



Research Article

Adequacy of Government Support in Ameliorating Female Labor Force Participation in Sri Lanka: Analysis at Provincial Level

Ananda Rathnayake

*Department of Business Economics, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce
University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka
rathnayake@sjp.ac.lk*

Abstract

Gender discrimination has been a predominant issue in the global context due to which the labor force productivity has been affected in an adverse manner. In Sri Lankan context, there has been a deterioration in the female labor force participation rate during the past decades due to several causes such as childbearing, wage discrimination, lack of access to infrastructure and corruption in the political system, etc. The key objective of the study is to analyze whether Sri Lankan government policies have been diverted towards the drivers of the female labor force participation and the adequacy of the support extended by the government in encouraging women to participate in the labor force. The study utilizes mixed method sequential explanatory design approach in which a mix of quantitative and qualitative analyses was used. In relation to the quantitative analysis, period random effect model has been performed using secondary data. To carry out the qualitative analysis, 18 semi-structured interviews have been performed by selecting 2 respondents from each province within the age range of 30 – 50 (graduate and non-graduate) who were not participating in the labor force. As per the results of the model, it turned out that an increment in budget allocation for education, availability of public transportation services and telecommunication services leads to a significant increment in the female labor force participation rate. Furthermore, the study corroborated that the support extended by the government was not adequate in ameliorating female labor force participation in Sri Lanka.

Keywords Female labor force participation, government support, access to infrastructure, childbearing, provincial analysis.

Introduction

Within the worldwide setting, out of line or simply the unfair treatment of people on the premise of gender has been a rooted problem. Women are most likely to uncover to the issue of gender discriminations which diminishes their dynamic cooperation in work constrain. This has adversely affected the productivity of the labor force in the country as well as has generated negative consequences to the nation's growth. A majority of women in South Asia work from dawn to dusk and their work has been hardly calculated and considered by the respective national accounting systems of the countries. Women not only work longer hours than males but also, they undertake different household chores including the caring and nurturing children and managing all household maintenances. Female Labor Force Participation is a well-researched and obviously a vital phenomenon to be researched as it has important contributions towards the socio-economic development in the countries. For instance, the high female labor force participation has generated lower level of poverty and minimized the income inequality issues existed within the country contexts (AHMAD, 2002). The determinants of female labor force participation have been studied through many previous studies where they were important to understand the

productive and reproductive roles of the educated female population in respective countries¹. For the study, the female labor force participation has been defined as the act of participation to the productive economic activities in order to generate income (AHMAD, 2002).

When it comes to the Sri Lankan context, the lower female labor force participation rate in Sri Lanka has puzzled many scholars and policy makers with the high cost incurred by the government consistently to provide education and higher education to the women in the country (Mallawarachchi, 2020). Despite the strong successful achievements Sri Lanka has gained in relation to the Human Development indicators and in relation to the gender equality, it is a surprising fact that the country faces the same issue similarly with the other South Asian countries which is the lower female labor force participation (International Labour Organization, 2016). Sri Lanka can be classified as a lower middle income earning nation with a per capita income of 13620 PPP Dollars or 3852 nominal US Dollars (CBSL, 2019). As per ILO (2017), Sri Lanka has indicated a very lesser female labor force participation which rated between 30 per cent to 35 per cent. When the focus is given to discuss the gender, disparities exist in the present labor market, it can be highlighted as

¹ See for example, Chaudry and Khan (1987), Kozel and Alderman (1990), Hamid (1991), Sahn and Alderman (1988), Shah (1975)

a common problem to Sri Lanka and majority of the South Asian countries. Females in Sri Lanka exhibit a very low labor force participation than males even though there are motivating factors to drive the female labor force participation rate. A majority of the Sri Lankan females still follows the traditional norms as housewives and with the heavy responsibilities with childbearing and family chores, they do not participate in formal employment opportunities in the labor market (Satharasinghe, 2015).

Sri Lankan Labor Force

The formal definition for the labor force participation rate can be stated as the economically active population who are in the 15 years of age and above or as the labor force to the overall working age population. The working age population include both economically active and inactive communities. **Table 1** depicts the unemployment rates and labor force participation in Sri Lanka from the period of 2000 to 2020.

Table 1. Labor force participation rate and unemployment rate of Sri Lanka from 2000 to 2020

Year	Labor Force Participation Rate		Unemployment rate	
	Female	Total	Female	Total
2000	33.9	50.3	11.1	7.6
2001	31.9	48.8	11.5	7.9
2002	33.6	50.3	12.9	8.8
2003	31.4	48.9	13.2	8.4
2004	31.5	48.6	12.8	8.3
2005	30.9	48.3	11.9	7.7
2006	35.7	51.2	9.7	6.5
2007	33.4	49.8	9.0	6.0
2008	33.2	49.5	8.4	5.4
2009	33.0	49.0	8.6	5.8
2010	31.2	48.1	7.7	4.9
2011	34.0	53.0	7.1	4.2
2012	32.9	52.5	6.3	4.0
2013	35.4	53.7	6.6	4.4
2014	34.6	53.2	6.5	4.3
2015	36.0	54.0	7.6	4.7
2016	35.9	53.8	7.0	4.4
2017	36.6	54.1	6.5	4.2
2018	33.6	51.8	7.1	4.4
2019	34.5	52.3	7.4	4.8
2020	32.1	50.6	8.4	5.5

Source: Central Bank Report (2020)

From 2000 to 2020, the female labor force participation rate was recorded at a lower level which ranges from 33.9 per cent to 32.1 per cent. This clearly depicts a decreasing tendency which is a more pathetic situation when considering the female entering the

active labor force in the country and contributing to the overall productivity of the country (Figure 1). Additionally, the female labor force participation rate always recorded at lower levels when compared to the male labor force participation rates. The following

trend line clearly depicts the decline in the female labor force participation rates. This emphasizes the issues with Sri Lankan women population and some gaps are

obviously existing to be addressed to identify the real reasons for the lower female labor force participation rate in Sri Lanka (World Bank, 2013).

