

**SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES IN BAHRAIN: A
CASE STUDY OF LIVING CONDITIONS AND COPING
STRATEGIES**

BY

MOHAMED IDREES MOHAMED ASLAM

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

2023

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degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology and
Anthropology

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed
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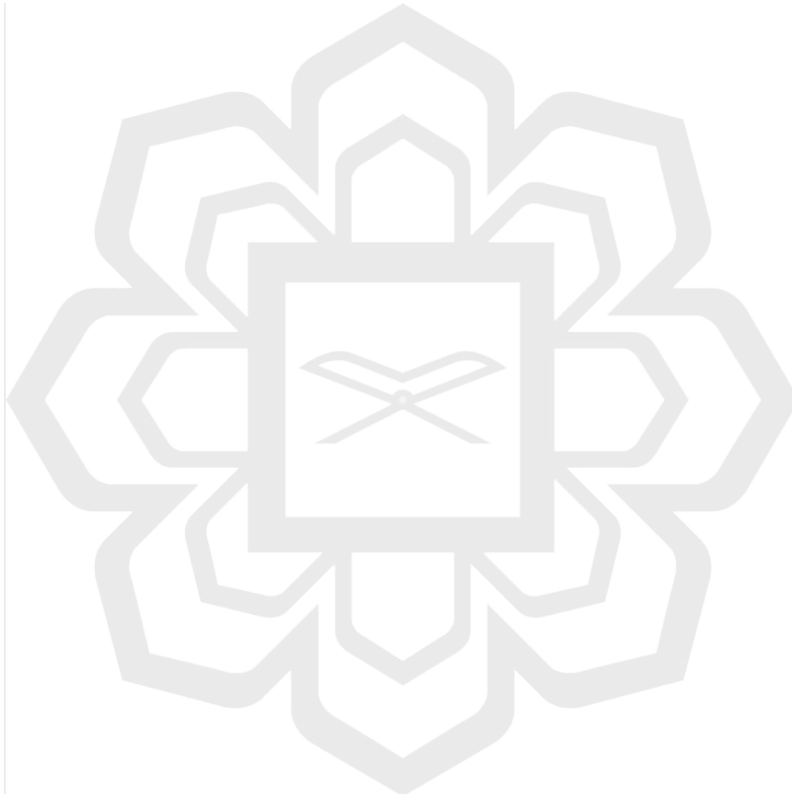
ABSTRACT

This case study is a detailed description of the experience of Sri Lankan migrant families in Bahrain and aims to explore their legal, economic, and social challenges after arriving in Bahrain and its impact on economic return and family well-being. These migrants' living conditions show contrasting and negative experiences after arriving at their destinations. The qualitative research method was utilised by drawing descriptive analysis (thematic analysis technique) of compiling data through semi-structured interviews. Thirty in-depth interviews with Sri Lankan migrant families who stayed with their families in Bahrain for more than six months were conducted using a purposive sampling technique. Observation and two interviews with officials were also conducted. All migrants were living with their families at the destination during the interviews. Economic and political macro drivers were contributing factors and were out of migrants' control. The problems that these potential migrants encountered in Sri Lanka were real and are predicted to persist in the future. The present study found that, since the pushing factors prevail more in the country of origin, the pulling factors become stronger during migration, which also persuades the use of coping mechanisms to accept the contrasting situation in the destination country. As per the obtained data, it was apparent that the arrival in Bahrain was challenging, and often, all the positive prospects for what they were pulled were non-existent. The findings have confirmed that the foremost goal of migration, earning through productive employment, has collapsed during their migration due to legal and economic challenges and social grievances. Furthermore, migration was the source of the changes in the family, including family structure and marriage choices. Lastly, the present study found that migration is about accepting challenges to achieve economic prospects, which is more particular to Middle Eastern countries. For migrants, coping mechanisms become an inevitable strength in their lives. They promptly use various coping mechanisms, regardless of their profession and economic status, to cope with legal, economic, and social challenges ahead of them. The present study explored the uncertain living conditions of migrant worker families in Bahrain, and it enriches the literature with a new sociological and empirical study that provides new evidence about the severe challenges migrants face. The study findings further stress the implementation of globally accepted guidelines, such as Sustainable Development Goals, to preserve migrants' rights and ensure their migration goals are achieved.

ملخص البحث

دراسة الحالة هذه عبارة عن وصف تفصيلي لتجربة الأسر السريلانكية المهاجرة في البحرين، وهي تهدف إلى استكشاف التحديات القانونية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية التي تواجهها بعد وصولها إلى البحرين وتأثيرها على العائد الاقتصادي ورفاهية الأسرة. تظهر الظروف المعيشية لهؤلاء المهاجرين تحارب متناقضة وسلبية بعد وصولهم إلى وجهاتهم. تم استخدام طريقة البحث النوعي من خلال رسم التحليل الوصفي (تقنية التحليل الموضوعي) لتجميع البيانات من خلال المقابلات شبه المنظمة. وتم إجراء ثلاثين مقابلة معمقة مع عائلات مهاجرة سريلانكية أقامت مع عائلاتها في البحرين لأكثر من ستة أشهر باستخدام تقنية أخذ العينات الهادفة. كما تم إجراء المراقبة وإجراء مقابلات مع المسؤولين. كان جميع المهاجرين يعيشون مع عائلاتهم في الوجهة أثناء المقابلات. وكانت الدوافع الاقتصادية والسياسية الكلية عوامل مساهمة وكانت خارجة عن سيطرة المهاجرين. وكانت المشاكل التي واجهها هؤلاء المهاجرون المحتملون في سريلانكا حقيقية، ومن المتوقع أن تستمر في المستقبل. وقد وجدت الدراسة الحالية أنه بما أن عوامل الدفع تسود أكثر في بلد المنشأ، فإن عوامل الجذب تصبح أقوى أثناء الهجرة، مما يقنع أيضاً باستخدام آليات المواجهة لقبول الوضع المتناقض في بلد المقصد. وبحسب المعطيات التي تم الحصول عليها، كان واضحاً أن الوصول إلى البحرين كان صعباً، وفي كثير من الأحيان كانت كل الآفاق الإيجابية لما تم سحبه معدومة. لقد أكدت النتائج أن الهدف الرئيسي للهجرة، وهو تحقيق الكسب من خلال العمالة المنتجة، قد انهار أثناء هجرتهم بسبب التحديات القانونية والاقتصادية والمظالم الاجتماعية. علاوة على ذلك، كانت الهجرة مصدر التغيرات في الأسرة، بما في ذلك هيكل الأسرة واختيارات الزواج. وأخيراً، وجدت الدراسة الحالية أن الهجرة تتعلق بقبول التحديات لتحقيق الآفاق الاقتصادية، وهو الأمر الذي ينطبق بشكل أكبر على دول الشرق الأوسط. بالنسبة للمهاجرين، تصبح آليات التكيف قوة لا مفر منها في حياتهم. ويستخدمون على الفور آليات التكيف المختلفة، بغض النظر عن مهنتهم ووضعهم الاقتصادي، للتعامل مع التحديات القانونية والاقتصادية والاجتماعية التي تنتظرهم. استكشفت هذه

الدراسة الظروف المعيشية غير المؤكدة لأسر العمال المهاجرين في البحرين، وهي تثير الأدبيات بدراسة اجتماعية وتجريبية جديدة توفر أدلة جديدة حول التحديات الشديدة التي يواجهها المهاجرون. وتؤكد نتائج الدراسة أيضاً على تنفيذ المبادئ التوجيهية المقبولة عالمياً، مثل أهداف التنمية المستدامة، للحفاظ على حقوق المهاجرين وضمان تحقيق أهداف الهجرة الخاصة بهم.



APPROVAL PAGE

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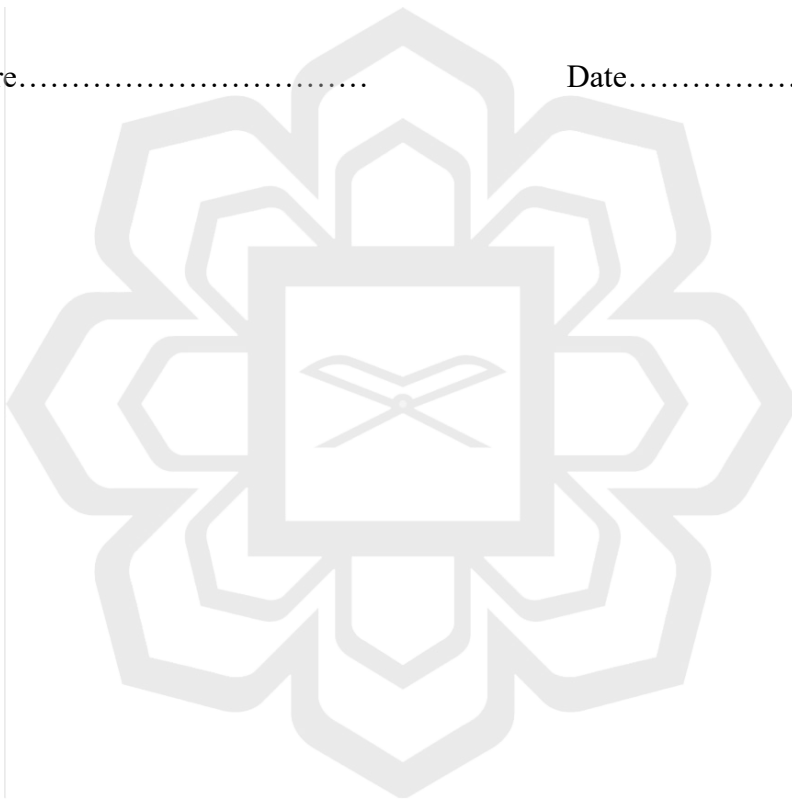
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Mohamed Idrees Mohamed Aslam

Signature.....

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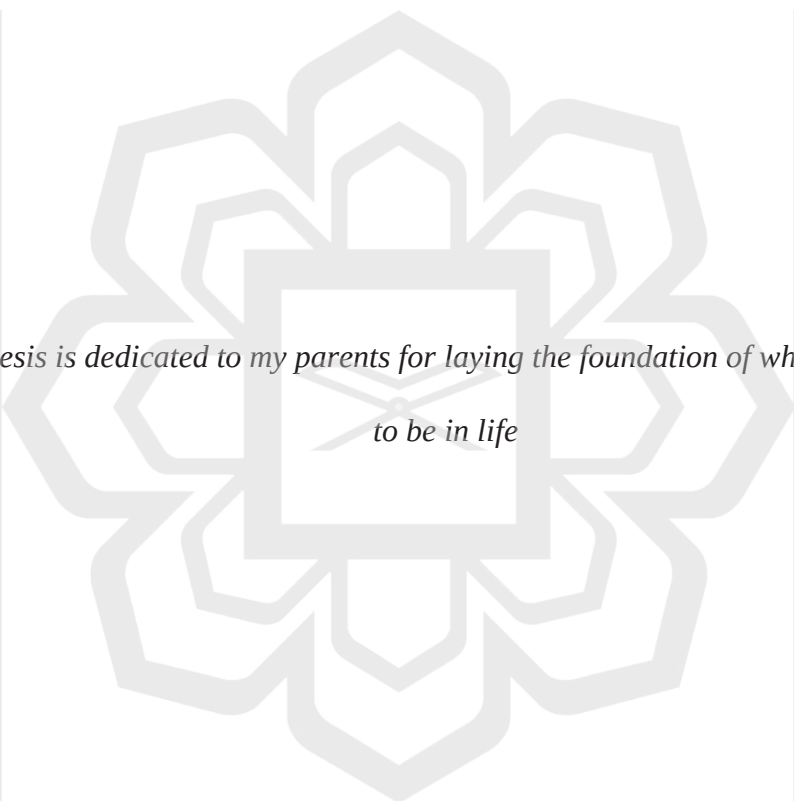
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*This thesis is dedicated to my parents for laying the foundation of what I turned out
to be in life*

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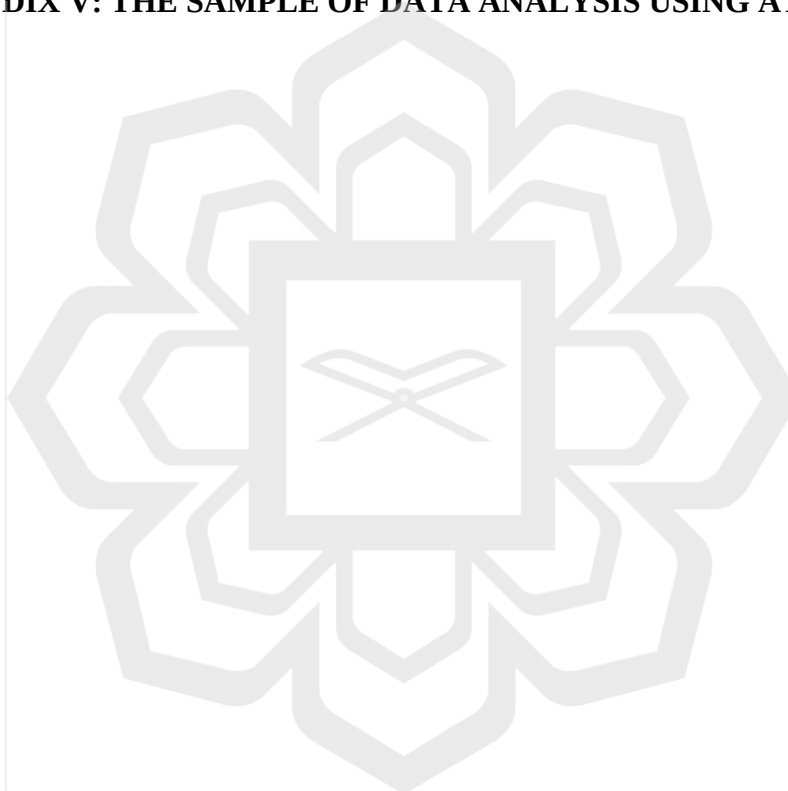
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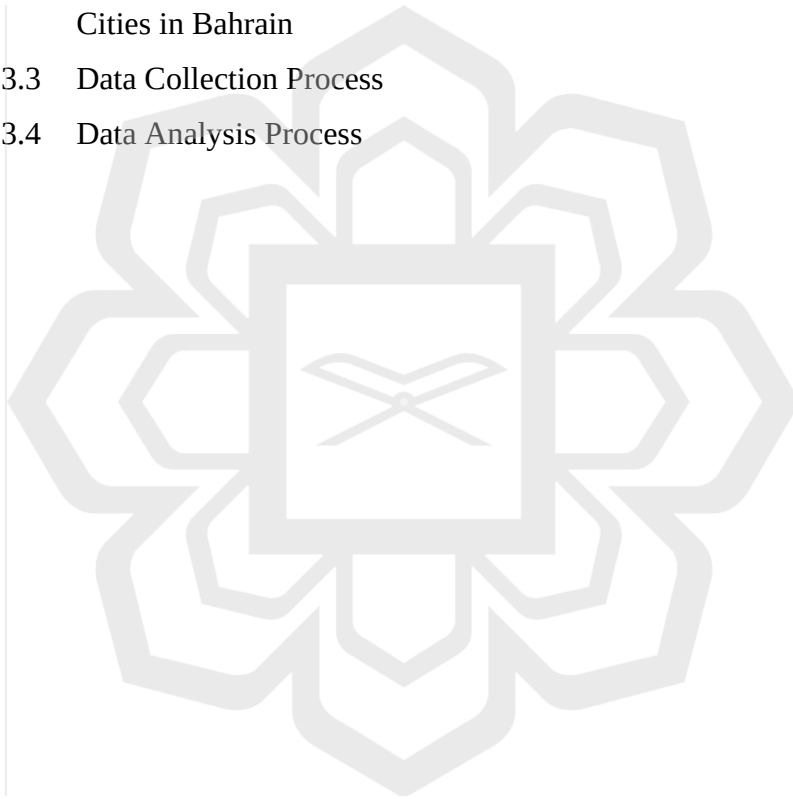
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BD	Bahrain Dinar
COPE	Committee on Public Enterprises
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Production
GMOA	Government Medical Officers' Association
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LMRA	Labour Market Regulatory Authority
ON	Observation Notes
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him.
PR	Resident Permit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SLBFE	Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment
SLTD	Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
TN	Theoretical Notes
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs
US	United States

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

International migration is a steadily growing phenomenon whereby international migrants have been everywhere and will likely continue due to the driving forces, such as diplomatic relationships between the countries, the openness of the labour market, and sophisticated modes of transportation and communication (Zlotnik, 1998). In these geopolitical developments, international migration facilitates people to improve their family economy and experience the desired life in diverse geographical locations in peace (Kulu & Milewski, 2007; Massey, 1999). In the migration project, migrants either leave their families behind or migrate with them. The second type of migration, i.e., family migration, is crucial in migration research. Family is an intimate social group, which is preserved by family migration, in which migrants reunite in the host country with spouses, parents, and children to cope with the prolonged separation from them (Bonizzoni, 2009).

In family migration research, the family is viewed as a sociological, explicitly considered as a collection of individuals, and focused on the impact of migration on the family (Mincer, 1978). González-Ferrer (2011) explained that the migration of the spouse and children is a secondary flow initiated by the first movers who had lived in the receiving country for an extended period. These family members arrive at their work destination, prioritising family-related reasons such as family ties and living with a family with distinct environmental amenities (Belgiojoso & Terzera, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2021). However, Ambroshini (2015) unearthed that in the Italian case, arriving families, particularly breadwinners, went through economic distress and work burden, thus causing unhappy endings for many families. If those challenges were not, family life would not be otherwise. Hence, knowing the underlying drivers of family migration, changing trends, and the social and economic impacts are crucial for proposing policies for receiving and sending countries.

The transitional life period of migrant families has been challenging. On the migration journey, migrants often contend with restrictive migration policies (Beauchemin et al., 2015). Furthermore, the migration of families causes inseparable economic consequences (Gardner, 2011), such as high rental property payments and increases in daily costs, affecting the financial stability of renewing family visas (Ambrosini, 2015; Kim Caarls & Mazzucato, 2016). In addition, increases in the expenses at the destination, once the families arrive, limit the flow of remittances and reduce the possibilities of saving in the source country (Ambrosini, 2014). Similarly, family migration changes the family structure and gender roles among the couples, the culture of the children, and the relationship between family members (Pannetier et al., 2017; Sørensen, 2007). For example, migrants and children feel lonely as they live distanced from extended family members and social support, as observed in Canada (Shirpak et al., 2011). Besides, the primary goals of migrant workers at the destination are to work and make money, but this occurs under many pressures in work. Such working pressures lower the time commitments for their children, especially in education and entertainment (Fleck & Fleck, 2013; Qin, 2009a). Notably, the forgone studies have focused more on families based on the permanent migration locations for families. Besides that, work purposes are another reason why people migrate across the borders, whereby migrants grab ample opportunities to live with family, which is often temporary, expecting to return to their home country after their migration goals are achieved.

Family migration towards temporary locations is growing. It often occurs in Middle Eastern countries. For instance, with the beginning of labour migration, migrants' families started to utilise available migration resources to be temporarily reunited with migrant workers in one Middle Eastern country (Gardner, 2011; Leonard, 2002, 2003). Studies in Bahrain (Gardner, 2008) and the UAE (Vora, 2008) revealed that skilled and professional Indian workers brought in their family members while working under the employer's sponsorship. Besides, Frantz (2008) observed that some Sri Lankan women in Jordan kept romantic relationships with other migrant workers and married them to start a family life in the destination, another form of family migration observed in these destinations. However, the studies that tackled such migrant families are impoverished. Considering the above facts and the gap, this research aims to explore the family migration phenomenon in the Middle East, where

family migration is temporary, looking more specifically into the challenges families face in improving their economic and social well-being.

Middle Eastern countries are challenging destinations for migrant workers, although the economic opportunities are ample. Migrant workers arrive in Middle Eastern countries, expecting better earnings than those in the source country (Tuccio, 2017), and their families come hoping it would be both economically beneficial and psychological solace. However, structural challenges that migrants go through in Middle Eastern countries impact families after their arrival, which is the polar opposite of what they expected. Most Middle Eastern countries, for example, have a dual economic structure with well-paid nationals and poorly-paid foreigners (Gamburd, 2010; Leonard, 2002). This dichotomy impacts upgrading employment status and getting appropriate jobs according to migrant workers' skills (Gardner, 2008), adversely affecting their ability to recover migration costs, get wages regularly, and enjoy family reunion resources. As per the forgone findings, migrants who are arriving from labour-sending countries, such as Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, are prone to these vulnerabilities. However, within the Middle Eastern context, there has been limited research on family migration and its consequences among family members. This is particularly true for migration and labour researchers, especially in the corridor between Sri Lanka and the Middle East, where family migration is a steadily growing phenomenon.

Middle Eastern countries continuously receive Sri Lankan migrants, resulting in a constantly growing number of Sri Lankan migrants who spend much of their lives there to earn money. In Sri Lanka, before the 1970s and after the 1970s, Sri Lankan migrants streamed to various potential destinations either as families or individuals seeking work, study, permanent settlements, and asylum seekers (Anas & Wickremasinghe, 2010; Gamburd, 2000; Hettige, 1989; Hugo & Dissanayake, 2017; Kottegoda, 2006). Before the 1970s, for example, educated people and business professionals travelled to Europe and Australia in search of work and permanent residence (Anas & Wickremasinghe, 2010; Hugo & Dissanayake, 2017). Since the 1970s, Sri Lanka has gradually integrated into the world market, encouraging tourism and international labour migration. Notably, in 1976, the restrictions on foreign employment were lifted, thus causing the expedition of labour migration across the

borders from Sri Lanka (Lakshman, 1993). Moreover, with the discovery of oil in the Middle East, there was a persistent demand for Sri Lankan labourers as massive development projects were started there (Gamburd, 2000, 2003). Thus, the migratory wave shifted to the Middle East by 1977 as individuals discovered new avenues to overcome immediate economic problems or make quick investments for their future lives (Gamburd, 2000; Hettige, 1989; Ukwatta, 2010b). According to a report published by the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE, 2019), the main authoritative body registering migrant workers, nearly 90% of these workers were employed in eight Middle East countries in 2018: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, which are collectively known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states¹, as well as Lebanon and Jordan.

Migration studies in Sri Lanka that tackle the Middle East migration focus predominantly on individual migrant workers. According to these studies, the leading factors that have been encouraging are economic, particularly poverty and unemployment (Abeyasekera, 2010; Davis & Jong, 1991; Hettige, 1989). Besides, studies have examined work-related problems that migrant workers face, such as non-payment of wages, overwork, sexual harassment, and inhuman treatment (Abu-Habib, 1998; Arachchi, 2013; Hewage et al., 2011; Shaw, 2010). Likewise, the impact of migration on the family has been researched, focusing on transnational mothering and remittance flow (Kageyama, 2008; Shaw, 2008b; Ukwatta, 2010a, 2010b). However, studies focusing on migrants' problems and the impacts of migration predominantly investigated female migrants' experiences (Abeyasekera, 2010). Besides, there is limited or unavailable information about the entire family living in the countries outside of Sri Lanka.

The present study considers the migration of the entire family, which is qualitatively different from individual migration (Davis & Jong, 1991). Therefore, rather than focusing on specific family members, such as the head of the household, a young adult or a woman, the attention here is directed to the entire family, aiming to explore their migration experiences, especially to understand the intricate pattern of the migration of Sri Lankan families and their experiences during their transition period.

¹ GCC countries are collectively referred to as Al-Khaleej in the Arabic language.

The present study investigates the phenomena of family migration through field research on Sri Lankan migrant families who moved to Bahrain, one of the prominent migration destinations in the Middle East for Sri Lankan migrants. In the present study, Bahrain is a case history that exemplifies the previous finding and explores more empirical evidence on migrant families, which many researchers have not explored.

In this study, three factors are collectively studied in the family migration context, which considers migration goals not achieved in the migrated destination and positive reconstruction of the surrounding world to achieve their migration target, where the coping stands stronger rather than giving up the migration target. In other words, coping strategies respond to the changing circumstances in the host country. The push-and-pull migration theory is employed to discern migration motives or goals (Lee, 1966), which was again compared to the legal, economic, and social challenges that migrants go through in the destination country. This research studies the coping strategies by incorporating migration network and social capital theories (Massey et al., 1993; Putnam, 1993). Given that migration life is socially connected, it creates a network between migrant communities, which is new social capital migrants gain, bridging the challenges and coping strategies.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sri Lankan families temporarily migrate from Sri Lanka to live across the borders with the migrant workers, who are, in this context, the breadwinners in Bahrain. Relatively, migrants capable of bringing their families to their work destinations choose family migration. However, once the families arrive in Bahrain, they go through various legal, economic, and social consequences. In other words, the expectation of migrants that life in the receiving country will be more productive and prosperous than before the migration is often non-existent, and they are disappointed. Hence, based on the actual experiences of the families participating in this study, the present study attempts to explore this dichotomic situation, as it is a gap to be studied in this particular context.

Over the last three decades, Sri Lankan migrants have consistently held a dominant presence in the overseas labour market, particularly in Middle Eastern

countries. Unfortunately, nobody has an accurate figure of outward migrant workers, and the causes behind their migration are ambiguous. In 2018, 211,211 Sri Lankan migrants left through the official channel of Sri Lanka, and among the countries, the Middle Eastern countries were the predominant place for Sri Lankan migrants (SLBFE, 2019). Given that the poverty indicators show a negative alarm for the country's development, many believe absolute poverty is the major cause of migration. According to the present poverty indicators, the estimated poverty headcount ratio in 2019 was 14.3 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022). Similarly, according to 2018 statistics, the female unemployment rate was 7.1 per cent, while the male unemployment rate remained at 3.0 per cent (Department of Census and Statistics, 2018), which remained a similar ratio even before 2018, thus causing researchers to find the causes of migration based on unemployment.

Previous studies attempted primarily to explore unemployment and poverty, which are only the consequences of lack of development. Hence, besides these economic indicators, the present study assumes that numerous push-pull factors influence families to migrate, factors including better earning and employment opportunities and unstable economic and political situations. In the family migration process, the spouse migrates with the migrant worker, and either the children move with the working parent/s or the parents accompany them. Family ties and family privileges in the host country are underlying in this family migration process. Thus, the present study aims to explore these intricate family migration patterns from the Sri Lankan community. According to the literature (Frantz, 2008; Gamlath, 2019), many perform their journey after passing many challenges. Thus, the present study aims to investigate the intervening challenges during migration preparation, both economic and psychological.

Primarily, this study focuses on the legal, economic, and social challenges migrant families face in Bahrain, which contrasts with what they expected from migration. Family migration is legally challenging (Beauchemin et al., 2015; Bonjour & Kraler, 2015; Kofman et al., 2011), which increases the pressure of securing visas and legitimising the status. The migrants in this study are contract workers in the Middle East, expecting to live with families. In this contract period, the secondary flow of these families and the challenges in their journey are less researched in the literature.

Thus, firstly, the study investigates the legal challenges, which expressly investigates the visa status challenges in sponsoring family visas and preserving documents, such as birth and marriage certificates.

Besides, the unstable working conditions that impact migrants' income source and well-being have become a regular occurrence in migration life (Landsbergis et al., 2014). The exploitation that migrant workers encounter is the polar opposite of what the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aim to achieve, which concerns that migrants should be free from any abuses (United Nations, 2015b). On the other hand, day-to-day expenses after the arrival of a family get worse (Ambrosini, 2015; Bonizzoni, 2014), thus reducing the remittance flow. Therefore, there is a demand to consider the interconnectedness between migration goals and the challenges in reaching the goals in the migrated destination. Accordingly, secondly, the present study explores the economic challenges that migrants go through at their destination. Furthermore, the study examines the unfavourable economic circumstances in which savings for future investments must be accumulated over an extended period of time.

Besides, the arrival of families in foreign countries alters the family structure, gender roles, and family relationships. The recent changes in migration include the rise of binational marriages in the host countries (Kofman et al., 2011). Traditionally, Sri Lankan society strictly follows the cultural norms and legal impediments in marriage contracts. However, migration and the changes in the family structure change the traditional marriage practices of Sri Lanka, where couples prioritise inner desire rather than social expectation (Abeyasekera, 2016), which has received a substantial focus in this research. Furthermore, migration changes gender roles (K. Caarls & Mazzucato, 2015) and creates loneliness (Rashid et al., 2013), thus reducing the happiness they enjoyed before. Given that these are regular occurrences, exploring the causes and providing implications for the benefit of the entire migrant community and the families in particular become significant. In this vein, the present study investigates gender roles and family relationships by incorporating a foreign working environment and explores marital distress, comparing the Sri Lankan marriage traditions.

Likewise, the present research aims to explore the coping strategies that migrant families employ to overcome legal, economic, and social challenges during their

transitional life in Bahrain. For example, given that the women are away from the symbolic duties of house chores, they have greater freedom in the destination than in the source country, but coping with the husband's busiest working schedule is challenging while they stay separated from their native family members in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, managing the family's daily expenses and renewing the resident permit is challenging when the family income is scarce. Such families find remedies to reduce living difficulties by incorporating social networks and community organisations ahead of them. Therefore, the study examines the quality of family life, satisfaction, and socio-economic adjustment, which may corrupt or uplift the family's well-being based on how aptly the coping mechanisms are employed.

In sum, the present qualitative research on 30 Sri Lankan migrant families will be used as a case study to explore some of the relevant factors that may have influenced the complex family migration pattern observed in Bahrain to make explicit the current migration process in Sri Lanka. Legal, social, and economic challenges will also be a serious focus to address the effects on the families associated with migration flow. Finally, the study emphasises various coping strategies families employ to overcome social, economic, and legal difficulties pertaining to family life.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The growing family migration in this current era is indisputable. However, people traditionally believe that emigrating families are socially optimistic, economically prosperous, and psychologically healthy. Surprisingly, the situation of Sri Lankan migrant families that arrived in Bahrain intending to improve the economy and family well-being was not as favourable as they expected. The arriving families come across various legal, economic, and social consequences. Given that Middle Eastern countries are prime earning destinations for Sri Lankan migrants, who also fill the ample labour demand in those countries, knowing the consequences of migration is crucial for proposing policies for receiving and sending countries.

Accordingly, the uncertain living conditions of migrant families in Middle Eastern countries will enrich the literature with new sociological knowledge and

empirical evidence, benefiting the sociological field of migration and society in general and the study of worker migration in particular. Furthermore, the study will benefit policymakers involved in migration and development. Furthermore, the study contributes to the novel approach of conceptualising migrant families to transitional living conditions and family relationships across the border.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the major push and pull factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka to Bahrain among Sri Lankan migrant families
2. To explore the challenges that the Sri Lankan migrant families experience in Bahrain
3. To examine the coping strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan migrant families in Bahrain

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the major push and pull factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka to Bahrain among Sri Lankan migrant families?
2. What are the challenges experienced by Sri Lankan migrant families in Bahrain?
3. What are the coping strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan migrant families in Bahrain?

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Temporary Sri Lankan migrants

Many labour movements from Asian countries flow to Middle Eastern countries (Battistella & Binokhadria, 2011). Traditionally, five South Asian countries, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, share a large number of labourers with them (Thimothy & Sasikumar, 2012). Since the 1970s, Sri Lankan migrants, many of whom are contract workers in Middle Eastern countries, have been migrating temporarily (Abeyasekera, 2010). The main attraction in Middle Eastern countries is earning opportunities in the abundant labour market, where the Sri Lankan migrants' primary source of income is labour force participation. Thus, migration of these migrant workers to the Middle East is temporary, and the main source of income is labour force participation. Temporary migrants must return to their country of origin once the contract period ends (Hettige et al., 2012). In this vein, the present research focuses on temporary Sri Lankan migrants.

1.6.2 Migrant Families

Migrants who receive high wages sponsor their spouses and children as 'dependents' in the host country (Siddiqui, 2008). Furthermore, romantic relationships with other migrant workers end with marriages in the destination countries (Frantz, 2008). Based on these two different migration patterns, migrant families in Middle Eastern countries were classified as either being reunited with the breadwinner, who is the family's sole economic provider, or families formed in work destinations with a foreign worker or native citizen (Frantz, 2011; Leonard, 2002). The present research does not refer to migrant families who seek permanent residence outside the country, which is non-existent in the Middle East.

1.6.3 Breadwinners of the families

Breadwinners of the families refer to the primary economic provider in the family, either male or female. These breadwinners arrive in Middle Eastern countries with the intention of better living conditions and earning opportunities than those in the source country (Tuccio, 2017). Since the family members depend on these migrants, regular income becomes vital, in that migration is another working portfolio for them for their families' survival. Furthermore, when the prime economic provider migrates overseas, they consider the collective well-being of the family and support dependent family members left behind (Handapangoda, 2014). Thus, this group's migration psychology is absolutely different from that of individual migrants.

1.7 CHAPTER ORGANISATION

This thesis contains five chapters:

Chapter One provides the research background for this thesis. The research objectives and questions formulated to address the proposed problem are presented in this chapter. It has also offered a detailed discussion of the demographic and socio-economic context of Sri Lanka, where the current study is taking place. The subsequent topic discusses labour migration from Sri Lanka, which helps readers understand Chapter Two.

Chapter Two focuses on a systematic review of empirical studies based on the objectives of the present research, and then it reviews the Islamic perspective and the theoretical stand on the topic. First, the section reviews the bilateral migration drivers, focusing on four migrant cohorts: Breadwinners of the families, educated people, and female domestic workers. The following theme focuses on the social and economic challenges faced by migrants in their receiving countries. First, the theme informs the family migration and legal challenges when families arrive in the host country. Then, the following section discusses the economic challenges faced by migrant workers as they impact the family explicitly. Subsequently, the chapter reviews the literature on

the social challenges arriving families face before winding up the chapter with exclusive coping mechanisms adopted by migrant families to overcome such incoming challenges in the destination. The Islamic perspective on migration in this chapter describes the historical migration that occurred in the GCC context in an early period of Islamic history. Finally, the chapter ends with the relevant migration theories to the present study.

Chapter Three, the study's methodology, starts with the ontological, epistemological, and methodological stand. It justifies the qualitative research choice and case study, including its advantages to the present research and how it will answer the formulated questions. The subsequent section elaborates on the research setting and sampling techniques in detail. The following topics explain the field entry, including obstacles in conducting interviews during the upsurge of COVID-19. The following topics describe the in-depth interview process and observation. Finally, the data analysis process is presented with a detailed explanation of the software functions used in this study.

The following **Chapter Four** is on findings that explore the pre and post-migration experiences of migrant worker families. Furthermore, the following themes present the push and pull motives of migrant workers who act as sole economic providers of the family. Thus, this section will fulfil the first objective of the study. Then, the chapter examines the movement of migrants' families and the obstacles they face upon arriving. In order to make a comprehensive discussion based on question two in this study, the following section is divided into two sections. The first section explores the economic challenges faced by migrant workers and their families throughout their stay in Bahrain, which is a prominent part of the thesis. The next part then focuses on the social circumstances and obstacles. This chapter finally relates the challenges migrant families go through and the coping strategies employed by migrant worker families, which is the study's concluding question.

Chapter Five is the last chapter that presents the conclusion and discusses the findings. The chapter discusses the limitations of the study, and finally, it provides recommendations and gaps for future research.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The present chapter has established a research background for this thesis. This section contains research objectives, questions, and a description of the study context. Furthermore, the migration of Sri Lankan workers was thoroughly examined, allowing for a complex relationship with chapter two. Finally, the chapter presented the organisation of the thesis in detail.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The process of Sri Lankan family migration and their contemporary situation are unique examinations because of their constant connection with overseas migration for more than four decades. The investigation of the social lives of the Sri Lankan migrant worker families is related to the historical circumstances of worker and family migration aspects. Therefore, this study aims to review the literature in order to investigate various aspects of worker and family migration that have surrounded migration over the years.

The literature in this chapter discusses the three main objectives related to the current study, which are: investigating the major push and pull factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka to Bahrain among Sri Lankan migrant worker families, exploring the challenges that the Sri Lankan migrant worker families face in Bahrain, and examining the coping strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan migrant worker families in Bahrain.

2.2 INVESTIGATING THE MAJOR PUSH AND PULL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MIGRATION PROCESS OF THE SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES FROM SRI LANKA TO BAHRAIN

International Migration is commonly defined as “moving people from one place to another to live or work,” while “an international migrant is a person living in a country other than their birth state” (United Nations, 2017). Migration is as old as human history (Castelli, 2018). In recent decades, globalisation, rapid transportation, and technological advancements have expedited international migration, and international migrants can be found everywhere (Zlotnik, 1998). Historically, people migrated to various destinations for a better life for themselves and their loved ones due to a deplorable situation in their home country (Massey, 1999). Some people migrate for

reasons related to families, such as cross-border marriages and new settlements in wealthy nations (Kulu & Milewski, 2007). Furthermore, people move from their homes for many tragic reasons, such as conflict and natural catastrophes (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2020).

Thus, the reasons behind migration or determinants have been studied from several perspectives. The following section recaptures the worker migration from poorer to better-off nations in terms of four migrant groups: Male breadwinners of the families, educated people, and female domestic workers. Notably, the push characteristics of the origin countries and pull features of the destinations vary according to these migrant groups and their migration goals. Furthermore, when the migrants start their journey, intervening challenges are the initial shock that they experience. Thus, this goal is designed to end with a theme of intervening problems during migration preparation.

2.2.1 Migration of Families' Breadwinners

The economy is a significant aspect of running a family in which either husband or wife is expected to be the sole breadwinner while also assuming household responsibilities, including childrearing. The following literature sheds light on some families earning and fulfilling their families' economic needs, which are difficult in the country where they reside due to a lack of income resources, thus prompting them to seek revenue prospects outside the country. The following discussion explicitly supports the challenges that economically active breadwinners face in the family that cause them to migrate.

The family's economic disadvantages, which happen for various reasons such as scarcity of income sources, failure of agricultural production, and unemployment, induce the family's sole economic provider to migrate, searching for better working opportunities worldwide (Castelli, 2018). Labour migration from Mexico highlights the fact that the scarcity of land resources for younger generations and the crisis in agricultural production cause an uncertain economic situation in the family, pushing them to migrate to the United States (Poveda, 2007). In some circumstances, inherited

land divided among subsequent siblings, as seen in Ethiopia, particularly among males, reduces agricultural land property, threatening their family's survival and driving them to migrate in search of an alternative livelihood in areas where agricultural labour is in demand (Tegegne & Penker, 2016).

Economic insecurity that families are experiencing, such as unemployment and the replacement of manual labourers, affects their regular income. Massey & Espinosa (1997) found that growing economic insecurity in Mexico's urban and rural settings, such as the displacement of manual workers and mechanisation of production, and the strong desire to participate in the global economy has prompted the Mexican household heads to migrate to the United States to search for income for families and accumulate scarce capital. Similarly, migrants who experience severe unemployment pressure find a way to improve their lives through foreign exchange earnings (Wickramasekera, 2002). Castelli (2018) discovered that, in developing countries, jobs predominate in informal sectors with poor pay and no social safety, causing people to search for better working opportunities in countries with more job chances. Carlos (2002) and Agbola and Acupan (2010) observed that rising unemployment and population growth were associated with increased migration rates from the Philippines.

Besides, migrants living in poor infrastructure facilities and dangerous areas look for better opportunities outside their homes to supplement their family's economies. Poor households in rural Indonesia migrated to urban areas as a result of a dangerous environment caused by agricultural harvest failure, natural disasters, and a scarcity of employment opportunities (Marta et al., 2020). Thus, economic disadvantages in the sending country and within the family expedite worker migration to seek better employment and earning prospects outside the country, primarily for their basic survival and to regain their lost resources.

Apart from the migration for a basic family survival strategy, prime economic providers attempt migration to increase their families' economy compared to the other families in their community. According to Stark & Taylor (1989, 1991), rural Mexican family members who were relatively poor in comparison to a specific reference group in the village and other individuals attempted migration to the United States to improve their relative position rather than increase the household's absolute income. The

findings ruled out the conventional notion that absolute income solely motivates migration (Stark & Taylor, 1991). Bhandari (2004) discovered, supporting earlier works by Stark and Taylor (1989, 1991), that households with less access to farmland were more likely to migrate from Nepal in search of work than those of their neighbours with more cultivated land. Similarly, Kafle et al. (2020), in a survey of five sub-Saharan regions, discovered that relative deprivation positively affects migration among rural and agricultural families.

Sri Lanka is a labour-sending country that continuously responds to the growing labour market in Asia and Western countries, from which married, unmarried, and females have been migrating explicitly under the circumstances of domestic economic problems. Sriskandarajah (2002) found that domestic economic opportunities and lack of development were the primary reasons for labour migration from Sri Lanka. Gunatilleke (1995) observed that slow economic growth and urbanisation in Sri Lanka caused new job seekers to wait for a longer length of time for permanent employment, resulting in rural-to-urban migration and, later, urban-to-international migration. Withers & Piper (2018) and Withers (2019) discovered a similar pattern in which women who migrated from the rural villages to urban Colombo due to the uneven development between rural and urban areas to work in garments and as domestic workers later left these jobs because of a lack of payment, which then led them to migrate overseas. However, it is still unclear whether the majority of migrants migrate because of similar reasons.

In Sri Lanka, poverty and unemployment are dominant problems in the urban, rural, and estate sectors (Central Bank, 2016). After researching migrants from two rural areas in Sri Lanka, Hewage et al. (2011) discovered that migration motivations were rooted in desires to earn money for family necessities and future investments, such as building a new house, starting up new business ventures, and educating children. Gamlath (2019) realised that urban migrants who experienced uncertain economic conditions sought employment opportunities as a survival strategy overseas. Second, the migrants with the income to cover their basic needs, such as food and daily necessities, migrated to increase their family economy to achieve secondary demands, such as investment in income-generating activities, known as the ‘building-up strategy’.

Third, migrants with sufficient assets and wealth exploited migration to sustain their wealth and increase their social status in society.

When the prime economic provider migrates overseas, they consider the collective well-being of the family and support dependent family members left behind. For instance, married migrant women from Kandy, the central part of Sri Lanka, migrated to the Middle East and Southeast Asia, such as Singapore, where they were away from their customary motherhood and wifehood, to attain the family's collective well-being rather than their own (Handapangoda, 2014). In line with the preceding findings, migrant families left behind gain disproportionately from money supplied by migrant workers. For instance, each migrant worker's family in Indonesia benefits from the money sent by the migrant workers to meet their daily needs and build or renovate their homes (Hugo, 2002, 2007).

Various literature shows that, according to the prime economic providers in the family, who are already engaging in labour force activities, migration is an alternative economic option. They use this option to overcome absolute income or relatively to be better by attaining their secondary needs. Furthermore, the reviewed literature highlighted problems such as poverty, unemployment, an economically hard environment, and a lack of infrastructure and development and how those factors push breadwinners to find solutions overseas.

2.2.2 Migration of Educated People

Educated migrants look for better prospects to increase their income in countries with open income sources and welcoming immigration regulations. Skilled migrants from South Africa, India, and the United Kingdom came to New Zealand for the same reasons: a good quality of life, a pleasant environment, and arrival policies that allowed them to enter New Zealand legally (Tabor et al., 2015). Similarly, the income differentials between sending and receiving countries are the primary motivators for human migration, particularly among the educated (Goss & Lindquist, 1995).

As per the following studies, the rising demographic changes, such as literacy, education, and skills, influence the emigration of people from different income levels from source countries. For example, increased educational attainment among young people in Indonesia encouraged migration, with international jobs providing better opportunities than life prospects in agriculture (Hugo, 1995). Furthermore, adult literacy and population density were significant causes of emigration among Filipino migrant workers and educated people (Agbola & Acupan, 2010).

Moreover, the following study reported high migration aspiration among skilled and educated migrants. According to the findings based on the data of immigrants in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), countries populated by relatively educated citizens reported a higher proportion of migration (Dao et al., 2016), which means young and educated people are enthusiastic about migrating to diverse locations.

Studies conducted in Sri Lanka highlight that skilled migrants are concerned about stable employment conditions, high payments for their qualifications, and possibilities to improve their skills during the migration. Historically, the country's economy has been unable to provide adequate jobs to accommodate the country's rising labour force (Shaw, 2008a). Since the early stage of migration, Sri Lankan-educated migrants have been interested in finding jobs in permanent locations. Silva et al. (2014) revealed that nearly 24 per cent of medical students, including male and female, had already decided to migrate to Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States from Sri Lanka in search of a better quality of life and excessive earning and training opportunities in their field in those migration destinations. Professional migrant workers working in developed countries, such as Australia, the UK, the US, Canada, and Japan, were willing to return to Sri Lanka when provided a stable working environment and sufficient salaries (Anas & Wickremasinghe, 2010). Very few studies have been carried out in the Sri Lankan context, emphasising skilled migration to permanent locations; however, studies tackling temporary migration are impoverished. Migrants temporarily select destinations based on positive factors such as job market demand, earning opportunities, and peaceful life in the receiving countries. In other words, educated people migrate, escaping from unstable political conditions and insecure lives in their countries, which need to be stressed more.

2.2.3 Female Domestic Workers

The experiences of female migrants are now a centrepiece of migration research as they constitute about half of all international migrants (Tayah, 2016). Women are more and more engaging in labour force activities outside the home, particularly as domestic workers in overseas countries. Palenga-Möllenberg (2013) investigated Polish domestic female workers in Germany who are outsourced to work in the reproductive sphere in Western countries to fulfil the demand for elderly care and childcare services. Similarly, women are grabbing other destinations where the demand for domestic services is ample to enhance the family economy and change their personal lives. For instance, Regmi et al. (2020) disclosed that young females from low-economic families in Nepal, particularly less educated females, were more likely to choose Middle Eastern countries to grab opportunities in the unskilled category to overcome financial struggles and support their families.

In some families, the family economy is secured through the best effort of the female household, and they support dependent children. Those women are prone to economic uncertainties due to the loss of male support, thus causing them to be the sole economic providers in the family by finding employment outside the country. Evidence suggests that the economic difficulties of Ethiopian women heads of families, particularly widowed and divorced mothers, drove them to migrate as housemaids to the Middle Eastern countries and Sudan for the short-term or long-term in order to stabilise their family economy (Tegegne & Penker, 2016).

Furthermore, Phuong & Venkatesh (2015) used Vietnam women who worked as domestic workers in Taiwan as an example to show that those women migrated expecting the family's well-being because of the uncertain economic condition they were in due to their parents' dismissal and the loan the family took to build a house. Similarly, Ethiopian women often migrated to the Middle East as domestic workers in their teens or twenties, assuming that migration would be a quick way to earn money and change their lives and their families' lives (Schewel, 2022). Neetha (2004) stated that the migration of women as domestic workers is a breakthrough that causes them to be prime breadwinners in the household as they bear the entire burden of family expenditure.

In the Asian Pacific region, there are three countries from which the bulk of domestic workers flow: the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia (Piper, 2008). Arisman & Jaya (2021) disclosed the factors that drive Indonesian female migrants to work in informal sectors, including the domestic sector in Malaysia. These factors include the demand for domestic work, comparably higher salaries, and the obligation to support their families. Since young women are forced to take responsibility for their families, they use forged passports to conceal their age.

Filipina women contribute substantially to the domestic sector in the East and Middle East Asian labour market. Piper (2008) noted that the Philippine government is proactive in negotiating bilateral agreements on its nation's behalf, thus helping Filipino domestic workers penetrate various labour markets such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Gulf countries. The primary reason for Filipino migration is economic (Battistella & Conaco, 1998). Parrenas (2021) asserted that Filipino domestic workers in the UAE migrated from vulnerable families and remote provinces with limited access to electricity, water, and telecommunication, and even they migrated without the resources to cover the migration cost.

Sri Lankan families utilise their female workforce to send to the Middle East as the pre-departure cost is three times cheaper than the pre-migration cost for males, and agents pay the female pre-departure cost from migrants' advance payments received from the employers (Shaw, 2010). Moreover, when the men in the family could not find a full-time job in the origin country or migrated destinations, they pushed their daughters or wives into the labour market to act as the main economic providers (Pinnawala, 2009; Ukwatta, 2010b). According to Gamburd (2000), male habits, such as drinking and gambling, are often reasons for women to opt for migration, abandoning their symbolic duty of house chores. The majority of them were young mothers with young children (Gamlath, 2019), aged between 20-39, which is the prime reproductive age of females (Dias & Jayasundere, 2002; SLBFE, 2017) and with only six to nine years of education (Ukwatta, 2010b, 2010a).

Shaw (2010) discovered that most female migrants from Kuliyaipitiya, a Sri Lankan village, were unemployed before their departure. Due to the adverse economic pressure in rural villages, as Hewage et al. (2011) observed in Kumburugamuwa South

(a rural village in Sri Lanka), female migration was not an alternative option but was vital for family livelihood. According to Gunathilaka (1986), 75 per cent of migrants in Middle Eastern countries were from low-income families, and young females migrated seeking work and opportunity to build a house. Similarly, Ukwatta (2010a) found that 94 per cent of female migrants reported that the main reason for their migration was the economic vulnerability of the family.

Migration studies done in Sri Lanka among female workers repeatedly observed that the primary reason for their migration is economic. Dharmadasa et al. (2018) revealed that adverse poverty in the estate sector, as well as agricultural failures and low wages in the tea plantation sector, forced young males and females to change their income portfolios by incorporating non-farm income sources, with young males migrating to urban areas and young females migrating overseas. Abeysekera (2010) observed that young Muslim women chose the Middle East as a migration destination to earn money for their dowries, an uncommon cultural practice in Sri Lanka in which the female side pays a lump sum of money or property to the male partner during the marriage (Gamburd, 2000; Kottegoda, 2006). Repaying debts was another pushing factor among Sri Lankan domestic workers migrating to Middle Eastern countries (Gamburd, 2000; Kottegoda, 2006).

