



An Analytical Study of Political impact on Brain Drain in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study examines political impact on brain drain in Sri Lanka. In the current situation of Sri Lanka, brain drain has become a significant concern, as many doctors, engineers, teachers, IT instructors, scientists, professors and academics, health officers and other skilled workers leave the country every year. The research problem is, why does political influence causes brain drain in Sri Lanka. The main purpose of this writing research paper, critically examine how does political influence causes brain drain? In additional sub purposes are, to understand how political interference affects employment, promotions and transfers in Sri Lanka, to examine why educated and skilled people feel frustrated and leave the country, to suggest simple solutions to reduce political influence in employment and to find ways how to create supportive work environment for skilled professionals. The writing of this article uses qualitative method. Under the qualitative method using literature resources for this. Specially analysis technique based on previous researchers' findings. Through this study, appointment given based on political patronage without transparency, not receiving jobs and salaries that match one's qualifications, more pressures on politicians during official work and bankruptcy of the state, these findings can be identified regarding why does political influence causes brain drain in Sri Lanka.

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1. Introduction

Brain Drain refers to the large-scale immigration of educated, skilled and talented individuals from their home country to other countries in search of better career opportunities, higher salaries, improved living conditions and political or social stability. Sri Lanka has historically been a hub for developing skilled professionals across various fields, including medicine, engineering and information technology. However, a continuous outflow of talent has emerged due to limited career opportunities, political instability, and inadequate infrastructure (Sanjeevani,2025) ^[9] Brain Drain Sri Lanka is not a recent incident. It has developed over several decades due to economic, social and political factors. After the independence in 1948, Sri Lanka initially faced challenges in building a strong public sector and modern economy. In the 1970, when the country shifted toward an open -market economy, opportunities abroad increased, and many educated professionals started migrating for higher salaries and better working background.

By the 2000, the trend became more pronounced, particularly in the fields of medicine, engineering, Software field and academic, as skilled workers increased. In this situation, young professionals often get higher education opportunities or better career prospectus abroad. The national center for advanced studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (NCAS) is such as educational institute offering overseas scholarships. The national center for advanced studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (NCAS) was set up under the UGC with the declared purpose of expanding opportunities for academics from Humanities and Social

Sciences to improve their research capabilities and postgraduate qualifications and has provided overseas scholarships to large number of academics. Thus from 2006 to 2013 NCAS has granted financial support for 325 academics to pursue their postgraduate studies, 102 whom have completed their Ph.D. or M.Phil. degrees. The UGC as well as individual universities also sponsor research and training for academics. (Gunawardana, 2017).

After 2020, Brain drain is such as a life style. Beside tech workers, other highly skilled workers, such as doctors and nurses, are also migrating, as the embattled government has proposed salary cuts to a system already under immense stress due to medical shortages. There's been a 250% increase in demand for new passport issued in 2022, per the department of immigration of Emigration (Christopher,2022). After 2020, brain drain in Sri Lanka has intensified sharply. A severe economic crisis, rising inflation, tax increase and deteriorating working -conditions have pushed many professionals to leave. For example, between 2022 and 2023 alone, over 1800 doctors reportedly migrated abroad, and in one 12 -month period ending May 2023, 842 graded medical officers plus 274 specialist doctors left the

country. Nearly 900 university lecturers quit their posts in 2023.

In 2025 brain drain in Sri Lanka remains a serious concern. The government medical officers' association warns that over 2500 doctors and medical specialists have left the country in recent years. Even though there are isolated efforts by the government to retain some specialists, experts say the structural problems, low pay, lack of career growth, unstable economy and lack of career growth and political uncertainty continue to push many to leave.

1.1. Problem formulation

why does political influence causes brain drain in Sri Lanka?

2. Literature search

Brain Drain problem is a most important contemporary issue in Sri Lanka. This research, which address the question of why does political influence causes brain drain in Sri Lanka? identifies two primary theoretical areas that need to be addressed. Accordingly, the literature review can be conducted based on the theoretical fields of political economy and governance theory.