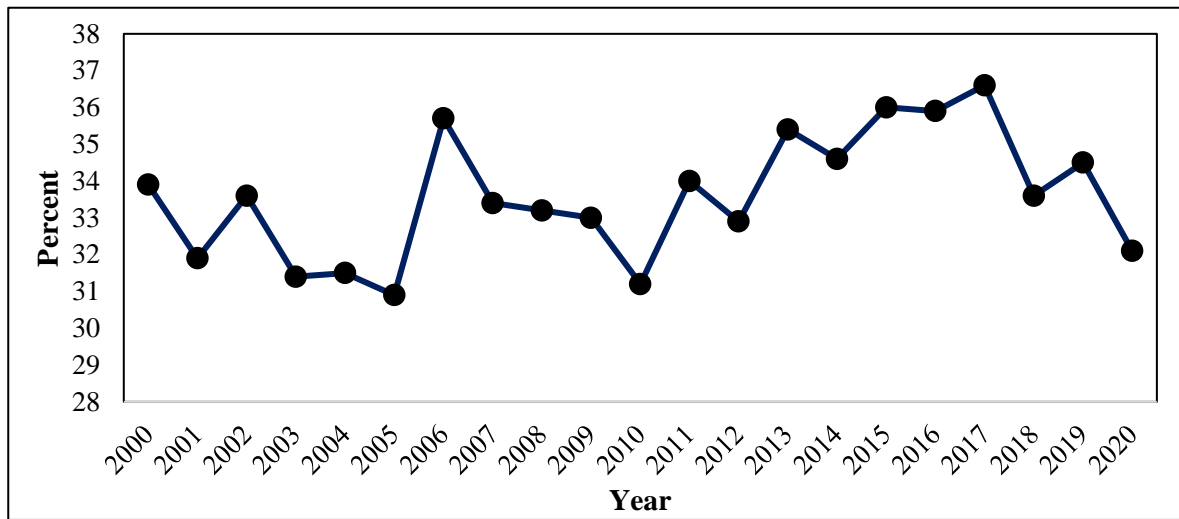


Figure 1: Trend line for female labor force participation rate in Sri Lanka from 2000-2020

Source: The Author

Apart from that, the women unemployment level in Sri Lanka is very high when compared with males during the period of 2000-2020. On the other hand, this is a surprising fact compared with the achievements of Sri Lanka in relation to the percentage of educated females in the country, also, the female enrolment rates to the secondary education are also higher than the male enrolment rates. Further, the performance of females at the public examinations and also the percentage of females in universities and other higher educational institutions are higher with relative to male population (Mayadunne, 2018). It is clear that a considerable amount of educated female workforce stay unemployed due to various reasons. This is further elaborated through the unemployment level by education levels from 2002-2020 (Mallawarachchi, 2020). Table 2 emphasizes the unemployment level of females by education levels from 2002-2020.

Diverting the focus towards the drivers and constraints of Sri Lankan women that affect their choice between the work and family life, it can be highlighted using the HIES and

Labor Force Survey data which was interpreted by Gunathilake (2013). Accordingly, the drivers for married women to enter the labor market are, educational attainments beyond G.C.E. Advance level, high per capita household consumption, availability of domestic help, higher percentage of employed female in the family, having children later than the earlier. They are constrained from entering the labor force through the factors including remittances received from abroad, disability, childbearing, unemployed women in family, educational and occupational background of males in the family. Going beyond the married women, the main drivers for single women to participate in the labor force include higher educational attainment, the employed parental background, the employed women percentage in the family and living area etc. Single women are also constrained from the great number of unemployed women in the family and living area, higher status of household consumption and the cultural norms in the family.

Table 2. Unemployment level of females by educational levels

Year	Education Level			
	Grade 5 & below	Grade 6-10	G.C.E.O/L	G.C.E.A/L and above
2002	-	-	-	-
2003	-	11.4	19.4	23.3
2004	2	10.6	18.9	23.8
2005	-	-	-	-
2006	1.4	8.7	14.3	16.8
2007	1.4	7.5	11.3	17.5
2008	1.6	6.4	12.4	15.3
2009	1.8	7.0	11.5	15.5
2010	-	5.8	10.1	15.8
2011	-	5.2	8.9	13.1
2012	3.5		8.8	10.8
2013	3.8		8.3	11.6
2014	3.7		8.9	11.0
2015	4.3		9.0	13.5
2016	3.7		9.1	11.9
2017	3.5		7.9	11.3
2018	-		-	-
2019	3.8		9.6	11.9
2020	5.4		11.1	14.7

Source: Central Bank Report (2020)

International Labour Organization (2016) lays out policy recommendations on reforming labor market institutions and legislations, improving infrastructure and support systems such as transportation system, education system, affordable and quality childcare, telecommunication systems, implementing micro insurance and credit schemes in order to ameliorate the female labor force participation in Sri Lanka. While prior research has offered valuable insights at the national level, there exists a conspicuous void in the exploration of provincial-level dynamics. Sri Lanka's provinces exhibit significant disparities in economic development, infrastructure, and cultural norms, making a provincial-level analysis imperative to uncover region-specific challenges and opportunities for enhancing female labor force participation (Mahadevan, & Jayasinghe, 2020, Sakalasooriya, 2021). Additionally, previous research has predominantly favored quantitative data analysis, overlooking the

equally essential qualitative exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of unemployed women. This qualitative dimension is crucial for comprehending the intricacies of decision-making processes related to work and home responsibilities (Bueno, & Brinton, 2019). Furthermore, a contemporary assessment of the situation in Sri Lanka is warranted, particularly considering the period from 2000 to 2020. A comprehensive investigation into the effectiveness of government policies, including budget allocations, infrastructure development, and social support systems, is necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding of the female labor force participation landscape in Sri Lanka and offer evidence-based recommendations for informed policy interventions.

The foremost objective of this study is to critically evaluate the adequacy of government support for fostering female labor force participation within the Sri Lankan context, with a specific emphasis on

provincial-level dynamics. Simultaneously, research endeavor to assess provincial disparities, recognizing that Sri Lanka's diverse nation presents varying levels of economic development and cultural norms across its provinces. The examination of government policies involves a close scrutiny of budget allocations for education, the availability of public transportation services, and the quality of telecommunications infrastructure, all of which significantly impact women's participation in the labor force.

To gain deeper insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of women, this research includes an exploration of the barriers and motivators that shape their decisions regarding labor force participation through qualitative interviews. By synthesizing research findings, we aim to provide a set of evidence-based policy recommendations that will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers and stakeholders, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of female labor force participation rates in Sri Lanka.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The second section reviews literature on women and employment. The third section presents methodology of the analysis while the fourth section devotes for the data analysis and discussion. The last section presents conclusions and policy implications.

Literature Review

Women and Employment

Gender can be illustrated as one of the most influencing factors that plays a vital role in the labor market in determining the positive outcomes for the global context in wide. As highlighted by Rosenbluth (2006), most of the decisions that are taken in relation to the labor market including the variances in income, labor market status and the division

of labor in the workplaces are based on the gender differences. Also, it is important to be noticed that the female labor force participation is not merely determined through the economic factors. The female percentage that participates in the labor force of the economies also depends on the social, cultural and environmental factors that can be further classified and interpreted as micro and macro factors (Psacharopoulos, 1989).

According to research by Dzubinski (2022), gender bias is still prevalent in gender-balanced and female-dominated industries. Women reported facing constrained communication, unequal standards, salary inequality, and even workplace harassment. The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on women's employment. A paper by Bluedorn et al. (2021) documents the extent and persistence of the phenomenon of "she-cessions" in a quarterly sample of 38 advanced and emerging market economies. The paper shows that there is a large degree of heterogeneity across countries, with over half to two-thirds exhibiting larger declines in women's than men's employment rates. These gender differences in COVID-19's effects are typically short-lived, lasting only a quarter or two on average. However, progress towards closing the gender gap has stalled in most countries according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 by the World Economic Forum.

