



Determinants of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity and residential sectorial diversity of it:

An exploratory study in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Purpose- This study explores the determinants of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity (WWCS) in terms of female labor force participation and examines the nature of residential sectorial (Urban, Rural & Estate) diversity of this sensitivity in Sri Lanka.

Design/methodology/approach – This exploratory study involved a qualitative in-depth analysis of the evidence of wage differential compensation sensitivity through an empirical study in Sri Lanka. The data collection for this study was done through an interview procedure and it has adopted snowballing sampling technique to select subjects for the sample. In line with this approach, the researcher has recruited sample members from three separate clusters namely urban, rural, and estate residential sectorial clusters. Qualitative data was analyzed through the reflexive thematic analysis approach which was introduced by Braun and Clarke.

Findings – This study found that rural females are highly sensitive to wage differential compensation in terms of labor force participation and estate females showed the least sensitivity. Motherhood and child age, co-habitation of grandparents, male supremacy in traditionally patriarchal families, intergenerational education & learning, voluntary child labor, human trafficking for women labor exploitation, and growth needs & domestic financial requirements are recognized as the determinants of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity.

Key Words: Female labor force participation, Thematic Analysis, Sri Lanka, Women's wage differential compensation

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Problem of women empowerment have been hotly debated globally, but have intensified in South Asia including Sri Lanka, which has seen rapid economic growth and structural transformation in recent decades. Although Sri Lanka is leading in South Asian region in terms of female educational attainment at all three levels namely primary, secondary and tertiary levels, the labor force participation of females in Sri Lanka is observed at relatively low level (Kotikula & Solotaroff, 2006). Local scholars also observed that there's a mismatch between educational advantage and labor force contribution of females although Sri Lankan females possess an educational advantage over their male counterparts (Gunewardena, 2004). Therefore, it is essential to go beyond the discussion on women empowerment and step forward towards the understanding of labor market participation. Articles from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan trace the struggles of garment workers, middle-class professionals, subsistence farmers and wage workers, actors, institutions and businesses that block the path to women's empowerment in global value chains (Nazneen, Hossain, & Chopra, 2019). Collectively, the articles argue that paid work should be seen as a decisive platform for the struggle for women's power and not an end in itself. Therefore, most of these articles emphasize the validity of wage factor as tool of women empowerment.

The work of the World Bank supports a greater understanding of gender equality and promotes economic participation of women. Across South Asia, its programs help girls and boys begin and complete their education, provide training relevant to employer requests, open access to finance and support small businesses, and contribute to the growth of self-help groups (Cho, Robalino , & Watson , 2016). Anyway, these interventions alone are not enough to economically empower females in South Asian region, and research shows that even women who have completed skills programs and are employed are leaving in response to family pressures (Donnelly, Twenge, Clark, Shaikh, Beiler-May, & Carter, 2015). Absence of addition incentives to compensate that family pressure can be one of the main reasons for such leaves. If countries have properly planned and implemented policy framework to

overcome those barriers for women employment, it will give a significant boost to the South Asian economy.