Studies on female migration have demonstrated that migration is driven by economic concerns such as building houses, supporting families and educating children. In some circumstances, women decide to migrate independently or be pushed by male partners or family members to act as primary economic providers. These women's lives start in the host country as housemaids, living away from their husbands, children, and extended family members. The present research expects to extend the literature by exploring the female migrants' marital life in the host country, which has been the gap in the literature.

When studying the above three types of migrants and the factors that push them to migrate, the intervening challenges during the migration journey were intermittently found: the start of the challenging life in the migrated destination. Thus, the following theme explains the initial challenges that potential migrants face during the preparation of their migration.

2.2.4 Intervening Challenges During the Preparation of the Migration

Migrating to a new geographical location has several economic and psychological challenges that potential migrants must overcome by using all possible means to complete the journey. Thus, the following section accumulates the literature based on two sub-themes, economic cost and psychological cost, highlighting challenges during the preparation of the migration.

2.2.4.1 *Economic Cost*

Migrants have to invest a certain amount of money in preparing passports and flight tickets to complete their migration journey. The following studies show how these migrants overcome the economic cost in various ways, each with advantages and disadvantages. According to Parrenas' study (2021) in the Philippines, the generally identified obstacle that first movers faced was economic, whereby these migrants pursued migration through the 'fly now, pay later scheme' set by recruiters who hunted the migrants in remote provinces in the Philippines. Similar practices happen in many labour-sending countries, including Sri Lanka, where Shaw (2010) found that agents paid the pre-departure cost of the female only from migrants' advance payments received from employers in Middle Eastern countries. Sometimes, these advance payments from sponsors benefiting potential female migrants lead to scruples practices by agents. Weeraratne (2014) discovered that agents in Sri Lanka advised housemaids to create some issues in order to change employers after completing a probationary period to reap the benefits from a new employer.

Besides these sponsorships, the migration network fulfils the economic cost of potential migrant workers. Already migrated groups assisted new migrants by providing necessary arrangements and information, particularly in providing material assistance before and during the migration (Poveda, 2007; Stark & Bloom, 1985). Empirical results showed that migrants from developing countries migrating to Europe received loans from previously migrated friends and relatives who had established themselves in those countries (Hatton & Williamson, 2002). Similarly, Filipino migrants used familial ties and social networks to choose a migration field, acquire

financial and material support, and obtain information regarding job openings in the receiving society (Tyner & Donaldson, 1999).

The studies that dealt with intervening obstacles among Sri Lankan migrants, particularly among female migrants, found a similar economic problem in that those migrants relied on family and relatives for economic investment. Kottegoda (2006) made a general conclusion that Sri Lankan migrant workers heavily depended on family support, including financing the journey and material assistance to attain their migration aspirations. In most cases, relatives are also the sponsors of migrants from rural villages in Sri Lanka. In line with the above findings, Pinnawala (2009) observed that family members and relatives played a role as economic providers in the migration process of women from the colony and urban low-income settlements in Sri Lanka.

When they did not receive family support, migrants attempted to pawn their jewellery in order to migrate (Gamburd, 2000; Ukwatta, 2010a). Furthermore, Handapangoda (2014) revealed that potential migrant women in Sri Lanka borrowed money from village moneylenders at an exorbitant interest rate to become a housemaid in the Middle East. Smith (2006) noted that the loans taken out by migrants for their travel expenditures added to the burden they faced throughout their migration journey.

However, skilled migrants arrive at their destination with enough financial resources and are less dependent on others. A study done by Tabor et al. (2015) in New Zealand found that skilled migrants have less need for such financial support as they arrive at the destination with enough financial resources.

The evidence in the forgone literature repeatedly shows the economic constraints that potential migrants have to go through during the preparation for their migration. Previous studies have not sufficiently explored how the additional burdens are placed on economically vulnerable migrants during the preparation for their migration. In sum, migrating economically vulnerable male and female migrants face economic challenges, causing them to finance their journey by loan or relying on recruiters and previously migrated migrants.

2.2.4.2 Psychological Cost

Migration is viewed as a major behavioural shift; thus, the researchers examined the pre-departure psychological experience as it continued through the acculturation process at the destination (Tabor & Milfont, 2011). Once the migrants start to prepare for the migration, they begin to cost their families, i.e., sacrificing their close families, which is psychologically displeasing. Migrants who left their families and friends behind and the memories and familiar surroundings they had in their country of origin incurred ‘psychic’ costs that are difficult to quantify (Sajastad, 1962).

The real psychological difficulties are felt when migrants start to perform the journey, such as purchasing air tickets and saying goodbye to their extended family members (Tabor & Milfont, 2011). It is apparent in the following study by Mak, Zimmerman et al. (2021b) that Nepali migrants who said goodbye to their families and children had tears in their eyes, but they left without looking back.

The growing number of mothers leaving their children behind has received increased attention among scholars. Leaving children behind is perceived as an emotional ramification for mothers who leave and their children who are left behind (Parrenas, 2021). Ukwatta (2010b) identified that Sri Lankan low-income women decided to leave their children behind because of the family economic pressure, thus negatively affecting the children’s psychological well-being, such as loneliness. A study conducted by Senaratna et al. (2012) confirmed that these psychological grievances have worsened, affecting their education and behaviour, even after the absence of their mothers.

Though migrants are willing to sacrifice their families and children, every family is not happy to allow them to leave. According to research conducted by Mak, Zimmerman et al. (2021b), when Nepali migrants decide to migrate, in most cases, migrants’ families refuse to allow them to migrate because of family ties. Since families live with their relatives in close proximity, even for families to migrate, moral approval from significant family members is vital (Davis & Jong, 1991).

Apart from these psychological costs that migrants invest in by separating from their families and relatives, they carry grievances from society and their families. In Frantz's (2011) studies, it has been reported that a woman, when she decided to migrate, was beaten by her drunken husband over the matter of decision. Furthermore, Frantz (2011) found that in Sri Lankan culture, a woman bound to household duties is not allowed by her husband and family to migrate. According to Alwis (2002), women's formal labour force participation, including working in garment factories and as migrants, was perceived as an affront in early Sri Lankan culture. The fact has been confirmed further by Frantz (2011) that migrant women were given the epithet 'Arabic good' because they were sexually promiscuous. Thus, women must go through all of these grievances, which are psychologically annoying while they prepare for their relocation.

The pre-migration process in the migration journey is vital, whereby migrants typically sacrifice their families, friends, and land. Losing this emotional belonging annoys the potential migrants but also impacts family members left behind. Furthermore, migrants, particularly female migrants, become movers after passing psychological grievances that arise from society and family. Thus, as discussed above, economic and psychological costs are typical intervening obstacles that migrants go through during the preparation for migration.

The reviewed body of literature covering the first objective is based on three cohorts: Breadwinners of the families, educated people, and female domestic workers. Reviewed literature shows that raising a family with existing economic challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and a lack of infrastructure and development, pushes them to find income sources in foreign countries. Furthermore, the literature also shows the financial challenges faced by migrants, especially females and those who do not have the skills to migrate.

The breadwinners of the families are fully responsible for looking after their families when finances are problematic due to various reasons, such as lack of financial resources and unemployment. Furthermore, they migrate to increase their family economy by comparing the financial capabilities of others in the same community. The migration of educated people mainly happens because of unemployment and the

scarcity of jobs in their fields of study. Furthermore, those migrants are pulled by the ample employment opportunities elsewhere in foreign countries, which help them gain more from the labour market. The final group, female domestic workers, migrate for a similar reason, but the family predominantly induces those migrants to contribute to the family economy. These groups commonly have been identified in the literature as unskilled workers with low literacy.

2.3 EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES THAT THE SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES EXPERIENCE IN BAHRAIN

The challenges in migration, particularly legal, economic, and social challenges, and their impact on families and their living conditions are vital in migration research. Migrating couples have to accept the gains and losses, legal challenges, and deteriorations in the labour market. The challenges that families face start from arriving at the destination until the return to the country. Therefore, based on the above three migrant cohorts, the present objective attempts to accumulate literature on the challenges that migrant families face during migration. Accordingly, the present section deals with three major subthemes: “legal challenges,” which discusses how family migration starts and how families fall into undocumented migrant status; “economic challenges,” which the theme discusses both deteriorations in the labour market and its impact on family life in the destination; “social challenges,” which discusses the grievances and the changes that migrant families face throughout their migration life.

2.3.1 Legal Challenges

The first subtheme reviews the literature related to legal challenges that migrant families encounter in the work destination. Typically, migration starts after passing the legal challenges (Beauchemin et al., 2015; Bonjour & Kraler, 2015; Kofman et al., 2011) that range from obtaining visa status, renewing visas, and securing legal documents or legitimate residence permits. Thus, the following section reviews the literature based on three subthemes: family visa status, sponsoring a family visa, and migrants without legal documentation.

2.3.1.1 Family Visa Status

The foremost encouragement for family migration is the highest net family benefit in destination countries and the economic power or family privileges, including family visa, that migrant workers, either male or female, acquire in the host country (Cooke & Bailey, 1996; Davis & Jong, 1991; Mincer, 1978). In the family migration process, family members often collectively decide to migrate as an entire family unit or follow the already migrated migrant worker, which apparently happens first after having family visa status, which is challenging because everyone would not receive that privilege. The following literature focuses more on the secondary flow that happens after the primary migrants' arrival, which is more relevant to the Sri Lankan context.

There are some possible ways that family members follow migrant workers to their work destinations. González-Ferrer (2011) explained that the migration of the spouse and children is a secondary flow that is initiated by the first movers who have lived in the receiving country for an extended period. In this case, either the male or the female initiates the migration of the family members. As evidence for men as leaders and family members as followers, Ambrosini (2015) discovered that more than half of the men in Italy who migrated first in the household could sponsor their spouses. In contrast, Eggebø & Brekke (2019) concluded that women grow as care providers participating in the labour market, particularly in the European context, while men migrate as spouses and family members. Similarly, a study conducted in Malaysia by Chattopadhyay (1997) revealed that dual earners migrate in favour of economic reasons, such as earnings and the job market. Ample empirical literature across various contexts presents these gender norms incorporating economic on family migration.

However, the entry of the family is dependent on the family visa status in receiving countries, which is restrictive based on the migrants' countries and their backgrounds. The following studies deal with the family status challenges that migrant families face in their destination. A smooth family arrival process has been observed in Spain among spouses coming from EU countries, as Spain gives EU citizens legal privileges and family visa status (González-Ferrer, 2011). However, it is very restrictive to sub-Saharan couples in terms of state policy to reunite in Europe (Beauchemin et al., 2015). Bonjour & De Hart (2013) emphasized the reasons for these

restrictions: Netherlands and Denmark implement restrictive family migration policies to maintain the national identity and local culture, which are devastated by forced marriages and fraudulent marriage practices where migrant wives who have problems adapting to local culture are brought in. Most obviously, the Western countries and the countries that provide permanent citizenship are concerned about these policy reforms on family migration (Bonjour & Kraler, 2015).

Some receiving countries prefer migrants with the appropriate educational attainment, regardless of the countries from which they come, to accompany their family members, therefore avoiding numerous family migration restrictions, such as pre-entry requirements. Kofman et al. (2011) explained that skilled migrants are privileged to accompany their family members to European Union states, such as the UK and Denmark. Those skilled migrants are often exempted from the pre-entry test, which has been deployed indirectly to regulate the percentage of the minority ethnic population formulating families with a partner from abroad (Kofman et al., 2013). Vidal et al. (2017) discovered, as witnessed in Britain, Germany, and Sweden that family migration is high when either the female or male breadwinner is employed in professional occupations with higher payments.

Limited studies have discovered the family migration of skilled migrants or business investors in Middle East countries. The apparent factor in these studies is that the need for skilled migrants in Middle Eastern countries eases the migration flow of families. A study conducted in Bahrain by Gardner (2008) found that Indian elite individuals, who were merchants, professionals, and skilled workers, had accompanied their spouses and children to Bahrain because of the simple process of obtaining family visa status. Furthermore, Vora (2008) researched Indian workers who lived with their families in Dubai with high salaries under the sponsorship of Emirati sponsors, and their family members had secured dependent visas. Since the other migrants, who are most probably contract migrants, live with families in the Middle East, the flow of these families and the challenges in their journey are less researched in the literature.

To obtain family visa status, sometimes migrants have to wait for a long time, hindering them from bringing in their family immediately. Davis & Jong (1991) discovered while studying Philippines families migrating to Hawaii that the economy

is a binding constraint because their empirical results showed that older nuclear families who have received enough remittances while having migration experiences decide to migrate with the family as a whole; hence, families who have not exchanged remittances stay behind. Empirical evidence showed that migrants who gain insufficient income from their jobs either decide to leave their families behind or wait until they get a job with family status. Caarls & Mazzucato (2016) found that the migration motive of the breadwinner of the family is to increase income, in which the left-behind spouse and migrated spouse in the Netherlands and the UK jointly decide to stay separated for an extended period, maintaining the transnational relationship, as living in the destination would decrease the economic gain while reuniting with children would increase the family's expense burden. Similarly, wives tend to reunite with their husbands in Germany only after having stable employment for husbands with family facilities in the receiving country (González-Ferrer, 2007).

Family visa status is a formal and secure means for people to enter any country with their families for employment purposes. However, the review of the literature shows that it is limited, depending on the jobs that migrants obtain and the skills that they possess. Furthermore, the possibility of getting family status for low-skilled workers is very low or absent. Thus, the following theme reviews the challenges that migrants in the low category face in sponsoring a family visa.

2.3.1.2 Sponsoring a Family Visa

Migrants in low-income jobs and not eligible for family visa status are more interested in bringing in their families. According to Ambrosini (2015), in the instance of migrant mothers in Italy who migrated from Latin America and Eastern European countries as domestic workers, mothers played a prime role in bringing in their spouse and children after nearly seven years periods of parenting from a distance. However, such low-income workers encounter problems in directly sponsoring their families with the appropriate family visa. Ambrosini (2015) revealed that when husbands arrive in Italy with the sponsorship of female domestic workers, these domestic workers have already obtained a family visa from the people they work with in Italy. In this case, those domestic working mothers had to find accommodation outside the sponsors' homes for

their husbands, as employer families were not ready to provide accommodation and work to husbands and adult relatives.

Sometimes, migrant family members arrive with a visit visa, hoping to change it to a work visa. According to the preceding circumstances, Ambrosini (2012) discovered in Italy that domestic workers' husbands arriving with a visit visa to obtain a job often find jobs in irregular sectors, which are not stable enough to obtain a visa to stay with family. In other cases, Fresnoza-Flot (2018) asserted that Filipino migrant mothers who were frequently in irregular migration status in France and had low income attempted to sponsor their children via the tourist visa, which caused them to put their children in irregular status in turn and continued this irregularity as a chain, tying their children to the domestic work once more.

The reviewed literature shows the different types of sponsoring methods that low-income migrant workers use to sponsor their family members, including spouses and children legally. Furthermore, studies show that the migrants who use the available options, such as visit visa, tourist visa, and work visa to work in unskilled categories are unstable, limit their freedom in the destination country, and put them back on irregular status.

2.3.1.3 Migrants Without Legal Documents

For migrants, the labour market is a prime source and often the only one to legitimize their arrival and stay in the destination. However, in various circumstances, migrants and their families lose their legal status and often live without documents. A study by Alsharif (2022) found that undocumented migrants from Yaman, Africa, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Philippines are prevalent in Saudi Arabia, and they continue doing their business, which is unstable, with fears of deportation from the country even without receiving proper health. Similarly, Khoso & Noor (2021) found in Malaysia that migrant workers from Pakistan who arrived with a visit visa could not obtain a work permit following the payments made to the deceptive agents, thus causing them to overstay and lose their legal stay. In support of the above findings, as discovered in Italy, male workers who arrive with visit visas fail to renew their visas

because of their unstable jobs, resulting in them becoming undocumented migrants (Ambrosini, 2012).

According to the following study, migrants lose their legal status when they attempt to work outside of their sponsors' homes. Smith (2010) observed that some Sri Lankan women work in Lebanon as freelancers because of the advantages of earning more money than the work stagnating in their employers' homes. However, Smith (2010) observed that those women remained outside without legal documents and engaged in conjugal relationships with legal fear because of their unlawful status.

Similarly, Ambrosini (2012) noted that female migrant workers who came to Italy with a legal visa fell into irregular conditions when they worked in an informal job, and they suffered until they legalized their status. For such migrants, particularly women who do not have a regular work permit, domestic work on a temporary basis is the main income source. For instance, Andall (2000) asserted that women with irregular residence permits are increasingly recruited as domestic workers in native-born families in Italy.

Similarly, migrants lose their legal documents after the divorce and remain in the destination without legal documents. For instance, in a study conducted by Bijwaard and van Doeselaar (2021), families expect to live together in the migrated destination; however, many of these marriages end with divorce. After this, the migrant women who lose valid resident permits are less prone to leave the country. Thus, under the conditions mentioned above, either partner losing their valid residence permit impacts their family members, causing them to lose their dependent pass.

The undocumented status of migrants is always troublesome in receiving any assistance from the public. For instance, undocumented migrants cannot seek assistance without further exposing themselves and their families to legal action when a migration-related problem arises (Glick, 2010). As Menjívar and Salcido (2002) discovered, undocumented women were more cautious about seeking help because they feared being detected by the state in which they resided.

Similarly, undocumented status limits the migrants from receiving health care facilities in the host country. A study conducted in Sweden by Mona et al. (2021) showed that migrants avoid seeking healthcare facilities because of fear of being taken by security forces and authorities. On an individual level, as found in Europe, the primary barrier for undocumented migrants to avoid seeking health care is fear of being reported to the police (Goossens & Depoorter, 2011). Undocumented migrants avoid seeking medical attention until it is absolutely necessary. Otherwise, they are even prepared to give birth at home. De Jonge et al. (2011) discovered that undocumented migrant women in the Netherlands are also more likely to give birth at home, and those women receive their first clinical visit five weeks later.

The reviewed literature shows migrants lose their legal status after their arrival with a valid visa for various reasons, such as overstaying, failing to renew their visa with a stable job, fleeing sponsors' homes and working with outside arrangements, and finally, marriage and divorce at the destination. In the above circumstances, not only do the migrants lose their legitimate work permit, but their family members also lose their dependent pass. Finally, the paperwork restrictions that migrants face limit their ability to seek assistance and access healthcare facilities in the host country.

The present theme of legal challenges consists of three subthemes: "family visa status", which shows that a family visa is a safe and legal way to reach the work destination and to work freely there; "sponsoring a family visa", which is the problem faced by low-income migrant workers who are not eligible to receive a family visa. Those migrants use the available migration options, such as arranging a visit, tourist, and work visa to lawfully visit family members, which sometimes results in irregular status and "migrants without legal documents", in which the literature reveals how migrants fall into the illegal status and the subsequent challenges faced by their families. Being an undocumented migrant is difficult since it limits the flexibility to seek aid, get health care, and finally, freedom of life in the destination. Thus, these migrant groups are considered in the following themes.

2.3.2 Economic Challenges Faced by Migrant Families

The transitional life period of migrant worker families is challenging. First, migrants move to a new work destination, considering better employment opportunities, after which their families arrive at the same destination for family-related matters. Ambrosini (2015) noted that in the Italian case, the arriving families, particularly breadwinners, go through economic distress and work burden, resulting in unhappy endings for many families. Thus, the following section explores five subthemes, such as finding a new job and unemployment, work instability and work termination, and work exploitation, which discuss work-related challenges and expenses after the arrival of families, remittances and savings, which relate the work challenges to how it is difficult for arriving families.

2.3.2.1 *Finding a New Job and Unemployment*

Migrants aim to increase their economic condition and well-being in their newly arrived destinations (Chuang & Gielen, 2009; Lamb & Bougher, 2009). However, due to the difficulties in finding new employment immediately, migrants remain unemployed. Concerning male workers arriving with the sponsorship of female workers, Ambrosini (2015) observed in Italy that male workers struggle to find a job quickly, leading the husband to be unemployed for a period of time before obtaining work.

Similarly, husband-centred family migration sometimes negatively affects the wife's participation in the labour force. A study in Malaysia (Chattopadhyay, 1997) found that when women accompany working males in favour of the labour market outcome of the male partner, it reduces the women's propensity to work in newly arrived places. Likewise, when the dual earners migrate, migrating wives experience unemployment and scarcity of employment, and sometimes they withdraw from employment at the destination or postpone the job search due to the increasing demand in the family for household activities (Mincer, 1978).

Increasing document issues lead to the challenge of finding new and well-paid jobs. For instance, Khoso and Noor (2021) found in Malaysia that the lack of work permits hamper the migrants from finding well-paid jobs.

The difficulties in finding a job and being unemployed may cause psychological trauma among migrant workers. Migrants with different educational levels experience stress at work and home, such as irritable feelings and difficulty sleeping. According to a study, stress levels increase because of the challenges of finding jobs corresponding to their educational level in the competitive job market (Agyei et al., 2014). Awuah et al. (2020) noted that Ghanaian migrants in Europe with tertiary education experienced unemployment-related work stress.

The reviewed literature above shows that there are difficulties in finding new employment at the migrated destination, which causes them to be unemployed for a certain period. Losing work or having difficulty finding work is troublesome, causing a financial strain on the family and affecting the psychological well-being of the family. Finding a new job or being unemployed is quite apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the following section reviews the literature related to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and employment issues.

2.3.2.1.1 Finding a New Job and Being Unemployed During COVID-19

Since 2019, the world has encountered severe health, economic, and social crises due to the deadly surge of the coronavirus disease (Paterson-Young, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, potential workers encountered the problem of finding new jobs as more and more people were losing their jobs. Lambovska et al. (2021) found that young people who often looked for their first job were severely affected in finding jobs. Similarly, people who had jobs but later lost them during this tragic time fought to keep their jobs. Also, folks who had jobs but lost them at this awful period fought to keep them. For instance, Jamil and Dutta (2021) highlighted that Bangladeshi workers in the Middle East remained unemployed and struggled to keep a job, which was needed at least for their survival.

During the COVID-19 crisis, social distancing and isolation were the primary measures to curb the spread of the virus among the public (Banerjee & Rai, 2020). Furthermore, the possibility of spreading the disease was high when people physically came into contact with more than one person in public. Lui et al. (2021) emphasized that because of the pandemic hysteria, companies and house owners in Hong Kong prevented minor workers, notably foreign domestic workers, from entering their premises, resulting in significant job losses for them.

Due to these pandemic preventive measures and subsequent loss of jobs, low-paid workers were exceptionally prone to pandemic-related effects, including income loss due to their work nature (Garfield et al., 2020; Jamil & Dutta, 2021). In another study conducted by Azeez et al. (2021), migrant workers in India lost their livelihood opportunities due to job loss, forcing them to go further into debt. Similarly, Khanna (2020) found that during the COVID-19 epidemic, Indian migrant workers were forced to remain in perilous conditions at their workplace or return to their original places, resulting in a loss of labour and revenue. Additionally, the pandemic impacted the daily lives of the migrants, who faced difficulty in paying rent and tuition fees, as found among Nepalese migrants in Japan (Bhandari et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the status of being unemployed brings multifaceted psychological effects on migrants. For instance, Sanfelici (2021) stated that for migrants in Italy during the pandemic, being unemployed and under the pressure of finding a job triggered a range of emotional distress, such as frustration, anxiety, and anger.

Finding new jobs and being unemployed were initial shocks that migrants experienced at their newly arrived destination. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it worsened unexpectedly. Further, the present research expects to find people unemployed due to various other reasons, such as the inability to renew the contract and premature terminations, which have received less attention among the researchers. Thus, the following section further reviews the studies regarding work instability and sudden terminations.

2.3.2.2 Work Instability and Premature Terminations

Workers in many workplaces experienced job termination, and their career prospects became unstable. People felt insecure when they believed that they had no power to defend themselves (Elshaer et al., 2022). The unstable working conditions that workers of lower socioeconomic status and migrants faced negatively impacted their income source and well-being (Landsbergis et al., 2014). Sulemana et al. (2020) stated that work instability, particularly losing a job, among those already employed full-time and part-time, is a serious labour market problem in Ghana, thus causing unhappiness in their lives. Another study by Berth et al. (2005) among young adults in Germany shows that losing a job decreases satisfaction in life.

These unstable working conditions further worsen when workers are suddenly terminated. Studies have highlighted the starting point of work terminations, which happens in the form of cost-cutting measures where the employees' wages are reduced. In a study by Tang and Li (2021), the majority of migrants in China lost their jobs due to cost-cutting by their employers.

Most migrants are given a sudden termination notice when their job is cancelled. Part-time workers, in particular, experience work cancellations on short notice, which affects their economic and psychological well-being. For instance, Schneider and Harknett (2019) opined that the workers who do the routine work schedule, probably hourly-based work, receive little advance notice on cancellation of the work, thus causing them psychological distress and unhappiness.

Similarly, a lack of proper documents, such as visas and travel documents, leads to unstable working conditions and an increased likelihood of job termination. Burton-Jeangros et al. (2020) found that undocumented migrants are fired by their employers. Because of their unlawful status, these migrants stay quiet and typically avoid receiving support from any welfare group.

Several studies observed work terminations as a prevalent problem during the COVID-19 pandemic among regular and irregular migrants. For instance, according to Bhandari et al. (2021), Nepali migrants in Japan were terminated by their employers

without prior notice, forcing them to lose their jobs and threatening them with deportation. In Germany, Auer (2022) noticed that layoff decisions on who to keep and who to fire are influenced by employers' preferences, with employers more inclined to terminate employees with migratory origins, which is viewed as emerging discrimination.

Furthermore, undocumented workers were severely affected by unemployment and work termination during this pandemic. A study by Alsharif (2022) found that undocumented migrants in Saudi Arabia are recruited for low wages or without wages. Because undocumented migrants are afraid of working due to their undocumented status, employers take advantage of this by hiring them for low payment for a short period (Khoso & Noor, 2021).

The reviewed literature shows that unstable working conditions and sudden termination are emerging challenges that migrant workers encounter. Similarly, undocumented migrants face a similar challenge of work termination, and these migrants benefit employers. This cohort intermittently experiences work terminations and instability, particularly during the migrant workers' crisis. To sum up, migrants experience work insecurity in the host country, affecting their psychological well-being, regular income, and, in some cases, their work permits. Apart from this work instability, migrants face exploitation in newly arrived destinations, which is discussed in the following section.

2.3.2.3 Exploitative Working Environment

Exploitation is by far a more reported issue among migrant workers in the receiving countries. Exploitation among migrant workers is prevalent in various sectors such as factories, agriculture, mining, and domestic work, and it has received global attention, including in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as migrants should be free from any abuses (United Nations, 2015b). Particularly, the present research focuses on migrants' experience of exploitation in receiving their wages on a regular basis and during their relationships with their co-workers and employers (Mak, Zimmerman, et

al., 2021b). These experiences are reviewed under two subthemes: exploitation based on relationships and exploitation based on wages.

2.3.2.3.1 Exploitation Based on Relationships

Migrant workers are exploited when interacting with various communities in the migrated destination, including employers and employees. Although migrants can earn more than what they earned in their origin country, many of them are often exploited by employers, sponsors, labour recruiters, and co-workers, causing them to lose their basic human rights and dignity as human beings (Auwal, 2010). Arnold & Hewison (2005) found that the far most intolerable difficulty that Burmese migrants endure in Thailand is exploitation, whose labour force is used by employers to maximise their profits, but they receive a meagre return and have to work longer working hours. Putul & Mia (2020) stated that employers in Malaysia heavily practise supremacy by forcing employees to work.

Co-workers work close to other employees in the organization and are responsible for being helpful to other employees, increasing job satisfaction and work performance (Charoensukmonkol et al., 2016; Srimarut & Mekhum, 2020). The quality of employees' relationships with co-workers and supervisors impacts the job burnout they experience (Charoensukmonkol et al., 2016). This amicable relationship positively impacts personal achievement in one's work over time (Austin & Fernet, 2010). However, most of the time, co-worker relationships lead to dissatisfaction with the job. Charoensukmonkol et al. (2016) opined that when employees' efforts are not recognised or are not producing expected results, they feel a lack of achievements in their careers. Furthermore, a lack of support from co-workers and managers causes employees to feel alienated and demotivated in showing high performance in the job.

Among the migrants, undocumented migrant segments far more experience exploitation by employers and co-workers in the same workplace. Agudelo-Suárez et al. (2009) opined that immigrant workers in Spain experience discrimination by being restricted from meeting their employers, and they are employed for low wages or sometimes unpaid for overtime work done because of their illegal status. At the same

time, they are mistreated by being overworked in companies managed by immigrants of the same nationality and workmates. Immigrants who experienced such discrimination and exploitation in Spain were more affected by declining health than those in their country of origin (Agudelo-Suárez et al., 2011).

The findings of Amnesty International (2014) among domestic workers in Qatar revealed that domestic workers are a vulnerable group who heavily depend on their employers, experiencing exploitation by their employers through long working hours, low wages, lack of rest, and dehumanising treatments. Nisrane et al. (2020) found that Ethiopian migrant women are frequently threatened in the domestic sphere by their employers, and sometimes they are sleepless because of fear of being assaulted at night. Similar exploitative practices, such as beating, scolding, and mistreatment, were experienced by the Sri Lankan migrants (Pinnawala, 2009; Weeraratne, 2014).

When workers have an uneasy connection with their employers or their homes, they shift jobs or quit. Näre (2011) identified that in Italy, domestic workers who are employed with hard work mostly change their employers intermittently when they find it difficult to find suitable employers who could provide health care and legal aid and treat them with respect and humanely instead of just providing money. In line with Näre (2011) findings, Habibi (1998) discovered in Lebanon that exploitative practices and hardship in the workplace caused the Sri Lankan migrant workers to leave their employers' homes without passports, leaving them in the hands of their employers and stay outside to work, particularly as prostitutes and daily maids for customers of their own choice.

Apart from exploitation throughout the relationship with migrants' employers and co-workers, they also experience exploitation based on wages, which is reviewed in the following section.

2.3.2.3.2 Exploitation Based on the Wages

According to the studies, migrant workers report being treated and paid unfairly in the job and are exploited by being forced to work. Vora (2008) identified that Indian

nationals in skilled categories experienced discrimination and high work pressure in the UAE workplace, which favoured Western-educated workers with higher salaries. Generally, the working hours of migrant workers in host countries are stressful, sometimes contrary to their expectations. For example, migrant families who moved to the US from China and Hong Kong engaged in labour force activities to earn more money in the US than they did in China and Hong Kong (Qin, 2009b).

Unskilled workers are exploited by being unpaid or having their wages cut. For instance, Arnold and Hewison (2005) found that Burmese migrants in Thailand were exploited by paying low wages below Thailand's minimum wage limit. In another study, Auwal (2010) discovered that many blue-collar workers, particularly in construction and cleaning in Kuwait, remained unpaid for months at a time, thus causing them to go hungry while working.

Similarly, women who are engaged in domestic work experience wage exploitation as a result of the employer-employee relationship. Sometimes, working women are tasked to remit money from their birth family, on the one hand, suffering from inadequate social benefits and wages in the workplace on the other, thus amplifying their greater level of precarity (Piper & Lee, 2016). Lui et al. (2021) found in Hong Kong that this pressure on sending money caused the migrants to tolerate abusive employment relationships where employers pressure them to work more, intensifying their already vulnerable status. Chung & Mak (2020) concluded that abusive employment conditions and not receiving wages on time were associated with worsened mental health among the migrants in Hong Kong as well.

No payment of agreed wages was a commonly reported problem among Sri Lankan migrant workers (Rosario, 2008; Shaw, 2008b). Jureidini & Moukarbel (2004) and Moukarbel (2009) interviewed migrant workers during their stay in Lebanon. These investigations discovered that women working in Lebanese houses were exploited through overworking and a lack of freedom due to being on call for the employer's family. Furthermore, these women in Lebanon were denied the right to an independent life outside the employer's homes, such as having love affairs with other migrant workers and starting a new life by marrying their romantic partner in the destination country (Moukarbel, 2009). Thus, migration destinations, particularly in

the Middle East, are reported to be more difficult in terms of wages. Wage exploitation can occur as a result of an unfavourable relationship with employers.

The studies reviewed reveal that migrants endure an exploitative environment in the work destination, either through mistreatment or low wages. However, in the migration setting, particularly in the Middle East, most of the existing studies revealed the consequences of exploitation and low-skilled migrant workers' experience, and little attention has been given to identifying the causes of exploitation (IOM, 2015). Thus, this study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by drawing evidence from the Middle East labour market, where a large proportion of migrants are employed (Gardner, 2011).

The working environment of migrant workers is challenging because they have to overcome many obstacles, such as difficulties in finding jobs, unstable jobs, work terminations, and exploitation, reducing their earnings and negatively impacting families by reducing happiness in the migrated destination. This challenge is further apparent when migrants face financial constraints when it comes to spending money on their families. Thus, the following themes are formed to collect literature on family spending while contrasting job obstacles in the host nation.

2.3.2.4 Expenses After the Arrival of Families

With the migration of families, expenses in the destination significantly increase (Ambrosini, 2015; Bonizzoni, 2014), coupled with the work challenges migrants face. Thus, the following themes are categorized into two sub-themes covering the expenses after the arrival of families: “family expenses” and “housing, medical, and educational expenses”.

2.3.2.4.1 Daily Family Expenses

The immediate expenses that migrants need to overcome are everyday expenses such as food. Eating three times a day is difficult for low-income families (Amfo et al., 2021). Amfo et al. (2021) found that when migrants' incomes diminish, they generally limit

their consumption of nutritious food, such as meat, vegetables, and milk. Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) highlighted that the initial period of Korean migrants settling in America is extremely difficult economically; they work longer hours to cover at least survival and food for their families, neglecting all forms of leisure activities.

Furthermore, studies reveal the consequences of consistent strain on daily family spending, particularly how it increases stress among migrants. Agyei et al. (2004) found that the migrants were stressed when they had problems paying their household bills from their own income. Ayón & Becerra (2013) discovered that Latino immigrant families in the US had severe economic conditions that required them to work hard, leaving their children alone at home all day, heightening the level of stress experienced in their family.

Given the gender pay gap and caring responsibilities for children and parents, migrant women in the Netherlands and the UK, in most cases, experience economic inequalities in the labour market, which is not enough to live with family in the destination, thus forcing them to maintain a transnational family (Kofman, 2018). Even in the male breadwinner family, Bonizzoni (2014) stated that when the migrated family in Italy fully depended on the husband's salary when it was lower to manage the family expenses, families opted to send their younger children back to Ukraine to stay with their grandparents.

It is apparent that migrants expect their daily income to cover their daily expenses. When the daily income is scarce or problematic, thus this impacts their food consumption, psychological well-being, and family life in the destination. Apart from the daily substances, expenses that need to be covered with their earnings are reviewed in the following section.

2.3.2.4.2 Housing, Educational, and Medical

Migrants' expenses change after the arrival of families as they have to pay for every facility they receive at the destination. Migrants spend more on housing, medical, and

education. Thus, the following section explores the literature based on three sub-themes: housing, medical, and education.

2.3.2.5.2.1 Housing

The major problem that migrating families face is the housing cost, including utilities such as electricity and water. Housing costs must be considered while determining migration decisions (Fafchamps & Shilpi, 2013). A study conducted in Germany shows that increasing housing rentals, which are insufficient to cover what they expect to earn, reduces the migration flow (Stawarz et al., 2021). Ambrosini (2015) found that in Italy, single mothers had to overcome economic barriers to migrating with their children, such as high rental housing payments in support of the house rent.

Once migrants arrive at their destination, they primarily consider the comfort of their family members or a family-friendly environment (Salama et al., 2018). Gillespie et al. (2021) argued that families in Sweden migrate for family-related reasons such as family ties and environmental amenities where they prioritize the family, particularly children's education, by residing in convenient places which are expensive to manage with their salary, causing them to experience a worsening in their labour market outcome that produces less economic benefit. According to this argument, the migrants take a long time to resettle in a good job to balance their challenging family commitments and work.

Furthermore, a study conducted in Doha discovered that the lowest house rents would be found in highly dense areas, and these areas are occupied by migrant workers, who, once again, face continuously increasing rental prices, making it difficult for lower-income and medium-income groups to find affordable housing (Salama et al., 2018). Even families that come to the Gulf states with minimal salary standards to obtain a family visa face financial issues as the salaries are higher than what the migrants earn in the destinations (Gardner, 2011).

Housing is essential for migrant families, and it must be both handy for families and inexpensive in relation to migrants' income. However, according to the reviewed

literature, once migrants arrive at their destination, they struggle to cope with rising rental costs, which are sometimes unaffordable compared to migrants' income.

2.3.2.5.2.2 Education

As much as migrant families decide to migrate for economic enhancement, this also implicitly includes educational opportunities for their children as it helps to better their future (Browne, 2017). Even breadwinners in immigrant families, particularly father-centred families, often believe that providing better education for their children is an investment in their future lives (Este & Tachble, 2009). Hagen-Zanker and Mallett (2016) further emphasized that, in the European context, families with children consider access to education essential in deciding where to go. Thus, migrants are less likely to compromise their children's education in the destination country.

However, stable jobs and economic status are vital in providing better education for their children. Leon (1996), in a study conducted in Michigan, identified some challenges for migrant workers' children, who are struggling to make ends meet and endure disrupted schooling due to economic marginalization, making school attendance difficult. Sometimes, as found in Canada, children from low-income families begin school later than their peers from affluent families (Ferguson et al., 2007).

Similarly, economic marginalization among migrants influences school choices. According to a study conducted by Liang et al. (2020) in China, private schools in China charge a high tuition fee, which is out of reach for deprived migrant children, forcing them to choose either public schools with above-average facilities but a high endorsement fee or migrant children's schools with poor facilities. As a result, children at migrant schools in China have fewer opportunities to excel academically than those in public schools (Chen & Feng, 2013). Similarly, Gardner (2011) concluded that the cost of educating children at private schools in the Middle East exceeds the cost of living in the destinations.

Since independence, the Sri Lankan government has successfully implemented a free education policy to maintain the nation's welfare (Alawattegam, 2020). Every

citizen of the country is entitled to pursue free education up to the university level. Either way, a free education system helps vulnerable communities pursue education without obstacles. The Sri Lankan government continuously allocates the budget for education, including higher education in Sri Lanka (Ra & Song, 2018). Due to the free education policy and international support, Sri Lanka has the highest youth literacy rate in the region, which is a remarkable achievement in the education system in Sri Lanka (Semasinghe, 2009). Thus, any additional burden that falls on education, particularly in the form of money, would impact educational attainment, which has been found among the migrant communities. Thus, the present research attempts to address educational challenges in comparison with the free education system that migrants enjoyed before the migration. Furthermore, according to the evidence described above, the economic difficulties of migrants disrupt their children's school attendance and impact their children's school choices, lowering their academic performance. Thus, these findings are significant because they highlight the relationship between economic marginalization and school choice among migrant families.

2.3.2.5.2.3 Health

Furthermore, accessing healthcare services in the migrated destinations is difficult, resulting in an additional financial strain. Peng et al. (2010) opined that the high cost of medical facilities in China causes migrants who become sick to forego hospital appointments and receive treatment on time. Similarly, financial barriers again were found among immigrant women in the Netherlands as a barrier to returning to the hospital to treat their children's illnesses (Schoevers et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Kuan et al. (2020) emphasized that migrants in Taiwan encountered barriers to accessing healthcare services due to the high cost of treatment, and those migrants could not afford those charges by finding funding resources. Similarly, Fellin et al. (2013) stated that raising a child with a physical disability was difficult for low-income migrant families in Canada. Those migrant families in Canada faced similar obstacles, such as finding the funding sources for treatment.

The studies above show that living in countries with high health-care costs is challenging for migrant workers. Furthermore, the financial disaster that occurred during their journey made it difficult for them to obtain hospital services.

The literature on housing, education, and medical costs was evaluated in the preceding sub-theme. According to housing, the rising house rents are often exorbitant in comparison to migrants' income. Similarly, educational fees are always problematic for low-income families, negatively impacting children's education. Finally, unaffordable medical expenditures reduce the chances of receiving proper healthcare facilities.

The expenses after the arrival of families are reviewed under two subthemes: daily family expenses and housing, educational, and medical expenses. In summary, migrants sacrifice their lives for their family members in their destination country and those in their home country. The financial hardships last throughout their lives, particularly for their daily expenses, medical, and utilities, and the pressure of their expenses affects their remittances and savings, which are the prime objectives of their migration. Thus, the following theme exclusively focuses on remittances and savings after the arrival of families.

2.3.2.5 Remittances and Savings After the Families' Arrival

Migrant remittances represent the most significant positive impact of migration on migrant-sending countries (Taylor, 1999). Previous research has shown the benefits of remittances that enable the family to get a better education, improve their lives, and access health services. Studies by Gamburd (2000) and Shaw (2008a) on Sri Lankan migrants depicted that remittances help them overcome their immediate problems in the family by providing help for the education of children, dowry for their daughters and themselves, buying necessary household items and repairing houses. Furthermore, migrant remittances allowed them to escape poverty, at least during their transitional period of living (Shaw, 2008a).

However, family migration reduces the remittances and shrinks the savings in the host country, as their earnings mostly drain in the destination. In the Italian case, Ambrosini (2014) discovered that the arrival of families, especially children, considerably decreases the remittances flow toward the homeland and reduces the possibilities of savings in the homeland. Similarly, Bonizzoni (2007) concluded in the Italian case that if children join their families in the receiving countries, the everyday life and savings of migrant families alter.

In a similar vein, balancing the family life in the destination and sending money to the extended family members left behind is challenging with what they earn in the host country. For instance, young women who had established their families in Asian countries and left their ageing parents at home had care responsibilities, such as sending remittances and expenses to their natal and newly founded families. (Piper & Lee, 2016).

Apart from these existing challenges, the COVID-19 crisis affected the savings and remittance flow of migrant workers due to pay cuts and unemployment. Ekanayake and Amirthalingam (2021) and Weeraratne (2020) stressed that the remittance flow to Sri Lanka from Middle Eastern migrants was considerably reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic as they experienced pay cuts and work terminations or were expecting to lose their jobs in the future. In support of the above findings, Khanna (2020) found that due to the loss of employment during the COVID-19 outbreak, migrant workers in India became dependent on their households instead of being providers of remittances to them.

The arrival of families considerably changes the savings and remittances they send to their family members left behind. These changes correlate with work challenges that migrants face in their destinations and the recent COVID-19 crisis that has shrunk their earnings.

Economic challenges faced by migrant families include six major subthemes: finding new employment and being unemployed, work instability and sudden termination, exploitative working environment, sexual harassment, expenses after the arrival of families, and remittances and savings. The above themes explore the

relationship between work-related problems and expenses at the destination, which again impact the remittances and savings of the migrants. As much as work-related problems that incur migrants, such as, finding new employment and becoming unemployed, work instability and sudden termination, exploitative working environment, and sexual harassment, increase the challenges of living with family in the destination that consumes their total return for their living cost.

Apart from the economic challenges that migrants go through, migrant families have to face some social challenges in their newly arrived destination, which are discussed in the following themes.

2.3.3 Social Challenges Faced by Migrant Families

Many authors draw attention to the various impacts of migration on migrant families and the changes that occur inside the family, such as the husband-wife relationship, the parent-child relationship (Dumon, 1989), and the relationship among migrant families simultaneously. In this case, it might be strategic to recognise first the impact of migration on marital choices, including marriages with different nationalities, then further the consequences of family migration, such as gender roles, loneliness and structure of creation of new migration networks and transnational bonds with left behind family members. Thus, the literature accumulated below supports the above paradigm, which addresses the Sri Lankan marriage system, migration families and gender roles, migration networks, and transnational relationships.

2.3.3.1 Sri Lankan Families and Marriages

Marriage traditions among the mainstream ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Christians, vary since each ethnic community marries based on their own religious and cultural values. Nevertheless, the common feature identified among them was that they complied with common marriage procedures that the territory defined as Sri Lankans. The present section attempts to accumulate the literature on

various marriage practices in Sri Lanka in order to compare them with the migrated community.

Early writers on Sri Lankan marriage, such as Yalman (1967), Leach (1961) and Tambiah (1965), have discussed Sinhalese marriage practices and kinship patterns even from the Kandyan kingdom in central and north-central Sri Lanka. Among the Sinhalese racial community, during the Kandyan kingdom, one of the surprising findings was the practice of polyandry marriage, which is called '*eka-ge-kema*' (eating in one house), which is adding another husband into a woman's marital life. In fact, polyandry marriage was a matter of sharing the wealth among the family members or the mechanism to shrink the wealth within one family. Anthropological studies that focused on marriage practices during the eighteenth century inform that polyandrous during that time was very rare (Bulten et al., 2018). Studies conducted in the early 1990s did not even attempt to analyse polyandrous since that practice was nonexistent (B. Caldwell, 1992). The foregoing findings show that the community was reluctant to accept polyandrous over time, and the Sinhalese marriage system changes are apparent. Similarly, Muslims are reluctant to practice polyandry marriage since, during the subsistence of the first marriage, a married woman cannot legally contract a second marriage as per Islamic marriage law (Marsoof, 2006).

Polygamy was also practised among different racial communities, but among the Sinhalese, some had married sisters who were in the same family (Kemper, 1980), which is paradoxical with Islamic polygamy practice. Muslims must consider the legal impediments that Islamic law has thought when contracting any type of marriage, monogamy and polygamy, even in Sri Lanka, which may be on account of consanguinity or the ground of affinity and fosterage (Marsoof, 2006). Notably, Sinhalese and other racial communities, except Muslims, cannot legally practice polygamy in Sri Lanka. Though Islam has allowed marrying four women at a time, Islamic teachings say that marrying a woman and her sister at a time, his wife being then alive, and any of her paternal aunts or a woman and her maternal aunts are forbidden². Currently, Sri Lankan Muslims follow the Muslim law contained in the statutory framework of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1951, which is consistent with the basic principles of Islamic law and morality (Marsoof, 2006).

² Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, ed. 1991

Generally, until the sixteenth century, Sri Lankan society married based on mutual agreement and traditional customs, and there was vagueness in identifying legal marriages (Rupesinghe, 2018).

As the Portuguese and then Dutch landed in Sri Lanka from the sixteenth century onwards, some European customs were introduced, which were opposed to Sinhalese cultural norms and traditions (Bulten et al., 2018). The customs, such as marriages through an official ceremony performed by a church minister, which was practised from 1580 onwards, and the European concept of illegitimacy that the Dutch introduced were somehow strange to the Sinhalese. For instance, children of women who had married lower than their cast were considered illegitimate (Bulten et al., 2018). In fact, this marriage custom was introduced indirectly to control Christian marriage with a non-Christian and to ensure the intergenerational transmission of feudal services attached to the land (Bulten et al., 2018; Rupesinghe, 2018). Notably, Muslims were legally forbidden to form a marriage contract with a non-Muslim man and a marriage contract with a non-Muslim woman, except with a woman following a revealed religion such as Christianity or Jews, collectively known as *Ahlul Kitāb* (people of the book) (Marsoof, 2006). Besides, in the eighteenth century, when marriage registration was introduced, this caused many to skip undocumented marriages and marriage practices that culture does not value. It is pertinent to note that Leach (1966) stressed that although governmental pressure was incurred on village peasantry to comply with the law, very few did so and registered their marriages (Leach, 1961).

Though the Sri Lankan community's marriages were restricted by law to a certain respect, some cultural facts, such as couple matching, dowry, believing in astrology or horoscope, and wedding ceremonies, could not be restricted by any legal or political forces. The Sri Lankan community follow various customs, which are culturally rich, based on the ethnic community that they belong to. The typical marriage practices that many authors agreed on was that parents arranged most marriages for their daughters' past puberty, and the residence type was either based on *Binna* (uxorilocal) or *Diga* (virilocal) marriage, which lodging the husband with the bride's family or the wife's residence with the groom's family (Malhotra & Tsui, 1996). Apart from that, Sri Lankan Buddhists believe that marrying a person by looking at astrology helps to cope with the fear of marrying the unknown, granting a moral guarantee that

marital union will persist (Abeyasekera, 2015). A study conducted among Muslims in the Kutali community in the Monaragala district asserts that love among them is considered inevitable in village marital choice and sometimes an acceptable motive for marriage (Munck, 1996). Another ethnographic study on the Puttalam Muslim community emphasizes that Marrikar families are still willing to endogamy marriage practices to maintain their uniqueness (Anes, 2009). The above findings show that a community cannot easily be transformed from what it perceives as a change and its original norms.

The Sri Lankan marriage system includes dichotomous practices, either arranged marriage, which occurs mainly with family members' involvement, and love marriages, which start with love prior to marriage and end with marriage with or without concern of the parents (Premawardhena et al., 2020). However, marriage based on love or personal choice was not a solitary societal practice. Families' involvement in traditional marriages in Sri Lanka was vital. In this traditional marriage culture of Sri Lanka, the bride and groom must obtain their parents' consent before being allowed to marry, and the cast and wealth are notable concerns (Jayanththi, 2021). Furthermore, the couples' freedom to choose partners was restricted to the interest of their paternal kin group, where marrying outside one's cast group was unimaginable (Bulten et al., 2018; Jayanththi, 2021). Even in love marriages, if the parents were informed of the matter, the young couple would step back, allowing their parents to negotiate marriage-related matters, including the marriage ceremony (Abeyasekera, 2016). Even though sexual activities and love life were practised before and after Sri Lankan colonization, early marriages were not purely a romantic decision (Bulten et al., 2018; B. Caldwell, 1992). Instead, it was a family strategy and matter of inheritance issue in which the family counteracted property fragmentation by allowing cross-cousins to marry (Bulten et al., 2018).