The empirical significance of the study is expanded with the exponential growth in the attention of the scholars to determine the factors affecting the lower female labor force participation in relevant country contexts. However, it is important to highlight that some of the factors that affect the female labor force participation have no influence over the male labor force participation rates in the international labor markets. As per Malhotra (1997), family and roles based on

gender are principal to women's work and the sustainability and success of the work, and hence, it is imperative to consider the components reflecting familial desires and social standards, in expansion to personal skills and competencies. Psacharopoulos (1989) has reflected that the western countries experience a higher female labor force participation than Asian countries. Moreover, the developing nations such as Sri Lanka has reported a very low level of female labor force participation with relative to male labor force participation.

Sri Lanka's Female Labor Force Participation

The Sri Lankan female participation in the labor force highlighted a stagnating performance since decades (Madurawala, 2017). According to the UN Women (2022) report, most Sri Lankan women are either unable or unwilling to engage in paid work. Only 36 percent of women of the working-age cohort were either employed or seeking work in 2019. The report illustrates the largely unexplored factors on the part of employers and firms that prevent women from entering the paid workforce, including a lack of flexible work arrangements, limited access to affordable childcare, social norms that discourage women from working outside the home and limited job opportunities for women. According to the analysis conducted and interpreted in the World Bank (2017) report, this low participation is mainly due to the wage discriminations that take place in relation to the gender. As per their findings, the males are getting higher wages than females who are giving the same contribution to the similar jobs. Most of the female population migrate to different other countries in search of employment opportunities due to low level of wages paid in the national labor market. In addition to that, even though many women are interested in engaging in

self-employment, they lack entrepreneurial knowledge and sufficient capital to initiate their MSMEs, which in turn leads to high rate of departure of female population for foreign employment (ILO, 2018). Simply, it can be concluded that the key reason for this lower female labor force participation is the gender discriminations in the job market. However, it seems to be more comprehensive and broader than wage discriminations. When it comes to the broader sense of the wage discriminations, World Bank (2017) report further emphasizes that the married women who have small children indicated that there is a less chance for them to be paid than the young unmarried women in the country. However, the wage discriminations are one of the key points that affect the low female labor force participation in Sri Lanka (World Bank, 2017). As same as in Japan and Korea, the wage discriminations in Sri Lanka are much vitally reflected with the age levels of the female in Sri Lanka (Lee, 2013). When it is focused on the age-specific female labor force participation in Sri Lanka, it shows an "M-shaped" curve implying that the female in the age group of 20-24, and in the age group of 25-29 years quit the jobs due to various family related responsibilities more importantly, the child bearing.

In a more comprehensive view, it can be clearly noticed that Asian ladies leave employment after either getting married or having children, and then return to the workforce once they wrap up raising their children after their children reach a certain age, or after they feel secure around leaving their children and going back to work. This work design comes about in a labor force participation rate that takes after the letter "M." Compared with ten years back, the labor force participation rate of females within the 25 to 29-year age bunch and 30 to 34-year age bunch expanded by 7.9 per cent and 5.9 per cent, respectively. As a result, the

foot of the M-shaped bend tends to be shorter, demonstrating the continuing tendency for the letter M to have a flatter curve (Gunathilake, 2013).

Gunathilake (2013) has emphasized that the majority of married women in Sri Lanka, approximately more than 70 per cent of them have at least one child where they need to put more concentration and effort in household activities and therefore, they are less likely to engage in a job. More surprisingly, the research has elaborated that the economically inactive female percentage is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Apart from that, he also suggested that the married women have constrained from the cultural norms and beliefs than the single women. Hence, going beyond the wage discriminations in the job market, the marital status of women also has brought heavy influences on the female labor force participation rate in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, the other factor which has been highlighted is the cultural barriers.

Culture also can be stressed as a factor that affect the low female labor force participation in the country. There are some scholarly articles that have highlighted the heavy impact from culture on the female labor force participation. This can be also emphasized as a common factor for many of the countries including most of the South Asian countries like Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh etc. In addition to that, some of the main reasons behind the low female labor force participation in Sri Lanka are, lack of infrastructure facilities such as public transportation facilities, telecommunication facilities and provision of electricity (International Labour Organization, 2016).

Measures taken by the Government

The representatives of the Ministry of Women Affairs (MWA) and other key ministries formulated the “Women’s Charter” for Sri Lanka in order to deal with

deprecatory issues pertaining to women. The Charter consists of 7 sections namely, family rights, right to health, right to education and training, civil and political rights, economic rights, social discrimination and gender-based violence. In addition to that, MWA formulated a three-year development plan and a project with the support of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in order to reinforce MWA (Asian Development Bank, 1999).

In Podujana Perauna Manifesto (2018), it is stated that the quality of primary, secondary and tertiary education would be inflated in par with international standards and a new scientific method would be introduced for university admissions. In addition to that, child care facilities would be expanded and flexible working arrangements and home-base enterprises would be introduced with required assistance for rural women while minimizing all kind of violence against women through 24 hour – emotional support and advisory helpline in order to ameliorate female labor force participation rate. Into the bargain, it is stated that a state sponsored mechanism would be devised where women entrepreneurs can engage in small and medium scale enterprises. In terms of the current commitment of the Sri Lankan government towards women, government policies are primarily focused towards violence against women and to uplift the socio-economic wellbeing of women in Sri Lanka (UN Women , n.d.).

Measures related to education

As per the women’s charter of Sri Lanka, both men and women have equal access to primary, secondary, tertiary, technical, vocational and professional education, scholarships and student grants. Furthermore, same curricular, examinations, certification procedures, school facilities, training programs and other educational

resources can be accessed irrespective of the gender. In addition to that, appropriate measures are taken by the state in order to make sure that the number of early school leavers would be reduced and various programs have been organized for women who have left school early (National Committee on Women, 1993). As per the policy document of Vision 2025, the policy formulates several recommendations such as access to 13 years of education regardless of their performance at examinations, increasing access to tertiary education by investing in private universities, increasing investment in vocational training institutes with high unemployment rates and increasing access to education for women in order to ameliorate the female labor force participation rate in Sri Lanka. The National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education which was formulated in 2018, one of the main objectives was to expand access to tertiary and vocational training specifically for women, vulnerable and disadvantaged people in order to match their skills with the job market requirements (UNICEF, 2019).

Measures related to child care

In accordance with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services (2017) annual report, Model Children's Village Program has been implemented in every Divisional Secretarial Division with an objective of ensuring child protection and encouraging children to actively intervene in community. Furthermore, child friendly care centers have been established and monitored to provide a safe environment for children to enhance their skills and competencies when both parents are employed and away from home. According to the National Framework for Women Headed Households 2017-2019, the Sri Lankan government enhanced capacity of the Department of Probation and Child services in order to improve the

coverage of childcare facilities and uplift the quality of alternative childcare by providing financial and non-financial support to train the field staff of the Department of Probation and Child services (Ministry of Women and Child Development Affairs, 2017).

