

Article

Labour Migration towards Export Processing Zones: Exploring the Demographic Change in the Region

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Abstract

Export Processing Zones (EPZs) have brought about a new phenomenon with labour-oriented industrial activities in developing countries. These industrial clusters act as an enclave creating numerous changes in the economic and social environment of the particular region. Huge in-migration flow towards the first three EPZs in Katunayake, Biyagama and Koggala from all districts of the country fulfils the labour requirement of each EPZ. This huge flow of young male and female workers contribute to an imbalanced demographic pattern in the region, especially in the immediate neighbourhood of the EPZ. The present paper explores the population dynamics of three regions (Katana, Biyagama and Habaraduwa DSDs) and analyses the demographic characteristics of the EPZ workers living in the immediate neighbourhood. The GNDs were categorised into three levels according to the proximity to EPZ. Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka provided necessary data (2001 and 2012). Primary data were gathered through a questionnaire survey directed to EPZ workers and informal interviews with native residents. Data analysis is based on SPSS (22), MS Excel and ArcGIS (10.1) using demographic measures and descriptive statistics. Findings reveal that there is a significant demographic imbalance and unusual demographic pattern in the immediate neighbourhood of each EPZ compared to the GNDs in the distance in terms of population distribution, population growth, age-sex distribution. A similar pattern could be identified among the EPZ workers to confirm the unusual pattern has been created by these workers. The significance of the unusual demographic pattern is lesser in Habaraduwa as the flow of in-migration is also lesser than in the other two regions. The flow of labour migration has brought positive impacts on the regional economy and adverse impacts on the socio-cultural environment of the region.

Keywords:

demographic characteristics, export processing zones, labour migration