic improvement were put on hold or reversed. Sanctions, capital flight, the withdrawal of development assistance, and the collapse of the banking sector led to an economic crisis that has plunged 97 percent of households into poverty – with disastrous consequences for children (Hakimi & Price, 2022).

According to the report, Afghanistan's children are in a worrying scenario. Children in Afghanistan are a group that is particularly in danger and vulnerable. The location of the child's domicile, the degree of sensitivity to other cultures, gender-based discrimination, and economic position are a few of the elements that contribute to and aggravate the vulnerability of children in the nation (AIHRC,2007). According to Abdi (2023), Afghanistan's children and families are dealing with a growing humanitarian crisis as a result of years of war, extreme poverty, and frequent natural disasters. The terrible situation includes a hunger crisis, a health system that is on the verge of collapse, the destruction of schools, and the loss of family livelihoods. Even before the Taliban returned to power, girls’ rights were constantly being disregarded. Girls experience sex-based discrimination across Afghanistan, particularly in Taliban-controlled areas. Corporal punishment is often recorded. There is mistrust

of authorities for fear of reprisals, and as a result, abuse often goes unreported. There is significant pressure from family circles as well as pressure on government agents (Amnesty International, 2020) but Regarding boys, some might be enlisted as juvenile soldiers, albeit there are no trustworthy sources to support this claim. Nearly 100 minors were reportedly transported to fight with the Taliban in 2015 (Lakrichi, 2021).

According to Save the Children (2007), Child protection is the prevention and treatment of child maltreatment, neglect, exploitation, and violence. Since ratifying the UNCRC in 1994, the Afghan government has made considerable strides, especially in enhancing access to health care and education for both girls and boys. However, millions of children continue to be denied their fundamental rights, such as the right to health, safety, and the ability to learn, play, engage, grow, and develop to their full potential. Although Afghanistan joined the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in March 1994, the Committee on Rights of the Child's 56th Session's final observations rated Afghanistan's implementation as "low" (UNCRC, 2011). In a similar vein, Afghanistan has ratified the UNCRC-like covenant of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the Rights of the Child in Islam. Afghanistan's current circumstances show how difficult it is to put these international agreements into action and follow them. Determining the true scope of VAC in Afghanistan is challenging. Other data sources are ad hoc, and there is no official reporting for all types of VAC (UNICEF, 2012).

### **Methodology of the Study**

This particular research is a case study that involves 21st-Century Children's Rights Violations in Afghanistan, this study in its nature a blend of qualitative and quantitative research, Mixed methods with secondary data sources serve as the primary data source. The study will be based on secondary data gathered from a variety of sources, including books, journals, magazines, newspapers, yearly reports, surveys, online sources, and other studies carried out by various academics. Then, content analysis will be used to interpret the data. A study technique called content analysis is used to examine and understand the properties of different types of communication, such as text, images, and audio. It entails doing a thorough analysis of the information included in these sources, spotting trends, themes, and other pertinent characteristics, and making deductions or inferences from the results (Hassan, 2022).

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

In 1989, a remarkable event took place. A historic commitment to the world's children was made by world leaders in the face of a shifting global order. By ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, they fulfilled a promise they had made to every child to uphold and safeguard their rights.

Figure 1 Rights of the Child



Source: (OHCHR,2019)

This treaty contains a deep idea: that children are not only adults in training or things that belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made. Instead, they are people with rights who are human beings. The Convention states that childhood, which lasts until age 18, is distinct from adulthood and is a privileged, protected period during which children must be given the opportunity to grow, learn, play, develop, and flourish with dignity. The Convention has changed the lives of children and has gone on to become the most widely approved human rights convention in history however, while considering Afghanistan in the twenty-first century, those children's rights are gravely infringed. The researcher will review the paper on the abuse of children's rights in Afghanistan.