Measures related to transportation

In terms of the measure taken with regard to transportation, the government has undertaken various initiatives to inflate road infrastructure in order to uplift rural-urban linkages. Some of the key projects undertaken by the government related authorities are Integrated Road Investment Program (i-Road), Southern Road Connectivity Project, Port Access Elevated Highway Project and the New Kelani Bridge Project. If concurrent improvements are made to the public transportation system, it will lead to improved regional connectivity, congestion alleviation and reduction in transportation costs which in turn will lead to boost the productivity in the economy (CBSL, 2021). Inclusive transportation is a key yet often neglected area to gender equality. One of the main reasons behind low female labor force participation in Sri Lanka is lack of safe, affordable and accessible transportation (International Finance Corporation, 2020). The Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation has formulated the National Transport Policy with the directives of improving safe, affordable and comfortable public transportation services, expanding public transport network and increasing the frequency of services of public transportation, improving accessibility and equity of public transport services and many other policy directives (MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND CIVIL AVIATION).

Measures related to telecommunication

In order to facilitate smooth functioning of online activities related in the fulfillment of education, profession and entertainment needs, the telecommunication providers had offered innovative, affordable packages. Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka (TRCSL) initiated a project called “Gamata Sannivedanaya” in collaboration with several telecommunication providers with the motive of upgrading their infrastructure to improve internet coverage in dark spots across the nation. The government granted the legal approval for number portability in order to enhance quality driven competition in the telecommunication sector (CBSL, 2021). Despite remarkable achievements in education, female labor force participation is lower than the male labor force participation. Teleworking mode can be a great facilitator of work and family life balance (DISSANAYAKE, 2017).

Measures related to SMEs and micro finance

The Ministry of Women and Child Development affairs in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture and Trade Unions have implemented long-term policy measures including relief and credit schemes and insurance schemes with the motive of uplifting the productivity and working conditions of the women in the informal sector (Ministry of Women and Child Development Affairs, 2017). Income generation training programs, revolving credit programs, Vanitha Shakthi Foundation, Thirasara Krushi program are some of the development programs aimed towards the upliftment of the livelihood of women in the informal sector (Ministry of Women, Child Affairs and Social Empowerment, n.d.).

Measures related to electricity services

During the 8 months ending August 2021, the total electricity generation mainly comprised of Hydro, Fuel Oil, Coal and Non-Conventional Renewable Energy (NCRE) sources which accounted for 29 per cent, 19 per cent, 37 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. The Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) has undertaken several initiatives to enhance the capacity of generating cost-effective energy sources which in turn lead to the increment in the provision of electricity service to a wide range of population in the country (CBSL, 2021). With special attention to women held households, the government undertook initiatives to improve access to electricity/energy services for them by providing energy to women held households at concessionary rates for their homes and industries through various programs and schemes (Ministry of Women and Child Development Affairs, 2017).

Measures related to foreign employment of women

The Sri Lankan government has taken various measures to address the needs of women held households who have been migrated for foreign employment opportunities. One of the measures was to improve the protection of children and other dependents of migrated women by monitoring and responding to the vulnerabilities of them through social services staff. Furthermore, regulations were developed to improve access to support services available in the country within which they were employed such as banking facilities, housing facilities and psychological services, etc. In addition to that, the Ministry of Foreign Employment has implemented number of schemes to provide tailor made support services to women held household who have been working abroad to enhance reintegration of them to their families

(Ministry of Women and Child Development Affairs, 2017).

Many scholars have outlined the driving forces and restraining forces related to female labor force participation, yet they have failed to identify the effectiveness of the policies and initiatives undertaken by the government in ameliorating the female labor force participation in Sri Lanka. It is quite crucial

to identify whether the government has diverted their policies and initiatives towards the drivers of female labor force participation in Sri Lanka. Therefore, in this study we try to fill up the stated research gap by analyzing the effectiveness of the policies and initiatives taken by the government in exhilarating the female labor force participation in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

Conceptual Framework

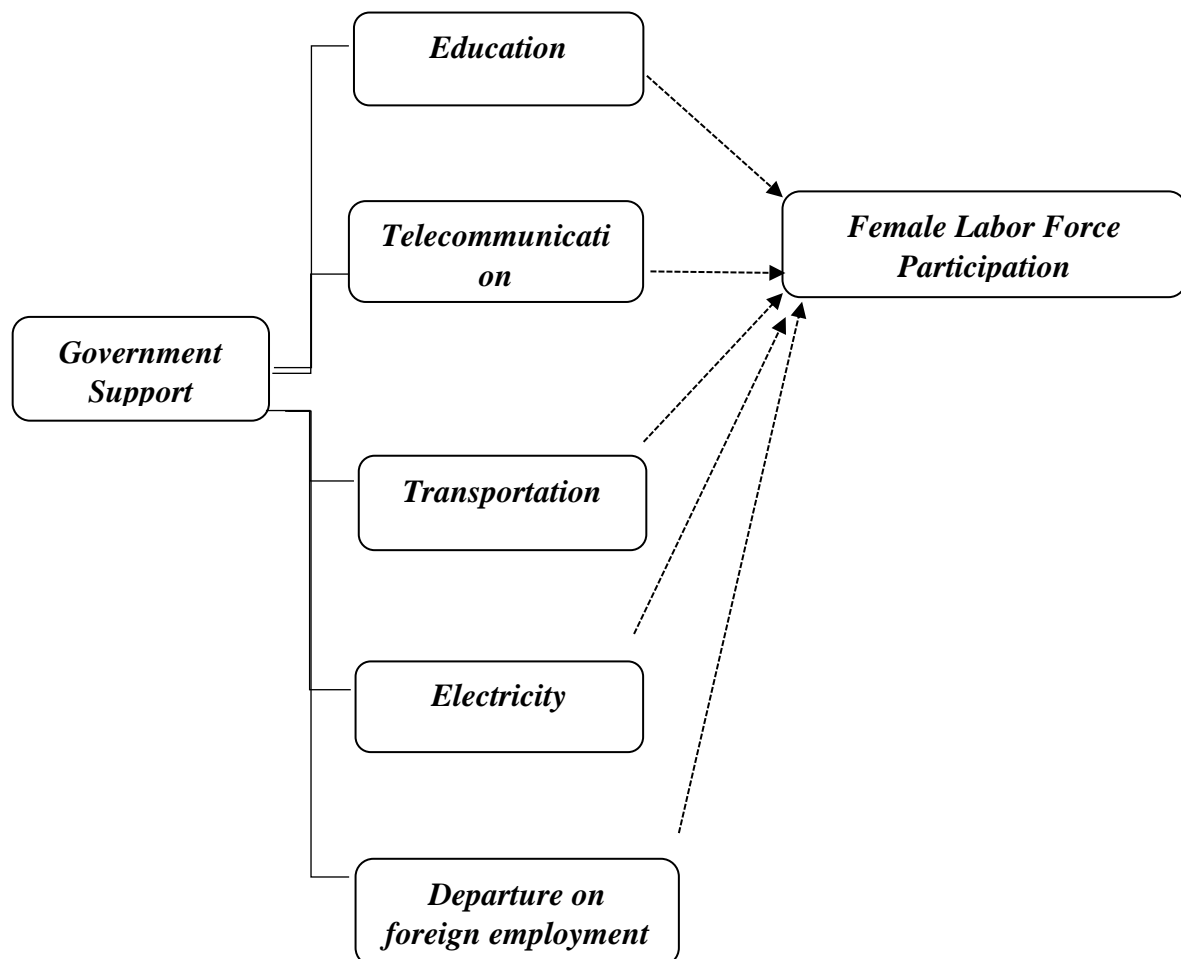


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Source: The Author

Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design Approach

This study has been built using the mixed-methods sequential explanatory design

approach, in order to analyze the effectiveness of Sri Lankan government policies in ameliorating the female labor force participation. Mixed method sequential