In the changing social world, Sri Lankan society has changed from a family and community-centred to an individualistic one where individuals choose their marriage partners based on skills, education, and jobs (B. Caldwell, 1992). Increasingly, a young woman's marriage in Sri Lanka depends more on her own ability and choice than relying on her family (Abeyasekera, 2016; B. Caldwell, 1996). A recent study by Udagama (2021) on marital conflict in Sri Lanka has explored that due to love affairs,

even during school time, women's families are reluctant to accept such affairs, thus causing them to elope and get married. It is pretty evident that the modern changes among the urban middle-class women in Sri Lanka in which young women emphasize the self as the principal navigator of their life course, including determining their life partner, narrating it as their inner desire rather than social expectation (Abeyasekera, 2016). In this process, some families no longer prevent love marriages, but when couples choose their partners by their own choices, they are not obliged to take any responsibility if anything goes wrong (B. Caldwell, 1996). Furthermore, parents have been more concerned that love marriages would end in cross-cast or cross-religion marriages (J. Caldwell et al., 1989).

Self-choice of marriage partner, women's economic liberality, and nuclear families are three pathways absent in the marriage history of Sri Lanka and are modern experiences. Since the non-agricultural type of employment is increasing, thus causing males and females to be exposed to the outer world, love marriage become the norm in society (J. Caldwell et al., 1989). As per the studies, the emerging nuclear rather than extended-family type is another notable reason why autonomous mate selection and romantic love are more prevalent in society (G. R. Lee & Stone, 1980). On the other hand, a woman's increasing pressure of the obligations in the nuclear family setup, finding a job before the marriage, and accumulating dowry on her own has received increasing attention, all of which sometimes delay the marriage at her proper age (Malhotra & Tsui, 1996).

From the beginning to date, Sri Lankan marriages seem rigid in terms of marriage choice and agreement, following formalities of marriage, and considering legal impediments to the marriage. According to the reviewed literature, the Sri Lankan community always resorts to formal marriages to start their family life, which the culture values. However, changes in the family structure and earning opportunities outside the country change the traditional marriage practices and need to be spelt out as the community expects, which has received primary focus in this research.

2.3.3.2 Marriages of Migrants from Different Nationalities

Migration is the growing passage that prompts migrants to become economically independent, accumulate whatever amount they want for dowry and marriage, and be ready to marry on their choice, even finding a life partner other than one's birth country. In the migrated destinations, binational marriages between people of native origin and migrants entering the labour market to marry have been on the rise (Kofman et al., 2011). Some marriages between native people and migrants intend to settle in the migrated destinations. For instance, skilled labour migrants who enter Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan are more interested in staying longer and exploring new lives, despite their economic prosperity, in order to find a spouse to settle permanently in the host country (Yeung & Mu, 2020). As cited in Shanghai, such intermarriages are often associated with maximising wealth and social status (Farrer, 2008).

Similarly, an empirical study noted that single mothers from the Philippines migrated to France as domestic workers and married native sponsors, expecting a better life for their families and a promising future for their children (Fresnoza-Flot, 2018). Given that women are growing as economic providers in Vietnamese society, they expect better marriage prospects, mainly by choosing potential grooms in Taiwan, even with the help of the family (Bélanger & Linh, 2011). Such married migrant women in Taiwan and South Korea act as brides for their foreign partners and breadwinners to the families they migrated from (Bélanger & Linh, 2011; H. K. Kim, 2012).

Another set of literature deals with the marriages between second-generation immigrants and someone from their parent's native country (Eggebo & Brekke, 2019), as studies have identified British Pakistani Muslims who were married to a spouse from their parents' or grandparents' native country (Charsley, 2005). British-born Pakistani and Bangladeshi women marry men back home, probably a cousin, with traditional Pakistani or Bangladeshi culture, such as expecting more responsibilities to be done by women at home and restrictions on engaging in labour force participation outside the home (Dale & Ahmed, 2011). Besides these cultural preferences, it is further evident, as found in Belgium on partner choices among men and women of Turkish, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Panjabi Sikh, as well as Pakistan and Albania, that occurs with their own desires and preferences (Casier et al., 2013). Given that the marriage migrations

in these contexts relate to native-born sponsors or with already settled migrants, studies by far have analysed the integration and assimilation issues and labour force participation of newly arrived spouses (Bonjour & Kraler, 2015; Charsley et al., 2016, 2017).

The third form of marriage occurs between migrant workers who are from different nationalities in the host country, which is the temporary destination for them. The causes of such marriages have received less attention in the literature. According to certain reports, love relationships between migrants from different nationalities end in marriage. Studies often explore love marriages as a transitional phase in the structure of forming families (Hart, 2007). Such romantic relationships that ended in marriage have been found among Sri Lankan migrant workers in Jordan (Frantz, 2008; Smith, 2010a). In this transitional phase, some women in Jordan decided to live away from their employers, experiencing more freedom, including sexual encounters with male coworkers. Furthermore, domestic workers outside their employers' homes keep romantic ties with male workers and often marry them (Frantz, 2008). Most of the migrants who engage in cross-border marriages are most vulnerable and economically deprived (H. K. Kim, 2012).

The above literature so far shows all kinds of marriages in the migrated destination itself. Apart from that, migrants take migration as a means to accumulate money and settle in the country after marriage or sometimes repeat migration. As per the forgone studies, forming families in the migrated destination happens for various purposes, such as permanent settlement and as a temporary economic remedy. The structure of forming a family in these destinations occurs through family support or self-choices, probably love marriages. It was pertinent to inquire whether migration and marriage were related, particularly changes in forming families and challenges they face subsequently, and if so, what factors were involved, which is the frame for the present analysis.

2.3.3.2.1 Divorce: A Challenge Faced by Migrant Women Who Marry Foreigners

The studies on divorce among migrant women who marry in a foreign country showed a high divorce rate. Andersson et al. (2015) observed that foreign-born women who married in Sweden had an unusually high divorce risk due to their diverse social backgrounds and family systems. Furthermore, mutual understanding and role negotiation are vital in families of two distinct nationalities in order to smooth the marital connection. For instance, Filipino wives who were married to Japanese husbands were active in balancing the marital relationship to avoid stress, whereas husbands rarely participated in house chores (Satake, 2018).

When the relationship between husband and wife worsens, their lives end with divorce. For instance, the wife's feelings of more freedom in the family due to the economic power causes her to play a dominant role in the family, thus triggering divorce among the migrant families (Wirawan & Mas'udah, 2020). Another study conducted using Ghanaian couples abroad found that migration increases the chance of divorce by creating tension between spouses due to changes in gender roles, particularly when becoming the main breadwinner in the family (K. Caarls & Mazzucato, 2015).

The research described above looked at marriages and divorces among various migrant communities. Although researchers have paid more attention to the relationship between migration and family life, the influence of migration on divorce has received less attention (K. Caarls & Mazzucato, 2015; Glick, 2010). Furthermore, prior research paid less attention to marriages between migrants of various nationalities in foreign places.

The preceding section analyzed the literature based on marriages from different nationalities, which also includes a subtheme of divorce as it is a subsequent challenge migrant women face in such marriages. According to the above studies, migrants marry a foreign national for love reasons, economic motives, or to secure their legal status. However, these migrants are at risk of divorce as these marriages create disputes among the spouses.

2.3.3.3 Family Migration and Loss of Social Support

From birth to death, the family is considered the primary social and functional unit in all human societies, where sexual relationships are socially approved among couples and children are nurtured until they find their own families (Ebrahim, 1982; Sharma, 2013). Furthermore, as parents, children, and siblings, family members interact with one another in accordance with existing social and cultural morals (Ebrahim, 1982). This relationship is further strengthened when family members need assistance from their kin groups but cannot obtain it from immediate family members (Arce, 1970).

However, family migration changes the structure in most families due to the receiving countries' policies and procedures. These receiving policies for migrant families are restrictive and usually allow only spouses and children (Gardner, 2011). According to Vora (2008), low-skilled women and housemaids in Dubai are unlikely to be able to sponsor their husbands and children. Gardner (2011) discovered that due to the restrictive receiving policies in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the probability of moving as nuclear families, with or without children, was more likely than transferring as extended families. The new structure of families reduces the support that these families receive from their extended families and their prolonged relationships, thus causing loneliness.

According to the reviewed literature, it is evident that after the family migration, the migrated families suffer greater loneliness in the destination. Rashid et al. (2013) discovered that women in Canada who migrated with their young children experienced loneliness during their initial migration period, stagnating at home without the social networks and social support that they had in their home country. Similarly, migrant couples from Iran in Canada, while they were close to each other, were suffering from greater loneliness as they were separated from extended family members and social support (Shirpak et al., 2011). Migrants who live far from their native families often live with divided hearts, connecting them economically and emotionally with families back home (Falicov, 2005). Similarly, from the migration decision onwards, the left behind families, particularly parents, feel greater pain as it is an impending loss (Marchetti-Mercer, 2012). Sometimes, this pain is considered more than the migrants feel (Falicov & Diego, 2008).

Moreover, the loss of social support that migrants had in their home country when they migrated to a new economic setting affected their mental well-being. For example, the Romanians' working conditions in Spain, without the social assistance they got in their native country, worsened their mental health (González-Castro & Ubillos, 2011). Migrated couples, in most cases, feel loneliness on the one hand and work pressure on the other, affecting their mental well-being. Furthermore, in the absence of family support, migrant families share their family roles, which has been reviewed in the following theme.

2.3.3.4 *Family Gender Roles*

The migration of entire family members creates structural changes within the family, such as types of work and hours worked, family structure and gender roles in the family, which differ from the native population (Pannetier et al., 2017; Sørensen, 2007). Besides, families strive to maintain quality family relationships, especially by offering love, compassion, and support, improving the psychological and behavioural well-being of the members (Dai & Wang, 2015; Thomas et al., 2017). However, empirical studies offer a more detailed picture of how family changes, as a result of migration, affect couples' relationships.

Firstly, the power dynamic between the spouses shifts after the migration. Ben-David & Lavee (1994) revealed two sources of conflict between couples after migration by studying migrant families from the Soviet Union to Israel. First, conflict among the couples emerged when one partner did not want to move from their country of origin. Secondly, their power dynamic becomes strained when the wife absorbs the language in the receiving country and obtains a job before the husband. According to Gill & Matthews (1995), in Canada, when women participated in labour force activities that allowed them to earn more, they became more autonomous and reduced their attention to their own families, causing their husbands to lose a sense of authority and identity, particularly in economic contribution to the family.

Furthermore, families change their traditional family setup and share the spouses' roles to manage the current economic context. For example, the Somali

families in Finland lacked options to raise their children, as they had lost their support providers, such as mothers, sisters, and relatives, as a result of family migration's external stress. However, after migration, the family role of Somali families changed in the new cultural context of Finland from a heavily dominated patriarchal system to a collective gender role where women and men shared all their responsibilities at home, including childrearing (Degn et al., 2006).

According to the studies, meeting spouses at a place and sharing their family roles were becoming less common in some dual-earner families due to broken shifts. Bonizzoni (2009) found that husband and wife arrived to work together to boost their family economy. Then, the next problem they encountered was maintaining a work-family balance, which arose due to the broken work shifts among spouses in two different places. The roles of families were further evident in the childrearing, which are reviewed below. The following theme further provides a comprehensive picture of migrants' family life.

2.3.3.4.1 Childrearing

Work pressure and poor adaptation in the host country affect the children and spouses in the family. A study on Chinese immigrant children in the US conducted by Qin (2009) revealed that these children's fathers, who had more work pressure, were less physically and psychologically engaged in their children's lives, leading to parent-child alienation and a negative perception of parental support among children as parents were absent in their academic achievement. However, such effects may vary in terms of children's gender and age (Lamb & Bougher, 2009). Some of the issues that families confront during migration are strained relationships and difficulties in maintaining contact with adolescent children (Ambrosini, 2015).

Fleck & Fleck (2013) stated that parenting in single-parent families is challenging in migration life. Single mothers who work multiple jobs to feed their children face physical and emotional depletion. In these circumstances, mothers respond little to their children's needs, such as helping them acquire an education. Ambrosini (2012) narrated the brief history of the Italian case, revealing that some

mothers were separated or divorced before their departure and that they then found new partners in Italy, sometimes older than their age, as a strategy to acquire legal status and improve their own and their children's living conditions. However, in this case, when children reunite with migrant mothers, they face difficulties in forming relationships with their mothers' new partners. On the other hand, working mothers struggle to juggle work and family responsibilities. For instance, working women who migrate to urban Malaysia are depressed by the lack of childcare facilities, prompting them to give up their work (Chattopadhyay, 1997).

Children's attitudes and cultures in migrant households are influenced by their culturally diverse migrating surroundings. Gardner (2011) pointed out that children in middle-class families in Bahrain, who perceived education in an "Indian school" and interacted with Bahraini society and other nationalities, found difficulties adapting to Indian traditional culture when they returned for their higher education in India. They, too, lacked experience with day-to-day activities in the home country, such as using public transport. Furthermore, the conflict between parents and children occurs when the parents hold the traditional values and the children prefer the values which tend to be more oriented toward modernization (Dumon, 1989).

Reviewed literature sheds light on the culture children cherish in newly arrived destinations and their parents' traditional norms, creating conflicts between them. Furthermore, the work pressure that parents go through limits the time they devote to their children, particularly in terms of socialization and education.

2.3.3.5 Migration Network and New Social Relationship

Migrants broaden their ties beyond their families, which helps them to fulfil their needs at their destination. Migration is often motivated by a migration network, which is the connection with the people who have migrated earlier (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Thus, the tendency to keep relationships with other migrants begins even before the migration. Already migrated groups assist new migrants by providing necessary arrangements and information, particularly in any migration obstacles that occur during the migration (Poveda, 2007; Stark & Bloom, 1985).

According to a study, migrants from developing countries to Europe were given loans by previously moved friends and relatives who had established their living standards in other countries (Hatton & Williamson, 2002). Furthermore, Tasleem et al. (2021) asserted that Pakistani migrants received positive prospects in Malaysia, such as a secure life and freedom to work, from friends and family members who had already settled down in Malaysia. It is further supported by the finding of Uddin and Mohammed (2022), who found that Bangladeshi workers' relatives, who had already migrated to Malaysia, encouraged them to come to Malaysia.

Similarly, Filipino migrants used familial relations and social networks to choose the migration field, receive financial and material support, and obtain information regarding job openings and adjustment in receiving society (Tyner & Donaldson, 1999). However, skilled migrants in New Zealand had less need for such social support as they arrived at the destination with enough financial resources (Tabor et al., 2015).

Bartram (2019) discovered that multiple migrants in Sweden generally feel lonelier during the initial period of their migration, and often sometimes, and this frequently persists. However, in most cases, migrants form their relationship with the co-nationals to extend their network after the migration. The study by González-Castro and Ubillos (2011) noted that migrants from Ecuador to Spain rely more on their own ingroup rather than the host society for assistance in the host country (González-Castro & Ubillos, 2011). In another study, Ryan (2007) asserted that in the initial migration period, Irish nurses in the UK commonly form ties with other Irish nurses.

Migrants do not have the same groups of migrants forever in the network, which varies when they have children and change careers. Ryan and Mulholland (2014) found that women who had maintained the relationship with the mothers of their sons, who were friends at the same school and former work colleagues, had stopped their relationship when they stopped working and after having more children.

The relationships that migrants form at the destination are considered assets that they earn there. This network begins before the migration and continues after the move. However, the relationships reveal that they alter as a result of the changes that occur

over the migration period. The following section further discusses the transnational relationships that migrants maintain during their transitions.

2.3.3.6 *Transnational Relationships*

Migration transforms the family relationship from its original form into limited functions, which is more evident in the relationships with extended family members left behind. Family members separated for prolonged stints over long distances are commonplace among migrant workers (Yeoh et al., 2002). Though Migrants are physically at the migrated destination, they often leave their heart in the origin country (Falicov, 2005). When families live away from the physical premises of the shared houses, such as because of migration, these family relationships are limited to sharing financial resources and communication via global communication means (Sharma, 2013). The transnational relationship with the extended family members left behind is physically far, and they are missing most of the time joyful and sorrowful family life events, which causes dissatisfaction in this transition life. The unpleasant life event that happened to someone closer to the respondents has been noted to contribute to increased stress levels (Aneshensel et al., 1991).

As Marchetti-Mercer (2016) found among South African migrants, migrants do not consider a regular visit to their country of origin since it is costly. Furthermore, this distance relationship is further distanced because of the availability of technological facilities and the level of technological literacy that people have on both ends. Marchetti-Mercer (2012) confirms that the emotional support that grandparents are willing to render towards their migrated children and grandchildren is considerably reduced because of their lack of knowledge in using modern technology, such as Skype and WhatsApp. Simultaneously, the effectiveness of distance communication is low. Migrants feel that they cannot solve everything or talk about their children by communicating with their caregivers in their home country using the phone; thus, most of the matters are left to be solved by caregivers (Poeze et al., 2017).

As the migrants leave their families behind, there is a strong transnational commitment to transfer money to family members (Ambrosini, 2014). For example,

Handapangoda (2014) discovered that Sri Lankan migrants in Kuwait and Jordan maintain relationships with their families by sending money for family debts, medical, daily house needs, and festival expenses and gifting expensive products to their relatives. Even married women of foreign nationality in the destination maintain their relationship by sending remittances. Kim (2012) observed that Vietnamese brides married to Korean husbands maintain relationships with their families by sending money. Thus, this transnational connectivity either connects people through communication or by sending money (Ambrosini, 2014).

Social relationships with close friends, family, relatives, and the community in which people live are considered essential for exchanging support, love and care. However, some circumstances, such as life courses, marriages, and migration, cause these social bonds to shift, and they lose the implicit items they get.

The literature on the second objective of the present research was reviewed based on three themes: “legal challenges”, which included subthemes such as visa status, sponsoring a family visa, and migrants without legal documents; “economic challenges”, which involved subthemes like finding new employment and being unemployed, work instability and sudden termination, exploitative working environment, expenses after the arrival of families, and remittances and savings; and “social challenges”, which contained subthemes like Sri Lankan families and marriages, marriages from different nationalities, grievances that families go through, which also included the family migration and loss of social support, family gender role, migration network, and the relationship with extended family members left behind.

Reviewing various studies regarding migrant families in various destinations helps understand the uncertainties families confront following their arrival, including legal, economic, and social challenges. The challenges migrants and their family members face require proper coping mechanisms until they settle down permanently. Thus, the following section enables a discussion of how migrants cope with their challenges in the migrated destination.

2.4 EXAMINING THE COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES IN BAHRAIN

Families and migrant workers try their best to cope with the economic and social grievances that intervene during the transition period until they return to their home country. Mak, Roberts, et al. (2021) discovered five areas of work-related stressors in which migrant workers exclusively use as coping mechanisms: job environment, the legal status of the migrants, stigma, family, and health. For example, major stressors related to the job are exploitation, workload, underpayment, and terminations. Studies found the coping mechanisms that migrant workers employed to juggle legal, economic, and social stresses due to migration. The third coping objective discusses five common coping strategies adopted by migrants, which are: Reducing expenses and accepting the present situation, seeking support, being patient and turning to religion, family gatherings and entertainment, and distant communication and exchanging gifts.

2.4.1 Accepting the Present Situation

According to the reviewed literature, the major stress that migrants go through is financial hardship, particularly after the arrival of families, thus forcing them to reduce spending in order to manage their existing situation. Romanians and Moroccan migrants in Italy reduce their expenses during unemployment until they find a job using their migration network in Italy (Sacchetto & Vianello, 2016).

Migrant labourers encounter food shortages due to increased income and pressure to send remittances frequently. Deschak et al. (2022) observed that migrants who sought refuge in Mexico during their transition experienced food insecurity and economic vulnerability, and they coped by reducing food intake and often fasting for many days. In supporting the above findings, Amfo et al. (2021) discovered that migrants in Ghana who needed to send remittances to their families left behind lost income, thus reducing their ability to cope with expenses for daily sustenance. Those migrants dealt with the food shortage by lowering the amount consumed or the number of meals consumed daily.

The primary goal of migrants is to attain their desired migration goal by compromising the present situation, thus causing them to accept economic and social grievances during their migration. Mak, Zimmerman, et al. (2021) noted that Nepal migrant workers in Malaysia use the problem-solving strategy to achieve the desired migration outcome, analysing and strategising their financial difficulties during the migration. Migrants consider the two different stages in order to cope with the present situation. Eid and Diah (2019) discovered that migrants communicate with the immigrants who have reached their resettlement destinations, where they experience less anxiety and frustration, and their relatives, who are experiencing worse conditions in Palestine as a result of the war, to build a positive image of the situation that they go through in their lives in Malaysia.

Reducing expenses and accepting the present situation are common coping mechanisms that migrants employ during their financial struggle. However, when financial and social conditions worsen in the destination, migrants find some more strategies to overcome the situation. Accordingly, the following section presents support-seeking as another coping mechanism that migrants use to overcome migration-related stresses.

2.4.2 Support Seeking

Support-seeking was the particular strategy used by migrant workers to manage financial, social, and legal stresses. Mak, Zimmerman, et al. (2021) revealed that Nepal migrants use support seeking, including financial assistance and preparing documents with the help of friends, family, and organisations. The initial period of migrant families is challenging, whereby they seek help even for food expenses from their family members and friends who stay at the destination (Amfo et al., 2021).

Coping strategies are prevalent among immigrants and are applied by the migrant communities facing similar stresses in a foreign country. Khawaja et al. (2008) noted that Sudanese immigrant families employed support seeking from friends, family and the community where they lived as a coping mechanism to overcome financial difficulties and prolonged separation from the family members.

Hagan et al. (1996) noticed that parental support was a coping strategy among migrating families in Canada who had lost wider social capital, such as the support of extended family members. Parental support for children was a family coping strategy at this time, which is the ability to provide alternative social capital to mitigate the loss of social ties due to family migration.

Bonizzoni (2014) remarked that migrant mothers from Latin America and Eastern European countries to Italy were working in low-paying, unprotected and unstable jobs where they struggled to manage childcare responsibilities and work. Those mothers tried to broaden their support network with Italian elderly neighbours, on the one hand, to leave their children to go outside to work and, on the other, exchange their housing and jobs with new migrants as income sources to organize childcare.

The social support that migrants receive reduces their stress levels. Awuah et al. (2020) discovered that Ghanaian migrants with strong social support had a lower stress level at home or work, free from the financial crisis and mistreatment by others. Similarly, migrants from Ecuador to Spain were more satisfied when they received social support from their own ingroup (González-Castro & Ubillos, 2011). Even professional Pakistani workers in the UK sought social support from friends when encountering disputes with co-workers, relieving their pain (Murray & Ali, 2016).

Migrants receive support from individuals, families, and organizations to overcome the economic, social, and legal challenges they go through at their destination. Similarly, faith and patience profoundly dominate migrants' family lives and are used as coping mechanisms when problems arise during their transition period.

2.4.3 Being Patient and Turning to Religion

During migration-related pressures, migrant workers and migrating families resort to religion as a coping method. Filipino migrant workers in Hong Kong turned to religion when they encountered mental torture, such as loneliness and homesickness, in the workplace (Nakoncz & Shik, 2009). In line with the preceding findings, van der Ham et al. (2015) explored that Filipino women in the domestic sphere cope with stress

caused by their low income and loneliness by turning to prayer, particularly by reading religious scriptures such as the bible.

Similarly, Eid & Diah (2019) found that religious attachment is the major asset among Palestinian refugee families in Malaysia in order to improve their quality of life. Migrants feel relaxed when they employ religion as a coping mechanism. Murray & Ali (2016) observed that Pakistani Muslim professional women in Australia focus on praying as it calms them and gives hope that things would work out.

Furthermore, migrants patiently accept the existing situation until they achieve the migration goal at the destination. According to Herbert et al. (2008), Ghanaians experienced racism and discrimination in the London labour market. However, they persevered and accepted the existing situation, as the London labour market is a place to achieve economic prosperity. Migrants persevere patiently in marital relationships. Satake (2018) found that Filipino wives who married Japanese husbands continually exercised self-control and patience in their married life in order not to end their relationship with a divorce.

Religion and patience dominate migrants' lives throughout their journey. Apart from these coping mechanisms, migrants attempt to cope with problems as a family by engaging themselves in gatherings and leisure activities, which are discussed in the following section.

2.4.4 Family Gatherings and Entertainment

The migrants concentrate more on family gatherings and entertainment to rejuvenate themselves and family. Migrants usually sit together and share their experiences in their workplaces in order to relieve the pain they face in their workspace (Murray & Ali, 2016).

Leisure and participation in community-based activities significantly impact the lives of migrants, who are mostly ethnocultural minorities in the migrated community, by improving socioeconomic advancement and fostering physical and mental health

(Stodolska, 2015). Kim et al. (2018) discovered that leisure activities considerably improve mental health and life satisfaction. According to Kim et al. (2018), western migrants who stay in South Korea with various mental stresses benefit from engaging in home-centred leisure and social activities to enhance their mental health and gain life satisfaction in the migrated destination.

In another study, Kim et al. (2021) noted that leisure activities helped Western students in Korea build inter- and intra-community relationships whereby they improved their social and psychological well-being and learned how to adapt to the new cultural environment by helping one another.

In a similar vein, a study conducted by Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) using Korean and Polish residing in Chicago stressed that recreation strengthens the social ties within the community itself. Furthermore, Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) highlighted that during extreme psychological and social grievances upon arrival in the host country, recreational activities, particularly sports, are an effective coping mechanism to build a friendly environment by making new friends, thereby assisting them to overcome such incoming challenges they face in the host society. According to Berasategi Sancho et al. (2022), migrants from various destinations in Europe and Asia who reside in northern Spain use their free time to entertain themselves and improve their lives, which also facilitates their inclusion in the host community.

Similar to the gatherings and entertainment, distant communication with the family left behind helps them to cope with loneliness at the destination. Thus, further studies are accumulated on this view based on the following theme.

2.4.5 Distant Communication and Exchanging Gifts

Rapidly evolving communication technologies and fast internet connections enable everyone to communicate more effectively at a cheaper rate. Today, social relationships may be maintained over great distances and via the use of global communication facilities (Sharma, 2013). Faster communication technology aids the maintenance of transnational relationships among migrant workers. Marchetti-Mercer (2016) stated

that migrants rely more heavily on communication technology in order to maintain distance relationships. Sometimes more than ever, communication plays a role in virtually connecting migrants with their families, even with countries of birth (Falicov, 2007).

In the transnational linkages, migrant members connect with family by acting as operating family members even though there is no physical presence (Pinnawala, 2009). Typically, migrants maintain their relationships using telephone calls (Vullnetari, 2012). Marchetti-Mercer (2012) found that Skype was the main communication tool to connect migrants and native families among migrants from South Africa. Despite these means, modern means of communication are being used (Djundeva & Ellwardt, 2020). Stodolska and Santos (2006) revealed that Mexican migrants in the US communicate with their families and friends left behind in the form of transnational leisure activities, such as online chats, phone connections, and the exchange of images and videos.

Limited studies have examined the transnational family support rendered by families in the home country towards those who migrated (Merry et al., 2019). Available studies suggest that, as Marchetti-Mercer (2012) found, parents emotionally feel close to their migrated children despite the distance. Poeze et al. (2017) found that family members are willing to help out without expecting any return from the migrants. Furthermore, family members, particularly parents, were also supportive in managing financial matters during the absence of migrant families in the home country. According to the findings of Pinnawala (2009) based on the Sri Lankan migrants in the Middle East, they were helped by their family members in two ways: by giving care responsibility if they left any children behind and by helping to manage their finances, particularly building a house, settling loans and buying a piece of land.

To conclude, communication is a powerful coping method to connect people wherever they are and whatever situation they are in. When migrants are connected via this technology, probably through phone calls and online chats, they are overwhelmed with happiness.

According to the literature discussed above, family migration affects every aspect of family life, especially in marital life, culture, and economics. Thus, studies

have highlighted that migrants and family members comply with various strategies to cope with the insecurity of their living conditions during migration. Accordingly, this section reviewed the literature based on five themes used as coping mechanisms: Reducing expenses and accepting the present situation, seeking support, being patient and turning to religion, family gatherings and entertainment, distant communication, and exchanging gifts.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The present chapter sheds light on how migration is a long process that interconnects with ‘pushing’ migration factors and ‘pulling’ features in the receiving countries. Poverty, unemployment and political conditions inside the country push migrants of various categories, such as breadwinners of families, educated people, and female domestic workers to migrate. Furthermore, they are pulled by the earning opportunities and the demand for labourers in the receiving countries.

The second objective of the present research is to review various studies regarding migrant families in various destinations, which helps in understanding the factors pulling the family to migrate and the challenges faced by the arriving families, such as visa status and sponsoring a family visa. Furthermore, the literature highlights the uncertainties faced after the arrival of families and migrants, including economic and social challenges, in the destination country. These challenges include work-related challenges, family expenses, and subsequent challenges in sending remittances and saving. Furthermore, marriages among migrants and the consequences that stem from them and family relationships are reviewed under social challenges. Overall, migration of the entire family changes the family structure, gender roles, and working patterns in the destination. These families undergo psychological trauma because of work pressure, exploitation, wage issues, and loss of emotional bonds with their relatives and extended family members.

The final part highlights how migrants and their families cope with legal, economic, and social stress. The coping strategies include “reducing expenses and accepting the present situation”, “support seeking”, “being patient and turning to

religion”, “family gatherings and entertainment”, and “distant communication and exchanging gifts”. As a result, the logical, sequential steps have been reflected in the following conceptual research model to fulfil the present research.



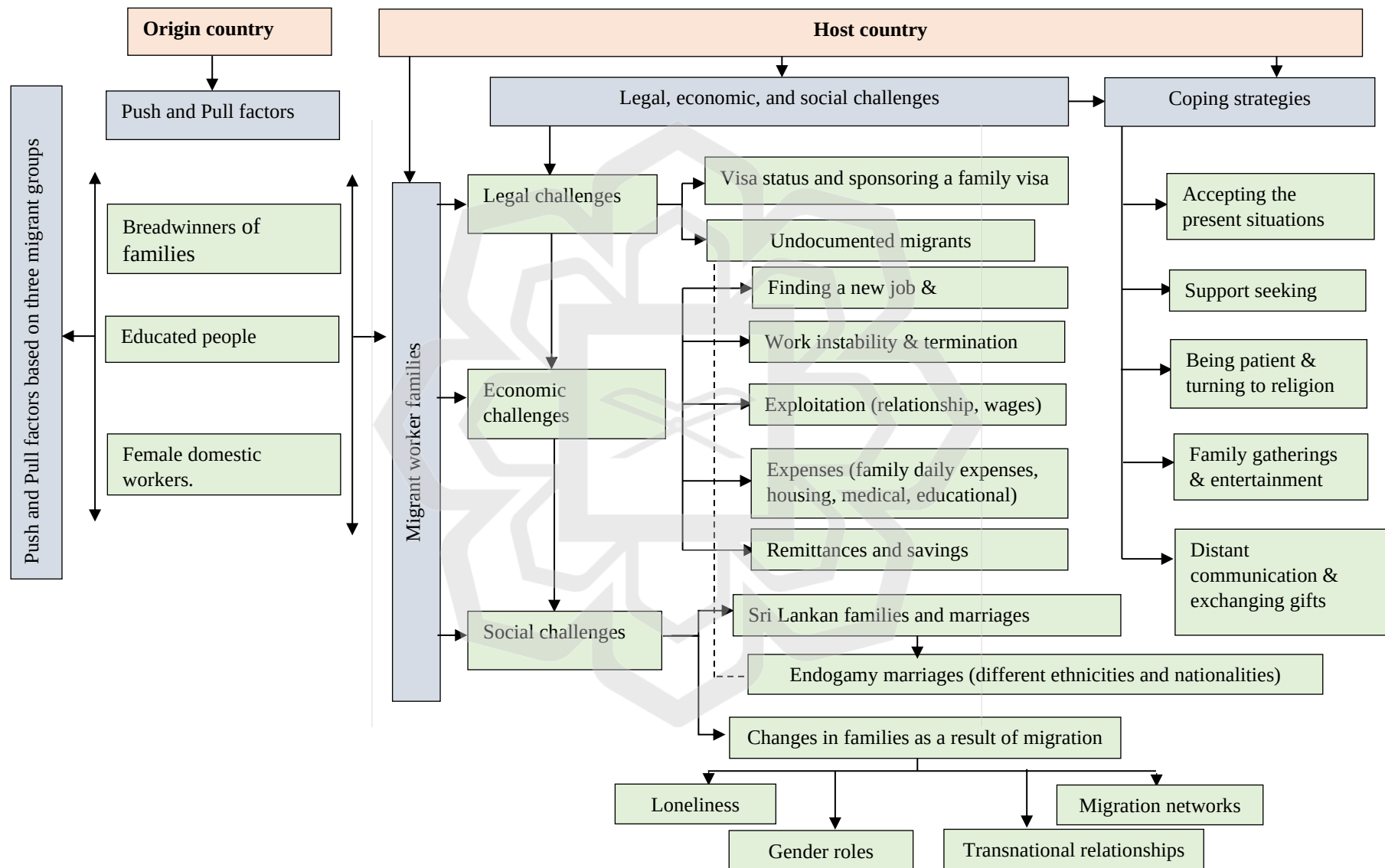


Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework on migrants' living conditions and coping

2.6 THEORISING MIGRANT WORKERS' FAMILIES

Several approaches have been developed to explore each migration case individually. However, no single, unified theory of migration that simultaneously addresses all migration-related issues yet exists (de Haas, 2010; Wickramasingha & Wimalaratana, 2016). Massey et al. (1993) concluded that it is hard to depend on tools of one discipline or analytical model to investigate the current migration dimension and process since it is complex, diverse and multifaceted and requires sophisticated theory combined with a variety of perspectives and models. Thus, this section outlines the traditional migration theories under two themes: initiation of migration and perpetuation of migration. Furthermore, a comprehensive theoretical framework is presented at the end based on the following theoretical review.

2.6.1 Initiation of the Migration

Origin or causes of migration are included under the initiation of migration flow. These causes consist of economic, social, and political factors that influence migration from the origin country to another region. Under this aspect, the theories include neoclassical, new economic labour market, and dual labour market theories.

The first theory, which deserves the name neoclassical theory, was given the presidency during the 1960s and 1970s (Arango, 2000). Arango (2000) further pointed out that, surprisingly, approaches should be derived from the realm of economics at that time. The obvious explanation was the huge migration and accommodation in new boundaries following the second world war. As a result, the countries became directly connected with the outside world, and people started to move. In brief, the first neoclassical economic theory of migration from neoclassical economics is characterized by an increase in income and wage differentials at both ends of migration.

One core element of this theory is that eliminating wage differentials in the origin country would stop the labour movement (Borjas, 1989; Massey et al., 1993). Furthermore, it conceives migration as an individual decision to increase income

(Massey et al., 1993). Moreover, it defines migration as “a process or labour adjustment caused by geographic differences in ‘the supply of’ and ‘demand for labour’ (Massey et al., 1993; Weeks, 2008). Sajastad (1962) used this theory to treat migration as an investment with a cost and lower return, thus increasing resource productivity. At the micro-level, the theory has been used by Todaro (1969) and Harris & Todaro (1970) to elaborate on the probability of rural unemployed and underemployed workers seeking jobs in the urban sector as a result of urban-rural real income differentials.

After the 1970s, the neoclassical theory became obsolete due to the changing reality of migration flow. Based on the neoclassical theories, Arango (2000) argued that neoclassical theory was insufficient to explain why so few people migrated and why some countries had higher emigration rates, given the huge income, wages, and welfare differentials between the sending and receiving countries. Despite criticism, several compatible amendments and revisions have occurred from the beginning to the present, although they are still required. Kurekova (2011), for example, proposed a model to incorporate the ‘country characteristics’ with the neoclassical analysis of the probability of employment and wage differentials to explain the migration dynamics. This country’s characteristics include labour market difficulties in the sending country, changes in migration flow from the previous quarter, and migration networks. Furthermore, the traditional theory of “push and pull” was later developed by Lee (1966).

Lee’s (1966) further refinement of this theory incorporates a set of elements at the origin and factors at the destination. Lee’s model originally introduces the intervening obstacles and opportunities between the source and the destination. According to him, every act of migration involves an origin, a destination, and an intervening set of obstacles. Furthermore, migration is prompted by individual calculations concerning positive factors at the destination and negative motives at the source (Piché & Dutreuilh, 2013). Thus, migration occurs because of both ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors. Both pluses (+) and minuses (-) in origin and destination significantly impact migration (Lee, 1966). According to the push-pull theory, people move either because of social and economic forces in the origin place or are attracted to destination places by one or more social and economic factors (Boyd, 1989; Zimmermann, 1996).

Weeks (2008) reached a critical conclusion that potential migrants rely on a strong pull factor rather than a push migration factor.

After the 1970s, international migration underwent several changes that influenced how people saw global features. Transnational places and communities have emerged (Arango, 2000; Massey, 1999). Due to these complexities and variances, theories have been developed in new facets or new directions. In contrast to the neoclassical theory, the new economic theory of migration considers various markets. The key argument of this theory is that migration decisions are made by families and households, not by individuals (Massey et al., 1993). Furthermore, migration is initiated by a variety of factors in the home country (Kurekova, 2011). For example, because migrating is a family decision to reduce financial burdens, families may be able to make more complex migration plans due to family labour (Lundquist et al., 2015).

The theory, primarily associated with Stark & Taylor (1989, 1991), was developed in contrast to the neoclassical theory. The theory departs from the micro-level explanation to a broader aspect of migration, such as mutual interdependence between migrants and families as a form of social insurance (Piore, 1979). Furthermore, the integration of human capital with social capital is a key development in this approach (Piore, 1979; Stark & Taylor, 1989, 1991). In brief, Massey et al. (1993) asserted that income is heterogeneous, the source of income is the central focus, and the household plays a pivotal role in diversifying and investing the family resources to find new income sources. However, the New Economic Labour Market theory has been criticized for its sending-side bias and limited application (Kurekova, 2011).

Michael Piore's (1979) dual labour market theory provides an analytical platform for the primary and secondary working sectors of migrants in the destination. The theory reflects a major pull factor of developing countries. The theory generally ignores the micro-level decision processes, instead focusing on forces operating at much higher aggregation levels (Massey et al., 1993). It pays attention to the structural determinants at the receiving end of the migration (Arango, 2000). Furthermore, this theory connects migration determinants to global market structural changes (Kurekova, 2011). The dual labour market hypothesis generally does not explain the reasons for international migration. Instead, it provides factors for the occurrence of international

migration, namely, an inherent structural demand for foreign labour in advanced industrial societies (Arango, 2000; Massey et al., 1993).

Micro-level theories, such as neoclassical, new economic and labour market theories, provide factors for the initiation of voluntary migration and how various individuals decide to migrate. Macro-level theories, such as dual labour market theory and some amendments of neoclassical theory, refer to the national and global social, economic, political and cultural change and how these initiate and perpetuate global migration. Furthermore, these theories make it possible to investigate the changes and effects of the labour market in which migrants participate.

2.6.2 Perpetuation of Migration

Migration theories tend to see the perpetuation of migration. This category includes the migration network, institutional migration theory, cumulative causation theory, social capital, and transnationalism. First, the migration network provides an analytical dimension to understand how migration flow persists while the constraints intervene. Migration network refers to individual and collective actors such as family and non-migrant groups, previous migrants, and the multiple social and symbolic ties that connect them (Faist, 2000). The current migration pattern and new conceptualisations underlie more interest in family roles, friendships, and community-based networks (Boyd, 1989). Stark & Bloom (1985) described how migration decisions are made and maintained based on network entities. Stark and Bloom (1985) explained that when migration occurs under information, the migrants gain from the advantages of migration.

The theory moves from individual independence to mutual interdependence in migration behaviour. Risk handling is an excellent example of how migrants and networks are collectively responsible for individual migration (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Migration networks can substantially influence migration flow and direction by providing various supports like information, contacts, and economic and social support (Boswell, 2002). The actual flow of migration starts with the network theory of migration. Many migrants use the existing migration network to join friends and

relatives who had previously migrated to the same destination and receive their assistance until they ‘adapt’ to the labour market (Borjas, 1989; Hatton & Williamson, 2002; Stark & Bloom, 1985). The family migration process occurs in a chain, one after the other. According to Boswell (2002), as a chain, the flow through the network makes migrating a more attractive and feasible option for other network members.

Institutional arrangement plays a vital role in risk minimising during the migration process. The primary function of the institution is to satisfy the demand created by an imbalance between seeking a job in rich countries and the number of immigrant visas they provide. On the other hand, private and profit-makers penetrate the market in terms of profit by giving beneficial information and creating a black migration market. Inevitably, humanitarian organisations provide a hand to the vulnerable migrants affected by these procedures (Massey et al., 1993).

The cumulative causation theory of migration focuses on migration growth based on social capital in rural sectors (Fussell & Massey, 2004). In summary, the theory elaborates on the mechanism underlying social capital accumulation. For example, community members received migration-related knowledge and resources through family members and friends who have travelled to the United States (Massey, 1999). Fussell & Massey (2004) emphasised that socially connected people can travel more freely and reduce risks during migration.

According to the preceding debates, migration networks and social capital are related, and these theories are relevant to the present research. Putnam (1993) defined social capital in terms of economic development as the “features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”. Social capital, in terms of social development, refers to the intangible relationship between actors in the community who possess the resources “that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young” (Coleman, 1990). In family migration, families and children lose the social capital that they had before, such as grandparents and other support organisations. In these circumstances, Hagan et al. (1996) found that migrants’ families and other institutions in the destination country act as social capital in mitigating social capital losses due to family migration in these

conditions. Furthermore, parental social support mitigates the pressures experienced by children as a result of social transition or changes in residential mobility.

Furthermore, transnationalism is a trending concept highlighting binational relationships between migrants and natives (Levitt et al., 2003; Schiller, 2010). Transnational migrants maintain economic and social relationships with family members and friends in their home country (Ukwatta, 2010a). The transnational bond ranges from financial provisions to social and emotional bonds. The increased transportation and communication facilities link people from different geographical locations (Basch et al., 1993). However, these transnationalism aspects reflect segments from previous theories, such as migration networks and cumulative causation theories.

The second aspect of theories is mezzo-level theories, which explain how voluntary migration is perpetuated from a source to a destination and the persistence of migration across countries. These theories include network, migration institution, social capital, transnationalism, and cumulative causation theories. Once migration is initiated, migration stability can be continued as long as push and pull factors persist. These theories contextually fit to analyse the migrant worker families and their transitional family life.

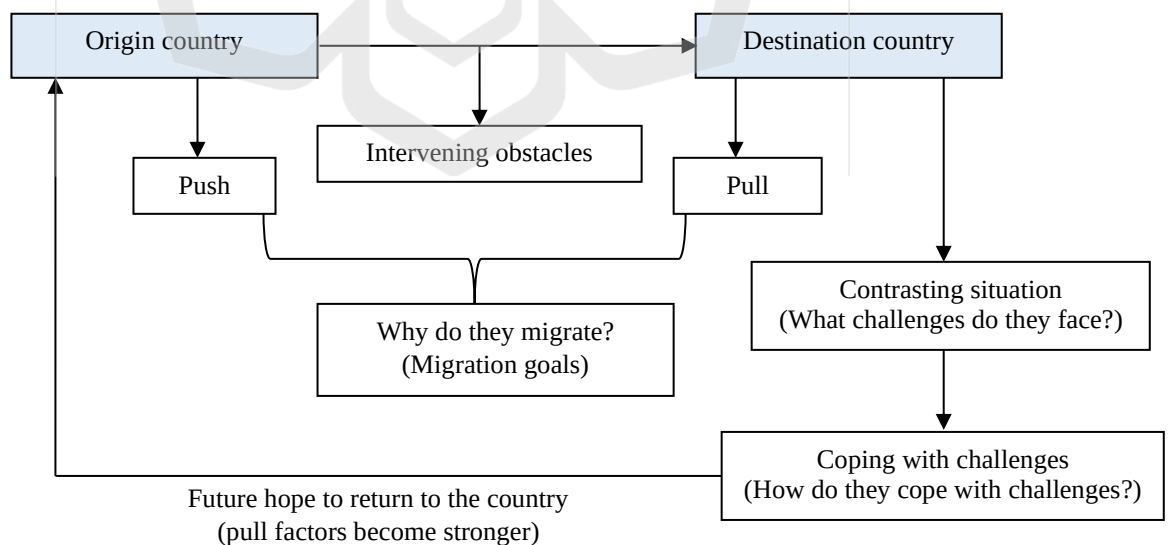


Figure 2.2 Theorising migrant families' migration decisions, challenges, and coping

Primarily, the present study focuses on why people migrate. What challenges do they face? Moreover, how do they cope with challenges? Based on the theories and literature, the above theoretical framework has been formulated to explain migration from Sri Lanka to overseas, the issues that arise as a result, and finally, their coping mechanisms.

Migration goals are determined based on push and pull factors. According to Lee, migration occurs because of both ‘push’, which are minuses (-) in the origin country and ‘pull’ factors, which are pluses (+) in the destination country (Lee, 1966). Lee’s theory further encompasses intervening obstacles (Lee, 1966) by being merit in identifying the complex pattern of the migration process. The migration from Sri Lanka, a lower-developed country, is determined by economic factors (push factors), such as poverty, income disparities, and unemployment. Furthermore, some of our forerunners migrated to Middle Eastern countries and a variety of locations in order to improve their income level and family status by earning money. Destinations in the Middle East are economically wealthy, as evidenced by income opportunities, employment, autonomous environment and social well-being (pull features). Potential migrants with a variety of skills and experiences opt to migrate with their families. The destination choice is perpetuated by network entities like family and relatives who contribute to the cost of migration at both the home and destination. Direct migration costs, material and psychic, are being invested at the initiation of migration. The migration cost means migrants invest their wealth (material) to migrate, separating from their extended family members (psychic), which are intervening obstacles in the migration project.

Migration from Sri Lanka continues to the Middle Eastern countries as migration motives include the push and pull factors. After the migration of breadwinners and forerunners in the family, family migration is perpetuated for various reasons, such as family ties, long separation from the family, and opportunities to live with family. The arrival of families reduces the migrants’ psychic cost because of the intimate relationship among the family members present.

However, their situation in the migrated destination contrasted with what they expected to achieve. Structural problems in the labour market, such as difficulties in

finding a new job, unemployment, work terminations, exploitation, and the inability to get wages regularly, affect the family life at the destination, which did not fulfil their economic expectation. Apart from these financial difficulties, migrant families go through some social challenges because of the changes that occur after the migration, such as a loss of social support, role division among the couples, and adopting a new culture in the destination. Family and marriage endure far-reaching changes in the destination country, in which a shift in marriage choice and wedding formalities occurs. Furthermore, some changes and challenges may be seen in their social relationships as a result of the new life they have chosen.

Overall, life in transition has its pros and cons. In such a situation, migrant families must observe proper coping mechanisms to avoid further vulnerabilities. Furthermore, migrants remain in the destination country by coping with the challenges if the pushing factors prevail or increase in the origin country; thus, the pull features strengthen among migrants. Migration networks and social capital hold crucial significance in strengthening their coping mechanisms until they return to their home country. Thus, theories on migration networks and social capital have been incorporated into coping mechanisms. Migrants use the existing migration network to receive assistance until they ‘adapt’ to the labour market (Borjas, 1989; Stark & Bloom, 1985). Social capital is using the features of social organisations, such as networks and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit, which is also an intangible relationship between actors in the community for social development (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993).

2.6.3 SDGs, Maqasid al-Shariah, and Migration Research

For the first time, the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan acknowledges migration’s contribution to sustainable development as the migrants act as instrumentals to develop both ends, sending and receiving countries (International Organization for Migration, 2013). Migration helps alleviate poverty and the problem of unemployment in sending countries. Migrants also contribute by remitting money to solve housing and sanitation issues as well as improve the children’s education and the family members’ health. Furthermore, receiving countries fulfil their labour needs, particularly for development

purposes (Lucci & Martins, 2018). While sending and receiving countries benefit from migration, the migration development agenda targets the issues of migrants' rights and brain drain, reducing the cost of remittance sending and preventing abuses and exploitation (Nijenhuis & Leung, 2017). As a result, 11 out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contain relevant objectives for migration and mobility.

According to the literature presented at the beginning of this chapter, the migrant community has various social, economic, and psychological problems during their journey while facing exploitation and discrimination. Given that the SDGs approach development gradually and consistently with the fundamental principles of human rights that eliminate all forms of "distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national and ethnic origin" (United Nations, 2015a), the framework of SDGs is closely consistent with the underlying principles of the Maqasid as-Shariah (the higher objectives of Shariah) (Abdullah, 2018). For example, the Shariah goal of *Hifz al-Nafs* (preserving the human self), which emphasises earning freedom, human dignity, utilising resources, and utilising one's own efforts, remarkably parallels the SDGs' eighth goal, which protects labour rights and ensures a decent, safe and secure working environment for all, including migrants (United Nations, 2015b).

According to the Maqasid al-Shariah, preserving the human self is envisaged as Shariah's foremost necessity (Auda, 2008). The objective of preserving the human self can be achieved by strengthening human self-respect, dignity, social equality, and justice, securing human life and property, ensuring freedom of thought and action, and creating an atmosphere conducive to earning a living and raising a family (Chapra, 2008). Allah S.W.T says, "We have honoured mankind" (al-Isrā 17:70) and "whoever saves a single life, it will be as if they saved all of humankind" (al-Ma'idah 5:32). Preserving the human self helps people develop their personalities, sustain their well-being, and play the role of *Khalīfah* (vicegerent). According to the Quran, man as the *Khalīfah* on earth (al-Baqarah 2: 30), is responsible for his development, benefiting humankind, and bringing positive changes in this world and the hereafter. Although some specific goals of SDGs focus on migration issues, these goals are scattered and are still considered somewhat marginal (Nijenhuis & Leung, 2017). Thus, incorporating the framework of Maqasid al-Shariah may widen the focus on migration-related issues.