## Child Labor

Labor, sometimes performed abroad or away from one's home, including hazardous jobs. In the June 2022 assessment compared to the November 2021 review by Save the Children, there were more children who reported leaving home and working as children. There were also more children in displaced households, households headed by women, and households with one member with a disability. The stated rates were noticeably higher in households where all sources of income had been eliminated. While 22 percent of adults, put their kids in paid jobs, children were somewhat more likely to work to support the family—one in four kids (25 percent) had worked because of a request to do so. In Sar-ePul (37 percent), Balkh (35 percent), and Nangahar (28 percent) this figure was much higher (Severijnen et al, 2022). While children in higher-income families were working with caregiving and household chores, those in lower-income families were working to labor for pay. Girls are made to perform housework or labor. Due to barriers preventing them from attending school, older girls are now spending more time at home performing unpaid domestic tasks, primarily sewing, weaving, and laundry. 96 percent of boys and 68 percent of girls were employed, with boys working outside the home (ibid). Boys are exposed to toxins while working in mines, brick factories, and recycling businesses without any safety precautions. Boys frequently have to leave their towns and travel to mines and factories that are distant from home, making these hazardous forms of child labor more dangerous and posing extra threats to their safety. For Example, numerous boys between the ages of 9 and 14 from Nangarhar province have left the region to work in brick factories, often accompanied by their families.

The most prevalent type of employment for kids across all industries is

street vending (38.9 percent) (ibid). Among these were selling things on the street, shining shoes, and gathering rubbish, scrap metal, or brushwood to sell. It was also typical to work in a shop, restaurant, or workshop, which was frequently described as a family-run enterprise.

### **Children's Early and Forced Marriage**

Many more households are turning to child, early, and forced marriages as a result of the protracted crisis and the worsening economic and humanitarian conditions. Although child marriage is a very delicate subject, since the end of 2021, 3 percent of all youngsters have married to assist their families. Moreover, one in twenty (5.5 percent) girls had been asked to get married, and cases were more prevalent in households headed by women, which were under the most financial strain and had trouble meeting bare necessities, Balkh and Sar-e-Pul reported the most cases (ibid). Due to families' financial struggles and lack of resources, forced marriages and early childbirth primarily afflict girls, including very young ones. When a family member gets married, there is more money available to care for and feed her siblings. In addition, several parents thought that getting married would provide their elder daughters a shot at a better life because they are no longer permitted to attend school. Girls who had been forced to wed at a young age to an older man may feel melancholy about the experience, or they may have hoped to be able to marry when they are ready. When it comes to marriage, girls believe their parents don't consider what they have to say, which makes them feel dissatisfied and helpless. Other hazards of sexual and gender-based violence include child, early, and forced marriages.

### **Children's Education**

One of the concerns that the international world has focused on most in

2022 is children's access to education, particularly for girls. A last-minute U-turn by the Taliban extended a ban on secondary school-aged girls' attendance after months of promises that they would be allowed to do so in March 2021 (informal arrangements and local leaders have made it possible for girls' secondary education to continue in some provinces and districts despite the ban). In addition to any breaks, they may have already had owing to COVID-19, girls have been barred from attending school for more than 300 days as of the time of writing. Among the youngsters Save the Children surveyed in June 2022 who weren't in school, more than half (54 percent) had been absent for more than a year. Since the de facto authorities no longer let girls attend school, they are most impacted by that scenario. Along with this statutory restriction, some girls revealed that their parents, brothers, and community members also enforce limits on girls, even younger ones, due to actual or perceived risks associated with compliance, or even because of their own beliefs.

The best example is Children in the study had different mean school grades depending on their gender. But in Kabul, the gender gap in educational achievement was mostly to blame. Boys in Kabul had the lowest mean grade at 4.1 years, while girls in Kabul had the highest mean grade at 8.5 years. When the disparity was broken down by child age, it persisted. There was no difference in educational achievement between men and women in Jalalabad and Torkham, with Torkham having the lowest total mean grade. However, there was also a reduced representation of 17 and 18-year-old children from those two locations, in both genders, despite the fact that none of the youngsters interviewed in Jalalabad or Torkham had finished a high school education to Grade 12 (O'Leary, 2018). More than a quarter of the kids surveyed (26.2 percent) said they had never gone to

formal school. In general, more girls (60 percent female, 32.4 percent male) were enrolled in school at the time of the interview. The rates of current school attendance did not differ by gender between the geographical areas, nevertheless. Financial difficulties (86.9 percent), parents limiting access (28.7 percent), a lack of school facilities (18.4 percent), taking care of siblings (17.4 percent), and disliking school (14.9 percent) were among the reasons given for not attending school throughout the three regions (ibid). While boys were more likely to indicate they disliked school, girls were more likely to say there was no school nearby. A little but insignificant trend existed when girls were forbidden from attending school by the Taliban.