explanatory design comprises of 2 phases namely quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis where qualitative analysis is used to elaborate, explain and validate the results obtained through quantitative analysis. (Ivankova, N.V., 2006) The reasoning behind using the mixed method sequential

explanatory approach is that the quantitative analysis provides a general understanding about the research problem whereas qualitative analysis elucidates the statistical results derived through quantitative analysis by exploring participants' perspectives in depth (Ivankova, N.V., 2006).

Table 03: List of interviews conducted with unemployed women

<i>Number of Participants</i>	<i>Province</i>
02	Uva
02	Eastern
02	Northern
02	Sabaragamuwa
02	North Central
03	Central
03	North Western
03	Southern
04	Western

As the first phase of the mixed-method sequential explanatory design approach, a quantitative analysis has been carried out. The quantitative analysis used panel data for the period of 2014 to 2017² for 9 provinces of Sri Lanka. Secondary data sources such as reports of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, World Bank, UNICEF, Department of Census and Statistics had been used in order to derive the research outcomes which in turn would aid in attaining the research objective.

The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of women in a country or region is influenced by a multitude of socio-economic, cultural, and policy factors. Neoclassical economic

theory, suggests that LFPR is influenced by individual choices based on factors such as wages, education, and family responsibilities. Additionally, feminist theories emphasize the role of gender norms, discrimination, and social expectations in shaping women's labor force participation decisions.

Investment in education is a key determinant of labor force participation. Human capital theory, posits that education enhances an individual's skills and employability, thus encouraging labor force participation. Moreover, from a feminist perspective, access to quality education is considered essential for empowering women and enabling them to enter the workforce. The

² Some of the data are not available after 2017. Therefore, the period of 2014-2017 has been taken into consideration.

decision of women to seek foreign employment is often driven by economic necessity and opportunities abroad. The new economics of labor migration theory suggests that migration decisions are influenced by income disparities between home and host countries. Access to electricity is a crucial infrastructure indicator that can affect labor force participation. Modernization theory suggests that improved infrastructure, including electricity, can lead to increased economic development and participation in the formal labor market. Electricity also facilitates women's participation in both formal and informal sectors (World Bank, 2020).

Telecommunication services can enhance access to information and job opportunities, especially in remote areas. The diffusion of innovation theory suggests that the availability of modern communication technologies can impact employment patterns. Telecommunication can also support women's participation in remote or part-time work (Qiang et al., 2009).

Adequate public transportation can reduce barriers to labor force participation, particularly for women who may face mobility challenges. The accessibility theory, as outlined by Handy (2002), argues that convenient transportation options enable individuals to access job opportunities and services, thereby promoting labor force participation.

By grounding the conceptual framework in established theories and referring to key scholars in each area, the research can provide a more robust and theoretically informed analysis of the factors affecting female labor force participation while revealing the adequacy of the government support and assistance towards encouraging female labor force participation.

Dependent Variable:

Female Labor Force Participation Rate (at provincial level) (LFPR): Female labor force participation rate is defined as the percentage of the current female labor force to the total labor force in Sri Lanka. Respective district averages have been taken into consideration when calculating provincial female labor force participation rate.

Independent Variables:

- Budget allocation for education: Budget allocation for education is defined as the percentage share of provincial council's expenditure on education to the total public expenditure.
- Departure for foreign employment (female): Departure for foreign employment (female) is defined as the provincial share of the women migrant to other countries for foreign employment in absolute terms.
- Electricity services: Electricity service is defined as the provincial share of consumer accounts of electricity as a percentage of the total consumer accounts of electricity of Sri Lanka.
- Telecommunication services: Telecommunication services is defined as the provincial share of provision of wireless local loop and CDMA units as a percentage of all island provision of wireless local loop and CDMA units.

- Availability of public transportation: (In Millions) of SLCTB/ Regional bus companies have been used as buses are the principal mode of transportation.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

Where;

Y = Female Labor Force Participation Rate

β_0 = The constant term

β_1X_1 = Budget allocation for education (BAE)

β_2X_2 = Departure for foreign employment (female) (DFE)

β_3X_3 = Electricity Service (% of Consumer Accounts) (ES)

β_4X_4 = Telecommunication Service (Wireless Local Loop & CDMA) (TS)

β_5X_5 = Transportation Services (Operated KM of Regional Bus Companies (Mn) (TRS)

ε_t = The random error term which is assumed to be normally distributed.

We perform some Lagrange Multiplier tests (Breusch-Pagan) to outline the cross-section effects. If random effects exist, then Pooled OLS will not be the appropriate model for this study.

H₀: There is no random effect

H₁: There is random effect

Then we perform Hausman specification test to select the appropriate model from fixed effect model and random effect model. If the corresponding p-value of the Hausman test is not greater than 0.05, fixed effect model would be appropriate.

If contemporaneous correlation in residuals is existing, the results provided through fixed effect model will be biased which is termed as cross – sectional dependence which is checked through Breusch – Pagan LM test.

H₀: There is no contemporaneous correlation in residuals

H₁: There is contemporaneous correlation in residuals

If case of an existence of contemporaneous correlation in residuals, Panel Corrected Standard Error (PCSE) model will be used to derive unbiased coefficients of the estimators.

H₀: There is no significant effect between dependent variable and independent variables.

H₁: There is a significant effect between dependent variable and independent variables.

As the 2nd phase of the mixed-method sequential explanatory design approach, 18 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with selected women who are not

in the labor force in Sri Lanka (covering all 9 provinces) in order to validate the statistical results generated via quantitative analysis which in turn would enhance the reliability of the study. Purposive sampling technique has

been used to select the respondents, in which 2 respondents within the age range of 30-50 years, have been selected from each province (graduate and non-graduate).

Results and Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Initially, we run the pooled OLS regression (Table 4) and perform Breusch Pagan test (Table 5) to discern the suitability of pooled OLS model for the study.

As per the results of Breusch Pagan test, the value for cross section factor is insignificant as it is greater than 0.05 whereas the value for time factor is significant as it is lesser than 0.05. Therefore, pooled OLS model is not appropriate for the study, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. Then we run the period random effect model as the value for time factor is significant.