The Maqasid al-Shariah differs from the SDG paradigm because of Islamic guidance (revelation). Islam considers that reason and revelation work together to provide solutions for social problems according to the context (Auda, 2008; Eid et al., 2020; Ibn Ashur, 2013). As the Maqasid al-Shariah specified that its objectives are to sustain human development and well-being when addressing social problems, these ends (Maqasid) can be accomplished by being based on and guided by faith (Eid et al., 2020) that will guide the contents of *Maṣālih* (utmost inherent goodness) and *Mafāsīd* (evil consequences) to be considered in the society (Auda, 2008, 2019; Ibn Ashur, 2013). Thus, the present approach addresses the migration issues based on the Maqasid and SDGs which are founded on universal goodness and human well-being.

2.7 ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION

The Islamic notion of migration plays a role in understanding the present migration process of families, such as migration motivations and native-migrant and migrant-migrant relationships. In Arabic, the term migration means ‘to leave, ‘to emigrate’, or ‘to give up’ (Reda, 2017). Another word derived from the root word ‘*Hājara*’ used in this section is *Muḥājir*, which refers to ‘emigrant’ (Ahamad, 2007). The Qur’ān denotes “emigrants who have been driven out of their homes and possessions...” (*Hashr* 59:8). The *Hijrah*, in its various forms, appears in thirty-one places in the Qur’ān (Ahamad, 2007).

The notion of *Hijrah* or migration has a predominant place in Islamic history, denoting the migration of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and his companions to Yathrib (Al-Madeena). *Hijrah* is the starting point of Islamic civilisation and sets the foundation for an Islamic society (Jureidini & Hassan, 2020b). In early Islamic history, two significant occurrences happened: migration to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 617 CE and Al-Madeena (city of the prophet) in 622 CE. The second occurrence has been marked as the beginning of the Islamic calendar (Abu-sahlieh, 1985; Saritoprak, 2011). This Islamic history of migration is significant for defining the ethical and social aspects of migration.

Overall, the motives behind the migration of Muslims included socio-economic alienation, economic hardship and material loss, as well as direct violence, torture and death (Al Mubarakpuri, 2002; Reda, 2017). Oppression, which is referred to in the Arabic language as *Zulm*, was the first moto of migration to Abyssinia and Al-Madeena (Reda, 2017). The Qur'ānic verse directly uses oppression as an effective cause of migration in early Islamic history.

And as for those who emigrated for the cause of Allah, after suffering oppression, we will certainly give them goodly residence in this world, but indeed the reward of the hereafter will be greater if they but knew!" (Qur'ān, 16:41).

In historical experience, the Qur'ān (al-Nisā: 97) highlights the oppressed and weak people on earth and recommends they migrate from the persecuted location to another land of God (Saritoprak, 2011), which is spacious. The verse says, "was not the earth of God spacious enough for you to flee?" (al-Nisā:97). This does not imply that everyone must leave their homeland (Hassan, 2007).

After the *Hijri* year eight, apart from the oppression, which was an initial motive for migration, people emigrated from Makkah to reunify with family members in Al-Madeena who had already migrated during the oppression (Al Mubarakpuri, 2002). Apart from these migration patterns, Islam urges people to travel and experience the vast world. The holy Qur'ān reveals:

It is He (Allah) who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes: but unto Him is the resurrection" (al-Mulk:5).

It is pertinent to note that the Muslim community's political and socio-economic conditions in their countries have substantially altered the migration pattern (Karpas, 1996; Reda, 2017). Therefore, today, Muslim migrants can be found in various parts of the world for economic benefits, new settlements, and educational opportunities. Likewise, the Muslim world receives many migrant workers with a contract to fulfil their labour shortages. For example, most Sri Lankan Muslim migrants have migrated as contract workers to Middle Eastern countries where Arab people live (Eelens & Speckmann, 1990; Ukwatta, 2010b). Similarly, Sri Lankan Muslims use non-Arab

countries, such as Australia, the UK, Canada, and the US, for employment and settlement (Hugo & Dissanayake, 2017; Sriskandarajah, 2002). Thus, economically motivated migration has brought a new shape to the concept of *Hijrah*.

Islamic perspectives in the literature are not direct references to the present study. However, these migration aspects are relevant for analyzing the native-migrant relationship and mutual support of the migration network based on Sri Lankans in the Bahraini environment.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter highlights the migration of people from their birthplace to various potential destinations in terms of economic and employment opportunities due to uncertain conditions in the country of origin and family. Furthermore, this section grasps the idea regarding factors that influence the initiation of migration from Sri Lanka. Then, it presents a discussion on the family migration aspects, focusing on how migrant workers start family life in their work destinations. This section provides context for Sri Lankan migrants living with families in the Gulf countries.

The subsequent section discusses family life and the changes that occur in the family after their arrival at the work destinations. In addition, the section discusses the various coping strategies that families employ during the challenges they encounter. The literature shows that Sri Lankan migrants face economic, social, and psychological challenges. Therefore, this section helps in the analysis of family challenges and coping strategies during the transitional life at the work destination. The next section of the chapter presents the migration theories and related concepts in detail in order to conceptualise migrant worker families and their family life in transition. The final part of this chapter outlines the religious notion of migration and its applicability to the current migration process to integrate the Islamic migration aspects into the present family migration. This section is appropriate for discussing the support of the native community and the previous migrants in Bahrain towards Sri Lankan migrants who face economic and social grievances.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The problem that migrant families face in Bahrain became a major focus of study in this research after observing their lives during a Bahrain visit. Some families did not have a legal resident permit and stayed for an extended period of time with various economic and social problems. The researcher's firsthand knowledge of the living conditions of worker families gave a broader perspective to design this research. However, the dream of researching the phenomenon came true when the researcher was offered the opportunity to pursue a Doctorate in Sociology and Anthropology at International Islamic University Malaysia.

Since this study was systematically done, the following section concisely describes the research methodology employed to investigate the Sri Lankan migrant families in Bahrain, considering the explorative study on their living conditions and coping experiences during their stay in the destination. Accordingly, the following principles, methodology, and inquiry methods helped to enlighten the proposed problem and fulfil the research objectives.

The section starts with the ontological, epistemological, and methodological stand. Then, the second section justifies the qualitative research choice and case study, including its advantages to the present research and how it will answer the formulated questions. Section three explains how the field was found and where the research was conducted. Further, this section explains the research setting and sampling techniques in detail. The research obstacles and the struggle to conduct interviews during the upsurge of COVID-19 are discussed in the ensuing section. The following topics describe the in-depth interview process and participant observation, including the pilot study. Finally, the data analysis process has been presented with a detailed explanation of software functionalities used to organise the documents, code, and analyse the data.

3.2 ONTOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL, AND METHODOLOGICAL STAND

First, the sources of knowledge became a debate in social research based on epistemological and ontological philosophical orientations. In response to the discussion, positivists, in the natural science approach, have recognised only two forms of knowledge: empirical and logical (Hughes, 1990). British and French philosophers supported this view (Farooqi, 2017).

As this concept was obsolete in the following decades, autonomous discipline emerged in social research, characterised by the scientific method due to its inability to distinguish human society from the broader social environment (Hughes, 1990). Furthermore, this paradigm, combined with interpretivism, allows individuals to understand the world in which they live and work beyond mathematical logic alone (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, critical social research, which was a critic of positivism and interpretivism, was the third approach. However, this technique is still being debated. Observation and hearing, according to Islamic sources of knowledge, reveal the phenomenological basis of the world and objects. The heart illuminates its transcendental aspects and interprets the essence and purpose of its existence (Farooqi, 2017).

The preceding discussion on the research selection prepares the way to employ multiple paradigms in producing knowledge on the subject (J. Hughes, 1990). Therefore, the researcher integrates the scientific method with Islamic knowledge sources, broadening our vision of human society with an utterly social environment to comprehend the phenomenon efficiently. Accordingly, the researcher phrased the questions that provide particular ontological and epistemological clues so as to develop the researcher's view on the significant and knowable components of migrant worker families and how their social lives can be explained (Mason, 2002).

The present fieldwork was based on a qualitative approach as the researcher needed a comprehensive study on 30 Sri Lankan migrant families in Bahrain. In brief, the researcher employed a case study as it is conceived as an in-depth focus on features of single cases (Burgess et al., 1994; Mason, 2002; Stake, 1995), an inductive analysis

as it shapes the themes that emerge from the process, and descriptive as it contains more explorative questions (Creswell, 2007). The research tools employed in the study were in-depth interviews, interviews with officials, and observation.

3.2.1 A Qualitative Approach Using Case Study: Justification of the Choice

The present study employed a qualitative approach which was necessary for comprehensive research on Sri Lankan migrant families. Qualitative research is defined as follows:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. (Creswell, 2007)

Qualitative research is a strategically conducted argument about the shifting context and situation in which the researcher interacts and the investigation takes place (Mason, 2002). The approach merely involves studying the social or human problem. Throughout the investigation, the researcher used this approach to understand the multifaceted pattern of the migration of families during their transitional period in Bahrain. As this study focused on the factors related to worker-family migration and their family survival in newly arrived destinations, the qualitative approach, which subsumes several diverse research methods (Bryman, 2012), was considered a more appropriate approach. Furthermore, using this method, migration-related issues, such as legal challenges, labour-market outcomes, family living conditions, family changes in the destination and the coping mechanisms that they employed, were better captured and investigated.

Besides, the approach gives rich information about the migration process in a specific setting. The qualitative method answers the causal questions and provides in-depth explanations of complex issues (Iosifides, 2011). According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), qualitative researchers look at things in their natural settings and attempt to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Accordingly, the case study was suitable for investigating Sri Lankan migrant families and their transitional life at the destination.

A case study is an eminent approach in many fields. For instance, several studies have been conducted using a case study due to its popularity in psychology, law, anthropology, sociology, and education. A case study is defined as a qualitative approach where the researcher explores one or more cases within a bounded system over time using multiple sources of information like participant observation, interviews, and reports (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). The present case study examined uncertain conditions and coping strategies of 30 Sri Lankan migrant families using in-depth interviews and observation. They have migrated from different parts of Sri Lanka, hoping to return to their homeland once they finish their contracts. In designing this qualitative project, the researcher moved backwards and forwards between different research process sequences. In developing a project, for example, consideration must be given to the endpoint and the concepts and theories used in data analysis (Bryman & Burgess, 1994).

The theoretical framework was formulated based on the migration reality of migrants' subjective experiences, as revealed by previous migration studies. Accordingly, the present case study first investigated their migration experience, especially the push-pull factors that influenced migration to Bahrain. As mentioned above, the research was conducted in a natural setting. Accordingly, this case study better captured the research questions phrased by the researcher to elucidate the significant and knowable components of migrant families and their social lives. The researcher posed inquiries about their daily experiences in newly arrived destinations, which resulted in new themes and qualitative descriptions of their living conditions in their language. The following section further describes how the research field was discovered for an in-depth investigation.

3.3 RESEARCH SETTING AND SAMPLING

The logic of using a sample of subjects is to represent a larger population from a smaller one (Berg, 2001). Sampling is directly related to the research questions being asked

(Bryman, 2012). As a result, selected samples enabled the researcher to understand the study objectives in order to investigate migrant families in Bahrain.

The researcher gave due weight to relevant sample categories from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds to collect a wealth of information. Therefore, the purposive technique was adopted to select participants who were informative and guided to further in-depth investigation cases. Purposive sampling is a technique in which the units of analysis to be studied are chosen based on the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most informative or representative (Neuman, 2014).

First, the Kingdom of Bahrain, one of the oil-producing countries, was selected as a research setting using the migration report published by the Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE). Labour migration to the Middle East from Sri Lanka started after the rise of oil production in the Gulf region by the 1970s as it created a demand for Sri Lankan labourers in those countries (De Silva & Sriwardhane, 2014; Gamburd, 2009; Kageyama, 2008). Furthermore, Sri Lanka immediately responded to the labour demand by exporting labourers and housemaids with no restrictions (Dias & Jayasundere, 2002; Jayaweera et al., 2002). Consequently, the number of departures increased in subsequent years.

Table 3.1 Total departure for foreign employment to eight Middle Eastern countries (2015-2018)

Countries	Saudi Arabia	Qatar	UA E	Kuwait	Oman	Jordan	Bahrain	Lebanon
2015	74,894	65,139	43,666	38,473	7,082	4,809	3,722	2,604
2016	63,293	59,523	40,117	32,400	9,729	3,867	3,225	2,644
2017	37,745	56,637	36,667	37,410	8,865	3,925	3,002	2,408
2018	35,866	50,774	32,836	46,951	8,345	4,163	2,922	2,229

Source: SLEFB 2019¹

¹ The data obtained from the official website of the SLBFE, Sri Lanka: <http://www.slbfe.lk/page.php?LID=1&MID=232>

Table 3.1 depicts the total number of emigrants registered with SLBFE who left for eight Middle Eastern countries from 2015-2018. There is apparent fluctuation in migration to those countries because the departure is most probably determined by the job opportunities available there (SLBFE, 2017). For example, there was a sharp decrease in labour departure to Saudi Arabia, while the number of migrants to Kuwait increased in 2018. This fluctuation happened due to the significant variation in housemaid departure to both countries. The number of housemaids that penetrated Kuwait increased from 17,779 in 2016 to 23,638 in 2018, while in Saudi Arabia, it decreased from 24,360 in 2016 to 11,381 in 2018 (Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), 2019). Therefore, it is difficult to conclude which country is most preferred by Sri Lankan migrants. Furthermore, the number of departures to Bahrain was less significant in selecting the destination for an in-depth discussion regarding the migrants' family experiences.

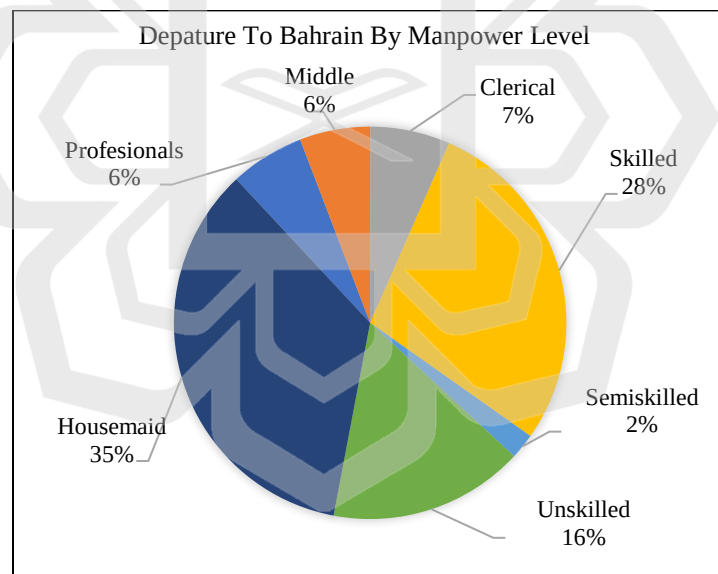


Figure 3.1 Proportions of departure to Bahrain by Manpower level
Source: (Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), 2019)

Figure 3.1 aims to provide qualitative significance for the research setting. The total number of migrants that arrived in Bahrain in 2017 was 3,002. Though the number of migrants to Bahrain was small, different personalities, professionals, skilled migrants, and clerical levels could be found in this destination, the same as in other

GCC countries. Figure 3.1 depicts the proportion of Sri Lankan migrants by workforce level in Bahrain in 2017, with professionals accounting for 6%, middle-level skilled workers accounting for 6%, and clerical-level emigrants accounting for 7%. Those migrants were most probably living with families in Middle Eastern countries. According to an explanatory note, by 2014, Sri Lankan migrants comprised 21.9% of dependent family members out of 7,627 migrants (Bel-Air, 2015). Therefore, the researcher could reach a different type of migrant to collect the data within a small geographical location.

The following facts were also convincing in choosing the setting for the study. In comparison to the other GCC nations, the research location is geographically convenient. In the present research, the researcher included informants from all four governorates in Bahrain: the Capital, Muharraq, and Northern and Southern Governorates. Although Bahrain is geographically small, it shares a similar GCC culture (Gamburd, 2003) and competes in oil exports with other oil-exporting countries. Furthermore, the Kingdom is reported to be one of the region's wealthiest countries and employs labour from the South Asian region (Hugo, 2007). Finally, Bahrain is a popular destination for Sri Lankan migrants, who continuously contribute to Sri Lanka's economy. According to the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Bahrain, Sri Lanka sustained cordial bilateral relations with Bahrain even before establishing an official diplomatic relationship in 1992 (Foreign Ministry, 2019).

The present research was based on 30 migrant families who had spent at least six months in Bahrain. In the in-depth interview, the breadwinners of the households, either male or female, who possessed a resident permit (PR) in Bahrain were included to represent their families. The breadwinners were the sole economic providers for their families and were aware of the family's financial and social conditions. They were asked about their personal experience migrating to Bahrain and their family experiences during their stay.

The initial six interviews were conducted in various geographical locations in Bahrain. The remaining informants were then gathered by purposive sampling and the snowball technique. First, the informants were drawn purposively from the updated contact list received from Darul Iman. The contact list produced and modified by the

researcher during his stay² in Darul Iman, Bahrain, from May 2017 to December 2018, was used to verify the new information with the organiser's consent. The new list consisted of nearly 170 families from various districts in Sri Lanka.

Darul Iman is a communal organisation that operates in a two-story building where Sri Lankan families visit for various reasons, including gatherings and welfare activities. This society contains multiple activities such as youth activities, Eid (festival) gatherings, group classes for children, Toastmasters, entertainment, and family gatherings (Darul Iman, 2018). According to Azahim, the head of Darul Iman's welfare section, the following is how migrant families benefit from this organisation:

The centre provides humanitarian, educational, and loan support for the vulnerable and those with intermittent problems such as the inability to pay house rent and utility payments or school fees. Sometimes, the organisation act as a mediator between families and Jamiyyathul Islah³ in humanitarian activities such as *Qurbān* (slaughtering the cattle and distributing them to needy families during the Hajj festival), *Zakātl Fitr* (distribution of rice packets at the end of fasting of Ramadan), *Iftār* (breaking fast) programs, and other welfare activities. However, Darul Iman is not authoritative in handling the legal issues families encounter or labour recruitment activities. However, it guides them to solve the problems within their capacity.

The conversation with Mohamed Thariq, the Sri Lankan group Discover Islam coordinator, was helpful during the sample selection. Mohamed Thariq described their activities and revealed the families who benefited from the organisation.

Discover Islam" is a Bahrain organisation working on Islamic preaching and welfare activities. Discover Islam has a separate wing for the Sri Lankan migrant community. The branch organises weekly classes for Sri Lankans and tries to engage them in Islamic preaching activities. Besides, it helps those who seek assistance from them. Mainly, it will arrange to receive the conversion certificate to Islam from the Bahrain court.

² The researcher was working as a center manager (Da'ee of the center) from May 2017 to December 2018.

³ Jamiyyathul Islah is welfare organization that operates in Bahrain and extends its services to various nationalities and cultural background. The organization is in Muharraq, Kingdom of Bahrain.

As a result of these interviews and interactions, the researcher was able to identify the participants and places where he might meet the relevant cases for this study. Moreover, these organisations helped in the selection of breadwinners from various socio-cultural backgrounds for a case study.

Furthermore, the researcher used the snowball sampling technique to identify significant migrant families and discovered that families were not listed on organisations' lists. The contacts provided by the interviewees were used to identify some additional relevant cases. The respondents identified some families who provided useful information to the researcher. Furthermore, the informants affiliated with several groups, such as the cricket club, Toastmasters, and engineering society, provided a list of contacts of families who routinely associated with them, along with their phone numbers. Cross-checking the connections supplied by organisations and informants proved beneficial. Accordingly, the researcher could interview informants from varied social and cultural backgrounds who live in different parts of Bahrain. For instance, informants with no valid residence pass (PR) were discovered throughout the data collection, which was discussed in chapter four.

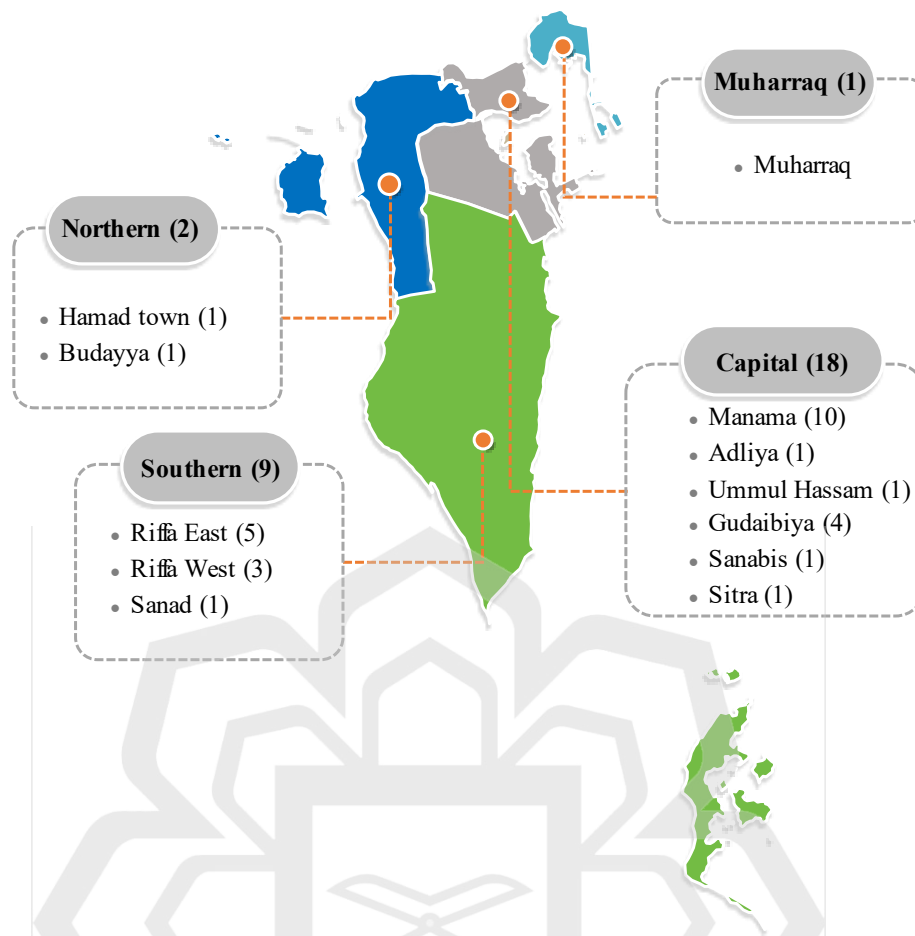


Figure 3.2 Number of informants reported from the Governorates and cities in Bahrain

Source: The map was verified at <https://upda.gov.bh/en/category/map-of-bahrain-national-detail-land-use-plan> ⁴

Figure 3.2 shows the Governorates and cities of the informants selected using the purposive and snowball technique. Accordingly, 18 informants were reported from the Capital, nine from the Southern, two from the Northern, and one from the Muharraq Governorates. Informants chose to live in certain areas depending on their jobs, considering school facilities for their children, housing rentals, and places their fellow citizens occupied. The probability of finding a low-cost apartment was high in the capital governorate. Low-cost apartments were less modified and located in densely populated areas. Furthermore, economic and social information regarding the residential location that was obtained from the informants is discussed in the findings sections.

⁴ The editable map was used for illustration purposes that available at <https://yourfreetemplates.com/free-bahrain-editable-map/>

Table 3.2 Demographic and social information of the participants

No	Name	Status	Husband/Wife or parents from	Social role in the family	Dependent children/siblings In Bahrain	Visa status of spouse/parents In Bahrain
1	Azam	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03	Dependent
2	Naseer	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03	Dependent
3	Raheem	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	02	Dependent
4	Abdullah	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	02	Dependent
5	Ihsan	Single	Sri Lankan	Son	02	Working
6	Nihal	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03	Dependent
7	Sheema	Married	Sri Lankan	Mother	03 in Sri Lanka	Working
8	Rubini	Separated	Sri Lankan	Mother	01	-
9	Sara	Separated	Sri Lankan	Mother	01	Dependent (Father)
10	Jazeera	Separated	Indian	Mother	03	-
11	Nisa	Married	Indian	Mother	03	Working
12	Nismi	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03	Dependent
13	Raslan	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03 in Sri Lanka	Working
14	Nazim	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03	Dependent
15	Harees	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03	Dependent
16	Reeza	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	02	Dependent
17	Shihan	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	03	Dependent
18	Rasmi	Married	Sri Lankan	Husband	-	Working
19	Aroos	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	04	Dependent
20	Naja	Married	Sri Lankan	Mother	01	Working
21	Mary	Married	Indian	Mother	03 in Sri Lanka	Working
22	Naeem	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	02	Dependent
23	Ibrahim	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	04	Dependent
24	Naseem	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	02	Dependent
25	Salam	Married	Sri Lankan	Father	01	Dependent
26	Sama	Married	Indian	Mother	02	Working
27	Simaya	Single	Father Indian & sisters have married Pakistanis	Daughter	03	Parents died in Bahrain
28	Ummu Zameel	Married	Bahraini	Mother	01	Dependent on Bahraini husband
29	Amaliya	Married	Sri Lankan	Mother	02 in Sri Lanka	Working
30	Piyasiri	Married	Sri Lankan	Husband	-	Working

Table 3.2 illustrates the demographic and social profile of the participants. The breadwinners were selected to obtain relevant information on Bahraini living. Accordingly, four participants (Abdullah, Ihsan, Sama, and Simaya) were not the families' forerunners. However, they acted as breadwinners or the family's sole economic providers. Surprisingly, one lady (Simaya) was a financial provider for her family members due to her parents' dismissal while they were in Bahrain. She still lives with her siblings in Bahrain.

Three families had left their children behind, and the remaining families lived in Bahrain with one, two or three dependent children in Bahrain. Six families have been formed with Pakistani or Indian workers, but one with a Bahraini. Three mothers were without male companionship during the interview due to the separation from their husbands. Female migrants who married a foreign nationality engaged in labour force activities while their husbands worked. Most of the wives who married Sri Lankan men moved in with their husbands and lived as dependents. However, three of them were working women who shared a home with their husbands.

Table 3.3 Distribution of the Participants by Occupational Level

Occupation	Male %	Female %	Total %
Housemaids		10%	10%
Unskilled workers		10%	10%
Semi-Skilled workers	17%	10%	27%
Skilled workers	46%		46%
Professionals	7%	-	7%
Total %	70%	30%	100%

n=30

Table 3.3 illustrates the occupation level of the participants selected for this study. Table 3.3 further shows the gender compositions of the participants selected for the in-depth interview. According to the gender of the participants, the study had 33%

female participants and 67% male participants. According to age, 43% of male participants fall into the age category of 40-49, while age above 50 is much lower in both sexes. The education level of female participants was lower than males in this study. However, 10% of them were engaged in semi-skilled labour force activities, such as office assistance, taxi driving, and home nursing, which will be presented in chapter four. 10% of females worked as housemaids, while 10% were unskilled workers. Male workers possessed considerably higher job categories compared to female workers. Male workers in skilled positions made up 46%, 17% were semi-skilled workers, and 7% were professionals. The findings go into further information regarding these job variances.

Table 3.4 Distribution of Participants by Duration of Stay as Family and Income Level

Duration of Stay of Families	Lower-income families ($\leq$ 400BD)	Lower middle-income families (401-600BD)	Middle-income families (601-800BD)	High income Families (above 800BD)	Total
Six months – 5 years	2	2	-	-	4
Six years – 10 years	1	1	2	-	4
11 years – 15 years	-	1	5	2	8
16 years – 20 years	1	-	2	-	3
Above 20 years	6	2	2	1	11
Total n (%)	10 /33%	6 / 20%	11 /37%	3 /10%	30

Table 3.4 describes the participants' duration of stay as family and family income level. The minimum income level was decided according to the essential requirement of a family visa, which remains at 400BD in Bahrain (Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), 2020). According to the interviews, however, the minimum requirement does not meet their basic survival needs. Therefore, those who reported beneath these minimum criteria come into the first category of participants.

Furthermore, families earning barely beyond the basic salary of 600BD have been categorised as lower-middle-income families, despite continuing to struggle for basic survival and savings. The third category of migrants, who can save and remit to Sri Lanka, falls between the 601BD and 800BD axes. Families earning more than 800BD are considered wealthy. Accordingly, one-third of the families are lower-income families. Furthermore, 20% of lower-middle-income families, 37% of middle-income families, and 10% of high-income families were reported in the sample.

In brief, the participants' demographic and social characteristics reflect their social status and living conditions during their stay in Bahrain. More explorative information based on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, exclusive for findings, has been discussed in chapter four.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present qualitative research involves a series of activities in the data collection process to gather wealthy information to answer emerging questions (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative research design is also interconnected with the problem, theory, and methods (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). Qualitative inquiry is a scientific pursuit with specific theoretical underpinnings and procedures that require scientific sources of information on the phenomenon of interest, such as in-depth interviews and observation (Mayan, 2016; Yin, 2003). Accordingly, the present study employed an in-depth interview with migrants and officials and observation to elicit a deep understanding of the issues of the families.

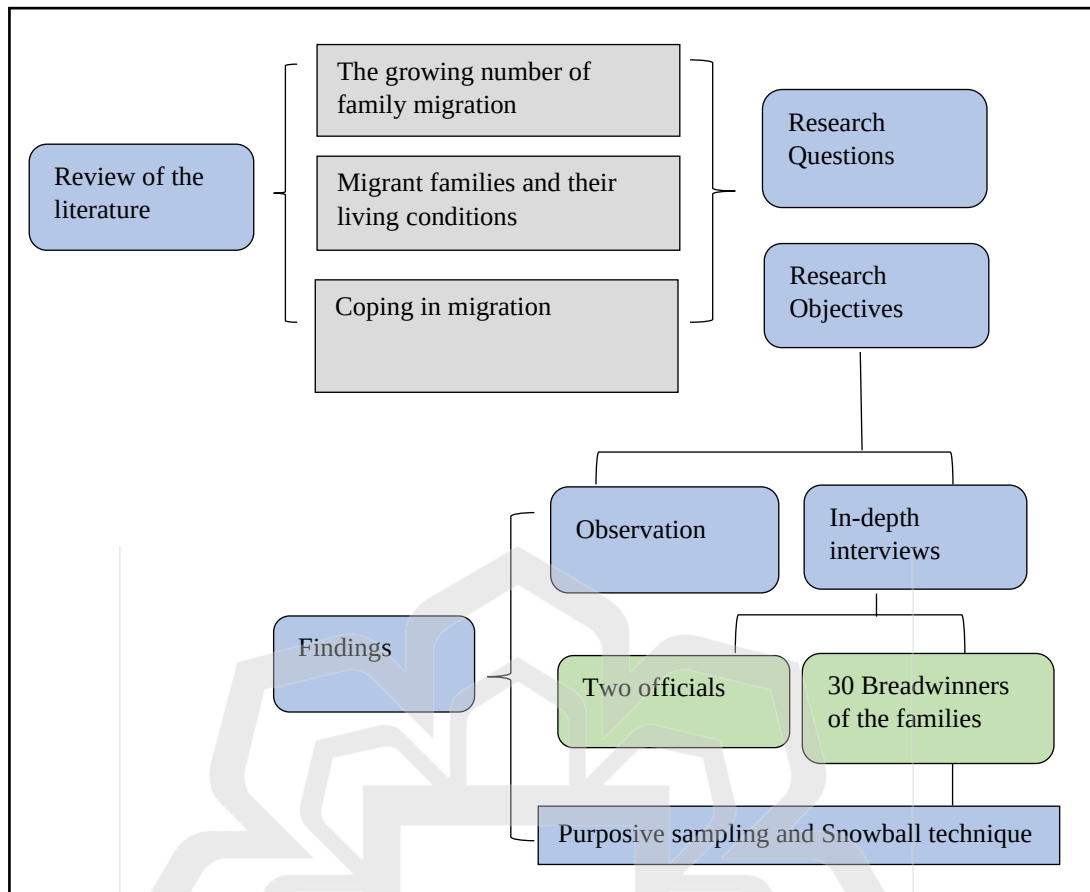


Figure 3.3 Data Collection Process

The researcher established the above design (Figure 3.3) for the present research. Firstly, background reading of the literature focusing on the objectives and application method enabled to polish the research questions and the interview guide (McGrath et al., 2019; Yin, 2011). Accordingly, the researcher focused on the literature on why people migrate from one place to another, both economically and socially. Besides, the literature was relevant to the research context and included a variety of studies. The researcher then identified the gap to be investigated and the method to be used in the current study. Furthermore, migration theories steered the path ahead.

3.4.1 Data Collection Obstacles

The researcher planned to collect the primary data from June 2020 to December 2020 while visiting Bahrain during the summer vacation. Meeting families who are not

visiting Sri Lanka during the summer is convenient because parents are free from their children's school activities. Furthermore, the rest of the families could be reached once they returned from their vacations after September. However, the COVID-19 pandemic started towards the end of 2019, and its severity peaked worldwide from February 2020 to August 2020, changing everything. The data collection process was then postponed to November 2020 - March 2021 in order to interact with the cases in their social setting.

Since March 2020, every GCC country has reported a few cases (Bashir et al., 2021). Consequently, preventive measures to safeguard residents were tightened, including travel restrictions from other countries. Accordingly, Bahrain restricted public gatherings and issued guidelines for the workplace, limiting worker density in the workplace (Alabdulkarim et al., 2021). From June 2021 to October 2021, when the trip to Bahrain was scheduled, there were more than 3000 daily active cases in Bahrain⁵. Besides, Bahrain imposed travel restrictions for travellers from Sri Lanka. Therefore, the researcher started to meet the informants online from June 2021 to April 2022 using apps such as Zoom and WhatsApp, as the pandemic was expected to continue for a few more months.

Although the researcher was unable to face interviewees due to widespread fear of pandemics, especially among migrants, the researcher made the necessary arrangements to meet the respondents in a sanitary manner. He was ready to undergo the quarantine procedure imposed by the governments of Bahrain and Malaysia. He was also aware of using hand sanitiser, wearing a mask, and maintaining proper social distancing, which were essential during that time. Nevertheless, when the researcher submitted the information sheet and consent form requesting permission to meet for an in-depth interview, many brought up their concerns about the face-to-face interview. They spoke about continuing the conversation over the phone or using popular apps such as Zoom and WhatsApp.

Lune & Berg (2017) argue on the advantages and disadvantages of telephone and computer-based self-administered interviews, especially the length of qualitative interviews. The computer-based conversation allowed the researcher to conduct a

⁵ The data was retrieved on 2021.05.10 from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/bahrain/>

conversation that was similar to face-to-face interaction and exchange questions and responses in almost real-time. Although there were certain disadvantages to the online interviews, such as data speed and audio interruptions, the researcher discovered that the online platform was an effective means of gathering data due to the pandemic circumstances. Accordingly, online platforms allowed the researcher to face participants and record the information in video and audio formats. Fewer technical errors, such as loss of connection, were encountered during the interview.

The interviews with families took one hour to one and a half hours in order to obtain adequate information about their living conditions and sensitive family issues. Therefore, the researcher considered getting official permission from the organisations and informants to interact with them. The official permission letter was obtained from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The letter was forwarded to Darul Iman and Discover Islam to obtain the relevant information regarding the migrant families. The letters were then sent to the informants, who needed the researcher's identity to ensure their story was not misused.

The researcher had to face some difficulties when requesting permission from the informants. More than 39 informants were contacted to establish a sample size of 30. Four of them withdrew from the interview for some reasons, such as a busy working schedule and a lack of experience. The researcher omitted three interviews as their families were sent back to Sri Lanka. Another two were unavailable after agreeing to the interview time. For example, the following is an excerpt from Shakeef, who withdrew from the interview. He said:

I have been in Bahrain with my family for six months. I think I am not suitable to be interviewed, and if you could, please find someone more experienced than me.

Some migrants apologised for their inability to provide the time for the interview due to their time issues. As the researcher completed the interviews with the 30 informants in various categories, he did not request to meet them again. When the researcher contacted female migrants for consent, many first refused due to their lack

of understanding of the research. However, after a few conversations, they agreed to the interview. One of the migrant women decided to be interviewed after learning the goal of the interview. Sara stated:

I did not become aware that this interview is related to your studies. I thought about what the benefit would be for me. I was not thinking of asking more about your intention at that time.

The repeatedly encountered problem was the rejection of the informants to participate in the study. Some of the family breadwinners were unaware of the significance of the study. Therefore, these participants took the time to schedule an interview with them. Some of the ladies delayed the meeting by 50-60 days. Thankfully, the wife of the welfare officer of Dar Al-Iman encouraged these ladies to participate in the study. Accordingly, the researcher felt more comfortable interviewing the ladies. The researcher was accompanied by his spouse to meet the female participants to make them more comfortable and provide information on their living conditions and coping strategies.

3.4.2 In-depth Interview

The researcher believes that information about the social world is achievable through an in-depth interview (J. Miller & Glassner, 1997). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with semi-structured questions to elicit views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2009). Interview conversation is a pipeline for transmitting knowledge and generating empirical data on the real social world (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Therefore, through interviews and conversations with breadwinners, who were the sole members of the migrant families, the researcher began eliciting replies to the above-mentioned questions, and their words were quoted to illustrate the argument.

First and foremost, as research focuses on people, ethical issues are centrally important in each research process (Creswell, 2007; Rokis, 2017). Therefore, ethical norms were employed from beginning to end, especially in the data collection process. Islamic ethical values, which have been placed at the top by Islam, played a prominent

role during the research. Furthermore, experience shows that implementing such ethics is practically possible through observation and in-depth interviews to do the right thing in research (Rokis, 2017).

Furthermore, the researcher is responsible for protecting the informants' identity and information confidentiality at every research step, as mentioned in research ethics. According to Lune & Berg (2017), the researcher must inform the participants of the potential risks, benefits, nature of the research, and the right to withdraw from the interview. Furthermore, the researcher must clearly explain the confidentiality assurance and protection of the participant's anonymity. Next, the researcher must ask about their willingness to take part in the interview.

As we get little time to build trust in participants, the project must be summarised in layperson's terms as much as informants need before meeting in an interview (McGrath et al., 2019). Accordingly, the researcher first forwarded the information sheet and consent form through email and WhatsApp for the interview. Further clarification was also given by the informants during the message conversations. The researcher then read the information sheet and consent form during the interview. All the informants agreed to the interview being recorded. Each interview lasted for an average of one hour and ten minutes. According to Seidman (2006), the ideal length of the interview should be one and a half hours for the participants to reconstruct their experience, put their lives into context, and bring meaning to their lives, but one hour is too short.

Furthermore, the interview protocol was used, which enabled the researcher to take notes or record them during the interview (Creswell, 2007). Accordingly, the responses were audio-taped with the consent of the interviewees. Although they agreed to record all the information they provided, some did not directly agree to include some of their sensitive family issues in the research. At the time, the researcher confirmed the ethical dimensions of keeping their personal and family details confidential, which was also asserted in the informed consent statement. The researcher felt that the primary reason for revealing a deep story was the ethically made rapport with participants during the interview process. For example, Amaliya told untold stories to her family, but she did not permit her one story to be directly quoted in the research. She stated:

I can tell you something that I did not tell anyone before as I need to reveal this story to somebody. Please keep this story confidential.

About 10 per cent of the participants spoke Sinhala, and the rest spoke Tamil, so the interview language was taken into account. Therefore, the already prepared English questions were translated into Tamil and Sinhala by sworn translators in Sri Lanka, which was effective in avoiding the meaning of the language and the researcher's bias. However, as the interview guide and questions were semi-structured, the floor was open to saying anything related to their miserable lives. However, the researcher managed to focus more on the objective with probing techniques.

Although the interview guide was semi-structured, the questions were divided into three parts. First, the researcher started eliciting the participants' experiences when they became a migrant. The information was essential in relating to their life in Bahrain during their migration. Therefore, the questions were asked, such as 'why did you migrate,' 'how your family's economic condition was,' 'how did you decide to migrate,' 'when was your family reunited with you,' and 'what was the reason behind your migration.'

The researcher then planned to create the participants' present living experience in Bahrain as a migrant worker family rather than asking their opinions of the living conditions and coping strategies. Therefore, the questions were raised to address their relationship with their family members, families in Bahrain, and relatives and families in Sri Lanka, which elicited details about their experience (Seidman, 2006). Furthermore, a set of questions were asked about their economic and social living difficulties. The final part of the items dealt with how they coped with Bahrain life during their living difficulties until returning to Sri Lanka. The part reflected the exact details of what they were doing at the time of the interview.

Beginning with the comfortable materials and working up to the more informative questions will allow informants to become comfortable before sharing their personal stories (Lune & Berg, 2017). Accordingly, the researcher used general questions on Bahrain life, such as "how did your life start in Bahrain?" which allowed the participants to talk about their initial experience in Bahrain. Furthermore, the

flexible questions, but relevant to the context, helped remove the participants' fear of discussing sensitive family issues and living difficulties. They were then asked to submit demographic details, such as their age, education, income level, social role in the family, origin of the family, and living location in Sri Lanka and Bahrain.

Finally, the subsequent questions were related to the research objectives. For example, according to the first objective, the researcher asked first, 'Could you please explain why you decided to come to Bahrain?' Probing questions were then used, which enabled the researcher to draw out more complete stories from the respondents. The questions such as, 'tell me, please, your family's economic condition?', 'To what extent did your family income encourage you to find an overseas job?', 'how did you arrange to come to Bahrain?', 'why?' and 'what happened?'.

During the formal interview, the researcher took notes and recorded quotes verbatim as often as possible. Additionally, after seeking permission, scheduling the interview, and confirming the meeting, the researcher meticulously scribbled down the notes after the interview. The following narration was the abstract from the field notes of when Abdullah delayed the interview due to traffic around his home.

When Abdullah invited the researcher for an interview, he delayed 20 minutes because he struggled to park his vehicle near his house. He explained how their residential place is rushed with people and vehicles.

The criteria of information sufficiency and saturation aided in the selection of participants. When the researcher hears the same information reported in the previous interviews, it is sufficient to select a number at that point (Seidman, 2006). After completing the 24 interviews, the researcher had the impression that the material had been repeated. According to Douglas (1985), when information saturation happens in his study, he said he would select 25 participants. However, the interview was conducted with 30 participants to ensure that the information obtained came from a few more aspects. After completing the 30 interviews with migrant families, two in-depth interviews were conducted with the officers from two organisations, "Discover Islam's Sri Lankan wing" and "Darul Iman."

3.4.3 Observation

Qualitative research of the social world uses an observational method to identify and reconstruct the perspectives and interactions that organise diverse social worlds (G. Miller, 1997). The observation experience of the researcher at the first stage was the preparatory step. When the researcher was admitted to IIUM in February 2019 with his initial draft of the proposal, the researcher prepared himself for the research. During this initial stage, the experience helped him overcome data collection challenges during the pandemic after 2020. From May to August 2019, the researcher spoke with some Sri Lankan migrant worker families who had returned from Bahrain during their summer vacation.

Observation is the starting point of any research. Therefore, by June 2020, the field visit was scheduled to observe the families' living locations, working environments, and programmes in which they participate in order to observe their transitional way of life and social reality. However, due to the pandemic, the research was carried out entirely using an online platform to complete the data collection. As field research is the joint production of a researcher and a member (Neuman, 2014), the researcher acted as a tool to collect empirical data from every informant. As the researcher initially relied on the virtual platform, he sought assistance from the migrants, Abdullah, Amaliya, and Ikram, to take photographs.

Observing means photographing unobtrusive signs such as people's gestures, actions, social interactions, scenes, and the physical environment (Yin, 2011). Accordingly, the researcher used the field diary to note the participants' body language, non-verbal attitudes, and gestures during video conferencing. All the data collected were documented in a journal, systematically mentioning the date, describing the location, and the theme of the conversation.

Ibrahim, for example, worked as an electrician in a royal household. The interview was conducted with him on Friday at 6:45 a.m. He was considering bringing his 28-day-old newborn girl outside to enjoy the weather. When he received a call, his entire attitude changed. The following is an excerpt from the researcher's field note about Ibrahim:

While he was talking with the researcher, he suddenly received a call from his office. Till that, he was speaking freely and loudly. When he picked up the phone call, he talked in a low voice. He cut the phone, agreeing to come to work on that day. Once he finished the phone conversation, he said that we had been asked to work today as the office had changed the shift.

Jazeera, the 53-year-old Sri Lankan lady, worked as a housemaid for an American family and stayed in a shared house in Manama. The researcher noticed the following expression when she talked about her pre-migration experiences.

While Jazeera talked about her family's economic condition that forced her to fly to Bahrain, she paused for a few seconds and started to cry. Whimpering, she described how her family suffered for one daily meal as her father died early in her life.

The researcher used the field notebook to record the relevant information in the field. Besides, a set of notes and memos were made, which corresponded to the category of theoretical notes (TN), which had been extensively used by researchers in conjunction with observation notes (ON) by researchers (C. Hughes, 1994). The memo refers to any writing that a researcher connects with the research other than actual field notes, transcription, or coding (Maxwell, 1996). It may range from a brief marginal comment recorded in the field journal to a full-fledged analytical essay.

3.4.4 Pilot Study

The pilot study, also known as a feasibility study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002), demonstrates how to observe how data may be obtained before beginning the real data collection to avoid weaknesses and strengthen the study. A pilot study is a pretest and refines one or more aspects of a final study, like its design, fieldwork procedures, data collection instruments, and analysis plans (Yin, 2011). The pilot study was conducted when the idea on the subject was provoked and systemised.

The interviews took place online in Bahrain in February 2020. This process helped in two ways: providing detailed information on the phenomenon, whether it is researchable in the specific setting, and offering thorough background on the

circumstances families face during their stay in Bahrain and their coping experience. He conducted in-depth discussions with six migrant workers: two with female workers, two with male workers, and one with dual professionals. The researcher had exceptional experiences interviewing migrant families in Bahrain.

According to the findings of the study, families struggle to educate their children, encounter financial and social problems, and engage in workforce activities without prior experience. Separated or divorced women with children also rely on support, and families seek out community organisations that operate in the destination as a remedy for them. Furthermore, migrated families act as migration conduits from the destination. Three interviewees' excerpts were compiled below to show how they experienced social and psychological grievances and economic difficulties during their stay at the destination. Following is an interview note and quote from Sara on her miserable life. She started to reveal her story of living an enduring life in Bahrain. She stated:

“I expect to live and die in this country; I love this country very much. My husband worked in Bahrain for four years, returned to Sri Lanka due to a problem with me, and never contacted me back.” She worked as an officer in a real-estate company and lived in a shared house. (Interview with Sara)

The researcher met another female household who had lived in Bahrain with her three children since 1993. She avoided meeting any Sri Lankan families due to her precarious existence in Bahrain. However, she did not have the option of leaving the country. Finally, the researcher was able to solve this issue with the assistance of an Indian brother. The following is a discernable narrative from the interview. She preferred not to mention her marital status during the first meeting. She married an Indian migrant worker and divorced him when his job was terminated, and he was deported from the country. She stated:

“I have three children above 20 years old, but none have received any formal education due to the legal documents. I need help to prepare at least their birth certificate and educate them for their smooth life”. (Interview with Jazeera)

Professional workers who worked in high positions also faced some psychological difficulties. Workers' spouses were forced to cope with them due to their busy working schedules. Below is a narration of a professional senior accountant. He stated:

Though I receive enough wages in this company, life here is oppressing. We pronounce sheikh (sir) or sheikha (madam) more than we want to maintain their relationship and secure our existence.

The researcher had firsthand experience interviewing migrant families in Bahrain, which was invaluable for subsequent fieldwork. The pilot study enabled him to comprehend the uncertain conditions and approach the respondents in their busiest working environment. In addition, the pilot study assisted the researcher in refining his questions and objectives. Furthermore, the process helped validate the questions to be posed and gain experience before data collection.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative research forms new concepts or refines concepts grounded in the data, and the data is analysed by organising categories based on themes and concepts (Mason, 2002). The thematic analysis produces something about the participants as a whole and looks at some similarities and differences to be highlighted from the interview data. The present study adopted a thematic approach to extend the discussion on migrant families and their responses.

Moreover, the researcher used manual and digital methods (ATLAS.ti) during the analysis. The most significant changes in research methods are due to more sophisticated computing, and in this era, all kinds of empirical studies are carried out in cyberspace. Numerous computing programs facilitate qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the researcher used ATLAS.ti during the research analysis. The program, a PC and Windows-based program that enabled the expediting of the analysis process within a shorter duration, was available for purchase.

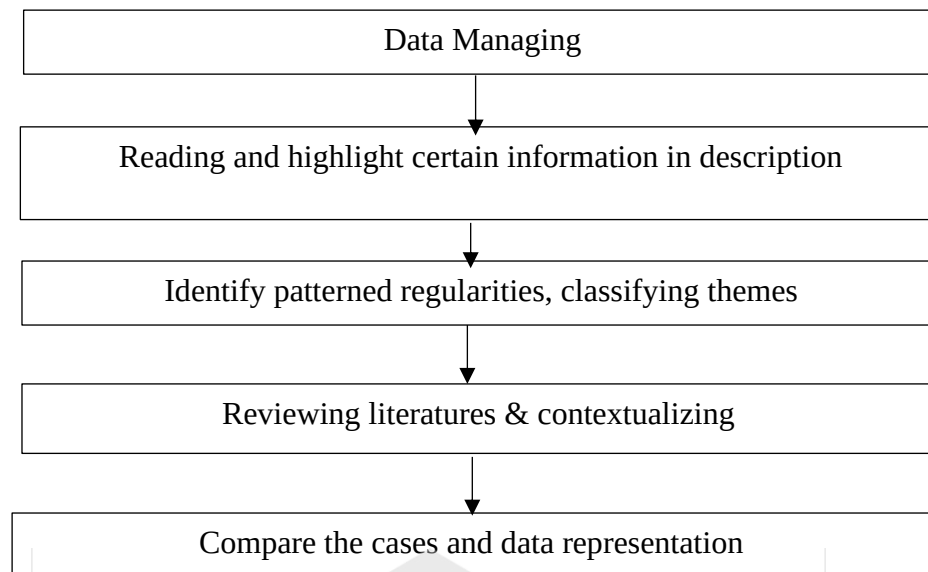


Figure 3.4 Data analysis process

Source: (Creswell 2007, Wolcott 1994)

Qualitative data analysis builds categories and themes from the bottom to the top to make sense of data or abstract units of information. In the analysis process, the researcher engaged in analytical circles rather than using a linear approach (Creswell, 2007). The thematic discussion began with data coding and ended with precise information on the issues posed. Qualitative research, from the data collection process to the end, is a kind of data analysis. The researcher invested effort early in the analytical process, identifying data in the database in a systematic and easily retrievable format. In our case, the data (words, sentences, and stories) were stored in specific folders with names in the ATLAS.ti database for future examination. However, most of the literature surveys were done manually. The functions of analysis software have been presented in a separate topic.