Girls of all ages feel demotivated and despairing as a result of the limitations placed on their ability to pursue academic prospects, which is occasionally reinforced by remarks made by those around them. Girls reported that others in the community or even their family members question them about why they continue to attend school as it is pointless and that they should quit and look for employment instead. Because they believe the future is dismal and it is unclear how learning will benefit them, the girls and boys who are still in school said it is harder for them to stay motivated.

## **Violence Experienced by Children**

Children were most likely to face violence at home, followed by school and the neighborhood. The significant exception was sexual abuse, which was primarily reported on the street. However, because most cells are small, it is important to take caution when interpreting this data. Because sexual abuse is a taboo subject, there are probably fewer reports of it. Girls' issues of violence in the home or school and boys face violence occurring

in the workplace or street, which is consistent with where the children spent the majority of their time. Female children in the sample were predominantly either attending school or working at home, whereas male children were working in formal workplaces, street vendors, or outdoor rural contexts such as tending flocks and collecting scrap metal, or brushwood to sell. Though cell sizes were small, a trend was evident for children from Kabul to be more likely to experience sexual abuse. Children from Torkham faced other forms of violence either at home or in other settings. The below figure emphasizes the violence that happens in different regions.

	Kabul		Jalalabad		Torkham		Total		P-value <sup>a</sup>
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
<b>Violence at Home</b>									
Drugs with violence at home	24	59.3	10	24.4	3	6.4	37	34.8	**
Alcohol fighting at home	26	59.0	22	53.7	22	46.8	80	73.7	**
Hit or hurt at home	31	69.6	12	28.3	11	23.4	54	50.2	
<b>Violence at, or outside, home</b>									
Scrammed at aggressively	41	67.2	28	71.8	46	100.0	115	78.8	---
Home	37	90.2	32	79.6	40	87.0	99	86.1	
Workplace	10	24.4	19	67.9	27	58.7	56	49.7	
Community	6	14.6	6	14.4	23	50.0	35	30.4	
Street	14	34.2	4	9.3	15	32.6	33	28.7	
School	8	19.2	7	17.0	6	13.0	18	15.6	
Called names	48	73.8	28	67.0	41	87.2	117	74.5	*
Home	31	70.5	18	48.0	34	62.9	79	70.0	
Community	10	22.7	9	26.0	33	60.5	52	47.3	
Workplace	12	27.3	18	72.0	31	51.2	51	46.4	
Street	17	38.6	4	10.0	12	29.3	33	30.0	
School	10	22.7	6	14.0	4	9.6	20	18.3	
<b>Pushed, grabbed or kicked</b>									
Home	36	59.0	27	65.8	43	91.5	106	71.1	**
Community	24	65.7	19	74.4	32	74.4	75	70.7	
Workplace	9	25.0	4	14.8	32	74.4	45	42.4	
Street	19	36.1	16	59.3	25	58.1	54	50.9	
School	18	30.0	3	11.1	7	18.3	28	26.4	
Sexual abuse	5	13.9	2	25.9	0	0.0	7	6.9	
Home	13	21.3	5	12.2	3	6.4	21	14.1	**
Community	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Workplace	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Street	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
<b>Total</b>							138	92.5	

Table 1Types of child violence experienced, and violence occurred, by geographic region location

Source: (O’Leary, 2018)

## Children’s Access to Healthcare

Most boys and girls are unable to receive medical care because there is no clinic or hospital close enough to attend. Even if a clinic existed nearby in the past their parents could afford treatment; but, due to the current economic climate, they are no longer able to do so. As a result of doctors leaving their professions (or Afghanistan) and a lack of female doctors, people may go to a clinic to obtain aid, but there would not be enough

doctors, facilities, or medication. For girls and women in particular, this creates a barrier to accessing treatments for sexual and reproductive health. In contrast to last year, clinics either don't have any drugs at all or do not have enough. Medication used to be provided without charge, but now patients are sent to shops to purchase it, creating yet another barrier. The quality of the medicines that are available also has issues, underscoring the point brought up by medical professionals.