Then we perform the Hausman test to discern the applicability of the period random effect model to attain the objective of the study.

As per the results of Hausman test, p value is greater than 0.05, therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and proceed with period random effect model for the study (Table 06).

Results of the Estimated Model

Based on the results of the period random effect model, we can derive at the following econometric model.

Table 4: Pooled OLS Regression Model

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t-Statistic</i>	<i>Probability</i>
C	34.498	0.352	97.993	0.000
D(BAE)	0.518	0.092	5.606	0.000
D(FDE,2)	-0.355	0.195	-1.819	0.082
D(ES)	0.044	0.058	0.747	0.463
D(TCS)	0.192	0.071	2.702	0.013
D(TRS,2)	0.054	0.015	3.683	0.001
R-squared	0.767	Mean dependent variable		35.678
Adjusted R-squared	0.715	S.D. dependent variable		3.475
S.E. of regression	1.856	Akaike info criterion		4.262
Sum squared residual	75.812	Schwarz criterion		4.548
Log likelihood	-53.675	Hannan-Quinn criteria		4.349
F-statistic	14.526	Durbin-Watson statistic		2.048
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000			

Table 5: Breusch Pagan Test

	Test Hypothesis		
	Cross-section	Time	Both
Breusch-Pagan	3.457 (0.167)	35.457 (0.000)	38.828 (0.000)

Table 6. Period Random Effect Model

Variable	Coefficient	Std.Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	34.498	0.352	97.993	0.000
D(BAE)	0.518	0.093	5.606	0.000
D(DFE,2)	-0.355	0.195	-1.819	0.083
D(ES)	0.044	0.059	0.747	0.463
D(TCS)	0.192	0.072	2.702	0.013
D(TRS,2)	0.054	0.015	3.683	0.001
Effects Specification				
			S.D.	Rho
Period random			0.000	0.000
Idiosyncratic random			1.304	1.000
Weighted Statistics				
R-squared	0.767	Mean dependent var		35.678
Adjusted R-squared	0.715	S.D. dependent var		3.475
S.E. of regression	1.856	Sum squared resid		75.811
F-statistic	14.527	Durbin-Watson stat		2.048
Prob(F-statistic)	0.000			
Unweighted Statistics				
R-squared	0.767	Mean dependent var		35.679
Sum squared resid	75.812	Durbin-Watson stat		2.049

Table 7: Hausman Test

Test summary	Chi-Sq. Statistic	Hausman Test Chi-Sq.d.f.	Prob.
Period random	0.000	5	1.000

$$Y = 34.497 + 0.519X_1 - 0.355X_2 + 0.044X_3 + 0.192X_4 + 0.054X_5 + \epsilon_t \quad (2)$$

Y = Female Labor Force Participation Rate (Respective District Average)

β_0 = The constant term

X₁ = Budget allocation for education

X₂ = Departure for foreign employment (female)

X₃ = Electricity Service (% of Consumer Accounts)

X₄ = Telecommunication (Wireless Local Loop & CDMA)

X₅ = Transportation Services (Operated KM of Regional Bus Companies (Mn))

As per the estimated model, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between female labor force participation rate and budget allocation for education, provision of telecommunication services and availability of public transportation services. Female labor force participation rate will increase by 0.52 per cent, 0.19 per cent and 0.05 per cent with 1 per cent increment in budget allocation for education, provision of telecommunication services and availability of public transport services respectively. There is a negative and statistically insignificant relationship between female labor force participation rate and departure of women for foreign employment. Female labor force participation rate will fall by 0.35 per cent with 1 per cent increment of departure of women for foreign employment. There is a positive yet statistically insignificant relationship between female labor force participation rate and provision of electricity. Female labor force participation rate will increase by 0.044 per cent with 1 per cent increment in provision of electricity.

Qualitative Analysis

Based on the insights gathered through the interviews, it was further proven that there is a significant and positive relationship between female labor force participation and budget allocation for education, provision of telecommunication services and availability of public transportation services. The respondents stated that there is no frequent

availability of public transportation services and the unaffordability to consume private transportation services and provision of inadequate financial and non-financial subsidies have been the main reasons for not participating in the labor force. One of the respondents in Uva province described her experience during the personal interview as follows.

“The support given by the government is not enough for us to do a job or start a business. We experience frequent power cuts and we cannot do any business because of lack of infrastructure. I had to close down my Lace leaf plantation as the government stopped offering fertilizer subsidies. Also, there is no adequate supply of water in our area due to which we are unable to carry out not only business activities but also our day-to-day activities. Even though I want to do a job, I am not very much aware about the job opportunities and it is very difficult for me to travel to work because of the high travelling cost. Working from home is also not a viable option for me because there is no strong network in our area.” (Respondent 8, Personal Interview, March 15, 2022).

The respondents from other provinces except Western province stated that they did not have access to quality educational resources such as skilled teachers due to which they were unable to pursue their secondary and tertiary education at the level best which in turn led to leave them out of the labor force as they lack required skills and

competencies for the employment opportunities. In the bargain, the respondents declared that they do not have access to strong telecommunication network facilities followed by real time signal outages which interrupts remote working. The respondents from all provinces mentioned that the frequent power outages have been a restraining force for not participating in the labor force, which was also proven in the quantitative analysis. The respondents further stated that the intermittent provision of electricity in all provinces had distorted business operations significantly, causing massive losses which led to the closing down of lot of MSMEs. One of the respondents in the North Western province shared her experience as follows.

“I had to quit working after marriage and started helping my husband with his tuition classes. He conducts online classes for commerce students. However, the online classes are getting disrupted because of the frequent power cuts and network problems. We cannot print and deliver tutorial materials on time because of the power cuts.” (Respondent 17, Personal Interview, April 20, 2022).

Besides, one of the main reasons for not participating in the labor force was childbearing followed by unavailability of daycare centers close to work premises. The respondents from Western province disclosed that they didn't have access to

daycare centers close to their work premises due to which they had decided to quit their jobs. The respondents from other provinces stated that they did not have access to trustable daycare centers and private daycare centers were out of their affordability. One of the respondents in Western province shared her experience during the personal interview conducted.

“I used to work in the IT sector. I actually had to quit my job because of my kids. I could not find a good daycare center near my office. When I quitted my job, two of my colleagues also left their job due to the exact same reason.” (Respondent 16, Personal Interview, April 16, 2022)

Furthermore, they emphasized on the corruptions and malpractices occurring in the Sri Lankan political system due to which they are discouraged to participate in the labor force. It is quite evident from the following statement made by two of the respondents in the Eastern and Sabaragamuwa provinces.

“It has been 8 years since I quitted my job at the garment factory due to the difficulty in paying rent in Colombo. Even though I moved to Eastern province, I still live in a rented house with my family, as we are unable to afford a permanent place to live. I wanted to start a sewing business but it is difficult with the tight budget. We do not get any support from the governing authorities as well. The development officers do not really pay attention to our problems and instead

they keep on postponing our requirements.” (Respondent 9, March 20, 2022).

