

The Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sri Lankan Migrant Workers in Qatar

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Abstract

Sri Lankan migrant workers in Qatar, as well as the Sri Lankan economy as a whole, was significantly impacted financially by the spread of COVID-19. The pandemic-driven economic downturn in the country, as Qatar has been one of the primary destinations among Sri Lankan migrants in recent years. This study aims to investigate the extent of the economic challenges faced by this migrant population during the pandemic, with a focus on job security and remittances, to provide insights for policy recommendations and support measures. This study is based on primary data gathered through semi-structured analysis using a mixed-methods approach. The objectives of the research are to assess the extent of job loss or income reduction experienced by Sri Lankan migrants in Qatar due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to explore the remittance patterns and changes in remittance flows from Sri Lankan migrants in Qatar to their families in Sri Lanka during the pandemic. The significance of the research is that it contributes to the global understanding of how migrant populations were affected by the pandemic, offering insights into the adaptability of migrant communities in different contexts. The sectors that Sri Lankan migrants work in Qatar were severely affected by lockdown and restrictions. However when compared to the early months of the pandemic, the financial stability of Sri Lankans in Qatar improved by 2020 with the easing of restrictions imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19. Due to reduced income or unemployment, they had less to send, effecting the financial stability of their families in Sri Lanka. The main findings of this research are that layoffs and pay cuts and Qatar's overall economic decline due to the pandemic affected a significant percentage of Sri Lankan migrants in the country.

Keywords: *COVID 19, Migration, Pandemic, Qatar*

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