Table 1: Literature Review Table

No	Title	Year	Writer	Research findings
1.	<i>Need for Change in the Current Crisis of Brain Drain of Health Care Professionals in Sri Lanka</i>	2024	Dharmasiri A.D. U	This research paper explores key areas that could help reduce the brain drain of health care professionals in Sri Lanka. In this research paper explain what are the reasons for migrating professionals in Sri Lanka. These are, improving career opportunities and healthcare facilities, making suitable political reforms for reducing corruption and establish higher education and quality training opportunities of Sri Lanka lagging behind still. Such as describe well. But mainly discussed through this healthcare professionals other professionals explain not deeply and not specify political impact for this.
2.	<i>The Determine of Brain Drain and the Role of Citizenship in Skilled Migration</i>	2025	Munoz A.V & et	This study has explained deeply six key influence variables for migrating, based on 178 countries data. uneven economic development, quality of public service, external intervention, voice and accountability, rule of law and political stability. Some of findings can be mention on this. Not developing quality of education, health care, infrastructure and security under the public service, next is ignore promoting international cooperation programs and foreign investment under the external intervention, next is ignore promoting local entrepreneurship and crating regional innovation clusters under the uneven economic development. But this research paper not specify Sri Lanka situation deeply and limited discuss political impact for this.
3.	<i>Unveiling Sri Lanka's brain drain and labor market pressure: A study of macroeconomics factors on migration</i>	2024	Kaluarachchi.S & et	This research paper has described; the issues of labor market pressure and brain drain become increasingly and economic crisis in Sri Lanka how to impact for this. Mainly focuses on this discuss impact of unemployment on migration and another prominent migration trend is the outflow of young people for foreign education. Through this research identify some findings. These are not allocating funds to enhance educational facilities, resource for universities, scholarships, next is not raising labor market opportunities. This study has explained macroeconomics and socioeconomics deeply. not explain well political impact of brain drain in Sri Lanka.
4.	<i>Brain Drain from Sri Lankan Universities</i>	2017	Gunawardena.C & Nawaratne. R	This research paper has described, Sri Lankan universities academics migrating after their postgraduate education appears to have increased over the years. Mainly discussed under the 4 key points this. Higher education for the 21 st century such as etc. Some findings mention like this way. These are, income was not enough to live decent life in Sri Lanka, next is in Sri Lanka those who go behind politicians get their work done, no place for educated people, next it was not better educational facilities for children in Sri Lanka, next is top administrative jobs in university system based on internal and external politicians and lack of opportunities to engage in best research in Sri Lanka. The study focuses mainly migration of university academics. But not explain other sectors migration.
5.	<i>Understanding the impact of Brain drain of academics and professionals on the Sri</i>	2025	Sanjeevani P.N & Cader K.A	This research examines the increasing issue of brain drain among academics and professionals in Sri Lanka. Study focuses, based on Sri Lanka's its sector, engineering, health care, education and policy interventions. These factors

	<i>Lankan Economy</i>			support for migration of Sri Lanka according to this research. These are, limited opportunities and not growing salaries in Sri Lanka, next is very difficult to maintain comfortable life in Sri Lanka, next is lack of professional development and not stable political and social environment in Sri Lanka. The research explained all professionals but limited examine political impact for this.
6.	<i>Brain Drain; the Exodus of Sri Lanka's Healthcare Workforce.</i>	2023	Abeysooriya B.M.V & et al	This study has explained, the issue of health worker migration in Sri Lanka has been capturing increasing. Sri Lanka significant socio-political economy changes created background for migration according to this research. In additional through this study mention important factors for migration in Sri Lanka. These are, dissatisfaction salary increment, socio political instability, economic crisis in Sri Lanka and political connection is most important for higher ranking of government. These findings described well. But political impact of brain drains not examine depth.

Although many scholars have examined the brain drain in Sri Lanka, there is still limited research specifically addressing how to impact political influence for brain drain in Sri Lanka. Any research not specify political impact how to relate for this. A literature gap exists when previous studies have not fully explored an important part of a topic. Through all the above-mentioned papers discussed brain drain in Sri Lanka. But all social economy political factors not examine on one research paper deeply, related brain drain in Sri Lanka. Otherwise, they have not been discussed in clearly and only those points have been mentioned or limited discussed. After discussing each of those papers or material, the research gap relevant to this topic has been showed one by one in each paragraph. By identifying this research gap and filling that void, this study will be conducted.

3. Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore political impact of brain drain in Sri Lanka. The methodology that has used for the study is qualitative in nature and descriptive analysis method has been followed to analyze the gathered data. For the study, only secondary data sources have been used. The theoretical framework has been featured with the political economy and governance theory. Conceptual wise, the concepts of globalization and power, political economy of crisis, institutions and development, market vs state, Ideology and economic governance have been applied for the study. The study also employs a comparative analytical framework to examine the differing approaches and interests of political impact of brain drain in Sri Lanka. The author collects information through the research journals that discuss this problem.

4. Data evaluation

The author evaluates the contents of the research journal obtained so that the research data to be discussed can be in accordance with what is desired.

4.1. Data analysis and interpretation

The author analyzes the research data obtained so that it can then be summarized and rewritten in the resulting article. The data analysis technique used by the author is the content analysis technique where the author will analyze the results of research that has been carried out based on suitability with the topic discussed and the time of implementation of the research.

5. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the literature search conducted by the author, there were research journals found that discussed the

topic, political impact of brain drains in Sri Lanka. Under the discussion, analyze secondary data and based on secondary data, describe research topic research problem and theoretical frame depth. The research shows that brain drains is a contemporary issue in Sri Lanka. It is also important and updated research topic current situation. Specially discuss political impact how to relate for this. why does political influence causes brain drain in Sri Lanka?, when studying this, should be discussed that under the main key components.

5.1. Corruption in government systems.

Corruption in Sri Lanka's government systems such as bribery, political favoritism and unfair recruitment makes it difficult for skilled and educated people to succeed based on their talent alone. Top administrative jobs in university system are based on internal and external politics, not vision and capabilities (Gunawardena,2017) ^[5]. In working institute, promotions or government contracts are given to those with political connections instead. Political interference often affects recruitment, promotions and appointments. Many qualified people face barriers and pushing them seek better job abroad. Under the situation, qualified professionals feel discouraged and undervalued. This create a sense of hopelessness because people understood that hard work and education are not enough to design a stable future in their own country. As a result, many talented people force to leave country. Over time, corruption slows economic growth, reduce the quality of public services, incases inequality. Specially educated youth migrate to countries with fair systems, transparency and stable opportunities. Overtime, this continues outflow of skilled workers weakens Sri Lanka's workforce and deepens the brain drain problem.

5.2. Political Instability

Political instability in Sri Lanka refers to frequent changes in government, inconsistent policies, protests, conflict between political parties and a lack of long-term national planning. Brain drain is closely linked to political factors such as instability, corruption, and a lack of trust in institutions.it can be said that brain drain is linked to distrust in institution, corruption and political stability (Munoz, 2025) ^[8] Strengthening political and economic system is crucial to discouraging emigration. The government must enhance governance, reduce corruption and ensure political stability (Dharmasiri, 2024) ^[3]. When government changes often each new government introduce different education, health, security and economic and development policies. So, people's plans very difficult to align with each new state policies. Under this situation, skilled professionals, students

and educated youth this unstable environment feels unsafe. They fear their job security, income and professional growth could suddenly be affected by a political decision. Such as inflation and unemployment. According to this, many choose to migrate to countries with stable governments, predictable policies and better living conditions.