“I used to work as a supervisor in a gem cutting business. After quitting that job, I wanted to continue with another employment. However, it is very hard to find a job with the corruptions in the political system in our country. I undertook several clerical exams to get a job, but I was not offered with the opportunities as the government officers were involved in manipulating the results of the exam. Poor people like us always suffer because of the corruption in these governing authorities.” (Respondent 3, Personal Interview, February 06, 2022).

In a nutshell, the support extended by the government in ameliorating female labor force participation has not been adequate as per the views of the respondents. Following are some of the statements made by the respondents with regard to the policy suggestions.

“It is better if the government authorities can advise us on starting a business at home, so that we can earn at home while taking care of the children. We are not even aware about the self-employment opportunities. It is better if the government can conduct advisory workshops in each province while giving a preliminary financial support to start a business.” (Respondent 2, Personal Interview, February 03, 2022).

“I believe that it is better if the government can increase frequent availability of CTB buses because it is very hard to afford private transportation services. That is one of the main reasons why I quitted my job because half of my salary was spent on transportation.” (Respondent 1, Personal Interview, February 01, 2022).

“I would love to start a tailoring business but I don’t have sufficient capital to start the business. If the government authorities can give an interest free loan facility to purchase sewing machines, it would be a really good encouragement.” (Respondent 13, Personal Interview, April 12, 2022).

“Only poor people have to suffer because of the corruption occuring in the governing bodies. I would suggest that there has to be some sort of a transparency in the political system. The government should conduct periodical monitoring processes at provincial level, so that it will reduce the unfair treatment towards poor people.” (Respondent 3, Personal Interview, February 06, 2022).

In short, some of the restraining forces of the female labor force participation as outlined by the respondents are childbearing, lack of access to telecommunication facilities, frequent power outages, lack of access to public transportation, lack of access to educational resources, lack of financial support, etc. In order to motivate them to participate in the labor force, the respondents

highlighted some of the policy suggestions such as provision of financial and non-financial subsidies to support MSMEs, workshops on raising awareness of self-employment opportunities and provision of advisory services on market expansion, enhance transparency in the regulatory system and provision of infrastructure facilities at an adequate level.

Discussion

The study carried out the mixed method sequential explanatory design approach in which both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative analysis reveals several significant relationships between female labor force participation and key variables. Notably, there is a positive and statistically significant association between female labor force participation rate and budget allocation for education, provision of telecommunication services, and the availability of public transportation services. This suggests that increased investments in education, improved telecommunication infrastructure, and enhanced public transportation systems can positively impact female labor force participation. IMF (2015) stated that the educational attainment for women has a positive correlation with female labor force participation. Zvi Eckstein (2011) states that 1/3rd of the increment in female labour force participation during the last century in the United States can be attributed

to educational attainment. In addition to that, according to the records made by the World Bank, one of the key reasons behind low level of female labor force participation in Sri Lanka is lack of availability and inaccessibility to public transportation in Sri Lanka (International Finance Corporation, 2020). Also, these findings align with Das and Mohapatra (2020), which emphasizes the importance of education and infrastructure in promoting female workforce engagement.

Conversely, the study identifies a negative and statistically insignificant relationship between female labor force participation and the departure of women for foreign employment. While the impact is not significant in statistical terms, it is crucial to recognize the potential implications of women seeking employment abroad. This observation is in line with the Ratha (2013), which underscores the need for policies that provide adequate support and protection to women in foreign employment to ensure their well-being and labor market reintegration upon return.

The positive yet statistically insignificant relationship between female labor force participation and the provision of electricity highlights the complexity of infrastructure development and its impact on labor force participation. This suggests that while access to electricity is essential, other factors, such as job opportunities and economic conditions, may mediate its influence. These

findings resonate with the research of Wodon et al. (2019), which emphasizes the multifaceted nature of women's labor market participation. According to IMF (2015), the availability of basic infrastructure such as electricity and water supply boosts the female labor force participation because inadequate infrastructure affects female labor force participation more than male labor force participation as women engage in household activities more often than men. Providing better access to basic infrastructure facilities frees up women's time for formal employment.

The qualitative insights gleaned from interviews with women not in the labor force offer a deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by potential female workers. Issues related to inadequate public transportation, frequent power outages, and lack of access to educational resources emerged as significant hindrances to labor force participation. These qualitative findings substantiate the quantitative results and underscore the importance of addressing infrastructure and educational gaps.

Moreover, the qualitative analysis reveals that childbearing and the unavailability of affordable and trustworthy daycare centers near workplaces are additional deterrents to female labor force participation. Hsin (2012), also emphasizes the need for family-friendly policies, including accessible daycare

services, to enable women to reconcile work and family responsibilities.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Sri Lanka has been recording a decreasing rate of female labor force participation throughout the past few decades due to various reasons such as childbearing, lack of access to transportation, electricity and telecommunication services, wage discrimination, corruption and malpractices in the political system, lack of access to educational resources and increasing trend of women departing for foreign employment opportunities. The findings of this study underscore the need for a comprehensive set of policy recommendations to address the challenges and barriers identified in relation to female labor force participation in Sri Lanka, particularly at the provincial level. Firstly, the government should prioritize investments in education. This entails improving the quality of education by, expanding access in rural areas, and implementing strategies to encourage girls to stay in school. Secondly, the government should work on expanding and improving telecommunications infrastructure across the country. This can enhance connectivity and enable more women to access remote work opportunities, including in fields like IT and customer service.

To address the issue of inadequate and inaccessible public transportation, the government should invest in the expansion and improvement of transportation networks, especially in rural areas. Initiatives such as subsidized transportation for women or dedicated women-only transport options can also be considered to enhance safety and convenience.

Furthermore, given the impact of women seeking employment abroad, the government should strengthen the current protective policies and programs to ensure the safety and well-being of female migrant workers, including pre-departure training and implement mechanisms for labor market reintegration upon return. While the relationship between electricity provision and female labor force participation is complex, the government should continue its efforts to expand access to electricity, particularly in rural areas, while simultaneously focusing on improving job opportunities and economic conditions. Addressing the challenge of childbearing and the lack of affordable daycare facilities, the government should promote family-friendly policies, including the creation and subsidization of daycare centers near workplaces, flexible work arrangements, and parental leave options.

Moreover, the government should actively promote gender sensitization programs to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, fostering equal opportunities for

women in all sectors, including traditionally male-dominated fields. Establishing a robust data collection and monitoring system to track progress in female labor force participation at the provincial level is essential. Also, collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations focused on gender equality and women's empowerment can provide valuable resources, expertise, and best practices. Additionally, launching public awareness campaigns to promote the value of women's participation in the labor force and challenge cultural norms hindering women from seeking employment is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable workforce in Sri Lanka.