The researcher used the Mendeley software to store and read literature for reference purposes. Then, the researcher started to read the transcribed interviews and notes several times to grasp the whole database and wrote the descriptions at the margin of the interviews, notes, and photographs before breaking the notes into segments. The theoretical notes and memos jotted down during the interviews and observations were revised.

Next, transcribed interviews and field notes were transferred into codes to start the thematic discussions. Originally, transcriptions were in Tamil and translated into English. Then, considerable time was used to transcribe interviews into English. Furthermore, the editing process was carried out in relation to what the participants meant during the interview. Transcribed interviews and field notes contained a massive amount of data. Therefore, the researcher carefully categorised more relevant themes according to the study objectives.

The researcher used the themes and concepts derived from coding the data as an initial step for data analysis. Furthermore, coding the data, which is classifying an individual piece of data, represents a crucial step in the process of qualitative social research (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). The themes are then followed by narratives and thorough explanations of the examples to cover some surprising information, conceptually exciting, and expected information from the study (Creswell, 2007). The reading of literature was resumed. Finally, data were presented as a doctoral thesis.

3.5.1 Functions of ATLAS.ti

The sophisticated functions of ATLAS.ti eased the analysis process of the researcher in many ways. However, to work with this software, the researcher required operational knowledge. Therefore, he allocated two weeks to study the software online, using video tutorials and presentations. Furthermore, he followed some training sessions organised by various departments in IIUM to enhance his knowledge. With this initial knowledge, he started to use the software. As mentioned earlier, the features of this software helped to organise the documents, code the data, create themes, and present the relationship with codes and themes in graphic formats.

First, transcribed notes were read manually before feeding the documents to ATLAS.ti. Then, the interviews, field notes, and photos were uploaded to the software. Subsequently, document manager, an ATLAS.ti document organisation function, was used to categorise the documents based on some demographic criteria such as gender and income level, allowing the documents to be retrieved in a matter of seconds.

Similarly to manual reading, the researcher did his final reading using software before proceeding with the coding process. First, the quotations containing codes were highlighted. The digital coding procedure eliminated redundancies and allowed the individual codes in the documents to be grouped based on some fundamental categories. The current grouping process was more precise based on certain themes that emerged throughout the reading, theoretical notes, and the theoretical framework. For example, some of the software-generated code groupings using the software are pre-migration career experiences, family types, work turbulence, and working environment. Each group had three to eleven codes. Documents are made up of 165 codes and 15 code groupings.

Next, the researcher did a thorough analysis, building network relationships between code-code, code-code groups, and codes-themes, which were helpful in creating a logical argument in the finding section under a specified theme. Throughout the writing process, the researcher produced the report based on the codes and code relationships to select more appropriate quotes to support the thesis, reducing the time spent gathering the handwritten or digitalised interview transcripts.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

From collecting data to analysing and accomplishing the study, most components are going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others (Maxwell, 1996). The above section provided a detailed description of the data collection and analysis process. In addition, the section justified the case study choice and addressed the researcher's methodological stance. The present qualitative study employed 30 Sri Lankan migrant worker families as a case study to investigate some key elements that have influenced the complex pattern of family migration found in Bahrain. Given that the study's goal was to investigate the legal, economic and social challenges, the qualitative method allowed for an in-depth examination of the total impact of migration on families in a natural setting.

Section three explained the research setting and sampling techniques in detail. Bahrain was among the ones in the Middle East determined by Sri Lankan migrants

over four decades; hence, this destination was chosen as a case history to exemplify with empirical evidence, which most readers unexpected. During the data collection process, the obstacles the researcher faced have been discussed in general, and interviews conducted during the upsurge of COVID-19 in particular. The following topics, including the pilot study, describe the in-depth interview process and observation. The inquiry methods helped to enlighten the proposed problem and fulfil the research objectives. Finally, the data analysis process has been presented with a detailed explanation of software functionalities used to organise the documents, code, and analyse the data.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULT AND FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter examined the Sri Lankan families' pre- and post-migration experiences and their coping strategies in the new social environment. By conducting empirical research and collecting primary data based on qualitative methodology, the present chapter answers the three major questions of the present research that were drawn to investigate the social and economic challenges that Sri Lankan families went through during their migration journey in Bahrain. The three major questions are: What are the major “push and pull” factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka to Bahrain among the Sri Lankan migrant worker families? What are the social and economic conditions of the Sri Lankan migrant worker families in Bahrain? and What are the coping strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan migrant worker families in Bahrain?

4.2 WHAT ARE THE MAJOR “PUSH AND PULL” FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MIGRATION PROCESS OF THE SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES FROM SRI LANKA TO BAHRAIN?

To extend the discussion on Sri Lankan migrant workers, the first part of this chapter significantly contributes to the first question of the research, focusing on the major push and pull factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka to Bahrain among the Sri Lankan migrant families. Migrants, before they brought their families or migrated with their families, arrived in Bahrain alone. Thus, migration decisions were not a solitary desire by an individual, but external pressures considerably influenced migration decisions, including family. The causes of the current migration process were associated with the origin country and the destination they wish to migrate to. Further migration was perpetuated because of both sides' continuing push and pull factors. These factors were identified based on three migrant cohorts who had exclusively chosen Bahrain as their migration destination. Notably, the first part presents the data

on their initial migration decision, considering them as married and unmarried migrants, in order to make coherent relationships with their families' migration later.

The first part analyses the responses from the breadwinners of the families, who were the sole economic providers before and after their migration, and the second, educated people whose education was enough to obtain skilled jobs. Finally, the section presents data on female migrants who experienced financial challenges in the absence of their parents and husbands. Furthermore, this first question presents the findings related to the intervening challenges revealed by these migrant cohorts during their migration journey.

4.2.1 Male Breadwinners of the Families

In Sri Lankan culture, male partners play a significant economic role in the family. Male members who participated in this study were the sole economic providers to their families. Particularly, Muslim males said the whole family depended on only one working individual. For instance, Naim had to take care of five family members with his earnings. Similarly, Harees, who was unmarried during his visit to Bahrain, said that his family relies on him for everything. Migrants uttered that their families were bound economically and emotionally. For instance, Nazim believed that taking care of his family was his prime responsibility since his family relied on him. Thus, leaving their families and working alone was impossible for them, and the culture they followed did not value such acts. However, they could not continuously contribute what they earned in Sri Lanka. They were frustrated with their existing job, which did not provide enough earnings to cover their daily expenses. For instance, Shihan, a rural family member who came to Bahrain as a salesman, narrated how his family's economic burden was due to agricultural failure, which caused an expenditure burden on the family.

We did the cultivation of rice. However, the price was unstable and not profitable. Thus, it was not easy to cover our expenses. Eventually, I came to Bahrain.

The reason that pushed them to migrate was not one-sided, i.e., not only related to the capability of working in their field of expertise but also associated with the country's economy. The proper production price for their production was vitally important to sustain the family economy. Thus, they thought it would be better to move to a job that provides a fixed salary, which would help sustain the earning laps, instead of spending their time in the fluctuating market. Similarly, the fixed salaries that migrants got in Sri Lanka were meagre, which was not compatible with what expenditures were ahead of them. For example, Raslan worked as a salesman in a grocery shop where he got low wages, causing him to migrate to the Middle East, where he received a better salary than in Sri Lanka. He said:

My salary in that grocery shop depended on the days I worked for them. I could not run my family with that salary. Finally, I found a job in Bahrain with a good salary.

Breadwinners in the family contributed by doing independent work or being an employee in business ventures. According to informants, a regular challenge that pressurised them to migrate was falling into debt, which was borrowed when they suffered from the expenditure burden. When moneylenders were chasing behind them, the immediate option they had ahead of them was migrating to the Middle East. For instance, Amaliya's husband did business, but at some point, he could not pay the loan taken from the companies, which was major pressure to find an alternative to pay them back. Thus, the decision at the family level was made to send one family member, where his wife was supposedly to migrate, and the destination was the Middle East since the journey was less costly. She said:

My husband did business in Sri Lanka. However, the company lost severely and fell on loan, where we received much torture paying the loan from the companies. We migrated to the Middle East when we searched for options to repay our debts. The journey was less expensive. My Aunty in Bahrain sent me a visa.

Breadwinners handling their families were frustrated when the income was insufficient to cover the family expenses and repay debts due to the losses and failures of personal income ventures or the low wages they received in their jobs. Thus, they

found income avenues in Middle Eastern countries, where the income was better than in their country of origin.

4.2.2 Migration of Educated People

Educated people worked in a competitive job market in Sri Lanka, which was insufficient to accommodate all the educated people by offering a suitable job for their field of study, forcing the educated to work in either an irrelevant job or for poor pay. Some of the informants who participated in this study were educated and worked in various companies with low salaries after completing their education, affecting their income. Educated people indeed weighed the consequences once they ditched their knowledge in an inappropriate setting. They specifically raised the issue of employment since they relied on paid employment either provided by the government or the private sector. Azam, for example, explained that a lack of earnings pushed him to migrate.

Nothing to hide; the primary reason I am here is money. I worked in a private institution in Sri Lanka, but it was not enough for my family's expenses. The salary was very low.

Apart from this wage issue in the professional field, obtaining a proper job due to the scarcity of jobs in Sri Lanka was a commonly identified problem among the educated cohorts. For example, Rasmy obtained an education in finance and accounting, but he was frustrated by his inability to find work as an accountant during his stay in Sri Lanka. He narrated that the opportunities in the Middle East that he did not have in Sri Lanka prompted him to migrate.

I have completed my studies in finance and accountancy. I tried many ways to get a better job in private and government institutions in Sri Lanka. Though I got some jobs, they did not make them permanent. Finally, I found a job in Bahrain.

Similarly, some educated migrants, who worked in Sri Lanka for a low-wage job, chose the Middle East since the pay was better than their previous job. For Reeza, the newly selected job offered him five times higher earnings than his previous ones. He said:

My company in Bahrain offered me five times higher than what I received in Sri Lanka. Happily, I accepted and left my country and job.

It is worth noting that career opportunities and recognition for skilled migrants are better in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries rather than in their country of origin, particularly those who come with the Middle East working experiences. For example, Ibrahim, who migrated to Bahrain with experience working in Qatar, said that there was a great demand for his field of expertise, so he obtained higher salaries for his experience.

I went to Qatar as a technician first. I stayed in Sri Lanka for one year but could not earn what I did in Qatar. Then, I got a visa to come to Bahrain as a technician based on my experience. I am receiving a better salary in my field than in Qatar.

Migrants were aware that obtaining a job in the Middle East job market and receiving higher salaries depended on their experiences, particularly in the Middle East. Thus, the first-time movers did not compare the return with the experienced one but expected to achieve something in the long run in the Middle East job market. The current study highlights a large number of educated migrants expect to boost their economy by obtaining productive jobs in the Middle East, which are not readily available in Sri Lanka. Those educated cohorts pointed out that scarcity of jobs and low salaries were the challenges they went through after obtaining their academic qualifications.

4.2.3 Female Migrants as Domestic Workers

Since the early 1980s, Sri Lankan women from all over the island have been migrating remarkably to oil-producing countries as housemaids. These women migrated from impoverished economic conditions and thus opted for this journey for their family's well-being. Similarly, female workers who participated in this study explained that their family social ailments were due to either their parents' dismissal or separation and the loss of a married spouse. In some families, adult children, while unmarried, took part in the economic responsibilities of their mother or father by migrating overseas. For example, Sara, who migrated to Bahrain as a housemaid at 17, associated her

father's continuous commitment to the family alone during the financially and physically challenging situation. She narrated her initial journey as follows:

When I was four, my mother left our father. Then, my father took all the family responsibilities at home. Our family earnings were less than \$78. However, his earnings were not enough for our daily expenses. He could not work hard since he had many health issues, such as diabetes, blood pressure, and knee pain. I had to take his part in the family. Then, I prepared to come to Bahrain when I was 17.

Similarly, Jazeera, who worked as a housemaid for a long time in Bahrain, lost her father before migrating to Bahrain, forcing her to work as a housemaid in Sri Lanka to earn money, where she also received minimal facilities and low wages. As the adverse economic conditions continued in the family, she expected the Middle East journey would alleviate her family's financial adversity, as she stated in her conversation as follows:

All family burdens fell on my mother's head after my father passed away early in my life. Unfortunately, I did not go to school properly due to our family's financial situation. Still, I remember that we sometimes ate two times a day or borrowed food from others. Then I travelled to Malwana, Colombo, to work in a house at 18. However, I did not receive enough facilities and salary, which caused me to choose a foreign journey, as I wanted to support my family with my earnings.

Similar to the experiences of other women participating in this study, Mary was a Sri Lankan village girl from a poor family who emigrated just before the pandemic (COVID-19) started in 2019. Poverty was held up by her family tightly. She and her three children had been living with her aged mother for four years owing to her husband's separation, causing her to take total responsibility for the family. She had this to say:

I lived with my three children and aged mother. My husband left me when my younger son was one year old. During that time, he was in Kuwait. Then, the total burden of caring for my children was on me. Then, I decided to come to Bahrain, leaving my children with my mother.

The interview responses are sufficient to conclude that women were pooled into labour force activities to overcome the economic instability in the family even before

their marriages. Those women migrated overseas as the main economic providers when they went through financial difficulties due to the lower income or loss of income earned by the sole economic provider in the family. The occupation that they were pooled in was the housemaid category. These three migrant cohorts decided whether to go once they went through the financial and employment challenges, but they had to face some more challenges when migrating, which were the initial shock. Thus, the following theme presents the data on the intervening challenges that migrants faced during their journey.

4.2.4 Intervening Challenges During the Preparation of the Migration

Migrating to a new working destination in a new geographical location is not a simple process, as migrants encounter financial challenges and psychological stress. Simply said, migrants spend both material and mental sacrifices, such as leaving family and friends. Thus, the following section discusses the intervening challenges based on the two subthemes: economic and psychological costs.

4.2.4.1 Economic Cost

Migrating to the Middle East requires substantial money, which is impossible to fund for migrants from impoverished households. The present study found that some migrants came to the Middle East with massive financial struggles, forcing them to finance their migration by pawning or selling jewellery. For instance, Ibrahim mentioned he sold his wife's jewellery and paid his flight ticket and bureau fee. Some migrants financed the journey with loans. As a result, families that had already faced economic hardships incurred additional economic burdens due to the loans they took out. Piyasiri stated:

I came to Bahrain by borrowing money from my neighbours and family friends. I repaid this loan with two years installments.

Furthermore, according to the data gathered, female migrants were a more vulnerable group. Female migrants relied heavily on others' support in order to migrate. According to their responses, some made their pre-migration arrangements with the help of their family. For example, Sheema said:

Nothing was in my hand to migrate. The agency that sought help for migration agreed to give flight tickets and for some other expenses, such as buying clothes. But I prepared the passport with the help of my aunty.

Migrants revealed that finance was the major challenge they faced during the preparation for the journey, prompting them to seek alternative solutions. Those included receiving help from their relatives and family, selling valuable items, and borrowing money from others, which they planned to repay with their migrating profits.

4.2.4.2 Psychological Cost

Migrants faced emotional stress as a result of their pre-departure experiences. As the migrants took the decision to move over a massive geographical distance that made regular visits home difficult, family members and migrants were increasingly emotional, with both parties bearing this cost. In the following extract from the interview with Salam, he described his psychological stress as follows:

I had to separate my family; I felt inferior during my decision to come to Bahrain.

Nihal had somewhat the same viewpoint in support of this psychological suffering. He said he had never been anywhere separated from his family members before his migration, which caused him to cry for a period of time. Quoting from Nihal's words, he said:

The first time, I decided to separate from my family for economic reasons. The day I departed was full of tears in my eyes.

Being among those who decided to migrate was painful for mothers since they were supposed to leave their children behind. For instance, Mary said:

From the day I decided to migrate onwards, I started to comfort my three-year-old daughter. Most of the time, I lied to her about going abroad to buy toys and chocolates.

Based on the data from female migrants from Sri Lanka, financial hardship was not their only challenge. They also carried psychological grievances when local members humiliated them, verbally questioning them about their journey. In fact, women working overseas before marriage was perceived as immoral in the village cultures in Sri Lanka. Sara pointed out her sufferings when she migrated for her family as a woman.

When I decided to leave the country, everyone started to ask about my journey at a young age and said about the difficulties of safeguarding chastity, which was very much hurting. I submitted everything to Allah S.W.T and finally arrived here (Bahrain).

Even after their marriages, families and husbands were reluctant to allow them to migrate. Amaliya said:

I decided to migrate during a hard time in my family. However, my mother-in-law initially showed little interest in allowing me to migrate. She was concerned more about the house chores that I wanted to do.

Migrants' pre-migration experiences demonstrated that apart from their financial burden, they also invested in psychological suffering by leaving their family members behind. Interview responses revealed that migrants felt inferior and had to comfort their families from the day they decided to migrate. Staying with their family in one destination was necessary for them. However, the asset that migrants required to scrutinize their vague decision was one of the barriers for the migrating family as a whole to the working destination. Thus, migrants made the prime decision to leave their family members behind, with whom they enjoyed their family life, by supporting one another for the collective benefit of the family.

The above section discussed two primary challenges that migrants juggle: economic and psychological costs, which show that migrating to a foreign country was not as easy as many potential migrants believed. In sum, Migrants used this journey to remedy their family poverty, thus ultimately aiming to achieve family happiness. Thus,

they were compelled to leave their family members behind to achieve their target, thus reducing their physical bond with their beloved family members. Even though the community was not ready to accept the women migrating alone to work outside, they had chosen migration for family's sake.

The first question was presented based on three cohorts of migrants to Bahrain: breadwinners, educated young people, and female migrants. Each group expressed the uncertain life that pushed them to migrate in different ways. According to the interviewees' responses, female migrants and a portion of breadwinners were pushed by absolute poverty, which was challenging to overcome while working in the unpromising economic setting of Sri Lanka. The debt that some of the breadwinners incurred was major pressure, which was not possible to repay by working in the same setting, which may take time, thereby deciding to find a better earning option that eventually ended in Bahrain. Educated people, another cohort, raised the problems of unemployment and low wages in Sri Lanka, which pushed them to find productive employment in the Middle East, where they earned more than in Sri Lanka. According to the data, the informants swiftly migrated when multiple factors supported their migration from sending and receiving countries.

The present study discovered that unmarried and married family members, both male and female, migrated for work. During the interviews, they all lived with their families in Bahrain. The challenges that migrants faced after the migration are discussed under the second research question, under which legal challenges migrant families faced in reuniting or bringing their families to their work destination are discussed in detail.

4.3 WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES IN BAHRAIN?

The present section answers the second research question, "what challenges do the Sri Lankan migrant worker families face in Bahrain." Migrants, particularly forerunners in the family, such as breadwinners, educated people, and female migrants, decided to reunite with their families, expecting a better life than they had in their origin country.

However, they went through contrasting situations, which did not fulfil their total expectation. Firstly, they endured legal challenges in this reuniting process, which were covered under the “legal challenges”. Moreover, migration with families was not often a happy ending for many families. Migrant families faced economic and social challenges. As a result, the second and third main themes examined the “economic challenges”, which were challenging to a family in the migrated destination, and the “social challenges”, where the present section shows the far-reaching changes that occurred in the migrated families as a result of migration.

4.3.1 Legal Challenges Faced by Migrant Families

Migrants who arrived in Bahrain rejoined their families after a period of time in the destination country. When the above three groups, breadwinners, educated, and females, were asked about their families’ arrival, they expressed that they faced some legal challenges when reuniting with their families, which were discussed under the themes of family visa status, sponsoring a family visa, and undocumented families. Thus, the present section enables the researcher to investigate the family visa status and the legal barriers to sponsoring family visas among various groups and undocumented families.

4.3.1.1 Family Visa Status

Migrants with a middle or high profile were provided with some family privileges, such as family visa status, that eased the arrival of families at their working destination. These facilities included accommodation, medical care for families, and schooling for their children. According to Nazim’s case, he was a skilled labourer and emphasized a combination of factors had prompted him to bring his family to Bahrain. In the following conversation, he described the privileges he received, including accommodation and visa status.

I was eager to live together with my spouse after my wedding. I had enough salary to live with the family. The accommodation and family status I received from the company helped keep my family.

These family visa benefits, such as family medical care and children's schooling expenses, differed from company to company. Although skilled people had the power to negotiate salaries and demand family visas, family medical, and children's schooling expenses, some struggled to get full family status, causing an extra burden on their income. For example, Aroos was restricted from receiving benefits for his third child as his benefits were limited to only two children. He said:

My company arranged my family visa, but I paid the visa fee for my third child, as they considered only two children under my visa. I take care of all the expenses of my third child, including medical and school fees.

Furthermore, some migrants were granted family visa status without additional family facilities, such as housing and medical care. Therefore, migrants took time to arrange the money or obtain high-income in Bahrain to ensure the smooth arrival of their families. For example, according to Naseer, although he wanted to be with his family, he took his time to reunite with them as his salary was low and the housing facilities were lacking. He narrated as follows:

I was here for more than 15 years without my family, which made some lack in my heart. My visa was with family status, but housing and medical were not included. Therefore, when I got a salary enough to maintain the family expenses at least, I brought them.

The findings highlighted that family privileges such as family visas, family medical care, and children's schooling expenses were some pull factors that encouraged migrants to bring along their families and stay with them. However, the data showed the limitations of these privileges, whereby some migrants did not receive the full benefits and were economically burdensome. According to the interviewees' responses, their economic capability was difficult before bringing in their families, as they had to wait a long time to fulfil their minimum financial requirements to bring them along.

4.3.1.2 Sponsoring a Family Visa

Migrants, both male and female, were interested in bringing their married spouse and working together at the work destination after their marriages so as to increase the family economy. Those migrants, who migrated before their spouses, had problems sponsoring them due to their visa categories, such as housemaids and labourers. Although they had this legal barrier, they used available avenues to sponsor a visa other than the family visas for their wedded spouse. For example, Sara obtained a work visa for her husband from another sponsor in order for him to remain in Bahrain. She stated that:

After my marriage, I had only one option: to bring my husband here with a work visa because I could not sponsor any dependents with my housemaid visa.

Similarly, in another case, Raslan arranged a housemaid visa for his wife so they could work together to increase their family economy.

I thought of bringing my wife here with a housemaid visa because we wanted to earn together to build a house in Sri Lanka.

Couples who were on work visas from different sponsors had limited freedom over their family life. For example, the work environment made it difficult for them to meet at a place as Piyasiri reported bringing his wife on a housemaid visa, but they remained separated since they worked for various sponsors in different cities.

I brought my wife here as a housemaid for a home in the same family I work with. However, we did not get the chance to stay at a place. Usually, we met once a week because her house was far from here.

Family visas should be obtained through the legal system. However, some migrants who were not eligible to sponsor their spouses used work visas to stay with them and work together to achieve their migration target. Although their economic desire was achieved, some of them could not completely enjoy family life by being together because of the legal system in which they were sponsored by different people and stayed in different places.

4.3.1.3 Undocumented Families

Migrants who were not eligible to obtain family visas or sponsor their families stayed undocumented without visas and passports, were found among Sri Lankan migrants. Some female migrants lost their valid visas when they violated their local sponsor's sponsorship and worked from outside the sponsor's home, making it difficult for them to renew their visas. For example, Sheema had been in Bahrain for more than 25 years without a valid visa. According to her explanation, she could not get the no-objection letter from her previous sponsor in order to shift her visa to another sponsor as she had illegally left the sponsor's home. Furthermore, her husband was not eligible to sponsor her with a visa since he was in the middle-skilled working category.

My husband was a driver and could not provide me with a visa. And my Kafeel does not know where I am. Then how can I get the letter to transfer my visa? Then I decided to stay out without a visa.

Similar to Sheema's case, Mary entered Bahrain with a housemaid visa, and then, within a month, she eloped from the sponsor's home to marry an Indian guy, believing that he would provide a visa. Since he missed providing a visa within the available period to transfer her visa, he skipped doing it, thus causing her to remain undocumented with him. From that day until this interview, she lived without a legal visa. She stated:

My passport is with me, but my sponsor has cancelled my visa. My husband tried to buy a visa from outside, but we missed the period that we should have done that.

Migrants who left their sponsors' homes when they married foreign nationals, who were migrant workers in Bahrain (Notably, such types of marriage choices were discussed under the theme of social challenges), could not register their marriages with a legitimate marriage certificate due to the problem of a valid visa. These couples remained silent without informing their respective Embassies of their nuptials in order to register their marriages, fearing deportation if the Embassy informed the police because of their illegal stay without a visa. For example, Jazeera stated:

When we married, we did not register our marriage and get the marriage certificate from the embassy of Sri Lanka. We were scared to go there without a valid visa as they would report us to the police.

The issue of documents appeared in a chain, one after another. Children born to these couples lost their birth certificates, making preparing travel documentation difficult. For example, Jazeera had three children. Two out of three were born at home, as she feared hospital care during her pregnancy due to the absence of a marriage certificate and visa and had no birth certificate.

I have three kids, but none of them have a passport. Even my two elder sons do not have birth certificates. They were born at home. I was scared to go to the hospital because I had no visa or marriage certificate.

The open discussion revealed that parents failed to prepare passports for their children because of their inability to prove their marriages. Parents must produce their valid marriage certificates and birth certificates for both parents and children to the immigration while preparing the travel documents, which should be certified by the embassy of their respective countries. For example, Nisa's two children were born to her first husband without a marriage certificate, thus causing her to skip preparing the travel documents for her children as she had no marriage certificate to prove her marriage. She stated that:

I could not apply for a passport for my two children because I still don't have a marriage certificate to prove my first marriage.

Likewise, children without proper documents stayed in the host country after their parents, who were forerunners of the Middle East migration. Once these children lost their parents in the host country before preparing their birth certificates and passports, they faced more challenges than their parents since proving their citizenship in their parents' native countries became more difficult. For example, Simaya and her siblings remained in Bahrain after their parents' dismissal. She said that neither she nor her siblings had been recognized as Sri Lankan or Indian citizens.

When I went to prepare the documents, the Sri Lankan and Indian embassies did not accept us. First, I went to the Indian embassy. They rejected my application because my father was Muslim, as he converted

to Islam in Bahrain, but there was no evidence to prove that. Therefore, they considered offering a Hindu passport, but I rejected it as I preferred to be passport as a Muslim. The Sri Lankan embassy did not accept our documents because our papers were father-centred, which means Indian.

Migrant families should have legal documents, such as visas, marriage, and birth certificates, to work and live in a foreign country. Evidence showed that participants who did not follow the procedure of transferring visas and registering marriages were susceptible to challenges, such as long periods of stagnation in the work destination, receiving health facilities in the hosted country, and children losing their legal documents, causing them to lose recognition from their parent's country of origin.

The evidence collected from migrant families shows that migration for work purposes should happen legally. The first theme shows that the family visa status is available to a restricted number of migrants. Interviewees' responses showed that family migration depended on the economic power of existing migrant workers in the destination and family privileges available to skilled workers. In most cases, family members migrated after the forerunners had attained financial stability, allowing them to pay the cost of family life in the host country. The second subtheme explored different types of sponsoring methods that low-income migrants used to sponsor a family visa. In the present case, some migrants used work visas for their spouses to stay with them and work together to achieve their migration target. However, this typical system reduced the freedom to enjoy family life.

Subsequently, the final theme discussed undocumented families, which explored document issues that occurred in a chain, one after another. Though the migrants arrived with formal visas, they later lost their residence permits for some reasons, such as escaping the sponsor's home and marrying at the destination. Migrants who married a foreign national without a legal visa had their marriage certificate revoked. As a result, children who were born to them lost their legal documents, including their birth certificates and passports. Eventually, life in the host country became challenging, limiting their ability to obtain aid, access healthcare facilities, and even earn money for living costs, which was the primary goal of the migration. During the analysis of economic and social challenges, undocumented families were considered since the evidence collected from them was significant to the present research.

4.3.2 Economic Challenges Faced by Migrant Families

The migrants' prime earning source in the transition destination was labour force activities. Also, their foremost goal of migration was earning through productive employment. However, the present study identified that after arriving at the destination, migrants encountered work-related problems, which were discussed under the themes of unemployment, sudden terminations, and exploitation. These working complications severely impacted their financial inequalities and families' living conditions in the host country, where they had to pay for every facility and service they used, such as housing and utilities, medical care, and education. Notably, Sri Lankans enjoy free medical and educational services in Sri Lanka. Thus, the subsequent discussion further discussed themes: obstacles in spending after the arrival of the families, under which family expenses, housing and utilities, medical, and education are included as sub-themes, and challenges in savings and sending remittances after the families' arrival.

4.3.2.1 Being Unemployed

Migrants were pushed by economic factors that they faced in their origin countries, such as low income, unemployment, and scarcity of jobs. Sri Lankan migrants chose Middle East destinations as they found jobs with enough salaries to solve their families' economic problems and improve their well-being. After the arrival of families, a consistent job was essential to cover their expenses in a foreign country. Although migrants turned to these work sources to support the families they left behind and the families with them, they faced difficulties in finding new jobs when their contracts ended. For example, Reeza could not find a job immediately after his contract ended while he was with his family in Bahrain. He described when he was jobless for a few months, and he could not pay his house rentals and school fees for his children on a regular basis, which put him under much pressure from his landlord and school administration. He stated that:

It took time for me to find a new job once I lost my previous job. During that time, I could not pay school fees for the children and house rent, and I struggled with food expenses. One day, my son was stopped by a school

gatekeeper as he had an overdue payment. The house owner compelled us to vacate the home.

When migrants stayed with family, unemployment was pathetic, which led them to do whatever option they had. Surprisingly, some families revealed the devastating condition that led them to seek help from the general public in order to survive. The matter was sensitive, and the researcher should not present the pattern that they explained to the researcher. However, they revealed this matter to alleviate their pain. Therefore, the study managed to narrate their psychological distress anonymously.

Sometimes, we would ring the bells of houses and ask for work (part-time work). Some people would give, and some not. What to do in times of no work? We have taken bagging.

Similarly, another informant cried a lot when describing her unclear narrative of being unemployed in the host country. She stated:

At some point, I picked up trash and even begged to feed my children.

The primary migration goal of migrants was to overcome the domestic employment problem and earn money for their own and families' well-being. However, migrants remained unemployed due to difficulties finding a job in the host country, severely impacting their family survival in the destination country. The difficulties in finding a job and unemployment further increased during COVID-19.

4.3.2.1.1 Being Unemployed During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the migrant cohort was severely impacted by being unemployed. In the present study, the inability of females to obtain part-time employment, particularly housemaids, was a serious issue during the COVID-19 epidemic, a recent disaster for workers. Employers had prohibited the workers from entering their homes due to the pandemic panic. Rubini stated:

Corona has stopped my job. My Kafeel said not to come to work due to the fear of spreading the disease. I stayed in the room without work for more than ten months.

Similarly, families who relied on work on a daily basis were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Jazeera mentioned how the pandemic impacted her family's regular earnings, as entering any home was difficult while the virus was spreading. Jazeera shared her story, weeping throughout the interview:

I struggled with our daily expenses for five months without a job due to Corona. My daughter was also babysitting for one family. But she has been stopped now.

COVID-19 was challenging for part-time and domestic workers due to the possibility of spreading the virus when in physical contact. Given this fact, finding part-time jobs and those wishing to shift jobs to another workplace was challenging, causing them to lose their regular earnings for their families.

4.3.2.2 Work Instability and Sudden Terminations

Migrants arriving in a foreign country expected a stable job that could help with a regular income to support their families. However, the work in these destinations was not as they had expected. When the breadwinners in the family experienced work instability, either because of the closedown of the companies or work terminations, they were frustrated, and it was painful for them. Migrants, regardless of their education level, skills, and work status, experienced inconsistency in employment during their stay in Bahrain. Among the participants, Naeem expressed his frustration with having an unstable job due to the inconsistency of the companies.

My work was unstable at the beginning, and it was challenging to support my family. I changed four companies within two years. Finally, I started my career in this present company in a minor position.

Similarly, Migrants were affected by early terminations or little advance notice of work termination, causing economic challenges to the family during the transition and contributing to their distress and unhappiness. Migrant workers were probably

terminated by the firm with little notice. When the question was asked about their economic hardship, Nismy gave an account of the hardship he faced in a soft voice. He stated:

My company terminated me before the contract ended because the company was not stable, but it gave me a chance to find a job. During that time, survival was pathetic. I spent all the money that I had in my hand. Additionally, I borrowed a loan from my friends.

These early terminations were challenging factors in continuing life with the family at the destination. Furthermore, migrant workers needed to have an official work permit in order to sponsor their families. When the workers were terminated from work while staying with their families, they struggled to renew their dependent passes, forcing them to send their families back. Reeza was fired from her job and voiced her feelings by saying:

I was suspended from my previous job before my work period ended due to a company's legal issue. I struggled to get a suitable job for four months. During that time, my family visa had expired, and that caused me to send my family to Sri Lanka. It is difficult to cope with the following problems without a work visa, especially when we live with family.

Migrants experienced work terminations in various circumstances, particularly those dependent on their relationship with employers. The company lessened skilled migrants' family privileges due to the mild disputes with their local employers, which was a sign of termination. For example, when Ibrahim had a disagreement with his employer that resulted in his losing his family privileges prior to his termination, he sent his family to Sri Lanka before quitting his job. He narrated his miserable life as below:

Due to management issues, I was compelled to return to Sri Lanka in my first contract. My new employer terminated many employees and cut all my previous family facilities, including family accommodation and utilities. Therefore, I decided to leave my family in Sri Lanka. After a few months, I was terminated and then stayed in Sri Lanka until I got a new contract in Bahrain, which happened after one year.

Aroos experienced a similar tragedy as Ibrahim and bitterly said:

I received a termination order to exit the country within one week. With nothing to do, I returned to Sri Lanka with my family.

Migrants must be ready to accept such managerial decisions in the Middle East working environment. As informants stated, sudden termination orders or reducing family facilities in a foreign country was challenging for the migrants who were with families. Besides these regular migrant workers, migrants without legal documents, such as visas, were more frequently prone to job termination in a foreign country. Sometimes, employers got benefits from such undocumented labourers but were paid less for their work. At the same time, those migrants struggled to obtain a respected job due to the lack of a visa. For example, Simaya and her family had been fighting with visas for a long time and explained the progress of their lives with their uncertain career.

Many employers temporarily recruited me and terminated me after a few weeks. They do not trust me as I do not have a passport. They suspect that we steal their property or cheat on the job.

In another case, Jazeera found it challenging to stick to a stable job due to the visa she lacked. Thus, she worked as a part-time housemaid in different houses. She stated that:

I cannot freely move and find jobs here. I work in some houses on a daily basis. No one wants to keep me as a permanent housemaid because they fear the legal issues they want to face.

The present study discovered that the migrants in various categories emphasised the difficulties of covering family expenses due to the work dilemma, which resulted in the loss of regular income, which was essential for their family life in the host country. The current study argued that termination from work is a challenge that hinders migrants from staying with family at the work destination. Migrants experienced work terminations for various reasons that caused them to lose work permits and, subsequently, family visas, which caused them to send their families back or leave with them. Finally, according to the findings above, the migrants without proper documentation were afraid of the documents they lacked and stated that as life continued without documents, even employers were reluctant to offer any work to them or terminate them.

4.3.2.3 Exploitative Working Environment

Middle Eastern workplace for migrants is not comfortable enough, where the opportunities for skilled migrants are limited, which are also competitive among migrant workers, while the educated Arabs in the Middle East are penetrating in some professions. Under these circumstances, the relationship between employers and employees and the managers, who are employees from other nationalities, has worsened and become exploitative. Notably, skilled and middle-skilled Sri Lankan workers were educated cohorts recruited by foreign managers but rarely employed by Bahrainis. These foreign managers worked in Bahraini companies and were loyal to Bahrainis working as their strategic allies. Similarly, low-skilled workers and housemaids were prone to exploitation either by foreign nationalities or Bahrainis. Low-skilled interviewees were domestic workers, helpers, security guards, and taxi drivers. The major cause behind this exploitation was the power relationship. Thus, the first theme discusses exploitation based on the relationship that skilled, middle-skilled, and low-skilled migrants desperately bear in the migrated destination. The second sub-theme further presents the exploitation of wages as a major consequence of these power relationships, resulting in adverse economic and living conditions for migrant families.

4.3.2.3.1 Exploitation Based on Relationships

Skilled and middle-skilled migrants worked for managers from other nationalities hired by. In a competitive job environment, sometimes, these managers prioritise their countrymates, maintain distant relationships with employees other than their own, and try to oppress them in work distribution. Under such circumstances, Sri Lankan migrants who worked under Pakistani and Indian managers experienced exploitative relationships with these managers. For example, Raheem elaborated on such experiences in his company as follows:

In the workplace, I had much pressure from seniors from India. Indians had penetrated significant positions in my company. Sometimes, they give preference to their own country. They do not distribute the work among the employees according to our skills. They do not allow me to talk to the Bahraini boss.

In another case, Ihsan explained that the Pakistani manager's scolding and negligence in public caused him to be uncomfortable. He stated that:

I am disappointed and frustrated by the manager from Pakistan, who is one of the employees but is senior to the company. Sometimes, my manager publicly scolds me. I do not know how he represents me because I do not have the opportunity to interact with Bahraini directors at a table to show my performance.

According to the above explanations, such malpractices were committed by personnel from Asian countries such as Pakistan and India, on which the Middle East relied heavily. The primary reason for such exploitation was employees' greed. However, skilled and middle-skilled workers felt at ease when they worked with Bahraini managers. Thus, Sri Lankan migrants compared their experiences in maintaining relationships with Bahraini managers and Pakistani and Indian managers. For example, Nismy mentioned his experience with Bahrainis in his work environment:

They [Bahrainis] do not show their greed and jealousy of what we are earning and bring their money to our country. For more than 25 years, I have been working here without interruption by Bahrainis.

Harees also justified his view pertaining to the relationship with Bahrainis by explaining a distinctive exploitative structure in the companies, that is, the interference of the Pakistani and Indian managers in settling company disputes with the directors. He referred to this as a "behind the scenes" relationship between directors (Bahrainis) and employees (migrants). However, it is not easy to assume that this is a natural setup in Middle Eastern companies. He stated:

Directors (Bahrainis) are sincere and good people. My Pakistani manager mediates all the company matters with the Directors. He doesn't allow me to meet them regarding any matters.

Similarly, the exploitation of employers was reported by low-skilled workers, particularly in the present study among domestic workers, thus causing them to leave their homes, sometimes without passports. For example, Nisa, a mother who worked under a Bahraini owner in the domestic sphere, explained the inhuman treatment while she was a domestic worker. She recounted:

Taking care of my sponsor's stubborn children with all the other house chores in that home was annoying and challenging. My boss did not recruit another worker to reduce my work. Instead of that, he compelled me to do everything.

According to Mary, she suffered from similar forms of exploitation, such as a lack of food and excessive work. Due to these inhuman treatments, she left that home without her travel document, and eventually, she worked under an Indian as a helper in a shop.

The place recruiters assigned me was challenging. I had to do more than 10 hours of work. Sometimes, I started my work without breakfast. Finally, I left that home without my passport. Now I am working in an Indian shop temporarily.

The recognition and trustworthiness that employers had shown towards employees were marginal, which caused psychological distress among the employees. In an interview with Raslan, whose wife also worked as a housemaid in Bahrain, he said that when he worked as a helper in a shop, the Indian shop manager always showed a lack of trust in him and constantly scolded him.

In the shop where I work, an Indian guy who is the manager suspected me that I stole their property. Due to this, he scolds me every time until I cry.

Sri Lankan migrant workers interact with people of various nationalities in the host countries. When these migrants work under other nationalities, they experience exploitative relationships because of the competitive working environment. According to the informants, they revealed that power relationships between the employer and employee or among co-workers turned into exploitation in the workplace. Although the exploitation by Bahrainis or native people was non-existent in the large-scale companies, in the domestic sphere, interference of native people was pathetic. As a result of the power behind this exploitation, migrants had no power to negotiate with the employer or bring that issue to someone. These regular disturbances in the workplace make them uncomfortable and unpleasant in their career, which causes them to lose their jobs and regular earnings.

4.3.2.3.2 Exploitation Based on Wages

Wage exploitation was by far a reported problem by migrant workers, which employers cruelly practised. Some companies were not generous enough to provide the agreed salaries upon recruitment, causing the migrant workers to suffer from getting their salaries on a regular basis. For example, when Reeza shifted his position to another company, expecting a salary better than before, he received less than the agreed amount, which also caused him to lose his job. Then, he found a job below his capacity and at a low salary to secure the family visa. He elaborated:

I changed my position to another company as I got a better job than the previous one. However, the company did not give me the salary that was agreed upon in the offer letter. When I brought this issue to my Bahraini boss, he was not interested in solving this problem and held my salary for a few months with him. Then, I was terminated from the job by the company. Eventually, I worked as an advertising collector to secure my family visa.

In other instances, some migrants who worked in low-level positions in Arab families faced a similar problem with salary retention. Piyasiri, among the interviewees, a watchman throughout his life, attributed his challenges in receiving wages on time and claimed that his work is generally miserable most of the time. He described his experiences as below:

When I make any small mistakes, the Bahraini employer and his family members scold me badly, and they do not provide a salary once the month ends.

Apart from Bahrainis, some migrants encountered wage issues from other nationalities, such as Pakistanis and Indians, who were in managerial positions in the company or shops. Rubini, one of the participants, revealed how difficult it was for her to demand and get a salary for her job. The following excerpt explains her experience with an Indian shop owner who took advantage of her by holding her salary.

I worked for Indian Shops. Sometimes, they hold three- or four-months' salary because they know I cannot act against them or go to the police as I don't have a proper visa to show.

Migrant workers experienced oppressive work relationships and wage issues in the companies run by Pakistanis and Indians hired by Bahraini owners. According to the exploitative relationships in the workplace, Pakistani and Indian managers prioritize employment for their countrymates, thus undermining Sri Lankan migrants' skills and experiences in the company. Those employers had taken advantage of such migrants by mistreating them and holding their salaries. The living conditions of migrant workers in a foreign country showed that, in addition to wage disparities, the working environment was not peaceful, causing psychological distress to them.

The themes covered so far revealed that migrants earn money by overcoming many challenges, such as difficulties in finding jobs, unstable jobs, work terminations, and exploitation, all of which lower their wages and satisfaction in the workplace. Similarly, after the arrival of families, they are expected to face further financial hardships due to the expenses ahead of them. The following section further explains these economic challenges as a result of work challenges relating to the arrival of families.

4.3.2.4 Expenses After the Arrival of the Families

In terms of costs, a family living in a foreign nation is not comparable to life in their own country. While migrant workers live alone in these destinations, the expenses are manageable. However, after the arrival of families, these migrants must cover the expenditures for their families who are with them and the family members left behind in their country of origin. Sri Lankan families migrate to the Middle East, where medical, education, house rent, and utility costs are high. During their transition, the informants from various income levels pointed out the high family living costs, including housing, utilities, food, education, and medical care. They repeatedly said that their income was insufficient to cover all their costs. The section describes the migrants' economic struggle in their day-to-day lives. The following section is broadly organized based on two sub-themes: "family daily expenses" and "housing, medical, and educational expenses."

4.3.2.4.1 Family Daily Expenses

Employees with humble salaries struggled to pay for their food, house rentals, and utilities. They were compelled to manage their family expenses with a limited budget and few resources. For example, Sama described her daily family expenses. However, she was shy about how her family suffered from economic tragedies.

I had [...] only coffee for my breakfast today. Only rice is available to cook for lunch. Typically, we don't cook every day as it is expensive.

Most days, lower-income families face the same dilemma. Food cost was the primary expenditure in their daily lives. Low-income families, in particular, struggled for their daily sustenance amid economic stress, as seen in the case of Sama. According to the migrants' comments, their daily lives were simple and inexpensive. For example, Simaya described how she covered the families' daily expenses while struggling to make ends meet.

When we get the money, we buy groceries only once, which must be used for the whole month. Sometimes, we also work in the fish market during tough times; we wash the fish behind the shop. I remember a day we bought rice only to make porridge for lunch.

Even migrants with better salaries at about \$300 were compelled to manage their limited budget in Bahrain as they depended on their monthly salary for the following month's expenses. Therefore, salary bottlenecks burdened their daily expenses, as happened to these migrants during COVID-19. For example, Shihan described how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted his salary and how he struggled to manage the expenses in his temporal life.

Our expenses must be limited to our salary. We had difficulties during these coronavirus periods because we did not receive our salary regularly. It is a lesson for us since we do not have enough savings to manage this pandemic.

Migrants worked to support their families in Sri Lanka, too. When they received a monthly salary, they had to allocate the money to their immediate family, who was with them and their parents in Sri Lanka. When their expenditures at the destination

rose, they struggled to match the family expectations with the money sent, causing them to borrow loans from other migrant workers. In the following conversation, Raheem explained how he had to borrow money when encountering expenditure pressure, as given in the excerpt below:

I must send money home and handle the expenses here. Occasionally, I spend for weddings, festivals, and funerals in my family in Sri Lanka. Sometimes, the salary is not enough to settle all these things. Therefore, I have borrowed money many times from others.

Since the family faced severe financial struggles when they lived with their family, they were asked what motivated them to be with their family in their destination country. They often remarked that being with their family was their sole source of happiness. As Naeem stated,

Day-to-day life with family is a struggle. But our only intention is to live together.

Families staying with minimum wages while having a family visa were battling to maintain their family life in the destination. They took this risk of bringing in their family members because of their long separation from the family and the bond they had among the family members. For instance, Salam said:

I could not separate the family for a long time. Being with family here was the only option I had.

However, regular interruptions in their financial capability forced them apart. When the migrants' family economy was affected, as found in the case of Azam, who struggled to manage family expenses, they decided to send his family back to Sri Lanka. He stated that.

My salary was insufficient to run a family, but I got a family visa and brought them. But my decision was too early because I struggled to manage expenses for my family. Therefore, my family returned to Sri Lanka until my salary increased.

Expenses at the destination had changed after arriving with the family. With lower economic prospects, families were struggling for basic survival. Furthermore,

their costs were occasionally increased in excess of their incomes. Even migrants with higher salaries struggled during COVID-19 because obtaining regular pay was complex. Apart from basic survival, workers felt pressure to send money and manage additional expenses for their families in Bahrain. Sometimes, these pressures led them to borrow money from others. Even though they were struggling for survival in a foreign country, these migrants were primarily content with life with their families.

4.3.2.4.2 Housing, Educational, and Medical

Migrants stayed with their families in these foreign destinations where housing, utilities, medical, and education costs were greater than in Sri Lanka. According to the interviewees' responses, when migrants' low income was challenged due to work terminations, job instability, and COVID-19, they could not cover those expenses since their income was insufficient to make it possible. Thus, the following section explores their financial difficulties based on the following three themes: housing, education, and medical expenses.

4.3.2.4.2.1 Housing

Housing, electricity, and water facilities are vital, and houses should be rented. Furthermore, high electricity bills can be expected during summer. Therefore, the migrant families were concerned about their house rent and utility expenses in the Middle East destinations. Migrants who received low salaries spent half or two-thirds of their earnings on housing and utilities. In a conversation, Naja and Salam, husband and wife, stated that:

I think two-thirds of our earnings or more go to the house rent and utilities.

Furthermore, families with low economic prospects struggled to pay for electricity and water, especially during the summer, as the cost exceeded that of the

winter. When families failed to pay electricity and water bills within the grace period, the connection was disconnected without any compromise, as explained by Nisa:

When our economic pressure was very severe, we could not pay the electricity and water bills on time. Suddenly, we lost the connection and had to regain the electricity by paying the over dues.

Some low-income families found it challenging to cover house rentals with their income. Thus, these families lived in houses shared by more than one family, which was a distinct culture among migrant families to cover house rent. These families shared the kitchen and the living room, and rental and utility were equally divided. In the following conversation, Sara described how she got back her house rent by accommodating another family in her house. Sara stated that:

I have rented one room for a couple. They use the lobby and kitchen. This is the last option we have to cover our rent. From the rental that I received from this couple, I covered half of my house rental.

Migrant families with inadequate salaries encountered problems in paying their rent and utilities. Furthermore, excessive expenses for house rentals and utilities reduced the possibility of saving for their future, forced them to live in inappropriate housing for families, and caused them to experience service disruption due to their inability to pay the bills on time. When migrants faced such primary problems and pressures during their lives in a foreign country, they were affected psychologically. In some cases, the expenses were difficult to handle in comparison to their salary after their arrival, as migrant families battled to manage the family expenses that caused them to be separated from their families.

4.3.2.4.2.2 Education

Similarly, education was unaffordable for migrants with low salaries and migrants whose salaries did not include these family facilities. Families migrated to Bahrain, where they enrolled their children in British schools and schools run by Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi communities. Those migrants' children went to school for free in Sri Lanka. As a result, abrupt shifts in paid schooling produced some economic

issues for families. For example, Ihsan said that paid education in Bahrain was problematic and beyond their economic capacity.