The majority of kids who require assistance while they are ill ask their parents, other family members, or neighbors for assistance; if not, they borrow money from them to pay for the costs of getting care. However, because everyone is having financial difficulties, people are less likely to assist one another. Children, therefore, conceal their illnesses from their parents since they are aware that they cannot afford to pay for medical care. Almost all children, regardless of age, have physical or mental health problems, and some are also at risk because of water shortages brought on by the drought. They are suffering from injuries and physical pain that may be related to the increased use of child labor. Many of the physical problems that kids had, such as headaches, pains, and lack of energy, can also be psychosomatic, brought on by stress and other unfavorable emotions that kids deal with on a daily basis.

But it's obvious that these adjustments are having a negative impact on children's well-being and on how they feel about their daily lives and the future. With all the changes and uncertainty in their lives, both boys and girls tended to experience negative emotions, including sadness, upset, stress, anger, disappointment, demotivation, fear, worry, and depression. They constantly worried about taking care of themselves, finding work, eating enough food, and having enough money to pay for other essentials

like health visits and school supplies. Given that they are still young, they could be unhappy about having to work because they would rather study or play with friends. Children are not only sad and upset by changes in their supportive environment, being unable to see friends (or seeing them less), and being prohibited from playing, but these changes also damage their ability to cope with stress. Across all age groups, girls in particular feel disappointed and angry that they can no longer attend school or go where they want to. They fear they won't ever finish their education or get employment, and some believe they will never be able to be independent adults. Due to the loss of their former rights and freedoms, some Afghani girls feel pessimistic about their future.

The design and implementation of programs to eliminate these abuses have not been discussed with Afghan authorities, which has caused initiatives to be out of touch with the realities on the ground, particularly in the area of funding for security forces and the court system. Interventions involving security forces have prioritized combating the insurgency over maintaining law and order and protecting civilians. As a result, the police have become more militarized, and the public has lost faith in the security apparatus. The majority of Security Sector Reform programs have not included any explicit child rights provisions. Given that donors and organizations have mostly concentrated on the capacity building of the security forces associated with conflicts, this is presumably related to the prior difficulty. Donors and organizations seem to prioritize the Juvenile Rehabilitation Centers over the facilities run by the National Directorate of Security, which is in charge of crimes involving State security when funding and providing programs for children who are detained. Although concrete proof is difficult to come by, it may be inferred that access to the National Directorate of Security institutions, the

Afghan government's unwillingness to assist, and the lack of knowledge about children who were being held as prisoners were significant barriers to the participation of these facilities in programming. Children connected to armed groups are still considered "national security threats." and "terrorists". Since children represent a nation's future, suitable legal systems are required to address these challenges.

## **Conclusion**

The 21st century has witnessed numerous children's rights violations in Afghanistan, highlighting the urgent need for immediate action and attention. The conclusion drawn from these violations is that the rights of Afghan children have been grossly undermined and disregarded, resulting in severe and lasting consequences for their well-being, development, and future prospects. Firstly, the impact of armed conflict and political instability in Afghanistan has been devastating for children. They have been exposed to violence, recruited as child soldiers, and targeted in attacks, resulting in physical and psychological trauma. The lack of safety and security has also disrupted their access to education, healthcare, and basic services, denying them their fundamental rights. Secondly, gender inequality and discrimination have persisted, denying girls equal opportunities and perpetuating harmful practices such as child marriage and limited access to education. This has hindered their personal growth, undermined their potential, and perpetuated a cycle of poverty and disempowerment. Thirdly, the humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by natural disasters and displacement, has disproportionately affected children. Many have been forced to flee their homes, becoming internally displaced or refugees, facing increased vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, and neglect. Limited access to essential resources like food, clean water, and healthcare



further exacerbates their suffering. Furthermore, the collapse of the Afghan government and the Taliban's resurgence has raised concerns about the erosion of human rights, including children's rights. The withdrawal of international forces and the subsequent power vacuum have led to an environment of uncertainty and fear, intensifying the risks faced by children and exacerbating the violations of their rights. In conclusion, the violations of children's rights in Afghanistan during the 21st century are deeply troubling and demand immediate attention from the international community. Urgent action is needed to protect children from armed conflict, ensure access to education and healthcare, address gender inequality, prevent child marriage, and support and assist those affected by displacement and humanitarian crises. Safeguarding the rights and well-being of Afghan children must be a priority to secure a brighter future for the next generation and promote peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

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