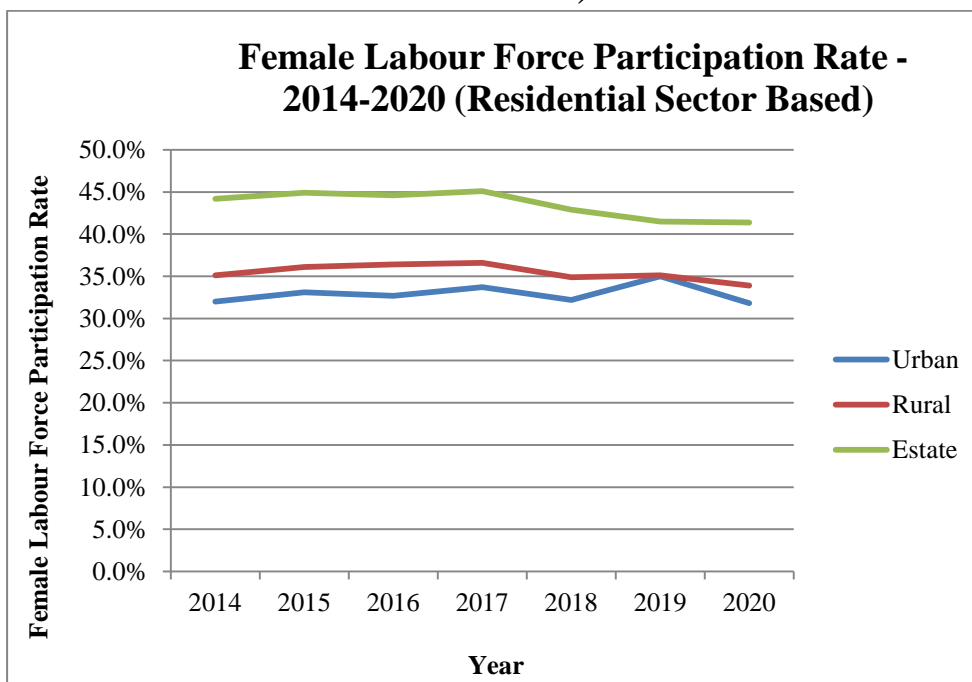
1.2 Research Problem

The story of female labor force participation (FLFP) is regretting in Sri Lanka. According to the Labor Force Survey Annual Report 2020, female labour force participation was recorded as 32% and male labour force participation exceed the double of it too and accounted for 71.9% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2020). Accordingly, 2/3rd of the female population in Sri Lanka is not belonging to the labor force and staying at home which is a sorrowful stagnating economic issue in Sri Lanka (Samarakoon & Mayadunne, 2018).

Triple burden faced by women because of their triple roles in the society is a major obstacle for women's economic empowerment. Women's triple roles include reproductive works (domestic work, child care, adult care etc.), community managing works (Social works, village religious works, women club activities etc.) and productive works /work for income or subsistence (informal enterprises, formal employment etc.) (Tonnie Zibani, 2016). Therefore, women may not be economically empowered to work without having extra financial incentive because they demand an additional wage as compensation to cover the value of time cost of carrying out women's normal day to day as housewife and other such activities need to be sacrificed when joining the work force. Therefore, it's important to study "how Sri Lankan females are sensitive for wage differential compensation in terms of labour force participation" in order to design productive wage policy to minimize the gender gap of labour force participation in Sri Lanka by bringing non-working females to labour force.

Residential sector based economically active population in Sri Lanka was an important focus in the Labor Force Survey Annual Reports published by the Department of Census and Statistics. According to these reports female labor force participation in estate sector was higher than both urban and rural sectors since past (*Figure 1.1*).

Figure 1.1 : Female Labour Force Participation Rate-2014-2020 (Residential Sector Based)



Source: (Department of Census and Statistics, 2020)

Estate females show high labour force participation rate because of high tendency of them to be self-employed within the estate sector although estate males internally migrate to other regions for jobs (Kotikula & Solotaroff, 2006). It explains that, the estate production is predominantly done by females. Gender inequality in the estate sector is characterized not by a gap in labor force participation but by a disparity in earnings. It was found that, estate females are earning significantly low wage when compared with wage of estate males (Kotikula & Solotaroff, 2006). This clearly depicts that wages earned by estate females is low although female labour force participation is relatively higher in estate sector than both urban and rural sectors. However average monthly earning of prime-age female employees in other residential sectors is higher than the estate sector and it is highest in urban sector. Rs. 25,433.5 and Rs. 41,168.3 were recorded as the average monthly earning of prime-age female employees in rural and urban sectors respectively in 2019 (International Labour Organization (ILO) , 2019). Even though mean wages are relatively high in rural and urban sectors, female labour force participation is comparatively low in those residential sectors than estate sector (Department of Census and Statistics, 2020). This fact pushes the study to investigate determinants of sensitivity shown by females

on “wage” factor in terms of labour force participation and explore why females in different residential sectors are differently sensitive for wage differential compensation or extra wage payment to offset the extra opportunity cost of working females. If there’s diversity in this sensitivity, it will be essential to identify causes for residential sectorial diversity in women’s wage differential compensation sensitivity (WWCS) in terms of female labor force participation for proper labour economic policy implications. This study will be filling this research gap.

1.3 Research Questions

The researcher expected to answer two (2) research questions to achieve the ultimate aims of this study.

Research questions:

1. What are the determinants of women’s wage differential compensation sensitivity (WWCS) in terms of female labor force participation?
2. What is the nature of residential sectorial (Urban, Rural & Estate) diversity of women’s wage differential compensation sensitivity in Sri Lanka?

1.4 Objectives of the study

In order to answer the stated research problem and the research questions, two (2) objectives of the study were set.

Research objectives:

1. To explore the determinants of Sri Lanka’s women’s wage differential compensation sensitivity (WWCS) in terms of female labor force participation.
2. To investigate the nature of residential sectorial (Urban, Rural & Estate) diversity of women’s wage differential compensation sensitivity in Sri Lanka.