We received all the education in Sri Lanka free of charge. Suddenly, this situation changed to the paid mode. My father had to spend a large amount of money, which was higher than his earnings, to get admission for the three of us. We studied in ‘A Pakistan school’, which was cheap compared to other international schools.

Typically, Sri Lankans preferred schools that provided education in the Cambridge curriculum at an affordable price so that their children could continue their education in Sri Lanka. Still, families could not spend enough money on education to educate their children. Naseer stated that:

My two children study in a school with a Cambridge syllabus, which may help our children continue their education in Sri Lanka. However, I need to pay a considerable amount for monthly fees and transportation, which is costly compared to my salary.

Due to the influx of migrant families in Bahrain and the high demand for schools, some families had difficulty admitting their children on time. Therefore, they selected the least expensive alternative for their children’s education, such as schools that were run by Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, which offered their respective countries’ national curriculum. Those schools were affordable and simple to get into. Although some migrants selected those cheap schools for easy admission, they still faced difficulties admitting their children on time due to high admission fees, resulting in non-schooling children at home. Ibrahim described the challenges faced in admitting children to school as follows:

I have four children. Two of them are school age, the elder in 8th grade and the younger in seventh grade. However, our children have spent almost one year without schooling. I decided to send them to the Pakistani school, but they demanded to pay a six-month payment at once. Paying such a large amount is impossible, which nearly cost my two-month salary.

The present study found that some undocumented low-income families missed providing education to their children. In these families, adult children aged 13-20 had never been to school before. The first reason for such non-schooling children was the

documents they lacked; the second was expenses, which were unaffordable for them. For instance, Jazeera and Nisa had three children and Rubini had one child who had never been to school. To admit the children, they required multiple documents to prove their citizenship, birthday, legal stay, and parents' details, which these migrants did not have. Some parents satisfy their responsibility towards their children by buying some books for them to read. However, these parents regretted about their children's future since they did not get a formal education. They fear when they think about their children's future. According to these children, education was what they learnt in the home environment and observed in their surroundings only, but formal education was a nightmare for them.

Sri Lankan families who migrated with children into the new community encountered some immediate problems, such as the high demand for schools and an inability to continue education in preferred modules because of the high school fees. Similarly, continuously sending the children to school was challenging for undocumented low-income families since they required documents to admit their children and a stable income to pay the school fees.

4.3.2.4.2.3 Medical

Similarly, Sri Lankan families enjoyed free medical facilities in Sri Lanka provided by the government, and even private medical facilities were cheaper than in Middle East countries. Therefore, medical care was another difficulty for families with lower economic prospects and families who did not have access to company-provided medical facilities. For instance, hospitals charged patients separately for consultation and medicine, which was costly. Azam said:

If we don't have health insurance, we should be ready to pay for consultation and medicine.

Therefore, migrants continuously saved for medical expenses, particularly for the children who become ill easily during the winter, causing frequent hospital visits, as Raheem described.

We save money for frequent hospital visits, especially during winter. During the winter, our children quickly get sick.

When the medical expenses were not covered for migrants' dependent family members, they struggled with frequent hospital visits and the purchase of required drugs. For example, Sara's father was on medication, and she spent more than what she earned on her father, forcing her to mortgage her jewellery. She stated that:

My father needs continuous medical treatment. When I encountered buying medicine for my father, I mortgaged my jewellery and got money.

Medical care was not free in Bahrain except for migrants under the company's medical insurance. Most of the dependent members did not have medical insurance supplied by the sponsors. Therefore, families with an average salary struggled to acquire medical care since it was expensive, causing them to lose their savings and the jewellery they bought.

So far, the present section has discussed the various economic challenges that families encounter in their transition life, such as food expenses, house rent and utilities, education, and medical expenses. When migrants spent the total money earned, it was a major stress for them while staying with their families. The expenses ahead of them in the host country affected their spending on medicine and receiving formal education. Furthermore, these expenses reduced the possibility of saving and sending money to their families in Sri Lanka. The subsequent section discusses their challenges in saving money and sending remittances to their country of origin.

4.3.2.5 Remittances and Savings After the Families' Arrival

Regular income for migrant workers is vital to save money and remit to their country of origin. Migrants' remittances considerably contributed to the GDP of the country in the past history. However, the work turbulence and the hostile work environment that migrants experienced profoundly impacted their finances. Apart from these work tragedies, family arrival considerably affected the family's savings and remittances, contrasting with what they migrated. According to the findings, most migrants were

paid less than the minimum wage, which was insufficient to survive with family. For example, Nisa fell into this category of receiving a low salary, which was not enough to cover all her expenses, and she described that saving money was impossible as she was required to reserve some amount for her visa:

My saving for my family is zero. I spent a huge amount of my earnings on my visa.

Migrants' savings were reduced when their families arrived as the expenses for a family in the host country were high compared to their country of origin. Raheem compared his bachelor life and present family life as follows:

I could buy a house and save a little money before marriage. I worked hard to save money. However, we can't imagine such investments because family expenses are very high compared to early life.

In some circumstances, migrants created simple financial plans when they wished to spend their money on other necessities as their salaries were insufficient for savings. For example, Ihsan described his financial plan for purchasing a mobile phone as follows:

Our earnings are not enough to save a large amount of money. Therefore, we don't have any big plans for the future. Usually, we plan anything four to five months before. For instance, the last time I bought a mobile. For that, I planned my savings four months earlier. After accumulating the money, I could buy a phone.

After the arrival of families, the remittances they sent to their country of origin reduced considerably. For example, Shihaan stated that the expenses he faced in Bahrain reduced his savings in the local bank in Sri Lanka, and he only transferred money to his parents for their expenses on daily necessities:

I can't save money in Sri Lanka as my earnings are drained here (Bahrain). I sent a few amounts to my parents for food and other daily expenses.

The COVID crisis proved difficult for migrant workers. Remarkably, savings and remittances were reduced when the migrants faced work problems during the

COVID-19 crisis. Some migrants who lost their jobs and encountered pay cuts during the crisis shared their thoughts on this matter. For instance, Naeem said:

I could not save or send money to my family as I did during the normal period. I had to stay at home with half payment during the COVID.

The primary goal of migrants is to obtain a productive job that helps them save money and remit to their country of origin. However, the findings showed that the family's arrival reduced the savings in the destination and the country of origin and substantially reduced the remittances sent. Primarily, migrants reported that these changes occurred after the arrival of their families.

The economic challenges that migrants went through were discussed under the five themes: being unemployed, sudden terminations, exploitative working environment, expenses after the arrival of families, and remittances and savings after the arrival of families. The above discussions found that the primary goal of migrants was to earn money and have a happy life by working in a comfortable job in a foreign country. However, the economic challenges in the subsequent period of their life in the host country caused them to lose their earnings and life happiness. First, the work in the host country where they expected a stable job was unstable, affecting professionals and skilled migrants. Unemployment and difficulties in finding a new job disrupted their ability to get regular salaries and affected their family life in Bahrain. Undocumented migrant workers were affected by unemployment and difficulties in finding a job, which caused them to resort to alternatives in front of them, such as begging for food or money to feed their families.

COVID-19, a recent tragedy, caused domestic and minor workers to lose their jobs because of the possibility of spreading the disease when physically coming into contact. The present study showed that participants commented on work termination, probably sudden terminations in which employers showed their power over employees who were bound to the contract. Besides the difficulties in maintaining their jobs, the working environment was also unpleasant because of the exploitative relationship between workers and managers, hindering them from receiving their wages on time and getting proper recognition from the company.

The current study found that apart from being exploited and bound to endure work challenges, the expenses, especially for education, medical, house rent and utilities, made life challenging in the newly arrived work destination. This study indicated that high school payments, high hospital charging rates for consultation and medicine, expensive house rent, and utility were existing challenges that hampered migrants' lives at the destination. Low-income families struggled with their daily sustenance as their income was meagre and challenging. The participants revealed that as a result of these difficulties faced by the migrant workers, the arrival of their families added to the burden of their expenses and even reduced the savings and remittances that they sent to their country of origin.

4.3.3 Social Challenges Faced by Migrant Families

Family and marriage in Sri Lanka have endured far-reaching changes in recent decades. Starting migration from Sri Lanka is one of the contributing factors to such family changes. Given that Sri Lankans have been giving greater importance to family and marriage, the present section investigates changes due to migration, such as families and marriages, gender roles, loss of social capital and transnational bonds, childrearing, and establishing a new migration network.

4.3.3.1 Families and Marriages

A change in marriage preferences, wedding customs, and their ensuing consequences, as recounted within the migrant community, aligns with the evidence gathered from Sri Lankan marriage migrants. Accordingly, the following section presents the findings based on three subthemes: the marriage choice, which explains the shift from arranged to love marriages; marriages from different nationalities, which narrates binational marriage in which migrants are involved and its consequences; marriage formalities, which to explain the legal impediments that migrants faced.

4.3.3.1.1 Marriage Choices

In this theme, marriage choice among the Sri Lankans was illustrated within the migration framework, thus explaining how migrants narrated their life stories when selecting future life partners as part of their transitional life. Through the migration, they gained what they had lost in their native country in terms of economy, freedom, and exposure to modernity. Thus, many decisions were made by migrants since they were far from the social support they had before their migration, such as parental involvement in family matters, thus causing them to go ahead with bringing the self as a principal navigator in their marriage choice. Although ‘whether’ to marry was decided by migrants, ‘to whom they to marry’ was still influenced by their parents in an arranged marriage. For example, Raheem migrated to Bahrain after completing his Advanced Level (A/L) examination with the goal of earning money in a productive working environment. He shared that after four years of work, he achieved his financial objectives and built his own house. Following this accomplishment, he began consulting with his parents about marriage. According to his narration, his parents suggested a cross-cousin to marry, and eventually, he did so. He said:

When I built my own house, I showed my intention of marriage to my parents. They didn’t refuse it but said to marry one of my cousins-mother’s brother’s daughter-. I accepted.

Interviewees’ responses revealed that migrants were anxious when they decided to marry as they wanted to satisfy their parents and relatives regarding their choice and to fulfil the responsibility ahead of them. According to Ihsan’s story, father and son worked together in Bahrain, and both of their earnings were shared in family expenses. Then, cutting off one’s earnings in the family would cause an expenditure burden. Such families had lengthy negotiations on marriage decisions. Ihsan was only 24 years old, worked as an accountant, and married a Sri Lankan bride with his family’s support. This discussion and family support were possible since he had developed a prolonged relationship with his family. He said:

Partially, I was spending on my family, such as paying utility bills and food expenses. When I decided to marry since I had a job with satisfactory earnings, I was afraid about how I could contribute to my parents. After the discussion with my parents, my father said to stay with them since my sister had yet to marry.

In an arranged marriage, family involvement was inevitable, and parents were more concerned about following traditional marriage practices, such as representation in the marriage decision by giving more suggestions. Thus, migrants made their decisions carefully without disturbing their relationships with their family and kin. In some families, though these women had their own expectations, they accepted their parents' suggestions instead of contrasting with them out of respect for their parents. In Sarah's case, it was evident that her cross-cousin and his family were chasing her. According to her narration, her father was anxious that he would not be able to give her marriage since she was working abroad. She said:

My father is important to me. He did everything for me and my sisters after his divorce. Then I let to decide my father. Since my husband was his sister's son, he accepted him. I knew he was under pressure since my age passed, and he feared that no one would marry a girl who worked abroad.

It was evident that female migrants had less power to reveal their marriage decisions to their parents, although they had economic power. One apparent reason they stepped back was that the family depended on their earnings. These females acted as primary breadwinners to their families, but their parents were still the decision-makers, which affected otherwise. In some cases, parents were reluctant to leave their daughters to act according to their desires. Sheema, a housemaid, said:

When I told my parents I wanted to marry, they did not happily accept it. Instead, they said to wait another two years.

Some women were not concerned about the consequences of their marriage choice on family respect and cohesion. Discarding parents' decisions happened most probably in love marriages, which have been increasing among migrants. According to case history, Rubini married a Sri Lankan because of love, thus causing her family to act totally against her marriage. Notable, when she migrated to Bahrain, she was not romantically connected to anyone. The love story began once she had economic power, which her village friend witnessed. She had this to say:

I had enough money in my hand. I said to my mom about my boyfriend, who knows me well. She refused to marry without knowing any of his background. But I married him.

Even though marriage choices among the male and female workers had some freedom because of their economic power, the way they negotiated their decisions with family differed. This first cohort most probably preferred marriages in their native country. Thus, negotiating their decision with their parents was inevitable. Those who preferred arranged marriage had to accept their parents' suggestions, who sometimes allowed only cross-cousin marriage and insisted on practising an extended family setup. Females participating in this study revealed that their say in marriage choice was less, thus causing them to rely on their parents' decisions. Giving female children marriages when they reach marriageable age is a common tradition in Sri Lankan culture. However, according to the informants, some parents delayed their daughters' marriages to sustain the economic benefit that they received from them. Female migrants who wanted to break this barrier contracted love marriages, discarding their parents' decision, as found in Rubini's case. Apart from that, migrants had the choice to marry migrant workers from different nationalities or native sponsors, which was discussed in the following theme.

4.3.3.1.2 *Marriages from Different Nationalities*

A minority of migrants accepted marriages with other nationalities. The marriages between Sri Lankan migrant workers and individuals from different nationalities across various countries illustrate the evolution of marital dynamics over time. These unions primarily occur as a result of personal choices rooted in the initiation of romantic relationships. Notably, these marriages lack alternative foundations such as educational or economic considerations; rather, they are founded solely on love and affection. Those migrants formed families with Pakistani and Indian migrant workers. Their families and sponsors never knew the relationship they forged in the destination country. Such marriage relationships occurred in various circumstances. According to Sama, she was a housemaid, and her marriage happened due to her affection for an Indian. Her relationship with the Indian migrant worker secretly continued for a certain period via phone calls. She said:

One day, I received a call from a number. He was an Indian worker. Our conversation continued for a certain period, and we started to love each

other. No one knows about our marriage that happened here [Bahrain]. After a period, I brought him to Sri Lanka and took a wedding party. Zameela, she was a housemaid, said:

I married an Indian vegetable seller in the Manama market due to our long relationship.

In another case, Nisa forged a relationship with an Indian worker who was a driver in the same house. Eventually, she eloped with him to stay outside the sponsor's home just one year after her arrival.

One year, I worked in my first home. Then, I eloped with the person who worked at the same house as a house driver (Indian).

Migrants' secret bond lasted a certain period, probably less than one year, over the telephone, which was unknown or was not informed to their parents. Migrants knew the consequences would occur as a result of their rash decisions, thus deteriorating their family honour and cohesion. When they talked about their decision to marry, some wept and said that their moms were unhappy. Therefore, migrants attempted to keep their marriage forever secret without expecting any support from their parents. However, the regular connection with their parents did not allow them to deceive their parents. Few of them tried to console their parents regarding their choice, which ended unsuccessfully, which worsened their relationship with their parents. Emphatically, they said how they missed their parents' blessing. Particularly for Muslim Migrants, their parents' Du'aa (prayer), which they did not receive during their marriage, was forever missing.

During this shift from arranged to love marriages, some migrants compromised cross-religious marriages. For instance, Sheema, a Buddhist girl, married a Hindu migrant worker. However, her parents did not formally approve her to continue her marital life. She expressed:

Only a few months later, my parents knew about my marriage here. They refused to accept me and my alliance with a Hindu groom.

Similarly, Nisa chose a Hindu groom while she practised Islam. Her only intention was to scrutinize what she desired in her marriage choice. According to her

narration, her husband later converted to Islam, which she followed. According to Muslim marriage practices, religious endogamy was vital, which the religion insists on following, while non-Muslim migrants' choices of religious exogamy were incompatible with their parent's expectations and the culture they followed. For this reason, Sheema's family rejected her marriage.

4.3.3.1.2.1 Divorce: A Challenge Faced by Migrant Women Who Marry Foreigners

Migrant women who married in the host country were not able to live a harmonious and successful family life. Migrant women lived alone with their children due to the separation from their married partners for various reasons. Either the partner's illegitimate stay, deceiving husband, or the couple's lack of cohesive relationship were some of the dominating reasons for divorce or separation among the couples. Such post-marriage breakdowns were distressing for migrant women in the host country. For example, Jazeera's husband was sent to India by Kafeel without renewing his visa, which caused him to leave his wife and three children alone in Bahrain. After he returned to India, he disconnected his relationship with his family, thus causing Jazeera to live as a single mother in the host country. She stated that:

My husband's Kafeel stopped him from work and asked him to return to India. My husband did not come to Bahrain again after returning to India. From that day onwards stopped talking to me and left me alone.

The illegal relationship that male partners had with another female partner in the host country caused many disputes and misunderstandings among the couple, thus ending their marriages in divorce. Eventually, migrant women were abandoned by their husbands. For example, in the case of Simaya's case, her Pakistani husband had little care for his family after having a relationship with another girl in the host country, which later led to divorce. She stated that:

I got married to my Pakistani friend. But he divorced me when he had a connection with another girl. I need someone's support to take care of my autistic child in this country.

Some women were without valid marriage certificates, which allowed their male partners to easily deceive and divorce them in order to marry someone else, either in their host country or their place of origin. Thus, these women and their children were isolated in a foreign country. For example, Sheema's husband did not return home from vacation as he married another woman in India. Thus, she remained with her child in Bahrain without taking any legal action against him as she was without a marriage certificate. She stated that:

My husband did not return to Bahrain after he visited India. He started a new life there with another one, leaving my son and me here. I could not take any action against him during our divorce because I didn't have any proof of our marriage.

These divorces or separations, which occurred mainly due to the lack of options they had to check their marital partner or wrong choices, were not an exception among the migrant women who married other nationalities. According to Nisa's case, her first husband was an alcoholic and left her when she was expecting her second baby. She narrated her story as follows:

Every day, he fought with me. He came to the home with an empty pocket but full of a drinking smell. I did not know much about him. When I was pregnant, he left me alone and went to India.

During formal marriages in Sri Lanka, checking the partner's background would occur, in which families formally visit the groom's and bride's families or gather information from the village mates (Abeyasekera, 2016; Yalman, 1967). Nevertheless, housemaids were restricted from outside their sponsors' homes, making it difficult to meet their romantic partners in person multiple times. This limitation hindered the opportunity to gather detailed background information, a practice commonly undertaken by parents in arranged marriages, and is evident in the narratives of these individuals. In Simaya's case, she knew her Pakistani friend by his voice. Similarly, Jazeera knew her husband's status in a later period, which was that he had already married in India. Both Simaya and Jazeera said their husbands deceived and divorced them.

Marriage is depicted as a means of establishing a key social institution in which children grow up and marital partners exchange love and compassion. The current study identified that migrant workers who married other nationalities failed to establish a fruitful family that supported their children and brought happiness to their family lives as their lives ended in divorce due to the lack of cohesive relationships with their married spouses. Likewise, marriages without proper documents had proved to be problematic in which the females implied that their wedded spouses had tricked them. Women who married males of different nationalities took on the role of mother, wife, and breadwinner. Besides, the marriage of these migrants did not alleviate their financial problems since these women who migrated as housemaids remained in similar precarious jobs and economic status. During the interview, the cross-questions about the marriage formalities they followed, such as marriage ceremonies, marriage registration, and family and kin presence, were asked of all the married migrants who married during the migration, presented in the following section.

4.3.3.1.3 Marriage Formalities

The above themes so far outlined all kinds of heterosexual alliances as marriage without explaining the validity of their marriages. In the present theme, marriages were identified as not following the basic formalities, which eventually brought various consequences to the family. Marriages in the country of origin in the presence of parents followed the marriage formalities according to their culture. For instance, Nazim's marriage was arranged by his parents when he was in Bahrain. Thus, his marriage ceremony was held in the presence of family, relatives, and friends, complying with Islamic marriage law. According to his narration, three ceremonies took place: one was *Nikah*, where the bride did not participate, in which he expressed his approval for the marriage to her father, offered dower money (*mahar*) and signed in the marriage registration. Second, he attended the marriage feast given by Brid's family, and then finally, he offered *Waleema*, which is the feast given by the groom. He uttered:

I was busy with three ceremonies during my marriage: Nikah, wedding, and Waleema. Once I approved the marriage, I gave Mahar money and jewellery and then signed the registration.

However, the marriages that happened in the host country followed only some of the formalities. Since some migrants were abroad for a long time, they thought rejuvenating the Sri Lankan culture in their marriage ceremonies was unnecessary. According to them, marriage was an ordinary life event. For instance, Sama brought her husband to Sri Lanka for a ceremonial marriage because of family pressure. Before that, her marriage occurred in Bahrain with only the marriage registration. She said:

Why do I need to spend a lot of money on marriage? Simply, we did that. For us, a marriage certificate was important. We had a wedding party in Sri Lanka because my family insisted on doing that.

Some migrant women contracted marriages with other nationalities without the approval of their parents and did not hold a ceremonial marriage, such as *Nikah*, which is to prove their marriage evidence with the assistance of a marriage certificate. Most of their marriages happened in agreeing with one another. For instance, Jazeera agreed to marry her romantic partner when he asked her. Registering the marriages and obtaining the marriage certificate were vital in abroad marriages since it is required to prepare the other documents, such as birth certificates for their children and passports. In-depth interviews showed why some omitted to register their marriages was their illegal stay. Marriages without a valid visa were challenging to register with a legitimate marriage certificate. Therefore, these couples remained silent without preparing it because of legal fear of an illegal stay. For example, Mary stated:

We still need to register our marriage and get the marriage certificate from the Sri Lankan embassy. We were scared to go there without a valid visa as they would report us to the police.

The issue of documents appeared in a chain, one after another, which caused multiple problems in the hosted country. First, some women who became pregnant while they did not have a visa and marriage certificate avoided hospitalization, forcing them to give birth at home or were hospitalised under fabricated identity cards. As a result, the children born at home or under fabricated documents lost their birth certificates, which made it challenging to prepare travel documents. For example, Jazeera had three children, and two out of three were born at home because of legal fear. She said:

None of the three kids have passports or even proper birth certificates. No one knows about their birth at home. I was scared to go to the hospital because of the visa.

In Nisa's case, she was hospitalised to give birth but under a fabricated identity card because she did not have a marriage certificate and visa, which caused her to be in police custody. She said:

It was a critical time. I was suffering to give birth. Then, a family hospitalized me under another lady's document. Then the police caught me. I was there for 45 days.

The children who were born to undocumented couples lost their birth certificates and passports, which were discussed under the theme of legal challenges. The marriage formalities migrants were supposed to follow in the migrated destination were rational and were not considered serious matters by the migrants in the present findings. Particularly, marriage registration that some migrants ignored resulted in identifying them as married couples and legitimating their children.

Family is a primary social institution of every society, which ensures the stability of the society, where the members of this institution partake in financial responsibilities, consumption, and socialization. However, marriage contracts and couple matching among migrant workers revealed that their ancient traditions had not been spelt out, which leaned more toward love matches apart from the traditional ethnic and cast-based matches and continued without legal marriage agreements. The present study found that the structure of building marriages between Sri Lankan female migrant workers and other nationalities, which did not follow the traditional Sri Lankan marriage culture, was confronted with a lack of cohesive relationships among the couples, leading to family breakups, as shown at the beginning. Evidence collected from migrant workers portrayed those women who migrated as housemaids and had formed families with other nationalities after arriving in Bahrain. None of them migrated from Sri Lanka, intending to marry another migrant worker in Bahrain or a native Bahraini. Moreover, evidence showed that the traditional Sri Lankan marriage culture and the couple matching did not exist in these marriages.

Furthermore, following the migration, families underwent far-reaching changes, such as migrant families transformed from extended family setups to nuclear families where they had lost their extended family members' support in family matters, thus causing the couples to manage their family matters by exchanging the family role among them, including childrearing and house chores. Their external family bond reflected transitional characteristics where they established a new family network with new migrant families. Evidence collected from migrant families indicates that the family lives of these couples were marked by both positive and negative consequences. Weaker ties were observed between parents and children, and challenges arose in the realm of childrearing. The following section delves into themes that highlight social grievances related to their family life during the transition journey, including the loss of social support, shifts in family gender roles, childrearing challenges, the establishment of a migration network, and the dynamics of transnational family bonding.

4.3.3.2 Losing Social Support

While migrant families were staying in Sri Lanka, the social support they received from their extended family members and friends significantly impacted their pleasant family life. However, the social support in family matters was lost in their families as the migrant families moved away, leaving their extended family members and relatives behind. On various occasions, informants revealed they lacked parental and kin support in their migrated lives. Since the migrants migrated as a family, probably husband, wife, and dependent children, someone's support in their family matters was inevitable. For example, Ibrahim said he cared for his wife when she was pregnant, as their parents were in Sri Lanka. He said:

Losing our parents' support was challenging during my wife's pregnancy. I did all household matters during that time. I was the only one taking care of her.

During women's pregnancy, in the traditional culture, the husband's and wife's families cook delicious food for pregnant mothers, which was missed by the migrant community. Ibraheem sadly said,

No one was here with us to celebrate her pregnancy with nice food.

Some parents in the migrated families regretted that their children did not have their grandparents' care, who nurture the children with traditional culture showing much love. Even the educated migrants brought this concern since they were busy working, which did not allow them to spend much time with their children. For instance, Nazim said:

My parents are teachers. In Sri Lanka, they did many things for our children: helped with homework, played, and told stories. However, I don't have time to do so.

Involving parents in family matters occurs in extended families and families when they are in their native country. Parents usually take part in solving problems that occur among the couples. Raheem described that they lacked the support of their parents in Sri Lanka, especially when there were some mild disputes between them. He said that Mild disputes in the family are natural. However, they need family members to solve some problems. In the migrated life, the unitary solution was always possible for migrants. However, consulting with their family and making a bilateral solution practically was impossible since transmitting the problem via telecommunication was not very effective. Thus, migrants used to live a lonely life without sharing everything they went through in their migrated destination with their extended family members. For instance, Naeem said:

Whatever thing happens here is 'my family' problem. I cannot gather families to solve that. We do not share everything with our parents via phone; they may take it wrong.

Many marriages that occurred in Bahrain happened without their parents' support, particularly involvement in marriage talk, marriage choices, and marriage arrangements. For instance, some women had chosen their marital partner and held their marriage even without informing their parents. Such changes further reflected that the social support they had from their families was reduced as a result of migrants' independent decision-making trend that many migrants preferred. However, later, some realised the importance of their parents' support. Still, those migrants did not expect

the economic contribution of the parents in arranging marriages, but they expected only to live with their prayers and moral approval.

The social support that migrant families had before their migration was disconnected since families were apart from their extended family members. For migrants, this social support was reputable, but regaining it was impossible at their condition of stay since some had permitted only immediate family members and some had lower family privileges. Thus, in the long run of their migration life, they adopted to live a lonely life, helping one another and solving problems unilaterally, which was recapped more in the following theme.

4.3.3.3 Gender Role in the Family

A family is an important unit where spouses exchange love, divide their family roles, and maintain a mutual understanding pertaining to family matters rather than opposing one another. After the migration, given that the family members lived far from their extended family members, the closeness among the couples increased. However, participants indicated that family life in a foreign destination faced many challenges, such as a lack of social support and entertainment and the breadwinner's busy working schedule. When the breadwinners were asked about their closeness with their spouses and their role divisions, Naseer explained his contribution to house chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes after his family's arrival.

We divide our work regularly. Sometimes, I cook at the weekends when my wife is busy with the children. When she was pregnant, I was the chef in the home.

The present study found that, in some families of educated migrants and skilled workers, the husbands were only the economic provider, and women did the rest of the duties at home, such as cooking, washing clothes, and helping the husband. Some females in the household actively supported the children's school homework, which was also unique to migrant families. Children in these families relied on their parent's full support in their education. Raheem praised his wife's contribution to educating the children.

My wife coaches the children for 2-3 hours per day, which I cannot do. I spent the day at the office and needed rest once I came home. No time to do that.

Furthermore, the females were the sole contributors to their husbands' busy working schedules, which was not taken as a burden. This contribution was made in order to preserve the existence in the migrated destination, avoiding unnecessary circumstances that cause deportation from the country. The circumstances that migrants might face, which are gained from the previous migrants' experiences, change the role of every family member. For example, the workers usually feared that anything could happen to their family during their stay in Bahrain if they hated their employer. Therefore, they were cautious about their work, even the phone calls from their employer. Ibrahim described his wife's contribution and tolerance during his busy work life.

Whenever calls come from the Boss, we should answer immediately. If we miss the call, he never calls back again. Interestingly, my wife stands beside the phone when I go to the washroom; if any call comes from the office, she will give it to me.

The daily routine of the husbands was departing from the home early in the morning and arriving home after five o'clock, which reduced the family bond or the time they spent with their family. Females in these families stayed in small houses for a long time until their husbands came home. These women were nervous about going outside without male companionship, which caused them to feel they were trapped. For example, the females reported a lack of freedom to go outside without male companionship. Naja, who joined the interview with her husband, revealed her frustration in the following excerpt:

Our house has the only room with an attached bathroom and a kitchen. The house has a minimal place to play with my daughter. I spent most of the time at home; No way to go out without him. My husband comes home at night.

The present study found that, in some families, the husbands were busy with their working schedules, which regularly impacted family entertainment. However, women were free and waiting for their husbands to bring them out for entertainment

activities. Repeated questions were asked about the husbands' role in giving time to entertainment. According to Abdullah, he had little time to spend with his family. Thus, concerning his circumstances, he said that was a disadvantage in the migration journey.

As per our working schedule, we bring our family out on weekends. I spend little time with my family during the weekdays. I feel this is a lack in this life.

Women who were married in the destination and previously worked as domestic workers continued in the labour force activities regardless of their race. The economic contributions to their families were vital since some of their husbands' earnings were meagre, which was inadequate to cover all their expenses. Thus, marriages they formed in the destination did not allow them to do only the house chores but acted multiple roles in the family, earning money, childrearing, house chores, and wives to their husbands. For instance, Nisa said:

I finish the cooking breakfast and lunch early morning, finish all my children's needs, and walk to work. Once I come back home, no time to rest, I have to do cleaning and again cooking.

Some women were single mothers and were the sole economic contributors to their families. Then, they could not stop the labour force participation or house duties. For them, managing the work and house duties was a major challenge. For instance, Rubini said:

Every day I must work. In the morning, I bring my daughter with me and drop her off with a babysitter. When I get back from work, I bring her home.

The findings showed that the relationship between husband and wife was strong, and they became closer by exchanging domestic roles and helping one another in their busy lives. The findings also showed that women's family role has expanded beyond the house chores. These females were obligated to support their children as they had lost their grandparents' and family members' assistance during the transition period. However, adapting to the new social environment and protecting conventional family values, such as spending time with family and exchanging love, was challenging for migrant families in a busy work environment. Women who married in the destination

did multiple roles: labour force participation and domestic roles. Raising the children in the transition destination was a major challenge for the parents, which is further discussed in the following theme.

4.3.3.3.1 Childrearing

A family is a recognized social institution in which socialization occurs and compassion and love are exchanged. Thus, the positive relationships between parents and children are vital. However, migrants faced obstacles in childrearing and sustaining their relationship with their children as these children's attitudes changed after migration. After the migration, children were adopted to a new social environment that changed their attitude and detached them from their parents, and they preferred self-decision-making in their matters. Some families reported weaker ties between fathers and children as they spent minimal time with their children. For example, Harees expressed that the workload, coupled with multiple responsibilities in the family, did not allow him to attend to his children due to insufficient time:

I have minimal time to spend with children. Because most of the time, I am at work, with many things on my head, including buying household items and involving children's school matters, my children spend more time watching TV and using smartphones. What should I do?

The children growing up in the Middle East absorbed many cultures from different communities around them. According to some informants, their children had less community exposure, including caring for their parents and respecting them as children did in Sri Lanka. According to these parents, this pathetic situation was a big drawback in their lives abroad. Naeem described the challenges he had with his children as follows:

Our children are born and brought up in this country. They do not have the memories of Sri Lanka that we have. When they finish their education, they decide on their life independently. We were born and brought up in Sri Lanka and have no problem continuing our life there. But we do not know whether our children do so. When we bring them for vacations, our children do not have community exposure, such as participating in functions, helping each other, and visiting relatives.

Similarly, teenagers in these families preferred outdoor activities with school friends and desired not to be dominated. However, most probably, they were compelled to stay at home by their parents, reducing the opportunities to go outside alone and sometimes creating disputes with their parents. Azam pointed out why they were scared to let their teenage children leave the house: It might cause extraordinary problems in their transitional lives.

My son asks me to allow me to go out with friends. I do not let him go all the time. When I refuse to let him go, he argues with me. They are far from our eyes. They spend time in entertainment in shopping malls. And there are possibilities to use smoking and alcohol.

Evidence gathered from Ummu Zameel indicated that her son was addicted to drugs when he was a school student. According to her, he was addicted to alcohol with another juvenile delinquent school friend. He disobeyed his mother and tortured her a lot as a result of his addiction to alcohol. She expressed her frustration with her son as follows:

I was not aware that my son consumed alcohol. I don't have enough time to watch him because of my work. His close friend comes to our home, and sometimes my son goes out with him. When they consumed it at home, I found it. It was hard to accept. He tortures me daily, steals my money, and compels me to buy an iPhone. I tried many ways to stop that: I called the police and took him to the doctor.

When the parents were asked about their relationship with their children, they spontaneously reported that their problems were childrearing and the challenges they faced in having children growing up in a foreign country. The challenges included the new culture, children's freedom, drug addiction, and attentively allocating time to their children. It is evident that fathers in these families were preoccupied with their work, which limited the time they spent with their children, especially in observing their behaviour. Similarly, these children grew up in these countries without their grandparents' companionship, who always played a role in transmitting native culture and childrearing in Sri Lanka.

Finally, the culture they learnt about in these destinations affected their behaviour, as they had friends from different countries at school. The data gathered

from the parents reflected these facts, indicating that children preferred to engage with friends of their age and were less likely to keep relationships with relatives and the community. When parents restricted their children's activities when they wanted to enjoy themselves with their children, it caused some disagreements between them. The children who enjoyed more freedom at home or were not being watched by their parents were addicted to filthy behaviours, particularly with alcohol.

4.3.3.4 Establishing New Migration Networks

The present study found that migrant families established new relationships with other migrant families and exchanged social support. However, these relationships were not similar to their customary relationship in Sri Lanka. Migration changes the relationship of families who follow a traditional setup in Sri Lanka: visiting relatives regularly and sharing their home-cooked food with their neighbours. In a foreign destination, migrant families required a similar bond to support their family life as they were far from family and friends. However, their busy lives, limited space in the house they lived in, and unfamiliarity with other migrant families hindered them from expanding their relationship from their end. Therefore, the migrants maintained ties only with a limited number of families on the basis of their conveniences, such as profession, distance, and similar villages from where they migrated.

Generally, migrant families are in Middle East countries to work in order to earn money. Thus, they prioritise their foremost objective and plan additional activities around their work schedule. However, the working schedule did not allow them to set aside time for family and relationships beyond the family as they wished. Thus, they restricted their relationship within their profession, who had the same working schedule. For example, Nazim expressed that the time issue hindered him from bringing his family to meet various migrant families who were not members of the society he represented.

I can engage with family only in engineering society gatherings as we all work together. But it happens once in a while. I don't have time to bring the family to meet other families from my country. Most of the time, my family spend time at home.

Workers in middle-skilled jobs also indicated that because of their busy working lives, they had a slight association with other families except for one or two families who were comfortable with them. For example, Naseer stated that:

We don't know more families here, and I don't have time to visit them all. We have two families to visit regularly.

Since everyone was so busy with work and other family commitments, families acquired permission to meet them on weekends, thus reducing the frequency of meeting the families. Informants realised that these changes in meeting families were not commonplace in Sri Lanka. Naeem described how meeting families was possible in Bahrain.

I contact the families I know before going to their houses, like a formal meeting. Everyone is busy with their work here since we have one or two days off. I have not done this in my village in Sri Lanka.

The present study further found that families with lower economic prospects lived in small houses that were inadequate to host visitors, hindering the family relationships they wished to keep. The informants said they avoided inviting families to their homes because of the limited space. Naseer clarified the situation as follows:

We don't have enough space in our house to invite families. When families come to our house, they feel uncomfortable. Depending on the time, I meet them in the parks. But regularly, it does not happen.

Although husbands were busy with work, spouses had more time away from their daily routines. However, wives were restricted from physically connecting to their community since stepping outside without male companionship was difficult for them. Thus, these families' relationship was limited to phone calls. For example, Aroos stated that:

My wife and children force me to bring them out on Fridays, but I am even busy that day. I am regretting for this. They cannot go outside without me. They use their phone to talk to the families they know.

The current study identified the families who lived without legal documents because of marriages that happened between foreign nationalities. Some of them were less likely to expose themselves to the public due to their legal issues and humiliations. They were isolated by the families where they lived in. Nisa described her isolated life as follows:

I have been out of contact with Sri Lankan families. During my marriage and pregnancy, people who knew us started to talk about our marriage. Sometimes, they did not invite us for anything.

Sama, who lived with her Indian husband, also expressed that she disliked keeping a relationship with migrant families due to her frustration with them. She said:

I am not particularly eager to contact any Sri Lankan families. I do not even go to my relatives who reside near me. It is better to stay at home rather than listen to their backbitings.

Similarly, Jazeera indicated that she was still afraid to show herself to the public since she did not have a visa. She stated that:

Usually, I stay at home other than my working hours. Although I have contact with a few Sri Lankans, I don't go to their houses. I don't have the proper documents to travel here freely.

Furthermore, the present study found that despite the hindrances that families went through in maintaining relationships with other migrant families, the positive fact was that some migrant families used public gatherings and religious programs to broaden their relationships. Families knew that family life in a foreign country was an alienated living entwined with a workload that demanded more relaxation by connecting outside their own family. For example, Azam emphasized that his family attended weekly religious and social activities organized by various groups, which broadened the relationship with unknown families after the migration.

Usually, I will bring my family to fortnightly gatherings at the Sri Lankan community centre. I will bring my family to Eid gatherings organized by Discover Islam and Darul Iman. I am happy that my family engages with various unfamiliar families, which they did not do when they were in Sri Lanka.

Some families gathered at parks and beaches according to their convenience, regardless of their profession and status. According to Aroos, he had made friends with some young families that liked to gather near parks to spend family time. He stated that:

Usually, I find the young families and arrange a gathering at parks and beaches at night when everyone is free.

The migrant families needed adequate community relationships and exposure to overcome some of the obstacles that arose after the migration. However, continuing relationships with other families had certain obstacles after the migration. Firstly, migrants had the busiest working schedule they had ever had in Sri Lanka, diminishing their relationships with others. Sometimes, migrants prioritised their mechanical demands, such as earning money, above the psychological needs of the family members, who eagerly awaited to meet many members in this isolated existence.

Secondly, some families who lived in small houses because of the low income avoided inviting families and continuing their relationship. Apart from that, some families were less likely to expose themselves to the public for some reasons, such as a lack of legal documents and previous indecent encounters with migrant families. Besides these hindrances, some connected with other families as they attended gatherings and religious activities. The findings in this section revealed that the newly established network was neither their ex-relatives nor village mates. Furthermore, family bonds were significantly diminished after migration, as shown in the present study, with visits to the homes of migrant families and maintaining intimate relationships being minimal.

4.3.3.5 Transnational Family Bond

Sri Lankan families traditionally follow the robust social bond between couples and children and even between relatives and neighbours. However, this culture significantly changed after the migration due to their working schedule and isolated life. Migrant families spent their time solely to earn in a foreign destination, leaving their parents and

family members behind. Thus, they missed the physical bond with them, thus increasing their feelings towards their family and motherland. Most migrants spontaneously expressed that they were unable to break psychological bonds with their homeland and families in Sri Lanka. For example, Ihsan expressed that long-term separation from their family was frustrating.

I feel that we have to live with our families in Sri Lanka. We haven't been to Sri Lanka for a long time. Sometimes, it creates a gap between our families.

Migrant families visit Sri Lanka less frequently, considering their economic prospects. Therefore, their physical meetings with their soul mates, parents, and natal families were infrequent. The migrants felt that the absence of extended family members, relatives, and friends was a significant and irreparable loss. Naeem revealed that he was not 100% satisfied with overseas life as he missed his parents.

We are not 100% satisfied with this life as we miss our parents. When I came to Bahrain for the first time with my family, my father brought us to the airport. He came to pick me up from the airport the second time, but he said goodbye while sitting in a wheelchair four years back. In the same month, he died. The same thing is happening to my mother now. Still, I feel guilty that we did not take care of them.

Most informants expressed their emotional touch with their parents. Even a few of them had taken the initiative to keep their parents with them. However, the children in these families did not have such an emotional connection with their grandparents. Most of them had grown up in Bahrain from an early age or were born in Bahrain. The present study found another reason for the lack of emotional connection: the children primarily spoke in English, which was unfamiliar to their grandparents. For example, Naeem associated these issues with his children when communicating with their grandparents.

Our children have minimal opportunities to engage with our families and parents during the vacation as we travel once every two years. I have observed that our children sometimes avoid talking to our parents when they struggle to speak Tamil. Even they are less likely to talk with them over the phone.

Some families disconnected themselves from their families once they got married in Bahrain. From the beginning, married women's family members were unhappy with their marriages, affecting their bond with them. For example, Jazeera cried a lot when she expressed her suffering due to her family's negligence since she married an Indian. She described her isolated life and disconnected relationship as follows:

My family members talk to me when they need money. They don't know my struggle here. None of my siblings asked me about my situation here. They don't like me as I am married to an Indian.

Migrants, who had been disconnected from their families after their marriages with foreign nationalities, thought about indefinite life in Bahrain. For example, Sama stated that:

I don't want to meet my family. They did not accept me when I married here. Better to live and die here.

The migrants' natal family members' relationship was physically distant. They felt that they missed their homeland, families, and friends. However, children in these families did not have the same feelings regarding their relatives and grandparents. Furthermore, some families were disconnected from their relationship with their family members as their families neglected them, showing their disapproval of their marriages to foreign nationalities.

Firstly, the present theme explored that marriage was a major life event that migrant workers passed through at a time of transition, where the major decision regarding their marriage choice was made, foregrounding their self since migrants were economically independent and culturally exposed to the new social environment. Contrary to culturally accepted religious endogamous marriages in Sri Lanka, some migrants, even Muslims, accepted religious endogamy in both preference and practice. Secondly, since migrants departed with their families and or started family life in the foreign country, families underwent far-reaching changes ranging from couple relationships, family social support, gender roles, childrearing, networks, and transnational family bonds. Families became more nuclear, and the bond they had with

their natal families was sometimes disconnected. Though they emphasised the family network more, their relationships with other migrant families were mild and mechanical due to their busy working lives.

The present section answered question two by investigating the challenges of the family, including the legal, economic, and social challenges that migrant families went through during their migration to Bahrain. Despite the migrants' economic and occupation status and gender, the legal challenges initially shocked them. The present study found that migrants made a prime decision to reunite with their families, expecting a better life than in their origin country. During this process, they endured legal challenges, such as obtaining a full family visa and sponsoring a family visa. Furthermore, migrants became undocumented while obtaining visas, working challenges, and forming families in their destination country.

Economic challenges in the preceding section explored how these challenges impacted the family's living conditions and earnings in a pleasant working environment. Primarily, migrants had chosen Bahrain to earn money and brought their families after finding a pleasant environment to live with family. However, in contrast to their expectation, when they were unemployed, fired, exploited, earning and happiness were wiped away from their life. Furthermore, spending on every amenity they used was frustrating, together with the pressure of sending money to Sri Lanka to care for their extended family members. The major change in terms of the economy was a reduction of remittances, on which Sri Lanka partially relies for the country's development. Thus, the benefits of family migrants to the country of origin are questionable from an economic perspective. Considering the social challenges that were discussed at the end, migration with families did not have a happy ending for many families. Many families started a solitary or lonely life and mechanically adopted a busy working life, where they missed the cohesive relationship with family and attention to their children.

However, moving forward with coping with what they went through to attain their migration goal, which is earning through the source of labour force participation, was inevitable. Returning to the country at their working stage must be delayed since they had to meet certain targets. Thus, families' economic and legal challenges and

social stresses require proper coping mechanisms, which participating families in the present study employed to a certain extent.

4.4 WHAT ARE THE COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES IN BAHRAIN?

The final part attempts to answer the third question of the study, which is to examine the coping mechanisms adopted by migrant families in Bahrain. The present study identified three different notions regarding returning to their country of origin among three migrant cohorts. In the first cohort, among the skilled and middle-skilled and female migrants, some decided to delay their return. The second decision was unwilling to return to the country, considering the country's dire economic condition and racial disturbance. The third type of migrants were the undocumented families, willing to work silently in their destination and less likely to return to the country. Delaying the return does not mean that they enjoy the migration life. Migration life comes with many negative experiences, which were contrary to their migration motives. Thus, migrant families used every possible way to protect their work and families as they had undergone several changes and encountered challenges after the migration. The code relationship showed that they employed coping methods during legal, economic, and social stresses to complete their migration aim successfully. Notably, some families employed more than one mechanism to manage uncertain living conditions during the migration.

The following discussion captures these coping mechanisms based on legal stresses, economic stresses, and social challenges that they went through in Bahrain. These coping mechanisms include “accepting the present situation”, which provides how they satisfied themselves and utilized migration opportunities; “support seeking”, which describes financial assistance and social support they received; “being patient and turning to religion”, which explains how they used spirituality as a coping method. Furthermore, migrants employed “family gatherings and entertainment”, which explains the benefits of leisure activities for life satisfaction, and “distant communication and exchanging gifts”, which explains the transnational relationship as a coping strategy.

4.4.1 Accepting the Present Situation

The labour force activities were the prime source of earnings for migrant workers, but their problems in the working environment profoundly affected their income and family sustenance. However, the migrant workers and their families coped with all the vulnerabilities until they returned to their homes and secured their jobs since they were aware of the sudden employment termination, which was ambiguous to them in the exploitative working environment. Migrants are in a foreign country to earn money by being in productive employment, which is also competitive. Also, migrants migrated from their origin country because of the economic and employment tragedies, which were also not developed enough to solve this issue. Therefore, participants stressed that their economic goal might be met by utilizing the migration opportunity they took with patience despite the life challenges they had faced before the migration and will face if they return to the country. For example, Abdullah portrayed his coping style with the proverb, “Make hay while the sun shines”. Migrant workers made the most of their migration opportunity while it persisted and was favourable. Abdullah stated that:

Now I have a job, and I cannot waste time available to save money. Many people suffer without jobs in our country, but we are wasting the opportunity. Another thing is that companies can terminate an employee within one month's notice. Therefore, if we have at least a six-month salary in our pocket, we can survive.

Usually, migrants who had a secure job and a family visa remained at the working destination, where they felt more comfortable than in their home country. Many participants added their views based on this matter. Raheem, one of the participants, had decided to continue living in Bahrain for a few more years, comparing his present life with his colleagues' life in Sri Lanka.

While our village mates tell us how they enjoy themselves, we feel something lacking in our hearts, but when they reveal their economic status, which is worse than us, we satisfy ourselves. I have a job right now. Therefore, I will earn money using this opportunity. Furthermore, living with family relieves our stress.

Although working in the Middle East was challenging for migrants, they could not give up their jobs when living with their families. Primarily, they expressed two

things in this regard: first, everyone would not get the opportunity to stay with family, and the second reason was that establishing another work environment would take time, thus making that transition challenging for their expenses. Therefore, migrants focused on their primary aim of saving money and tolerating all the grievances during their brief stay in Bahrain, which was reflected in their expressions. For example, when family members are irritated because of the hectic work schedule that the husband or father has, these primary economic providers console their family using various strategies, such as bringing outings. Ibrahim stated:

Sometimes, my wife asks me to return to Sri Lanka. This happens because of my work schedule and the expenses that we have. But I know she cannot manage alone with four children. We cannot have the same facilities that we have right now when we move to Sri Lanka. I ask them to be patient. I bring them to have dinner outside and park to fill this gap.

Migrant families lived in the Gulf countries where medical, house rent, utilities, and education costs were higher than in their home country, which should have been covered by their earnings, reducing their ability to save. At the same time, their earnings in these destinations were insufficient to cover all their expenses. They probably depended on their monthly salary for the following month's expenses. Thus, although the expenses were high, migrants had accepted to overcome this issue by reducing their expenses rather than consuming all they earned at the destination. The present study discovered that migrants planned their budgets according to their earnings by being simple and cutting costs in their lives. Some low-income families used to rent one of their rooms or reside in shared houses to cope with the expenses. For example, Nisa stated that:

The financial problem never ends when living with a family in an expensive country with a low salary. We reduce our expenses by residing in shared houses.

Similarly, they reduced expenses by eating low-cost foods. Most families' typical food was bread, which was cheaper than other foods. Regardless of the variation in family earnings, every family ate cheap food a few times a week. However, families with poor financial prospects often chose cheap food, particularly bread, to manage their food expenses. Sama stated as follows:

We manage the food by eating bread three times a day, no problem. It is the least option to survive.

Migrants utilized migration opportunities and contented themselves with their current jobs and living in order to cope with the economic constraints in Bahrain. For some reasons, such as being better off than people in their home country and turbulence of the job market on both ends, destination and home countries, they adopted accepting the present life as a coping mechanism while living with their family. Furthermore, migrants aimed to earn and save money for their future endeavours, such as building a house, repaying debts, and starting a business. However, these migrants were financially weak when they lived with their families as the expenses for the families doubled compared to their home country. Therefore, migrants were aware that their migration goal could be achieved by withstanding the financial challenges and persevering in their journey. Thus, migrants mostly found a way to reduce expenses and cope with the present conditions to accomplish their mission. The present study indicated that sharing houses and eating low-cost foods were prevalent among migrant families in general and low-economic prospects families in particular.

4.4.2 Support Seeking

Support-seeking was the primary strategy employed by migrants to overcome their legal, economic, and social challenges. The present study found that migrants sought support from individuals during legal, economic, and social challenges.