5.3. Not providing jobs that suitable qualifications and not giving satisfactory salary.

When professionals in Sri Lanka are not offered jobs that match their qualifications and are not paid a satisfactory salary. Many skilled professionals, including doctors, engineers, teachers, its specialists and academics find that their education and expertise are not properly recognized in the job market. Low pay and mismatched job roles. Both government and private health care training institute should establish clear career pathways, with competitive salaries that reward hard work, team work and innovation. (Dharmasiri,2024) ^[3]. Every professional should have clear career or job role. The analysis reveals that quality-of-life considerations significantly influence migration decision based on better salary. Migration offered better living conditions, access to quality health care, education and a favorable social environment (Sanjeevani, 2025) ^[9]. According to this migration salary due to spent comfortable life. Moreover, people's decisions to remain in their home country or move to another destination are often influenced by their income or job. (Kaluarachchi, 2024) ^[7]. As a result, many talented people migrate to countries. And also, they feel that their education and hard work are not valued own their country. Because of this, they move to other countries where their skills are recognized and they are paid fairly. This causes a loss of talented workers in Sri Lanka and it contributes to the problem of brain drain.

5.4. The lack of formal public policies establishes supportive working environments and creating new opportunities.

Unsupportive working environment means that professionals do not receive the conditions they need to work effectively or grow. Like these poor facilities, lack of career achievement and high work load and stress. Limited opportunities refer to the lack of chances for people to develop their careers or improve their lives. Like this weak research opportunities and reducing new job creating. Worker's retention within the industry should target providing a safe working environment and, adequate resources. professional bodies and companies should actively seek employee feedback and appoint human resources personnel to ensure that professional standards are maintained (Abeyasuriya,2023). In this research furthermore explain, developing infrastructure and social environment within public and private institutions and improving research opportunities. And also measure to improve education system improve living conditions for workers and their families.

The migration of educated and skilled persons from developing to developed countries will persist as long as international inequalities in standards of living remain as they are now (Johnson, 2009) ^[6]. To overcome these conditions, the state mechanism should formulate effective government policies to retain these professional groups in Sri Lanka. Many skilled migrants seek better employment and educational opportunities in countries with high regional and social imbalances (Munoz, 2025) ^[8]. Definitely, establishing

supportive working environment in Sri Lanka through public policies. The quality of education, healthcare and the economy in Sri Lanka must be improved through appropriate reforms (Dharmasiri, 2024) ^[3]. Sri Lanka does not have strong and effective public policies establishing supportive working environment and creating new opportunities. Such as research fund, higher education and creating new job opportunities. Under the working environment, stress and work load, some institution regulations unequal for everyone, not flexible management and lack of promotions due to these reasons very influence for migration. University administration is more on rules and regulations rather than working towards future and opportunities (Gunawardena,2017) ^[5]. As a result, workers feel under value and reduce motivation. In the long term due to dissatisfaction increased migration of skilled workers seeking better opportunities abroad.

5.5. Political impact of economic crisis.

The political impact of Sri Lanka's economic crisis strongly affects brain drain because it creates a sense of uncertainty, instability and hopelessness among the people of Sri Lanka. When the government struggles to manage the economy, control inflation or provide basic necessities like fuel, electricity and medicine. In this situation citizen begin to lose trust in political leaders. Weak governance, Corruption and poor decision making make people feel that the country is not moving in a positive direction. Brain drain is a mainly driven by economic factors, especially inequality in employment and opportunities. Many skilled migrants seek better economic and employment prospects outside their countries due to economic crisis (Munoz, 2025) ^[8]. As a result, educated youth and skilled professionals believe they have no secure future in Sri Lanka. This pushes them to migrate to countries. Therefore, political instability during the economic crisis directly increase brain drain in Sri Lanka.

6. Conclusion

Brain drains in Sri Lanka has significant political implications that cannot be ignored. The continuous outflow of skilled professionals from key sectors such as health care, education, technology and academics. Through this research identify some findings for brain drain issue in Sri Lanka. Political instability, corruption in government system, the lack of formal public policies establishes supportive working environments and creating new opportunities, not providing jobs that suitable qualifications and not giving satisfactory salaries and Political impact of economic crisis are among them. Especially low salaries, stress and workload with pressure, political favorable, economic crisis, lack of research fund and higher studies opportunities and lack of flexible and formal public policies and regulations based on this. As appropriate recommendation to overcome this situation, design flexible and formal public policies and regulations, transparency appointment without participating politicians, paying satisfaction salary, creating education opportunities such as training, research, scholarships and language literacy, developing economy with support international experts' relevant economy field and stablish political stability can be suggested for this.

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