Lastly, the government should implement measures such as initiating a sustainable scheme for women entrepreneurs to facilitate their MSMEs by providing financial and non-financial subsidies, provision of provincial wise advisory services and conducting workshops to raise awareness on employment opportunities and entrepreneurial activities and conducting periodical assessments of provincial level government authorities to enhance transparency in the political system.

Dr. Ananda Rathnayake is a senior lecturer in the Department of Business Economics, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka. Dr. Ananda Rathnayake has a diverse range of teaching interests. He is passionate about subjects such as

Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Econometrics, Monetary Economics, and Central Banking. His research interests span a wide range of topics, including Money and Banking, Agriculture Efficiency, Economic Growth, Political Instability and Gender Diversity. His publications have appeared in journals such as South Asia Economic Journal, South Asian Journal of Finance, Vidyodaya Journal of Management, Sri Lankan Journal of Business Economics, MSNIM Management Review.

References

- Banerjee, A., & Piketty, T. (2021). Building back more together: A resilient and equitable recovery for women in the informal economy. *World Development*, 139, 105313.
- Bluedorn, J., Bluedorn, M. J. C., Caselli, F. G., Hansen, M. N. J. H., Shibata, M. I., & Tavares, M. M. M. (2021). Gender and Employment in the COVID-19 Recession: Evidence on “She-cessions”. International Monetary Fund.
- Bueno, X., & Brinton, M. C. (2019). Gender egalitarianism, perceived economic insecurity, and fertility intentions in Spain: A qualitative analysis. *Population studies*, 73(2), 247-260.
- CBSL. (2019). CBSL Annual Report 2019. Colombo: Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Colombo.
- Contreras, D., & Plaza, G. (2010). Contreras, D., & Plaza, G. (2010). Cultural factors in women's labor force participation in Chile. *Feminist Economics*, 16(2), 27-46.
- Das, S., & Mohapatra, D. (2020). Female labor force participation in India: Trends, drivers, and challenges. *World Development*, 125, 104674.
- Department of Probation and Child Care Services. (2017). Annual Report 2017. Colombo: Department of Probation and Child Care Services, .Colombo.
- Dzubinski, L. M. (2022). How Bias Against Women Persists in Female-Dominated Workplaces. *Harvard Business Review Digital Articles*, 1
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- Gunathilake, R. (2013). Women's Participation in Sri Lanka's Labour Force: Trends, Drivers and Constraints. International Labour Organization
- Gunatilaka, R., & Chandrasiri, S. (2022). Gender Disparities and Labour Market Challenges. United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), New York
- Gupta, I., & Roy, A. (2023). What really empowers women? Taking another look at economic empowerment. *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 25(1), 17-31.
- Hafeez, A., & Ahmad, E. (2002). Factors determining the labour force participation decision of educated married women in a district of Punjab.

- Pakistan Economic and Social Review, 75-88.F PUNJAB. JSTOR, 15.
- Handy, S. (2002). Accessibility- vs. Mobility-Enhancing Strategies for Addressing Automobile Dependence in the US. Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment, 7(1), 61-75.
- Hsin, A. (2012). Does Universal Preschool Hit the Target? Program Access and Preschool Impacts. Children and Youth Services Review, 34(3), 654-663.
- International Labour Organization. (2016). Factors affecting women's labour force participation in Sri Lanka. ILO Country Office for Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Colombo.
- ILO. (2017). Social Finance and Impact Insurance Annual Report 2017. International Labour Office, Geneva.
- ILO. (2018). Sri Lankan Female Migrant Workers and the Family Background Report. Colombo: ILO, Colombo.
- ITU. (2021). Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2020. International Telecommunication Union, Geneva.
- Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. Field methods, 18(1), 3-20.
- Jayaweera, S. (1999). Women in Sri Lanka: Country briefing paper. Asian Development Bank, Manila.
- Klasen, S. (2019). What explains uneven female labor force participation levels and trends in developing countries?. The World Bank Research Observer, 34(2), 161-197.
- Kuptsch, C., & Manger, M. (2019). The impact of international labour migration on women in Asia: Engendering a rights-based approach to labour migration governance. Gender and Development, 27(3), 453-467.
- Lee, S. A., Cho, J. E., Park, S., & Lee, S. S. Y. (2013). It's More Than an M-shape: The Political Economy of Female Non-Standard Workers in the Republic of Korea. Asian Social Work and Policy Review, 7(1), 1-17.
- Madurawala, S. (2017). Labour force participation by women and inclusive growth: an application of social opportunity function for Sri Lanka. South Asia Economic Journal, 18(2), 214-229.
- Mahadevan, R., & Jayasinghe, M. (2020). Examining multidimensional poverty in Sri Lanka: Transitioning through post war conflict. Social Indicators Research, 149, 15-39.
- Malhotra, A., & DeGraff, D. S. (1997). Entry versus success in the labor force: Young women's employment in Sri Lanka. World Development, 25(3), 379-394.
- Mallawarachchi, L. (2020). A Study oOf tThe Factors Affecting Female Labour

- Force Participation in Sri Lanka. Research Gate, 20.
- Nistotskaya, M., & Baskaran, T. (2019). The Role of Gender in Democratic Revolutions: Evidence from the Color Revolutions. *World Development*, 119, 51-62.
- Pimkina, S., & de La Flor, L. (2020). Promoting female labor force participation.
- Podujana Perauna Manifesto. (2018). National Policy Framework Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour.
- Psacharopoulos, G. &. (1989). Female Labour Force Participation: An international perspective . *World Bank Research Observer*, 187-201.
- Ratha, D. (2013). Leveraging migration for Africa: Remittances, skills, and investments. *World Bank Publications*, Washington DC
- Rosenbluth, F. T. (2006). The political economy of gender: explaining crossnational variation in gender division of labour and the gender voting gap. *American Journal of Political Science*, 1-19.
- Sakalasooriya, N. (2021). Regional development disparities in Sri Lanka. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(7), 62-91.
- Samarakoon, S. J. M. N. G., & Mayadunne, G. (2018). An exploratory study on low labour force participation of women in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Social Sciences*, 137-151.
- Satharasinghe, I. B. (2015). Gender Disparities in Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Advanced Social Studies*, 15.
- Solotaroff, J. L., Joseph, G., Kuriakose, A. T., & Sethi, J. (2020). Getting to work: Unlocking women's potential in Sri Lanka's labor force. *World Bank Publications*.
- Thomas, D. (2019). Education and women's labor force participation. *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*, 1-21.
- Wodon, Q., Montenegro, C. E., Nguyen, H. T., & Onagoruwa, A. (2019). Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls. *World Bank*.
- World Bank. (2013). *Low Female Labor-Force Participation in Sri Lanka: Contributory Factors, Challenges and Policy Implications*. Washington DC: South Asia Human Development Sector.
- World Bank. (2017). *Sri Lanka development update, creating opportunities and managing risks for sustained growth.*: World Bank, Washington DC
- World Bank. (2020). *World Development Report 2020: Trading for Development in the Age of Global Value Chains*. World Bank, Washington DC