Staying in Bahrain requires having a legal status. However, according to the findings, some women who married a foreign nationality suffered to secure their legal existence in the host country. Similarly, migrant families who arrived with valid visas later lost their legal visas. When they were asked about the coping mechanisms for the legal issues they faced, the migrants revealed that they received help from their sponsors, familiar Bahrainis, and friends, who were among their network. For instance, Nisa was released by her Arbab (Boss) the first time and her husband's Arbab (Boss) the second time when she was legally penalized during her childbirth. She struggled to have a baby by being a housemaid and simultaneously without a valid visa.

When I was admitted to the hospital for my second baby, the police caught me. To my fortune, my sponsor released me. But then, immigration preferred to deport me, but my sponsor argued that he would take care of me as I was helpless in Sri Lanka. Again, they caught me during my third childbirth. Then, my husband's Arbab (sponsor) released me.

Some Bahraini sponsors were generous enough to help when the migrants struggled with legal impediments. Among the participants interviewed, Sara's boss assisted her in establishing a company and changing her visa from housemaid to skilled category after she encountered a problem in obtaining a visa for her son because she was on a housemaid visa. She stated that:

My son was born in Bahrain. Then, my boss opened a company and changed my visa to an office assistant while I was working as a housemaid. Under this visa, I arranged a dependent pass for my son.

Among the participants, Jazeera explained that the network that was established by her son when he visited a Christian missionary was helpful in overcoming a legal issue when he drove a car without a driving license. Quoting her words, she said:

My son was released by his friend, working in the security forces, from police custody while driving a car without a driving license. My son met him because of his regular visit to a missionary. This incident secured our stay in Bahrain. Otherwise, the whole family should be in jail.

In the above cases, Sara, Nisa, and Jazeera, their existing network, helped them overcome the legal issue. The findings revealed that migrants sought help from migration networks and sponsors to cope with legal stressors. Furthermore, they knew that the mechanism they used was not permanent; some were beyond the legal system, and they may encounter similar tragedies in the future. However, the help they received relieved their immediate problem.

Besides migrants' legal stresses, migrant families with inadequate income or work turbulence encountered problems in paying their home rent, utilities, and school fees. When they encountered such primary issues, they were psychologically affected. Such families confirmed that the assistance provided by individuals and organizations operating in Bahrain helped relieve their suffering. Some families received assistance

from various individuals, either Bahrainis or Sri Lankans, during uncertain living conditions. These vulnerable families were already familiar with these individuals or had been introduced by others. Accordingly, helpless families used this existing network to seek help and cope with their social and economic catastrophes. For example, Ibrahim described how he received support from neighbouring families when his wife gave birth.

My wife gave birth during the pandemic. I could not recruit any helpers at that time because of health issues. When I asked for help from a Sri Lankan family, they cooked food for my wife.

Similarly, some migrant families who were economically well-off were generous enough to find needy families to extend their help. According to the interviewees, some individuals voluntarily received help from them, which was happily quoted in their wording. Simaya said:

A Sri Lankan family regularly ask me about my medicine and send it to me. Sometimes, they send food to our family.

Similarly, the organizations operating in Bahrain helped others in various forms. According to the informants, Discover Islam and Darul Iman were the organizations from where these interviewees received financial and material assistance. The evidence showed that the families received help from both organizations for various reasons, including visa, medical, food, and school fees. Sama stated that:

Discover Islam and Darul Iman helped me renew my passport and visa when I requested them. The first time Discover Islam helped me to renew my visa. The second time I had the same problem with paying the visa fee, Darul Iman, the Sri Lankan centre, recommended us to another welfare organization to pay the visa fee. Accordingly, they gave me \$350.

Sheema indicated that she received financial help from these organizations when her family was in a pathetic situation. She explained that:

Darul Iman and Discover Islam helped us sometimes when people refused us. Our problems are not problems that end tomorrow.

Surprisingly, Nisa received financial help from a group of Bahrainis when she could not obtain a visa while her passport was with her Arbab (Boss). She narrated during the interview:

My elder son used to go to the mosque near our home. People who met him at the mosque came to me to ask about my situation. Finally, they helped me get my passport from my Arbab and paid for a visa.

Arab families were eager to help migrant families during Ramadan by assisting with food packs and money. By nature, Arabs were less likely to reveal their contribution to others. According to the informants, many families received assistance from Arab families during their grievances. For example, Sama stated that:

A Bahraini, one of the well-wishers, will send money to my account during Ramadan. Still, I do not know who he is. We contacted him by email. And another women's organization pays my daughter's tuition fee.

Mutual support among migrant families, particularly in social stresses, such as loneliness and psychological trauma, was a significant asset in their brief stay at the destination due to their knowledge and experience in various fields. Although all the families were not capable of helping others financially, they exchanged their physical support due to their relationship. When new families arrived at the destination, they suffered due to separating from their extended families and adapting to the new environment. In such a situation, existing families shared their experiences and helped them physically to overcome their impediments. Families shared information about newcomers through their WhatsApp groups to visit them. Salam said he received help from other families during his initial life.

Two families came to pick us up from the airport when we arrived in Bahrain. They added us to their family WhatsApp groups to interact with others.

According to the present findings, apart from the material and financial help that families received, they also obtained information, guidance, and physical support, which helped to relieve their psychological stress after arriving in Bahrain. Families

approached religious scholars and experts in various fields regarding their family and working issues.

Although migrants sought help from individuals and organisations, informants revealed the various barriers which prevent them from seeking help. Though the organisations and individuals were willing to help vulnerable groups, migrants were hopeless in approaching funding organisations because of their experiences of being rejected several times. For instance, Sara said,

For my father's treatment, I knocked on some organisations' doors and cried in front of them. However, I got rejected.

Getting help from the organisation was not easy for them since the procedures to approach them were a bit bureaucratic. Simaya said,

After reviewing many documents after the third attempt, one organisation accepted my application.

Since migrants were of equal economic status to the migrants from whom they wanted to seek help, they skipped asking for help out of fear of being stigmatised by their own colleagues. In the interview with Jazeera, she said:

Several times, I have thought to ask for help from my friends. But I did not. Sometimes, they will reveal my document issues and work problems to others. I am too nervous to ask for help from others. If they understand my situation and help, then okay.

Some undocumented migrants were extremely vulnerable but feared being reported to police, particularly during their meetings with people. This legal barrier prevented them from seeking help from many individuals and organisations. For Instance, Rubini stated:

I approached one organisation, but they asked for many details. I don't want us to be recorded anywhere. I came home immediately.

Naseer said:

Why do I need to fall into a well by myself? It's better to endure it on my own.

Similarly, migrant women who married other nationalities were unwilling to expose themselves to the public for any help because of society's attitude, which gives derogatory labels regarding migrant women. For instance, Nisa said,

I have a very limited number of people to ask for help. But most of them mocked me, saying I was crazy to males. Therefore, it is better to stand on my legs.

Sama said,

I have some family members in Bahrain, but I don't talk to them who put me down because of my marriage here. Even though I don't eat anything, it is better to keep quiet without bagging from them.

The findings discovered that helping people was the way to connect newcomers and already-migrated families. Seeking help and helping others were commonplace among migrant families. It is pertinent to note that, in seeking and receiving help, the contribution of the existing migration network and the social capital that the migrant families established during their stay in Bahrain was vital. When migrants lived with their families, they were introduced to well-wishers and funding organizations regarding their uncertain conditions through their relationships with other family members. Simply, it is a chain of exchanging information regarding other vulnerable families in order to help each other. Since the organizations had a formal system, needy families could request assistance from those organizations. The application was then reviewed in order to select help. Therefore, migrants faced some limitations in seeking assistance from formal organizations. Similarly, participants cited some more barriers in seeking help: fear of being reported to the police, being revealed their confidentiality, and being stigmatised by the helpers.

4.4.3 Being Patient and Turning to Religion

Religion gives meaning to life, reinforces unity and stability in society by serving as an agent of social control, and helps enhance one's psychological and physical well-being in a changing environment. Thus, when people encounter a problem that goes beyond their control, they primarily preserve patience and devote themselves to God to calm their thoughts and focus on the goal they want to achieve. Similarly, the present study found that religion and patience functioned as coping strategies that profoundly dominated migrants' family lives. Ihsan said his patience and connection to Allah SWT helped him secure his job and cope with the exploitative working environment.

I am disappointed with the present work because of the relationship with managers. I thought of changing jobs, but it is not easy at the moment. Therefore, keeping quiet is the only way to move forward. I always keep asking the prayers to Allah S.W.T.

Fear of God and being honest with the company were the solid characteristics of some migrants, which helped them cope with the unpredictable working environment and earn their income. Some migrants feared their bodies mingling with Haram (forbidden) earnings, which helped them to work hard and be honest during working hours. Further, they believed that doing forbidden things may cause work-related problems and would not please the creator. Rasmy expressed as follows:

I try to be sincere and pay attention to my work by following the company's rules. I do not eat any food beyond what I am permitted. I deserve to obey Allah S.W.T, and I fear mixing any Haram with my body.

Some workers were aware that life in the Middle East was temporary but feared continuing their lives in the homeland at this stage of their careers since they had to meet certain targets. Thus, migrants keep a close connection with God to strengthen their patience. For example, Raslan and his wife worked in Bahrain, intending to build a house, but separated their parents. He associated his connection with Allah S.W.T to decrease the pain of separation:

I work hard to build a house for us. But I am disconnected from my parents. The time that I spend in the masjid to pray relieves all the pain.

Like Raslan, Rubini said she visits Gudaibiya Buddhist temple twice a month to bring peace to her heart. Some migrants had disconnected from their native community due to visa issues. Such migrants observed patience and practised their faith. According to Jazeera's conversation, life in the Middle East taught her patience and tolerance. She blended her previous hardship with the current working environment in her explanation.

The difficulties I encounter here are nothing. I worked very hard in Sri Lanka as a housemaid. But I cannot do the same because of my age. At the same time, I cannot think of settling in Sri Lanka since my family has no legal documents. I pray to Allah SWT to overcome my difficulties and patiently work here for at least our survival.

Families had undergone far-reaching changes in the migrated destinations, in which patience was a strong family coping strategy for internal family problems among married couples. Patience has played a major role in some specific circumstances, preventing family values, such as happiness. The present study identified that some migrant workers were busy with their work and rarely concentrated on family matters, including childrearing and allocating time for entertainment. In some families, the husband and wife physically met once a week because they worked in two different places. The data showed that migrants earned under work pressure, but family members expected enough entertainment and gatherings, resulting in disputes between the couples. Some issues were manageable when members of the families were patient, and parents in these families were aware that their disagreement might negatively impact their children, which was positive. For instance, Raheem managed their issues themselves without troubling their children. Raheem stated that:

Just as "the one who loses patience loses the good", losing our patience will impact children. Maximum, we observe our patience.

In the case of Raslan, mild problems were natural in the family, which could not be solved by either husband's or wife's unilateral action. When a couple's connection is shattered, the solution must be borne bilaterally between husband and wife, as their extended family members cannot help in the matter. He stated:

We[...] are trying our best to solve that. My wife always advises me to comply with the patient.

In contrast to Raslan, Nisa maintained her relationship with her husband unilaterally and patiently, as she had children with her previous and present husbands. In such circumstances, when women in the family could not maintain the relationship, their spouses' relationship would suffer. She had this to say:

I carefully and patiently maintain my relationship with my husband and children, as two children belong to my first husband and a younger son to us.

Patience was a strong family coping strategy, which helped preserve the family's happiness or prevent the destruction of the family. Both males and females were aware that the problems that emerged during this transitional period must be solved by mutual understanding as they were away from their extended family support. When they fail to do so, it may harm the children and relationships among the couples.

The present findings proved that observing spiritual content, such as patience and converting migrants to religion, was a profoundly dominant coping mechanism to overcome psychological and economic conditions resulting from migration. These two spiritual characteristics, patience and religion, yielded them better psychological solace over employment difficulties and long separation from extended family members.

4.4.4 Family Gatherings and Entertainment

Regular job strain that migrant workers faced required adequate relaxation. At the same time, migrants must fulfil their family members' expectations as they are far from their extended family members and stay at home the whole day. Sometimes, this migrations life brought unhappiness and frustration. Thus, these migrants concentrated more on family gatherings and entertainment to refresh themselves and their families when time permitted. The following conversation with Naeem shows that 'Friday for the family' is popular among worker families, bringing quick relief to their families. He said:

My wife is very understanding, and both my daughters are occupied in education, and obviously, I am on my own. Therefore, I bring them out on weekends and have allocated Fridays for my family.

In the prolonged adaptation process to the new social environment, regular entertainment was an immediate psychological relief for the ladies in the family when the husband brought them out. In another case, Abdullah described how females felt relaxed when participating in recreational activities with other families.

Ladies are always looking for opportunities to go out of the house. I regularly take them out, and other families also join us. Now my wife has a small group of connections, unlike before, which are necessary for them. It is ample relaxation for my children and wife.

According to the informants, recreation and family meetings were the only opportunities to entertain their families during their brief stay in Bahrain. Families frequently used outings and gatherings to relieve job and family stresses.

4.4.5 Distant Communication and Exchanging Gifts

As per the data discussed above, migrant families were nuclear and separated from their extended family members and natal society. In order to preserve their family bond from a distance, these migrants used communication technologies such as direct calls and group video conferencing. Rapidly growing communication technology and fast internet connections have helped everyone to communicate more efficiently at a cheaper rate. For the participants, these means of communication relieved their stress and boosted their bonding with their family members. Among the participant, Ihsan stated that:

We maintain our family bond online from a distance, and we usually use video conferencing. When we see their face in real-time, we are delighted.

According to the informants, communication with their family members via phone calls helped them cope with their long separation. Raheem described the facilities they had now to expedite the relationship, unlike before:

Now, all people have the hand tool to spend their time. We have speed internet facilities for communicating with our families. These facilities help us to forget our loneliness.

Indeed, the technology to communicate with families during the 1990s was scarce, especially in Sri Lanka. The migrants used audio cassettes to record their voices and sent them by post during that time. Unlike in the past, Ummu Zameel said that speedier communication now allows communication with their families.

I recorded my voice on an audiotape and sent it to Sri Lanka early in my life, which took one to two months to reach them. However, now we can exchange our sadness or happiness with our family members with a single touch.

Similarly, migrant families' relationship with their natal families was strengthened with overseas remittances and the exchange of gifts. First, migrant families were pleased, as they could send money to their families and parents from their earnings. According to the informants, the money they sent home from the Middle East to their families was substantially more than it was in their home country. Ibrahim stated:

I always take care of my parents. Alhamdulillah, now I am happy as at least I can send enough money to them.

However, migrant families with low economic prospects could not help their native families with money even though they wanted to help their parents. However, they sent whatever amount they had with them. Sama stated that sometimes, she sends her parents 10-15 BD to satisfy herself.

Besides money, family members in Sri Lanka and migrant families exchange gifts, which considerably relieved the grievance as a result of the long separation. Harees said:

It is very sad when we miss attending any parties in our families, but we send some gifts for them, especially for weddings in our families.

Migrant families were overwhelmingly happy when they received food made at home by their parents. Furthermore, parents eagerly sent these items to their children when migrant workers returned from their vacation. Naseer stated that:

The happiest thing is the food and gifts we receive from our parents. My parents will send me some homemade food like Muruku, Dodol, and Sambol. They sent some dresses for my children with someone returning from their vacation.

The finding of this section showed that distant communication and exchanging gifts somehow relieved their long separation from their family members, particularly their parents. Usually, migrant families lived separately from their extended family members. Thus, they used communication tools to contact their loved ones. Communication by phone has become a useful tool in every household as it expands rapidly. According to some families, the remittances they sent were considerably low as they spent their earnings on their own families in Bahrain.

The present study found that migrant families underwent several changes that substantially impacted their family lives, which needed proper coping mechanisms. Thus, the final objective was to examine how migrant families adopted coping mechanisms during their living difficulties. Accordingly, they used an optimum level of coping mechanism in legal, economic, and social challenges. The above findings showed that they adopted various strategies to overcome those challenges and protect the family's well-being. Firstly, every migrant encountered all sorts of economic difficulties, including work-related problems. They could not predict their future career due to the nature of their working environment. Therefore, accepting the present situation was the primary coping mechanism to achieve their migration goal.

Secondly, the informants pointed out that the support from the individuals, particularly Bahrainis, significantly contributed to overcoming the problem of their legal issues, such as visas and dependent passes on which their family survived in the country where they lived. Patience and spiritual strength were other coping tools to cope with their economic and social grievances. Furthermore, the migrants sought financial support during the economic tragedies and physical or psychological assistance during social grievances in this transient existence, which helped them cope

with those uncertain conditions and enhance their family well-being. Besides, the function of institutions in supporting migrants had a part in coping with the uncertain economic situation.

Furthermore, to maintain the internal family relationship and cope with the work stress, families concentrated more on periodic family gatherings and entertainment. Furthermore, migrants' prolonged separation from their natal families, friends, and relatives was overcome through their online communication, exchanging gifts, and sending money. However, they expected to relieve this mechanical life and enjoy the rest of their life with their family in Sri Lanka.

4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The present study investigated the families' pre- and post-migration challenges and the coping strategies they adopted in the new social environment from the discussion above. These challenges were categorized into themes and sub-themes based on the three research questions. The present study identified three cohorts, breadwinners, educated people, and female migrants, who reported push migration challenges and pull features that encouraged them to arrive at a foreign destination. Push migration challenges included poverty, unemployment, agriculture and business losses, debts, and migrants aimed to increase the family economy and improve the family's well-being. Furthermore, pull features included higher salaries, employment opportunities, and easy job access.

In line with the second question, the present research identified some arrival challenges of the families, and further, the legal, economic, and social challenges after the arrival of families were also investigated. Participants reported that the long separation from their families and the privileges, such as the family visa they received at the work destination, pushed them to reunite with their families. However, during the arrival of the families, migrant workers were hampered by legal barriers, which caused them to use available options, such as arranging work visas, which were not stable. Furthermore, under this theme, the present study explored migrants without legal documents that occurred because of illegal stay, failure to renew the visa, and,

most importantly, migrants who married a foreign nationality lost their legal documents either because of divorce or failure to register their marriages formally.

Secondly, the present study highlighted the economic challenges that the migrants and their families went through. The discussion presented that the working environment that the migrants took as a source of income was challenging because of difficulties in finding a new job, work instability, sudden terminations, and exploitations, which severely impacted the family economy by reducing the savings and remittances they sent and happiness. Similarly, they had to face the costs of medical, education, house rent, and utilities, which were not cheap to cover from their earnings, bringing in an extra burden on the family.

Apart from these economic challenges, families also faced several social challenges ranging from family structure changes to relationships between family members and their present community. First, the section identified female migrants who were married to foreign nationalities and faced divorce or separation, as well as ongoing legal and economic issues. The present study further identified some unhealthy relationships between husband-wife and parents-children that disrupted the smooth running of the families. Moreover, due to their busy working life, alterations in the family relationship with other migrant families and the families who lived in the origin country were observed, which were moderate and mechanical.

Research question three pointed out the coping mechanisms of migrants and their families in order to overcome their economic, social, and legal challenges. This study highlighted that some coping strategies migrants adopted included seeking economic, legal, and physical help from sponsors and friends. Participants' coping mechanisms to reduce incoming challenges included reducing spending, being content with their current lives, being patient, and turning to religion. Moreover, families developed mechanisms to cope with social grievances by using periodic gatherings, entertainment, distant communication, and gift exchange.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Middle East has been a prime destination for Sri Lankan migrants, where families have a temporary life separated from their extended families in Sri Lanka. The present case study of 30 migrant worker families from Sri Lanka elucidates their experience with legal, economic, and social challenges after arriving in Bahrain. Bahrain is a case history that exemplifies what has been found before with empirical evidence found in the present study, which most readers unexpected. This research is significant because people historically assume that relocating families to economically wealthy countries are financially well off and live happily in their destinations. However, the case of Sri Lankan migrant families shows the detrimental implications of their movement with the hope of improving the economy and family well-being.

The study identified the primary pull factors that attracted migrant families from Sri Lanka to Bahrain, where the families' principal source of income was labour force activities. The foremost goal of migration, earning through productive employment, then collapsed during their migration life due to legal and economic challenges. The increasing migration and displacement as a result of the rapidly growing global market all make changes in the migrating families evident. Finally, those families adopted various coping strategies to deal with the challenges they encountered in their destination country. Thus, the following section interprets the study's findings in terms of how previous studies are contrasted and consistent with the current results.

5.2 THE MAJOR PUSH AND PULL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE MIGRATION PROCESS OF THE SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES FROM SRI LANKA TO BAHRAIN

Middle Eastern family migration starts with individual workers, either male or female, in the family, as reported in the present study. The families were then reunited at one

of the destinations with primary migrants who had already migrated. Thus, primary migrants' arrival in Bahrain has received the foremost attention in the present study, providing a comprehensive understanding of why people migrate and reunite with family later.

The labourers were migrating from Sri Lanka before the 1970s, and particularly, the trend of migrating overseas became commonplace since the late 1970s, which happened with the adoption of neoliberalistic economic policy after the independence of Sri Lanka. The British colonial government invaded part of Sri Lanka in 1815 and ruled until 1948, seeing the island as a strategic location for expanding British territory and trading routes as well as spreading its culture, politics, and religion (Gamage, 1993; Sagar et al., 2021). Following Sri Lanka's independence in 1948, rapid changes in political nationalism and economics resulted in the adoption of the neoliberalism policy, which was the only way to gain the benefits of globalisation. The neoliberal economic policy was established in 1977, which introduced a market-oriented policy, changing the practice of the government-controlled economic system into an economy free from government interference, thus removing the previous restrictions on market activities (Karunasena, 1996). For instance, foreign banks were allowed to open branches in Sri Lanka, and private sectors in Sri Lanka were free to open financial institutions, including banks and leasing companies (Karunasena, 1996; Vitharana, S., & Abeysinghe, 2021). These economic market changes have also liberalised job-seeking in foreign countries, including in the West, Middle East, and other Asian countries, with the expectation of more foreign exchange.

Thus, from that time onwards, as reported in the study, Sri Lankan migrants explicitly used migration as a survival strategy, including female domestic workers. For instance, Sri Lankan female domestic workers found their places in Middle Eastern countries for family survival when other South Asian countries were reluctant to send females abroad (Eelens & Schampers, 1990). More than three hundred thousand Sri Lankan migrants have migrated to work in foreign countries in 2022 (Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), 2023)¹, leaving apart the number who did not officially register their departure with SLBFE, most of whom are floating migrants with

¹ SLBFE has recorded 311,056 outward migrants in the year 2022 as provisional data

visit visas in the Middle Eastern countries. Migration from Sri Lanka is an intricate phenomenon encompassing bilateral migration drivers, which were analysed in the present study using a more straight push-pull theory, which was originally proposed by Lee in 1966. Lee's theory encompasses push, pull, and intervening obstacles (Lee, 1966) by being merit in identifying the complex pattern of the migration process. Thus, using this theory, we first detected the purpose of the migration and then integrated the present migration process from Sri Lanka and repeated migration, which is a critical part of reintegration into the origin country.

From the beginning to the present, push migration factors that Sri Lankan migrants went through, as discovered in earlier research, are somewhat similar, but the causes behind these factors are dynamic (Jayawardena, 2020). Breadwinners in the study were the sole economic providers, ran independent businesses, and engaged in daily wage activities, which resulted in loss or instability because of the country's economic malaise, affecting their family economy and convincing them to migrate. Similarly, the study discovered that educated people overtly expressed that they experienced unemployment, low wages, or difficulty finding employment that was commensurate with their educational attainment. Several professionals were dissatisfied with low-wage positions. These migrant cohorts apparently mentioned that they lacked hope in the country's economy and the job market where they might further their careers, thus showing a lack of interest in returning to Sri Lanka at this point in their careers since continuing their career in Sri Lanka is not promising, and the country is not politically stable enough.

Female migrants were more vulnerable and were not skilled enough, all of which were obstacles to getting well-paid jobs in the origin country. Earlier research based on various countries has well-captured the migratory precarity of these female migrants, and those studies have identified poverty (Hewage et al., 2011; Parrenas, 2021) and unemployment (Shaw, 2010) as primary reasons for their migration. Poverty is represented in the study when a family loses their parents or the wife loses her spouse, which solidifies their decision from a vague desire to migrate into action. As a result, the family economy is guaranteed via the best efforts of the female household, making migration to a Middle Eastern country necessary. However, not all migrants were happy to move, particularly female domestic workers, for whom it was a new and difficult

experience. Most females had never worked or were not skilled enough to migrate. According to studies conducted in Sri Lanka, the females are sometimes young mothers with children (Gamlath, 2019) and school dropouts (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Ukwatta, 2010b). Furthermore, they were forced to leave their parents, husbands, and children behind, which caused them distress. In fact, women agreed to move by putting aside their personal desires and focusing on what would benefit their children and family in the long run. Neetha (2004) concluded that migrating women as domestic workers is a breakthrough since they operate as prime breadwinners in the household, shouldering the entire burden of the family.

Largely, economic and political macro drivers were contributing factors and were out of migrants' control. The problems that these potential migrants encountered were real and are predicted to persist in the future. It is apparent that losing hope in one's country's future causes them to migrate and reduces the probability of migrants returning to their homeland. The current history of Sri Lanka is marked by a severe economic crisis and unemployment in particular. However, comprehensive research on how the present economic crisis influences the expedition of the migration flow (Lankasara, 2022) or reduces the possibility of migrants returning to the country has not been carried out yet.

Several factors have contributed to the country's present dire economic conditions. Firstly, economic mismanagement by the government resulted in a budget shortfall and a balance of payment deficit. For instance, Bhowmick (2022) noted that when the government imposed tax cuts in 2019 to fulfil a political pledge, the government lost taxpayers, which reduced tax revenue and increased fiscal and current account deficits. Secondly, the government policy of a sudden shift to organic farming in 2019 without having sophisticated technology, farming infrastructure, pesticide facilities, and agricultural literacy caused a drop in agricultural production, as reported rice production fell by 20%, resulting in a 50% increase in rice prices and the import of rice from Myanmar and China for the first time in decades (Bhowmick, 2022; Dipanjan, 2022). Tea and spice exports, the country's main exports and contributors to the Gross Domestic Production (GDP), were significantly reduced, causing the country to lose agricultural export earnings (Guzman, 2022). During this period, domestic

commodities were not competitive in the global export market, rather there was a rising demand in overcoming the domestic economy.

Thirdly, the measures that normalised the internal economic crisis further worsened the countries' economies. Increased reliance on FOREX in order to import essential commodities, such as wheat, sugar, milk powder, cooking gas, and fuel, resulted in massive currency depreciation in the country's economy and increased dependency on foreign debt (Bhowmick, 2022). Furthermore, excessive loans taken for non-profit development schemes drilled the country into a debt crisis (Amarasinghe, 2022). Sri Lanka's external debt has more than doubled from \$20.911 billion in 2009 to \$50.07 billion in 2021 (Central Bank, 2022; Shengnan, 2019). The debt rate is much higher than that of Sri Lanka's GDP in the corresponding period. On the other hand, government expenses to curb the COVID-19 pandemic and relief measures weakened the domestic economy, reducing foreign reserves significantly (Bhowmick, 2022; Central Bank, 2022). However, even during this pandemic, the practising government lost its integrity due to its many acts of corruption (Amarasinghe, 2022).

Thus, these forgone facts mentioned above caused the public to be frustrated, lose trust in the government, and lead to protests against the government, causing many to flee from Sri Lanka (Daily News, 2022). The greatest number, in comparison to prior years, have migrated. One apparent loss is that migration from that period mainly led to brain drain (Attanayake, 2022). It had a significant impact on the medical field, as the Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) claimed on October 12 that nearly 500 doctors, including specialists, had migrated in 2022 due to the upsurge of economic and political crisis, resulting in severe shortages in hospitals (The Island, 2022).

Consistent with previous studies, the study found that some migrants were less satisfied with future life prospects in Sri Lanka, considering the country's economy and opportunities. Tabor et al. (2015) encapsulated that what migrants seek through their migration is to improve their quality of life. However, most studies are devoted to studying "push migration factors", particularly in the present research context, assuming that economic predictors are influential. Hence, more recent studies have focused on the psychological and social factors that expedite the migration flow.

Among these, a study based on the life satisfaction paradigm by Bakina et al. (2019) found that less satisfied migrants in their profession, opportunities, and income level in their country of origin choose to migrate.

The intermittently found migration motives in the study are unemployment and poverty, which are issues that migrants directly face as a result of the economic crisis, political instability, and slow process in the country's development. Uddin & Mohammed (2022) concluded, based on a study of Bangladeshi workers who migrated to Malaysia, that a lack of employment opportunities corresponding to the population and poor income are driving factors. Though the present study did not focus more on the migration and development nexus, the motives that were heard from the interviewees reflected that. Among the studies, Sriskandarajah (2002) asserted that a lack of development was the cause of unemployment and poor income, which expedited the migration from Sri Lanka. In support of the above view, Withers & Piper (2018) found that disparities in development between urban and rural areas initially contributed to urban migration, and again, urban areas pushed them overseas by paying low payments. Consistent with the above studies, several participants reported receiving meagre returns when they migrated even to urban areas, and other women described that even domestic work is a less-paid occupation in urban Sri Lanka. According to Human Rights Watch, jobs available to women workers in Sri Lanka pay very little wages (Human Rights Watch, 2007).

A crucial part of Sri Lankan history was the civil war, which lasted for 26 years until it ended in 2009. The above circumstance slowed development projects because most of the money was spent on weapons, which had no return or economic production function from a development perspective, damaged the country's infrastructure, and forced the government to borrow money from external sources, leaving the economy in a bad state (Shengnan, 2019). Massive construction projects like airports and highways were initiated following the Civil War. However, all these projects were either on a non-profit or long-term basis (Bhowmick, 2022), which also failed to provide enough employment opportunities to boost the country's economy. It is apparent that the rural and urban areas in Sri Lanka continue to struggle to provide employees in all categories with pay sufficient to meet their basic expenses.

Furthermore, the corruption in the government sectors further worsened the country's economy and the government's trust among the public. Ramasamy (2020) concluded that government officials and politicians in Sri Lanka are indifferent to offering services to the poor segments of society without receiving bribes. Although the government that came to power, particularly after 2009, pledged to reform governance, improve infrastructure, make institutions more transparent, and combat corruption, these promises were not fulfilled in order to develop the citizens' trust in the government (Ramasamy, 2020). It is apparent that the unequal acceleration of growth between urban and rural areas and corruption perpetrated by governmental institutions and trained officials slow down the country's progress.

It is worth noting that the relationship between poverty, which is the result of man-made disasters such as war, development, and corruption, and migration was not only the reason why migration is perpetuated but also the intention to increase or maximise the wealth from the level that they can manage their day-to-day life to establish a prestigious life in society. Some migrants in the present study who received manageable salaries migrated to increase their wealth. Thus, in addition to the macro drivers, migrants' personal desire influenced their final decision to migrate to an affluent country, which is explicitly and implicitly often exaggerated by the various migration networks, including media and already migrated friends. Then, neither conceptualising migration as a linear function of poverty nor the reverse causality of development is consistent with the current migration process. However, each cause has a specific impact on expediting migration. Thus, when migrants decide to migrate, either because of external or internal factors, they must cope with economic and psychic challenges when migrating, which are, in the words of Lee, intervening obstacles.

Almost all migrants perceived their migration journey as having intervening challenges that required substantial effort to complete the journey. Most of them were not economically capable enough to migrate, and the above findings are similar to those of low and middle-income countries, such as the Philippines, where Parrenas (2021) found that the major constraint for Filipino migrants was economic. The vast majority of migrants came from impoverished families, and they encountered problems with their basic survival, causing their initial trip to be pathetic, in which they mortgaged their jewellery, borrowed money, and exploited existing migratory networks for their

migration arrangements. According to previous studies, migrants from Sri Lanka and other countries received substantial help from family, friends, and already-migrated migrants to realise their migration. According to the findings among Sri Lankan migrants, Kottegoda (2006) found that migrants heavily depend on family, Pinnawala (2009) stated that migrants receive support from previous migrants, and Gamburd (2000) and Ukwatta (2010a) discovered that sometimes migrants pawn their jewellery for their initial preparation. Thus, considering migration is not only the prerequisite for selecting whether to move but also acts as an impediment when deciding when to go.

The study found that the psychological challenges that migrants went through when preparing for their migration were the major investments put forward to realise the journey. It also found that migrants decided to leave their families behind, including children and spouses, which was emotionally tough for them. According to an informant, once migrants decided to migrate, she apparently started to lie to her children to comfort them. Mak et al. (2021) discovered in Nepal that migrants' feelings were similar to those of those who left with tears in their eyes. Throughout the decision-making process, all families were either dissatisfied or hesitant to transfer their family overseas owing to the family bond. Mak et al. (2021) state that the Nepalese community disapproved of sending young male migrants. In contrast, the present study indicated that young female migrants were sent, which was opposed by the Nepalese community.

According to the findings, women were mentally afflicted by their families and communities, which is perceived as another obstacle for female migrants. Some women were willing to migrate, but their family members were reluctant to send them. In some families, mothers and families agreed to have their daughters migrate, but society influenced them by questioning their womanhood. As found in some cases, the community where they were born found that the migration of women was inherent in traditional culture. Frantz (2011) noted a similar viewpoint based on Sri Lankan migrants in Jordan, who experienced initial disapproval from their husbands and families for quitting traditional motherhood. Despite the existence of traditional customs, Sri Lankan females increasingly engaged in labour force activities inside and outside the country to overcome the worsened family economy.

The fundamental drawback of push and pull migration theory is that it widely ignores the changing dynamics in the receiving country once migrants arrive and how migration invertly pulls them as a result. The arrival at the end destination was challenging and often contrasted with what they migrated for. However, macro factors repeatedly contribute to repeat migration, in the present case, the extension of the contract or migrating from one profession to another in the same workplace. Since the pushing factors prevail more in the origin country, pulling factors become stronger during migration, which also persuades the use of coping mechanisms to accept the contrasting situation in the destination country.

Weeks (2008) discovered that the related factors to migration potentials exert a major pull factor rather than a push migration. According to the Sri Lankan case, Middle Eastern destinations are short-listed countries compared to other countries among Sri Lankan migrants. Gamlath (2019) and Mak et al. (2021) found that many people continue to migrate to the Middle East to survive. The valid reason why migrants select Middle Eastern destinations is the higher earning potential compared to their homeland. Furthermore, some informants stated that the demand for labour force in all categories is still high; thus, migrating to Middle Eastern countries will continue in the future. Middle Eastern countries have attracted worldwide attention now, particularly since the commencement of the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, which was also an opportunity for the Middle East to promote their vibrant culture and values since it boosted the region's economy and tourism and created employment opportunities (Mansoor, 2022; Olusegun, 2023).

According to the present findings, some workers in the destination transferred from one job to another, expecting high payments and amenities. This migration appears to reflect migrants' expectations of economic benefits related to relatively high wages, working sector facilities, and the jobs they sought. As per the previous studies, the environment is the most appealing factor for migrants who select countries such as New Zealand (Tabor et al., 2015). However, the present study found that the environment is a less inspired determinant when individuals opt to relocate across Gulf countries or sectors. The present study couldn't be resistant that potential migrants quickly decide to migrate when the combined factors, including push and pull factors, influence their migration journey. This migration behaviour is supported by the

findings that people move either because social and economic forces in the origin place push them to do so or because they are attracted to destination places by one or more economic and social factors (Boyd, 1989; Lee, 1966).

The present discussion covers the first objective of investigating major push and pull factors influencing migration from Sri Lanka by discovering economic, political, and social factors. The economy is the centrepiece of the family, which is achieved by the primary economic provider's best effort in labour force activities, farming, and business. However, the negative experiences that families go through due to economic hardship, political instability, and social ailments drive one family member to migrate to improve the family economy and well-being. The factors that push migrants from Sri Lanka continue, which are also the causes that reduce the possibility of returning migrants and contributing their labour experiences to the country where they were born, must be a significant concern for policymakers.

5.3 THE CHALLENGES THAT SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES EXPERIENCE IN BAHRAIN

Sri Lankan migrant families encountered legal, economic, and social challenges during the migration, which were the primary focus of this study. Accordingly, the most relevant findings to the study's population are presented. Despite the fact that three different cohorts were interviewed, the majority of the challenges revealed were similar, with the exception of some legal and economic challenges, such as visa issues, expenses, and exploitation, which were more prevalent among undocumented migrants and low-income families, and divorce amongst female migrants. Migration is all about accepting challenges to achieve economic prospects, which is more particular to Middle Eastern countries. As per the obtained data, it was apparent that their arrival in Bahrain was challenging, and often, all the positive prospects that they were pulled for were non-existent. Furthermore, the increasing migration in the rapidly growing global market makes changes in migrant families, which range from marriages to family relationships.

Legal challenges were the beginning point for migration and every migrant passing through the process. On their journey, migrants encountered restrictive migration policies (Beauchemin et al., 2015) or greater privileges (González-Ferrer, 2011). According to the findings of the current study, some migrants in skilled categories with sufficient salaries and others with salaries above the national average received the legal privileges to rejoin their families at their destination. Migrants knew that Middle Eastern countries were not places to live with their families permanently, and their main goal was to make money. Thus, despite receiving family visas with no housing or medical benefits, some migrants chose to remain separated from their families, citing the expense burden. González-Ferrer (2007) supported the preceding viewpoint, stating that wives were interested in reuniting with their husbands after having stable jobs with family facilities.

The present study found a second cohort of migrants who were not eligible for family visas. Foreign employees in Bahrain must earn at least 400 BD or more monthly income to obtain a dependent pass (Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), 2020). The present study found that male workers brought their spouses with housemaid visas and female workers brought their husbands with work visas for low categories, as found by Ambrosini (2015) that domestic workers obtained a work permit for their husbands from whom they worked in Italy. Those migrants were not eligible to obtain family visas either because of work status or salary limits. The purpose of obtaining visas for their spouses primarily was to live with family, which contrasts with the Italian case, which was solely for work purposes. Migrants gave substantial importance to the family. However, in the present case, some obtained visas from other sponsors for a low category, making it impossible to recognise them as one family because neither husband nor wife was dependent on each other, restricting their ability to meet in one spot and sponsor their children as dependents.

With all these regulations and limitations, migrants attempted to bring their families legally. However, migrating with family was not lenient throughout the migration. Since migrants contribute to the destination country by giving their labour force and spending their earnings on daily expenses, where local economic ventures benefit most of the time, family migration policies should be more accessible. Allowing stay with family for migrant workers would be a major psychological solace and more

productive in their labour force participation and work performance. Being spatially separated from the home and family when it matters lowers the work performance (Choudhury & Kwon, 2020). On the other hand, living apart from a migrant spouse reduces the intimacy in the conjugal life, makes the woman feel lonely (Menjívar & Agadjanian, 2007), and worsens the health of left-behind women than the women in non-migrant families (Lei & Desai, 2021). However, in the present study, some informants said that companies are less likely to provide family visas by believing that arriving with family would reduce performance, which is a paradoxical notion to human values.

The present study discovered that families living with children in the Middle East without legal documents, including visas and passports, found it rather shocking to see migrants without a passport, which had never been made before. Migrants fall into the undocumented category because of work instability (Ambrosini, 2012), which prevents them from renewing their visa, arriving on a visit visa and failing to renew it, and a deceptive recruitment process (Khoso & Noor, 2021). In contrast to previous findings, the present study further found that migrants who married foreign nationalities kept quiet without renewing their visas or even informing their marriages to their respective embassies, causing their children to be undocumented for an extended period of time and even after their parent's death. According to the present study, marriage registration that some migrants ignored was challenging in identifying them as married couples and legitimating their children by at least preparing a birth certificate. Thus, the following marriage formalities in the migrated destination are vital and should be taken seriously by the migrants willing to marry in the host country, all of which may reduce the damage to the family honour.

It is essential to have an official document in order to stay in a country other than the birth country. According to the findings of this study, these migrants lost their documents after their migration, particularly in the case of women who married foreign nationalities while their employers confiscated their passports or were hesitant to renew their visas, and their children fell under undocumented status. Under these circumstances, their freedom to work, walk, and use healthcare services was severely limited. The subsequent challenges that migrants face after losing documents are pathetic. For instance, Menjívar & Salcido (2002) opined that undocumented women

are reluctant to seek support, while Mona et al. (2021) discovered that migrants refuse to seek healthcare due to fear of being caught by the police.

Economic challenges are by far the most commonly reported, including difficulties in finding employment, unstable jobs, work termination, and exploitation, all of which thus reduce their earnings, impacting expenses and affecting their psychological well-being. Previous studies mostly found that finding new employment is an initial stress that migrants go through. More specifically, when the husband comes with the wife's sponsorship or the wife comes with the husband's sponsorship, the latecomer would undergo this challenge (Ambrosini, 2015; Chattopadhyay, 1997). In addition to this initial stress, some migrants endured unemployment during the new contract or contract renewal. Typically, in the Middle East destinations, the employment contract period must be renewed every two years, as Sri Lankan migrants did. The present study indicated that seeking new employment is an obstacle that breaks the smooth travel on a stable job if they do not receive a contract renewal from the same employer, eventually collapsing the family life in the destination. According to the stated experiences of participants, this transition time of finding new employment rendered them unemployed.

Work instability is similar to what the present study discovered regarding obtaining new work. Hence, migrants lose their jobs before their contracts expire for a variety of reasons, such as company closures, failure to obtain enough pay, and early termination. These job strains are frequent among migrant workers, and the challenges highlighted by informants are associated with stable income, psychological well-being, and family visas, all of which substantially influence their daily sustenance and the legal stay of their families in the destination. In other words, their present job was not secure enough for a smooth life with family. Though the migrants' expectations of getting a job to increase the economy were met initially, they were later deceived by the work instability. The literature shows that unstable work conditions negatively impact employees' income and well-being (Landsbergis et al., 2014).

In many cases, work instability and sudden termination are frequently reported among low-income families and unauthorised migrants. Undocumented migrants reported that companies that recruit them pay less and terminate them after one or two

weeks after their appointment. As Khoso & Noor (2021) found in Malaysia, it is obvious that the lack of work permits hamper the migrants from finding well-paid jobs. As undocumented migrants were hired without an employment contract, these employees had less leverage to negotiate with their employers and stay at a secured workplace. Furthermore, these undocumented migrants cannot discuss their difficulties with anybody because doing so would result in legal action against them. Burton-Jeangros et al. (2020) found that undocumented migrants are silent workers and are unwilling to expose their problems to the public due to security issues. The situation these migrants went through shows that more than what employers expected from workers, such as work performance and profits, they were rigid in offering employees dignity. Allah S.W.T says, “We have honoured mankind” (al-Isrā 17:70). Thus, exploiting another human being for economic benefits is entirely paradoxical for this honour. According to the Maqasid framework, human dignity must be preserved through which the human self is preserved, which was rarely shown in the present study.

It further proves that human values are undermined by other human beings, particularly employers and co-workers. The present study discovered that exploitation, which they exercise, is another negative experience in this particular destination. Migrants were exploited based on their relationships with employers and co-workers and wages. Exploitative practices were more likely to happen in organisations that employed middle-skilled workers owing to relationships between the employees and managers of different nationalities, such as Pakistan and India. In the present study, migrants were restricted by Pakistani and Indian managers from meeting Bahraini sponsors, assigned extra work, and denied opportunities to advance in the companies. Agudelo-Suárez et al. (2009) discovered a similar practice in Spain where workers were restricted from meeting their employers. As reported by informants, the managers, who were the employees assigned by Bahrainis, exercised powers as they were senior to the company and to fulfil the Bahraini bosses’ desires. It is common to practice hierarchical power in small-scale businesses, as a practice identified by Chan et al. (2019) in China, where employees exercise hierarchical power, serving as their Chinese employers’ strategic allies. In addition, the present study identified that even in large-scale companies, skilled and middle-skilled migrant workers are prone to exploitation by co-workers who work in favour of native employers since the employment opportunities

in the skilled category are limited and competitive. Doing so would help them to be in the same position as long as sponsors permit.

The low-skilled workers revealed some signs of this power relationship that turned into exploitation in the workplace, where they had less power to negotiate with their employers. In some cases, native sponsors exploited such migrant workers by delegating extra work without giving them food and rest, paying low salaries and sometimes terminating them without wages. These findings are supported by early studies in this particular context, where Auwal (2010) found that labourers in blue-collar jobs remained unpaid for months at a time. Moukarbel (2009) found in Lebanon, among domestic workers, that the relationship with the employer was confined where they were exploited through overworking and a lack of freedom due to being on call for the employer's family. However, more dialogue is needed on the causes of exploitation, particularly what low-wage workers go through (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017).

The Middle East continuously support Sri Lankan migrants who spend much of their life there to earn money. Considering this fact, the origin and destination countries must evaluate such activities, including exploitation that migrants experience, and implement proper mechanisms to prevent it. According to Mak et al. (2021), adhering to and adopting the best practices approaches and international guidelines will help prevent, minimise or better support labour migrants. SDGs are globally accepted goals that try to preserve the migrants' rights. Notably, the SDGs' eighth goal protects labour rights and ensures a decent, safe and secure working environment for all, including migrants (United Nations, 2015b). Thus, such goals must be stressed more in offering migrants' rights.

Migrants encounter natural and man-made disasters in their migrated destinations in addition to what they go through due to migration. Since the data was collected during the upsurge of the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of migrants' work and economic statuses, everyone experienced the consequences of this pandemic. The COVID-19 period teaches all migrants that they might be affected by time-to-time crises in their work destination. The severe economic downturn during the crisis in the migrated destinations affects migrant workers and their dependent family members in their home countries (Ekanayake & Amirthalingam, 2021). Historically, Sri Lankan

migrant workers encountered a similar tragedy during the Gulf War in 1990. This event was an exceptional experience for Sri Lankan workers, where from 75,000 to 100,000 Sri Lankans returned to their home country, thus losing their jobs (Lakshman, 1993).

The experiences of the migrants interviewed indicated that documented and undocumented migrants experienced job termination, difficulty obtaining work, and job insecurity during the COVID-19 crisis. By January 2021, 34,721 Sri Lankan migrant workers in the Middle East lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 crisis. They were brought to the concern of the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) by the Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) to repatriate them (Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2021). Many news agencies published pictures and videos of these migrants' survival struggles. Since the present study data were collected during the peak time of COVID-19 cases in Bahrain, participants revealed their hunger and inability to pay for their house rentals and utilities. Thus, these tragedies have increased with time and have become routine events in the lives of migrants. However, migrants were less competent to cope with these sudden tragedies, and rendering services by different governments and non-government agencies to mitigate the consequences was less, as reported in the present findings.

Work-related problems immediately impacted their salaries, which was the primary goal of migration, and subsequently reflected in the pattern of their expenses. It was more challenging for them after the arrival of families. The present study noted that after the families' arrival, the significant change in the economy was an increase in spending on the one hand and a decrease in savings and remittances sent back to their home country on the other.

Remittances flow to Sri Lanka and are a measuring factor of migrants' objectives. Many migrants believe that migration is a long-term income stream (Shaw, 2008a) in which remittances help as a backbone to avoid future family deprivation. Similarly, the government expects to solve the marginal peoples' economic problem via migration while gaining foreign exchange earnings. So far, studies in Sri Lanka have found that the remittance of migrants comes mostly from low-skilled and unskilled Middle East migrants, which is an essential component of the domestic economy of Sri Lanka (Kageyama, 2008; Lasagabaster et al., 2005; Shaw, 2008a, 2008b; Weeraratne,

2014). Those remittances are streamed to rural areas with the aim of enhancing the quality of rural families of migrants (Dharmadasa *et al.*, 2018). Some previous studies have documented that many returned migrants have established their own way of life by building houses, starting business ventures, providing help for the education of children, dowry for their daughters and themselves, buying necessary household items and repairing houses (Pinnawala, 2009; Shaw, 2008a; Ukwatta, 2010a). The studies on migration and remittances incorporated with poverty and economic inequality have focused more on workers who stay as bachelors who had left their families in their home country. Although the remittances flow among the bachelors was substantially higher, it went the opposite after the family's arrival, whereby sending remittances and saving in the local bank were considerably low. First, the expenses for their families in the destination country were high, and then some well-off migrants stated that due to the inflation in Sri Lanka, they avoided saving remittances in the local bank and buying properties for their future endeavours.

Some migrants with humble salaries reported being unable to afford food, pay house rent, utilities, school fees for their children, and medical care. Expenses for these facilities, such as school fees, housing rent, and medical, are high in Middle Eastern countries (Salama *et al.*, 2018), making it difficult for migrants with minimum family requirements to come (Gardner, 2011). Similarly, these migrants struggled to manage the expenses at the destination and send money for their natal family, including their parents, on a regular basis. As Piper & Lee (2016) discovered among Filipina migrants and Bonizzoni (2007) in Italy, migrant families' daily lives and savings altered following their families' arrival. During the COVID-19 outbreak, this situation was more difficult as some lost their jobs, and some migrants did not receive their salaries regularly. Though migrants perceived migration as solving domestic economic issues, migration itself has worsened their vulnerabilities in their destination, which also weakens the policy of the country that strategises allowing citizens to migrate.

Although assessing the psychological impact related to economic distress is not a part of the present research, the work-related problems associated with poor psychological well-being were explicitly expressed by participants. Migrants in this study reported the challenges they experienced, such as work-related stress during the migration. Stress, emotional distress, and anxiety were exacerbated by their inability to

sponsor their families, find new work, or be unemployed, sacked, or exploited. Similar views have been found in the literature, as when migrants encounter multiple problems at a time, they are affected psychologically. According to Awuah et al. (2020), unemployment contributes to stress among Ghanaian migrants in Europe. Berth et al. (2005) discovered in Germany that losing a job decreases satisfaction in life.

Similarly, little advance notice of work termination that migrants receive contributes to their distress and unhappiness (Schneider & Harknett, 2019). Even when they believe they are unable to meet their expenses with their wages, migrants remain dissatisfied (Agyei et al., 2014). As discovered among Ethiopian migrants, returned migrants from Middle Eastern countries have mental illnesses (Tilahun et al., 2020). Furthermore, this study found that, since migrant families stay with migrants at their destination, they suffer psychologically with migrant workers.

Apart from the economic challenges, families underwent far-reaching changes as a result of migration. From the start of the migration, the family's well-being was a matter. Though migrants decided to bring their families by weighing the plusses, probably economic, they rarely ponder the social consequences of migration on families. Social challenges are anticipated for migrant families, irrespective of their income and profession. For certain migrants, the act of migration served as a transitional phase into marital life, where economic autonomy and novel experiences played a more influential role in shaping their marital choices, as opposed to adhering strictly to traditional Sri Lankan cultural norms.

Migrants, when they are of marriageable age, are expected to make the right decision in their marriage by choosing the right partner. In that, migrants use dichotomous practices: arranged and love marriages. The present research found that male children in the family had more say in an arranged marriage, while female children had less power in initiating their marriages. Thus, love marriages were taken to scrutinize their desire or break the barriers of parents' dominance in the decision-making. Love marriages, which female workers preferred, were initiated without their parents' consent and their presence, which is a rare practice in the Sri Lankan marriage system. Even in love marriages, in the changing culture of the Sri Lankan community, parents accept love couples and are involved in marriage-related matters, such as

marriage negotiations and participation in the marriage ceremony (Bulten et al., 2018). Family cohesion and relationships should not be worsened because of these marital choices. Thus, as found in the literature, the parents are responsible for normalizing the situation by agreeing to deal with the love as an arranged marriage, where their descendants take love as a prime part of their marriage decision, thus preserving family respect and cohesion (Donner, 2002). Of course, migrants must weigh the impacts of portraying what they desire, which is against their family's honour. A person's actions are accountable to groups they are assumed to belong to, such as a family, kin, and community (Mody, 2008). Further, the family is a negotiable institution where individual and collective matters are discussed. Thus, each family member must contemplate what they have been doing in contrast to their responsibilities.

The family is responsible for allowing the male children to marry themselves and giving marriages to their female children, which does not mean that parents must show power over women. Al-Qur'ān says 'to arrange marriages between the single men and women'², and more specifically, it commands eligible men to marry of their choice since he is the caretaker over the woman³. Traditionally, the Sri Lankan community is concerned about their female children's marriages. Abeyasekera (2016) found that parents wept when talking about their unmarried daughters, which shows that they overwhelmingly feel the burden of unmarried children as they have failed to fulfil their primary obligation. In contrast to Abeyasekera, some women's marriages were delayed because of families' economic dependency on migrant women and the decision-making power of parents over women. When economics becomes more important than tradition, the parents delay marital decisions and approval, as observed in the case of Sheema. The primary reason is that female family members are collectively engaged in the labour market to optimize the family's economic resources (Ukwatta, 2010b). Thus, until the family's economy reaches the expected point, the family is reluctant to leave female migrants from the family.

The present study found that marriage contracts and couple matching among migrant workers revealed that their ancient traditions had not been spelt out, which leaned more toward love matches apart from the traditional ethnic and cast-based

² al-Nūr 30:21

³ al-Nisā 4:3

matches and continued without legal marriage agreements. Caldwell (1992) and Udalgama (2021) argued that the younger generation prioritises their self or inner desire in determining their life courses, including marriage. Thus, the changes in marriage among the migrant workers were expected; however, it was somewhat surprising to find weddings that the culture does not value. For instance, as reported in the current study, marrying another one by deceiving a family born by him or entertaining a woman in the destination for a particular time and deceiving her in order to join with an already married partner in the origin country are destructive of the family system. This destructive family system must be eliminated by employing moral values in society. Furthermore, families in Sri Lanka are not willing to allow inter-religious marriages, which probably occur in love marriages (J. Caldwell et al., 1989). In the present study, even among the Muslim community, the acceptance of inter-religious marriage was observed, which their parents did not approve. Thus, again, negotiating their decision with the family to get their concern in their marriage becomes essential, which would further eliminate the epithet ‘Arabic good’, which indicates that they are sexually promiscuous women, that was given to migrating women from Sri Lanka over the years (Frantz, 2011).

In the present study, significant distress in love marriages, particularly among the migrants who forged relationships with other nationalities, was divorce and separation, which occurred because of a lack of knowledge about a marital partner. Being a housemaid, checking the proper background of their marital partner was limited, which is a common practice in arranged marriages in Sri Lanka. As per *Zameela*, *Jazeera*, and *Nisa*’s cases, they only got to know about their husbands’ true character after the marriage or after they were deceived. Thus, migrants should be aware of the consequences of their personal choices. Post-marriage breakdowns have been distressing for migrant women as they live with their children without male support, causing them to play the role of mother and breadwinner. Whether the marriage objective is achieved depends on how aptly they have chosen their life partner, leading to a successful family life. Furthermore, securing a good marriage is a marker of success for the individuals involved and is vital to maintaining the family’s status quo (Abeyasekera, 2016), which is the obligation of both parents and children.

Furthermore, the study discovered that family relationships changed between husband and wife, parents and children, migrants, and families left behind. According to Pannetier et al. (2017) and Sørensen (2007), the migration of entire family members causes family structure and responsibilities changes. Almost all families interviewed in this study were nuclear families, consisting of husbands, wives, and children. As the primary migrant obtained the visa only for their immediate family members, it contributed to the nucleation of the families. Gardner (2011) expanded on this viewpoint by stating that receiving policies in the GCC countries cause families to become nuclear, with migrants likely travelling with their immediate family members rather than the extended ones. Thus, the relationship with their extended family members is transnational.

The current study's collected interview data from migrant families perceived the family as an approved social institution, prompting them to migrate with family. However, they agreed that several changes occurred in family relationships after migration. It was discovered that the close relationships among some couples increased since they lived far from their family members, who were always supportive of their family matters, including childrearing. However, the pleasantness and satisfaction that migrants had before the migration were non-existent as they lost the prolonged connection with their family members in the newly arrived destination. Virtually all families stated that losing their parents' support is a substantial drawback in the migrated life, as they discovered through critical life events such as the wife's pregnancy and motherhood. *Ibrahim* stated that his wife's pregnancy happened during the upsurge of COVID-19 cases, whereby he realised the necessity of the close ones's help. Rashid et al. (2013) discovered in Canada that stagnating at home in the migrated destination without the social network and support that they had in their country of origin caused them to feel lonely. These conditions sometimes worsened their mental well-being (González-Castro & Ubillos, 2011).

Since the migrant families inevitably depended on other's help, strengthening their network became necessary. However, filling the grandparent's care in nurturing their children was missed forever. Even parents' and grandparents' involvement in family matters and solving mild disputes among the couples was perceived as missing. On the other hand, when the migrant families extend their stay in the migrated

destination, their relationship with their natal families becomes depleted, which also applies to the migrants who migrate alone. As reported in the present study, many female migrants' marriages happened without parent's involvement. Again, the need for extended family members' support increased during the pathetic status quo, which cannot be solved by migrants alone. Migration life is dichotomous, filled with happiness and grievances, in which the social support of a loved one is inevitable, which is partially replaced by the established social capital in the destination.

Migration is somehow an expansion of a relationship or expanding migration network, which is essential in meeting requirements that are dependent on one another. The migration network is social and symbolic ties that connect various actors, such as migrants and non-migrants, individuals and families (Faist, 2000). Migration network theory, which gives the analytical space for migration-related matters, was probably used to analyse how migration flow persists over time. In addition, in the present study, migrant families created a network that created social capital in the destination country, which was used to mitigate the consequences of migration. The newly established network was neither their ex-relatives nor village mates. According to a finding in Sweden, Bartram (2019) discovered that when migrants form a relationship with their co-nationals, it alleviates the loneliness that they went through at the beginning of the migration. However, according to the present study, the busiest life that migrants go through limits their relationships with other migrant families, which these migrants perceive as a drawback in migration life. Some migrants limit their relationships with migrants who are in the same profession or based in the area they live in. Ryan (2007) revealed that Irish nurses initially forged a relationship with other Irish nurses. Besides, as revealed by the findings, undocumented migrants choose a solitary existence owing to the legal dread of being apprehended by authorities.

With these immediate consequences of family migration, changes are reflected in the gender role, whereby the primary breadwinners, most probably husbands and wives in single-parent families, were busy with their working schedules during the day, causing some working parents to pay less attention to family entertainment. Thus, non-working migrants, probably women, play multiple roles in the family, including educating their children, helping their husbands, and doing house chores, yet they are restricted from venturing outside without male support, causing frustration among them.

Sometimes, migrants prioritise their mechanical demands, such as earning money, over the psychological needs of the family members, who were eagerly waiting to meet many members in this isolated life. Though they shared gender roles, they rarely enjoyed life. This pattern is slightly different from what was observed in the previous studies, in which Degn et al. (2006) opined that Somali families in Finland enjoyed family life by sharing their family roles among men and women.

Furthermore, parents spontaneously reported that there were problems in childrearing and challenges in having children who grew up in a foreign country. Children in migrant families were adopted to a new social environment, thus causing changes in their attitude and detached them from their parents, and they preferred self-decision-making in their matters. On the other hand, fathers in these families were preoccupied with their work, which limited attentively allocating time to their children, especially to observe their behaviour. The distance in the relationship with children and the environment in which children grew up resulted in many other consequences, such as children expecting more freedom, disobeying their parents, having less exposure to their local culture, and developing filthy behaviours such as drunkenness. More specifically, some behavioural changes were observed in the single-parent families. As Fleck & Fleck (2013) concluded, it is evident that parenting in single-parent families is challenging in migration life. Some cultural changes observed in the children are similar to those observed in Indian families in Bahrain, whose children had difficulty assimilating to Indian culture once they returned to India (Gardner, 2011). Children in the family transmit their parents' culture and values to the next generation. Thus, parents cannot be indifferent in nurturing their children, ignoring their needs and interests (Eid et al., 2022).

Since Sri Lankan families traditionally followed social bonds among the couples and children, and even with their relatives and neighbours, it did not allow them to break these psychological bonds with their homeland and families in Sri Lanka. However, physical visits to the native country were infrequent due to the cost of travelling, thus causing less satisfaction in overseas life. Some migrants reported being unable to physically take care of their parents and participate in both joyful and unpleasant family life events, such as weddings and deaths, adding to their emotional distress. The unpleasant life event that happened to someone closer to the respondents has been noted

to contribute to increased stress levels (Aneshensel et al., 1991). Notably, children in these families did not have the same feelings regarding their relatives and grandparents. In contrast, some families disconnected themselves from their families once they got married in Bahrain as married women's family members were unhappy with their marriages. However, prolonged separation from their extended families is worrisome, which causes dissatisfaction in this transition life to a certain extent even for them.

The migrants' primary source of income at the transition destination is labour force activities, through which their foremost goal of migration is achieved. However, arriving families encounter work-related problems, which severely impact their financial inequalities and families' living conditions in the country that they choose to reunite with family. Migrants decided to reunite with their families, expecting a better life than in their birth country. During this process, obtaining a full family visa and sponsoring a family visa were restrictive, which made enjoying life with family less feasible. Furthermore, some migrants became undocumented either due to the failure to renew their visas or right after marriage in their destination country, which also made their children undocumented. Primarily, migrants had chosen Bahrain to earn money and brought their families after finding a pleasant environment in which to live with family. However, in contrast to their expectation, when they were unemployed, fired, exploited, earning and happiness were wiped away from their life. Furthermore, the expenses they had ahead of them and the pressure of sending money to Sri Lanka frustrated them. It is worth noting that family migration considerably reduced the remittances flow towards the country, on which Sri Lanka partially relies for the country's development. Thus, from the economic perspective, family migration reduces the benefits that the country has been receiving over the years, particularly from the low-skilled workers. The social challenges that migrant families encountered show that family migration was not a happy ending for many families. Many families started a solitary or lonely life and mechanically adopted a busy working life, where they missed the cohesive relationship with family and attention to their children.

Families have been changing rapidly after the migration. These migrant families focus on their primary objective of migration by accepting all the changes that occur, such as nuclear family setup, losing family members' support, cultural influences of the host country, role division, and loneliness, because of the migration. Thus, the present

discussion implies that the challenges that migrants face in the destination country could be overcome or reduced by employing proper coping mechanisms.

5.4 COPING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY SRI LANKAN MIGRANT FAMILIES

Migration is all about coping with migration stresses and striving to achieve migration goals. Thus, coping mechanisms become an inevitable strength in the migrants' lives. Migrants, when they were staying with families, were not in a state to return promptly because their migration aim was yet to be achieved. Furthermore, promptly deciding to resettle in Sri Lanka for any reason would not be practical at their stage of work. In the present study, some skilled and female migrants delayed their return concerning better earnings than their country of origin, which has been facing dire economic conditions. In contrast, according to undocumented migrants, they preferred to stay in the migrated destination merely for their survival, concealing their identity. Then, during this transition period, migrant families adopted various coping strategies, sometimes multiple strategies at a time, in response to the present condition in the destination country and delay the return. These coping mechanisms include "accepting the present situation", "support seeking", "being patient and turning to religion", "family gatherings and entertainment", and "distant communication and exchanging gifts".

The labour force activities were the prime source of earnings for migrant workers, which was competitive and dynamic, and the problems they faced in the working environment affected their income and family sustenance. On the other hand, the push factors that pushed them to migrate remain the same and may worsen their economic and social situation once they return. Thus, these dichotomies made them accept the present situation. According to the informants, *Abdullah*, *Raheem*, and *Ibrahim* portrayed accepting the situation as an embedded mechanism in their lives to achieve what they want. Most probably, migrants, as Albanian immigrants did in Italy, make a favourable comparison (Kosic & Triandafyllidou, 2003). Eid & Diah (2019) concurred that Palestinians in Malaysia build a positive image of the present situation by comparing their lives to their relatives who have been experiencing worse conditions in Syria, Iraq and Palestine. Uddin et al. (2019) emphasised that professionals who can

adjust to whatever situation they go through in the migrated countries may work effectively and fulfil their goals.

In the context of limited earnings and the presence of pressure to send money to their natal families, migrants strategise to reduce their expenses in multiple ways. Even the Middle-income families depended on their monthly salary for the following month's expenses. Since the medical, house rent, utilities, and education were higher than in Sri Lanka, they reduced the expenses by cutting the cost of food most of the time. In line with the above findings, Deschak et al. (2022) discovered that migrants reduce their food intake and often fast for multiple days. Haak-Saheem & Brewster (2017) revealed that migrants in the UAE who need to remit money reduce their living expenses. Low-income families used another mechanism to reduce living costs: renting one of their rooms or residing in shared houses. Though living with another family or bachelor who is not close blood relatives in the same house was culturally disturbing, particularly for adult children, migrants still used this mechanism to mitigate the expenditure burden.

Since the migrants' lives are socially connected to various individuals and institutions, they develop a positive sense of transition surroundings over time to make their migration goal meaningful. The migration network they established and the social capital they gained bridged the social grievances and migration targets, which also responded to the changing circumstances in the host country. Social capital is used for the economic development of an individual as the features of social organisation, such as networks and trust, facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1993). In addition, migrants used the social capital that was ahead of them to seek help to overcome legal, economic, and social stresses. Migrant families used this strategy when facing problems they could not solve independently. Migrants faced legal impediments from beginning their migration project to returning to their country of origin. Although the migrant families tried to secure visas and legally work, restrictive procedures and employers' interventions made this extremely difficult. Thus, migrants sought legal assistance from employers and countrymates, such as arranging visas and overcoming document issues, as found among Nepali migrants (Mak, Zimmerman, et al., 2021a) and Albanians (Kosic & Triandafyllidou, 2003).

Seeking financial assistance from individuals and organisations operating in the destination country is the most used strategy by lower-income migrant families. Amfo et al. (2021) revealed that migrants even seek help for food expenses. Social or emotional support, like talking to friends, receiving advice, and expressing sorrow and happiness, are some other forms of help exchanged with one another so as to build a harmonious life in the destination. According to Murray & Ali (2016), Pakistani migrants in the UK feel comforted when they receive social support from their friends. As Frantz (2008) discovered in Jordan, seeking emotional support among Sri Lankan migrants continues throughout their migration life.

According to the findings of this study, the organisation's role at this particular destination is vital in relieving destination-related tensions, mainly financial and social pressures, which have received little attention in previous studies. Mostly, these organisations operate in these destinations to help vulnerable migrants who encounter legal, financial, and social hardships that otherwise would not be operated. Interviews with officials from Darul Iman and Discover Islam confirmed that Sri Lankan migrants have been receiving help from them. According to Frantz (2008), Sri Lankan migrants in Jordan receive assistance from Catholic organisations and Caritas for medical care, emergency flight tickets to return to Sri Lanka, and visa regularisation.

However, participants cited some barriers that prevent them from seeking help from formal and informal channels. These barriers included too many bureaucratic procedures in the funding organisation, fear of being reported to the police, being revealed their confidentiality, and being stigmatised by the helpers. Al Qur'ān said, "If you conceal your charities and give them to the poor, then that will be better for you"⁴. Thus, preserving the confidentiality of the person to whom the charity is given and avoiding exposing and hurting her/him with scathing words to demean them are the foremost qualities of helping others. Furthermore, these barriers leave the vulnerable or migrants who deserve to receive aid unattended. The messenger of Allah S.W.T concisely said: "He is not a believer whose stomach is filled while his neighbour is

⁴ al-Baqarah:262

hungry.”⁵ Thus, finding and helping people in need is vital, which was reported as very low in the present study.

In Islamic migration history, the messenger of Allah S.W.T and the native people of Al-Madeena revealed the value of helping one another with their tangible actions when migrants arrived in Al-Madeena, regardless of their differences. The migrants and the host society were united by a historical brotherhood pact called *al-Mu'ākhah*, which enabled migrants to live in Al-Madeena in the best possible circumstances (Ramadan, 2007). Essentially, migrants enjoyed a safe and secure environment through this brotherhood bond, which stressed mutual economic, spiritual, and psychological support, protection and social integration (Jureidini & Hassan, 2020a; Ramadan, 2007). This ethical dimension of hijra in Islamic history should be emphasised (Karpat, 1996) to establish a helping culture among the various migrant groups and even natives.

Religion is an agent of social control and helps enhance one's psychological and physical well-being in a changing environment. The findings of this study are consistent with earlier studies that patience and turning to religion significantly contribute to overcoming psychological trauma resulting from migration and provide them with better psychological solace over employment difficulties. When people encounter a problem that goes beyond their control, they persevere with patience and devote themselves to God, allowing them to focus on their migration objectives and live harmoniously with their families. Nakonz & Shik (2009) confirmed that Philippine migrants in Hong Kong turn to religion to overcome mental stresses resulting from loneliness and homesickness. In line with this, Eid & Diah (2019) discovered that religious attachment is an asset among the Palestinians in Malaysia in terms of improving their quality of life.

Migrants in Middle Eastern countries have the chance to engage in religious practices both individually and in groups, as evidenced by Frantz (2008) discovery in Jordan that Sri Lankan migrants are more engaged in religious activities. In the present study, migrants confirmed that they visit Buddhist temples operating in various places

⁵ Buihaqi:1262

in Bahrain, whereas Muslims visit the adjacent mosques. Most of the migrant families were aware that the Middle East is not a permanent destination, but resettling in Sri Lanka was another challenge at their stage of working, which needed time to achieve their migration target. Thus, religious attachment was vital to strengthen their patience. That patience was used in migrants' marital life, which underwent far-reaching changes as a result of migration. Similarly, increased patience helps migrants to cope with discrimination and exploitation in the labour market (Herbert et al., 2008).

In addition to that, migrants focus more on family gatherings and entertainment, at least to get immediate relief from the psychological stresses that they encounter. Kim et al. (2018) revealed that leisure activities significantly correlate with improving mental health and life satisfaction. Though the migrants are busy with their working schedule, migrants reserve Fridays for families and get together with other families at parks and beaches, which is a form of expansion of the migration network. Stodolska & Alexandris (2004) confirmed that recreation strengthens the social ties within the community itself. It is worth noting that illegal migrants have limitations in freely exposing themselves to the community and establishing this friendly network. Remaining silent among them is natural, as expanding their network threatens their security. Burton-Jeangros et al. (2020) found that undocumented migrants are silent workers and are unwilling to expose their problems to the public due to security issues.

Furthermore, the families in the current study found that rapid and sophisticated communication technology enables them to keep in touch with their parents and relatives left behind in Sri Lanka. They usually converse with their loved ones via phone calls (Vullnetari, 2012). Stodolska & Alexandris (2004) referred to this as transnational leisure activities in which migrants exchange photos and videos and chat online. Furthermore, these migrants send money and exchange gifts during pleasant and bad life events in their home country, such as weddings and funerals. Though migrants use communication as a tool to relieve the pain of long separation, they feel that they might be permanently freed of life with their loved ones in one destination. According to prior research, migrants employ more than one coping mechanism to comfort themselves and their families at the same time.

The final part of this discussion focuses on how migrant worker families use an optimum level of coping mechanism in facing legal, economic, and social challenges. Migrants and their families adopt various strategies to overcome challenges and protect their families' well-being. Economic and non-economic social support is vital for families living in a completely new destination, which they discover to be a readily available coping mechanism in a foreign country. Acceptance, patience and spirituality also help to strengthen life at the destination. Furthermore, internal family relationships and work stress are managed by migrants by employing periodic family gatherings and entertainment. Although migrants maintain transnational relationships, it is not a permanent solution to get rid of the prolonged separation from their extended family members.

The migration from Sri Lanka is influenced by major push and pull factors ranging from economic and political to social factors. The negative experiences that families go through due to economic hardship, political instability, and social ailments drive one family member to migrate to improve the family economy and well-being. However, the present study found that conceptualising migration as a linear function of poverty or the reverse causality of development is inconsistent with the current migration process. However, since the factors that pushed them prevailed and pull features became stronger, it reduced the possibility of returning migrants and contributed to repeat and family migrations. Migration with family has become a rapidly growing phenomenon, which has received less attention among scholars. The dynamic functions of the receiving country created the end destination as challenging, which often contrasted with their imagination and the information they received regarding the destination country.

The present study started discussing the arrival challenges and challenges after the migration to show how the migration goal is obstructed in the destination of arrival. Economic hardships and legal impediments that migrant families encountered after their arrival received major attention in the present study. Furthermore, the increasing migration culture in the rapidly growing global market continues to pull the families, though it is found to be a changing factor in families' culture, structure, and relationships. The present study found that family life revolves around a busy working schedule, abandoning the cohesive relationship with family and attention to their

children. Considerable changes were identified in gender roles, marriage choices, and migration networks as a result of migration. However, under these circumstances, again, since the pushing factors become worse in the origin country, pulling factors become greater, which persuades them to accept the contrasting situation in the destination country. Though the coping mechanisms were discussed at last, the present discussion implies that the challenges that migrants face in the destination country are reduced by employing coping mechanisms. In sum, migration is all about coping with migration stresses and striving to achieve migration goals.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study gathered information from 30 Sri Lankan migrant worker families in order to investigate why they migrated, their challenges, and their coping strategies. However, more samples in this particular destination and other Middle Eastern destinations would increase the understanding of the phenomena. Undocumented migrants and employee and employer exploitation were recorded, but in some cases, the sources of these challenges were ambiguous. Thus, including the employers' views would be more relevant in future research to ensure proper portrayal. Similarly, children's views on parent-child relationships would give real-world realism. In order to capture families' living realities, this survey only included major breadwinners who now reside in Bahrain. However, the present study managed to capture the living conditions from many perspectives. Data saturation occurred before data collecting was completed.

5.6 IMPLICATIONS

As the present study approaches the implication section, it recalls the direction of the current research: investigating major push and pull factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka. In examining challenges encountered by migrant families in Sri Lanka and the coping strategies they employed during migration, the qualitative interviews have yielded various implications based on these objectives. During the in-depth interviews, the Bahrain and Sri Lankan migration corridor was a case history to

exemplify with empirical evidence, which most readers unexpected. The case of Sri Lankan migrants shows the detrimental implications of their movement with the hope of improving the economy and family well-being, which is also paradoxical to what non-migrants think of migration as a happy ending for migrant families. The present research proved that the legal, economic, and societal complexity that migrant families faced was the polar opposite of what they had expected prior to migration.

The neoliberal economic policy introduced after 1977 liberalised job-seeking in foreign countries, expediting migration from Sri Lanka. Until today, Middle Eastern countries serve as potential places for Sri Lankan migrants. The push and pull migration theory helped to detect first the purpose of migration and then integrate the present migration process from Sri Lanka and repeated migration or a critical part of reintegration into the origin country. Educated and skilled people more overtly expressed unemployment, low wages, and difficulties in finding a job that recognises their education level as major push factors. Female migrants and low-income families explicitly referred to the poor economic prospects as a push factor and immediate opportunities in the Middle East with better pay regardless of their education level and experiences as a major pull factor. Among them, female migrants were more vulnerable and were not skilled enough, all of which were obstacles to getting well-paid jobs in their origin country. Women in the family agree to move by putting aside their personal desires and focusing on what would benefit their children and family in the long run. The economic and political macro drivers, beyond the control of migrants, were anticipated to persist in the future, diminishing hope for future endeavours in the country of origin.

Beyond the apparent economic drivers, the humans' instinctive nature of increasing wealth and finding happiness were other reasons to migrate, which were impossible to reckon using push and pull migration theory. Another drawback of push and pull migration theory is that it widely ignores the changing dynamics in the receiving country once migrants arrive and how migration invertly pulls them as a result. According to the present findings, since the pushing factors prevail more in the origin country, pulling factors become stronger during migration, which also persuades the use of coping mechanisms to persevere despite the contrasting situation in the destination country. However, the present study agreed that migration is not a simple

undertaking as experiences show that migration is not only the prerequisite for selecting whether to move but also acts as an impediment when deciding when to go.

Furthermore, the present study implies that migration is all about accepting challenges to achieve economic prospects, particularly for Middle Eastern countries. As per the obtained data, it was apparent that their arrival in Bahrain was challenging, and often, all the positive prospects that they were pulled for were non-existent. Furthermore, the increasing migration in the rapidly growing global market makes changes in migrant families, which range from marriages to family relationships.

Similar to the studies on migrant workers, migration studies with the inclusion of families are parallelly important, which was stressed by this study. Work is not for the work itself, but migrants eventually work for family and happiness. The places that gain labour expertise are less likely to consider their social well-being. Family migration gives greater psychological solace to the migrant worker and increases the productivity of their work, which is recognised less by employers who limit family privileges and drag the process of family visas. The present study found that sponsoring for the families of some migrant workers was restrictive. However, with all these restrictions in sponsoring family visas, migrants gave substantial importance to their families, thus causing them to use various ways to obtain visas, but some of them were not secure enough and caused the families to be undocumented. Furthermore, the visas they obtained from other sponsors for a low category made them neither husband nor wife dependent on each other, hampering them from sponsoring their children as dependents. Furthermore, illegal practices and negligence of migrants should be highlighted as the present study found migrants who married in the destination or married while they were not eligible to do so kept silent in renewing visas, but somebodies' practices should not hamper the visa process of genuine workers. However, this research also infers that migrants must be aware of having an official document in order to stay in a country other than their birth country.

The present study built the relationship between migration purpose and economic attainments in the destination country. From the beginning of their migration journey until the end, migrants went through various economic challenges, all of which reduced their earnings, impacted their expenses, and affected their psychological well-

being. Most of the migrants' jobs were not secure enough for a smooth life with family, or otherwise, they experienced work instability, although the migrants initially got jobs to increase the family economy. Better evident for this cohort were undocumented migrants who were hired without an employment contract, had less leverage to negotiate with their employers and stayed at an unsecured workplace. Furthermore, employers often disgraced employees' dignity, which is even paradoxical to religious views. It further proved that employers and co-workers oppressed migrants. Most of the time, senior employees exercise power or hierarchical power towards other employees to occupy the limited employment opportunities in a certain field. Furthermore, employers were not generous enough to provide wages once the work was done or at month's end.

Previous researchers were consistent with present studies that remittances flow is the backbone of the families back home and the country's development. However, the present study noted that after the families' arrival, the significant change in the economy was an increase in spending on the one hand and a decrease in savings and remittances sent back to their home country on the other. The present study found that when migrants found investing in Sri Lanka, where the return is ambiguous, they avoided saving remittances in the local bank and buying properties for their future endeavours. These findings alarm that the country must keep its reputation to get benefits even from the migrant workers.

The upsurge of the COVID-19 pandemic collapsed everyone's life regardless of their work and economic status. During this time, the migrants experienced job termination, difficulty obtaining work, and job insecurity, which were significant findings since the data were collected during the peak time of COVID-19. The severe economic downturn during the crisis in the migrated destinations affects migrant workers and their dependent family members in their home countries (Ekanayake & Amirthalingam, 2021). However, less experience among the migrants juggling this situation, and even less experience among both states, was observed. Employers either decided to stop or terminate the employees, which worsened their economic status. These results should be considered to establish permanent mechanisms to handle the crisis from both ends.

The Middle East continuously support Sri Lankan migrants who spend much of their life there to earn money. Considering this fact, the origin and destination countries must evaluate such malpractices of employers, including exploitation that migrants experience, and implement proper mechanisms to prevent it. According to Mak et al. (2021), adhering to and adopting the best practices approaches and international guidelines will help prevent, minimise or better support labour migrants. These findings further stress the implementation of globally accepted sustainable development goals to preserve migrants' rights. Furthermore, preserving the human self can be further framed by the Maqasid framework that dignifies the human being and prioritises human values.

Social challenges faced by migrant families are anticipated irrespective of their income and profession. Specifically, changes were observed in marriage choices, gender roles, and family relationships; however, some individuals were not receptive to these changes. Thus, how long could be left to let it last? The present study found that marriage contracts and couple matching among migrant workers revealed that their ancient traditions had not been spelt out, which leaned more toward love matches apart from the traditional ethnic and cast-based matches and continued without legal marriage agreements. Female migrants took love marriages to scrutinise their desire or break the barriers of parents' dominance in the decision-making. In some families, parents did not allow female migrants until the family economy was settled since these women were the prime economic contributors to those families. In the present study, important distress in love marriages, particularly among the migrants who forged relationships with other nationalities, was divorce and separation, which occurred because of a lack of knowledge about a marital partner. Post-marriage breakdowns have been distressing for migrant women as they live with their children without male support, causing them to play the role of mother and breadwinner.

The current study's collected interview data from migrant families showed that the family is an approved social institution, prompting them to migrate with their family. However, they agreed that several changes occurred in family relationships after migration. The contentment and satisfaction that migrants experienced before migration ceased to exist, as they severed longstanding connections with family members and the social capital they possessed in the newly arrived destination. This,

in turn, had an impact on their ability to nurture their children. Migration life is dichotomous, filled with happiness and grievances, in which the social support of a loved one is inevitable, which is partially replaced by the established social capital in the destination. The newly established network was neither their ex-relatives nor village mates. These findings suggest that migrants should bring in their families if their family members can accept the changes, cope with all types of grievances, and help the primary migrant to focus on her/his economic goal since s/he is also a victim in the working environment.

Families have been changing rapidly after the migration but focused on their migration objectives. Thus, the present discussion implies that the challenges that migrants face in the destination country could be overcome or reduced by employing proper coping mechanisms. For the undocumented migrants, the coping mechanisms were inevitable since they were supposed to choose a solitary existence owing to the legal dread of being apprehended by authorities. Migration is all about coping with migration stresses and striving to achieve migration goals. Accordingly, migrant families adopted various coping strategies, sometimes multiple strategies at a time, in response to the present condition in the destination country and delay their return, considering it would worsen the family economy further.

The migration network and the social capital that migrants establish are valued in migration life, which makes sense for their migration goal. The migration network they established and the social capital they gained served as a bridge between social grievances and migration objectives. This also allowed them to respond effectively to changing circumstances in the host country. Migrants utilised the social capital established through their migration network to seek assistance in overcoming legal, economic, and social stresses. These findings imply that coping was better captured by migration networks and social capital, which is also closely connected to the push and pull theory that was used to establish the connection between migration goals and post-migration experiences. Migrant families use social capital when they require problems to be solved by multiple stakeholders.

However, participants cited some barriers preventing them from seeking formal and informal help. Some migrants are nervous about receiving help from those who

expose their identity to the public or expect remembrance from whom the charity is given. Thus, finding the people in need and helping them should be promoted to preserve human dignity. This ethical dimension was promoted in the history of Islamic migration by establishing a brotherhood bond between migrants and native people, which provided a more secure environment for migrants in the host country.

In sum, in the present research, the gap in the existing literature was filled by bringing empirical evidence from the historical development of this migration to the current challenges, such as migration drivers, migration experiences, and coping with attaining the migration goals.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the obtained data and discussion, the following recommendations are proposed. Primarily, the migrant community, the potential migrants, sending and receiving governments, non-government and religious organisations, and future researchers would benefit from this study. The Middle East has been a prime destination for Sri Lankan migrants, and the migration towards these destinations continues, although the risks prevail in the migration project. As the sending country is economically destitute and lacks the capacity to provide employment to all citizens with sufficient salaries to meet their basic and additional needs, regulating migration may not be a practical solution. Instead, it would be more effective to send skilled workers, thus mitigating the potential risks they may face. Simultaneously, the development of the country is considered crucial, especially in reintegrating migrants who return with foreign exposure and experiences in various fields. It is worth noting that because of this lack of development and migration motives continuing to push them to migrate, migrants delay their return or are unwilling to return to their country of origin, which must be a significant concern of policymakers. On the other hand, implementing policies and plans to reintegrate the return migrants and gain their experiences is the foremost responsibility of the sending country.

Since Sri Lanka faces dire economic problems, which impact individuals' economies and employment, thus pushing them to migrate, comprehensive research on

this changing economic situation and how it influences the continuity of migration from Sri Lanka can be done by future researchers. Further, the present study identified that when the sending country loses its economic stability and is reported by corruption, it creates the problem of staying outside the country for migrants. The present study reported that migrants undergo rigid visa policies and cannot get prestigious jobs, which can be further explored in future studies.

Based on two findings, the present research recommends expanding the pre-migration training and providing knowledge on regulations of the receiving country in general and Middle East policies in particular. First, the present study found the undocumented marriages, and then it found the illegal stay. Further, this research recommends that migrants currently residing in the destination country must be educated about having an official document to stay in a country other than their birth country, which is the responsibility of various organisations operating in the destination countries for the benefit of migrant workers. Many migrants' problems were a lack of awareness or knowledge in finding proper solutions for their document issues and basic skills to create documents or write letters to reach out to the relevant authorities.

Of course, each family member must contemplate what they have been doing in contrast to their responsibilities. In addition to that, the present research found that families lose the legitimated couples and children and encounter handling delinquent children. Therefore, religious organisations must play a significant role in guiding migrants in order to preserve family values and honour. Furthermore, human dignity is degraded by employers and co-workers. Unfortunately, these organisations were unaware of these families and their employers since the data management and assessment of vulnerable families were non-existent. Thus, more dialogue is needed on the exploitation practised by employers and co-workers, particularly what low-wage workers go through (Zimmerman & Kiss, 2017). Furthermore, these organisations can still extend the dialogue between co-workers, employers, and employees to integrate them. These organisations can create close relationships with various organisations and government officials to help migrant workers.

The present research found that migrants were less competent to cope with these sudden tragedies, and at the same time, rendering services by different governments and

non-government agencies to mitigate the consequences were less. Since crisis handling is growing, migrant's sudden tragedies should be incorporated into crisis-handling mechanisms. Similarly, labour rights must be protected, so globally accepted measures, such as SDGs and Maqasid shariah, should be stressed more in offering migrants' rights.

Some migrants with humble salaries reported being unable to afford food, pay house rent, utilities, school fees for their children, and medical care. While migrants perceived migration as a solution to domestic economic issues, the act of migration itself has exacerbated their vulnerabilities in their destination. For them, the challenge lay in establishing a migration network and leveraging social capital to the fullest extent to overcome their problems. Though various organisations work on gathering migrant families through different programs, those gatherings do not include vulnerable communities. If they can create a proper network among the well-off and vulnerable groups using various activities, it would be helpful to create a helping network with one another in the transition life.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Sri Lankan migrants have been migrating to the Middle East since the 1970s so as to improve their livelihood and family well-being. With the changing nature of migration, labour migrants reuniting with families in Middle Eastern countries has become prevalent among Sri Lankan migrants, causing both direct and indirect effects on the family. The phenomenon of migrant families was identified as a gap to be explored in this particular destination by reviewing the literature. By investigating Sri Lankan migrant worker families, particularly what factors pushed them to migrate, how the pulling features influenced the migration, their experiences during the migration, and how they overcame the piled-up incoming problems, this thesis has shown contrasting and negative experiences both in origin and destination countries.

The present qualitative study employed 30 Sri Lankan migrant worker families as a case study to investigate some key elements that have influenced the complex pattern of family migration found in Bahrain in an attempt to make the current migration process in Sri Lanka explicit. Given that the study aimed to investigate the legal,

economic, and social challenges faced by migrant families, the qualitative method provided an opportunity for an in-depth examination of the comprehensive impact of migration on families in a natural setting. Furthermore, the complete family differs significantly from analysing merely a few people. Migration theories, particularly the push and pull approach, which cannot be neglected easily in migration research, played a prominent role in identifying migration drivers.

Sri Lanka faces dire economic problems, which impact individuals' economies and employment, thus pushing them to migrate. However, no one in society can migrate except those who make it possible by gathering information from the migration network and recruitment agencies and are willing to face the economic and psychological costs of leaving their family behind. Though the economy is challenging to bear the cost of migration, and it is emotionally hard to leave their families, potential migrants perceive that if they do not decide to migrate, their families will suffer financially, preventing them from moving one step ahead. Furthermore, migrants make a swift decision to migrate when multiple factors support their migration journey. The Middle East migration is temporary, and they are expected to return to the country. However, in terms of the development of the country, political instability and an unpleasant life make them delay their return to the country of origin or are rarely taken into consideration in a short period of time. From these viewpoints, with the recent increase in the brain drain, reintegrating migrants into the country should be a government priority.

With the increasing labour migration, migration with the family has become a rapidly growing phenomenon, which has rarely been discussed in Sri Lankan literature. However, migrating to another country is not rewarding or ends well. Moreover, there is a scarcity of literature on the uncertain experiences that migrants undergo, a topic rarely discussed unless approached with an in-depth conversation with migrants themselves. The dynamic functions of the receiving country created the end destination as challenging, which often contrasted with their imagination and the information they received regarding the destination country. These migrants' experiences at the destination reveal their legal, economic, and social difficulties. For instance, termination from work with little notice is a challenge that hinders migrants from staying with family at their work destination and disrupts their regular earnings. Besides this regular occurrence of economic challenges, they have worsened after the

arrival of families. Similarly, experiencing an exploitative work environment, either by wage or relationship, is perceived as a regular disturbance in the workplace that makes them uncomfortable and unhappy in their career.

The present study analysed the changes in the family and how family values are protected, particularly during the period of work and economic challenges. Though the migration period is short, families undergo several changes, such as shared gender roles among the couples, family structure, and imbibing the new culture. Migrants form new families with other migrants from other nationalities based on affection, which rarely follow the traditional culture, and most of these marriages end with divorce, causing psychological trauma. The family life of migrants became more mechanical than the country of origin due to the busiest working schedule. These migrants' lives should get more attention in migration studies to offer them better opportunities.

Finally, migration is all about adjustment and acceptance of contrasting situations either in their family or working life. Migrants promptly use various coping mechanisms, regardless of their profession and economic status, to cope with legal, economic, and social challenges ahead of them. Migrants work by persevering in the workplace, such as job terminations, exploitation, and the expenses they face. Migrants use the support-seeking strategy, economic and non-economical, often during stressful circumstances since they are away from home and staying in a completely different environment to minimise harm towards them. The role of religion is a widely accepted strategy to reduce the stressful life that might affect them and their family. Periodic family gatherings, entertainment, and distant communication also strengthen the family.

The present study has explored the uncertain living conditions of migrant worker families in Bahrain, and it enriches the literature with a new sociological and empirical study that provides new evidence about the serious challenges migrants face. However, the present research has identified the gaps that need to be carried out by future researchers; particularly, it implies that the changing pattern of migration from Sri Lanka and the economic and political challenges that the country faces should be incorporated.

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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tell me about yourself. Jobs, age, educational background, residence place in Sri Lanka

1. What are the major push and pull factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka to Bahrain among Sri Lankan migrant worker families?

- Tell me about your family's economic situation.
- Do you have any concerns about countries' development and jobs?
- Tell me about the difficulties you faced in your last job.
- When did you take the decision to migrate?
- Why did you select Bahrain (environment, facilities, job opportunities)
- How did you prepare for your migration?
- How your family supported your migration?
- Tell me about how the pain was when you separated your family (children, parents)

2. What are the socio-economic conditions of the Sri Lankan migrant worker families in Bahrain?

- When did you decide to bring your family?
- Tell me about the steps you took and the difficulties you faced during your family's arrival. (Visa, sponsoring)
- Tell me about your visa process and other document issues.
- How is your working place? (Satisfaction with the job, problem faced)
- Do you feel any work difficulties in Bahrain life? (Job recruitments, in a relationship with native and you or other country friends)
- How is your earning? Is it enough? Could you remit with your salary?
- How are your expenses in Bahrain compared to Sri Lanka? (House rent, schooling, daily expenses)
- How do you manage your relationship with your family (partner, children)
- What about your children's achievements? (Education and skills)

- Do you feel any difficulties in childbearing and childrearing (schooling)?
- How do you spend time with your family? (entertainments)
- How is your relationship with other families in Bahrain?
- How is your relationship with your families in Sri Lanka?
- Do you feel any difficulties in this life? (Emotional inferiority)

3. What are the coping strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan migrant worker families in the destination?

- How do you manage your financial difficulties in Bahrain?
- How much do you and your family satisfy with this new environment?
- How do you manage your long separation from your family members in Sri Lanka?
- How do you receive help from your friends, organizations and other families to manage life?
- How do religious beliefs help overcome difficulties?
- When do you plan to return to Sri Lanka?

APPENDIX II: INFORMATION SHEET

Dear participant,

Study on the living condition of expatriate worker families and coping strategies

I am Mohamed Aslam, Sri Lankan, pursuing a PhD Program in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in Malaysia. I am researching as part of my PhD programme. The objective of my study is to investigate the living conditions of working families in Bahrain and how they cope with social and economic difficulties.

As a summary of my research, temporary migration of the families who move with breadwinners from Sri Lanka coexists with social and economic factors. However, families who have arrived in Bahrain encounter various social and economic consequences. Furthermore, the comparison between the utilities they expected in Bahrain and the actual situation creates uncertain conditions. Thus, the present study attempts to fill this gap by exploring these factors in the migration of families.

The present research aims to collect information from breadwinners of immigrant worker families who have been in the Kingdom of Bahrain for at least six months. The interview will be for a duration of 60-90 minutes. Please, do not think that you are wasting your valuable time. Your valuable and genuine ideas would help me complete my study and contribute to the body of the knowledge that the government and the organizations make decisions to improve the lives of migrant workers and their families.

The researcher will take responsibility to protect the identity of the informants and the confidentiality of the information. Please feel free to answer the questions asked by the interviewer. Please note that you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. And, please note the following points:

- The information provided by you is strictly confidential and anonymous

- Results of the study will not be analyzed and published at an individual level and will not be able to identify or trace you personally.
- If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form

Please do not hesitate to contact me and my supervisors Dr Iyad Eid and Prof. Rohaiza Rokis, if you need any further information about this study.

Your participation in this study is highly appreciated.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Mohamed Aslam

Contact details

Mohamed Aslam

PhD candidate

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Eid

PhD supervisor

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Assoc. Prof Dr. Rohaiza Rokis

PhD Co-supervisor

Department of Sociology and
Anthropology

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APPENDIX III: CONSENT FORM

Serial No:

Consent Form

I (name)....., agree to in the research project titled “**Sri Lankan Immigrant Families in Bahrain: A Case Study of Living Conditions and Coping Strategies**”, conducted by Mohamed Idrees Mohamed Aslam, who has discussed the research project with me.

I have received, read and kept a copy of the information sheet on the study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research, and I have received satisfactory answers. I understand the general purposes, risks and methods of this research.

I consent to participate in the research project, and the following has been explained to me:

- the research may not be of direct benefit to me
- my participation is completely **voluntary**
- my **right to withdraw** from the study at any time without any implications to me
- the risks including any possible inconvenience, discomfort or harm because of my participation in the research project
- the steps that have been taken to minimize any possible risks
- public liability insurance arrangements
- what I am expected and required to do
- whom I should contact for any complaints with the research or the conduct of the research
- I am able to request a copy of the research findings and reports
- **security and confidentiality** of my personal information.

In addition, I consent to:

- I agree to the interview being audio recorded
- I agree with the use of anonymized quotes in publications
- I agree to the use of quotes with my name in publications

Name: _____

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX IV: APPROVAL LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Our Reference: IIUM/301/SOCA/13/12

Date: 18 Jun 2021

Mr Thariq Majeed,
Sri Lankan Wing Coordinator,
Discover Islam Bahrain,
Level 3, Baraka building, Manama,
Bahrain.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Dear Sir,

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVE FROM DISCOVER ISLAM BAHRAIN

The above matter is kindly referred.

I would like to request you kindly to grant permission for our postgraduate student to conduct an interview with you for his PhD research. The following are the details of the student and the research:

Name	:	Mohamed Idrees Mohamed Aslam
Matric No.	:	G1826843
Citizen	:	Sri Lankan (Passport no. N3204277)
Program	:	PhD in Sociology and Anthropology (P_SA)
Thesis Title	:	Sri Lankan Immigrant Worker Families in Bahrain: A Case Study of Living Conditions and Coping Strategies
Research Objectives	:	1. To investigate the major push and pull factors influencing the migration process from Sri Lanka to Bahrain among the Sri Lankan immigrant worker families. 2. To explore the socio-economic conditions of the Sri Lankan immigrant worker families in Bahrain. 3. To examine the coping strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan immigrant worker families in the destination.
Name of PhD Supervisor	:	Dr Iyad M Eid (iyad@iium.edu.my)

This letter also serves to inform your kind office that all information gathered from the interview will be used solely for research purposes and that the anonymity of all is guaranteed. The interview will be scheduled to be conducted via online platform Google Meet. I am very glad if you could give him the consent to do this interview.

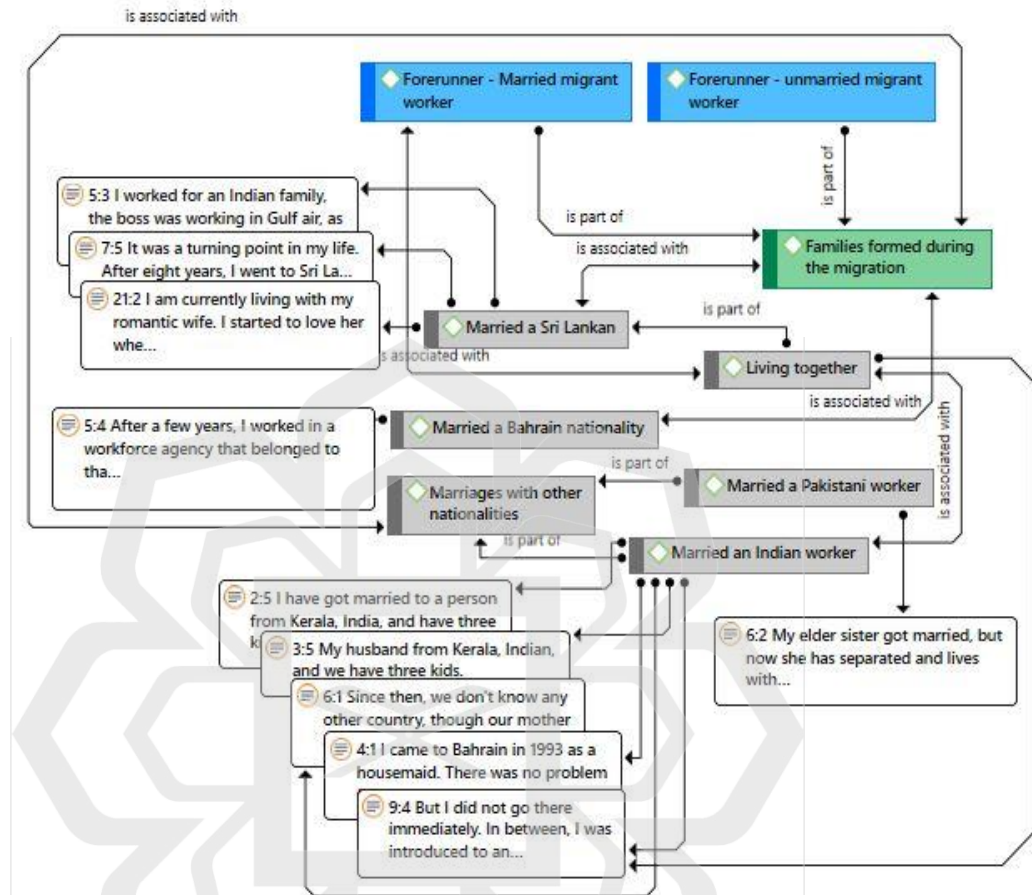
Thank You, wassalam

Dr Norasikin Binti Basir
Head,
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia
Email: norasikin@iium.edu.my



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APPENDIX V: THE SAMPLE OF DATA ANALYSIS USING ATLAS.ti



The above figure shows a graphical illustration of the marriages that occurred during the migration. This code network was created using the network manager in ATLAS.ti. Furthermore, the graphic shows the code frequencies, how many quotations (in this figure, a few have been presented) are linked to a code [Grounded], and the number of linkages to other codes [Density].