2. Methodology

This study is an exploratory study because it investigates a research issues that have not been previously studied in depth (Swedberg, 2020).

2.1 Population and Sampling

Population:

All the non-working married females with kids in Sri Lanka are identified as the population in this analysis. This population includes females in all the three residential sectors namely urban, rural and estate sectors of Sri Lanka.

Sampling:

To select the members for sample, this study has adopted a non-probability sampling technique called snowballing sampling technique/ chain-referral sampling which was extensively utilized for qualitative researches.

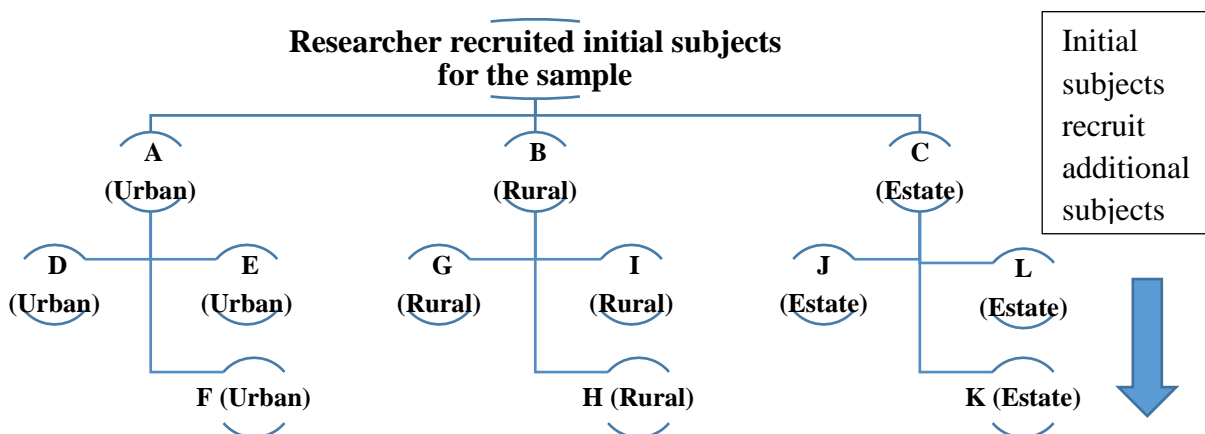
In line with this approach, researcher has recruited first three (3) members for the sample through personal network of the researcher. These three members were selected from three separate clusters namely urban, rural and estate residential sectorial clusters. Member from urban cluster is recruited through the network with urban council of Maharagama in Colombo district. Network with Medical Officer of Health (MOH), Polgahawela in Kurunegala District was used to recruit a member from rural sector. And third member was recruited by the researcher through the network with manager of the Henakanda Estate, Alpitiya plantation in Galle District. As the study progressed, researcher has reached to multiple respondents who were recommended by the initial participants. In this manner, researcher has utilized this snowballing sampling technique for the sampling process of this qualitative study as recommended by Rossman and Rallis(Rossman and Rallis, 2011).

Snowball sampling technique is very useful when there is no pre-calculated list of target populations. This research also used this technique due to the absence of a proper list of jobless married women with children. Ultimately, sample of this study is consisted with twelve (12) respondents from all the three residential sectors (strata) namely urban, rural and estate sectors. Four participants from each sector were

selected for the sample. That means, this study has mixed snowball sampling technique with proportionate stratified sampling technique when choosing respondents. Process of sampling is illustrated by figure 2.1.

This study expected variation in sensitivity of females on wage differential compensation in terms of economic empowerment.

Figure 2.1: Sampling process employed in qualitative phase of the study



2.2 Collection of Data

The data collection for this qualitative study was done through interview procedure. Face to face interview discussions were conducted for all the respondents except for three (3) urban participants. Due to social distancing policies and limits on physical meet-ups modes during the period of second wave of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka, those three urban participants were interviewed through online modes. Interviews have allowed respondents to ask questions for further clarification within the conversation. These interviews were conducted in a friendly manner to avoid becoming stressed and create a relaxed platform for the respondent to share their life experiences openly. All discussions were conducted in Sinhala language because it is the mother language of Sri Lankans which is more convenient for respondents to share their life experiences comfortably in story format. However, all the conversations were recorded on an electronic device with the acknowledgement of interviewees.

An interview protocol was finalized by including all the testable fields recognized from extensive literature review. Accordingly, this protocol includes five main sections in addition to general information namely current household life vs job life, barriers for economic empowerment, time analysis, sensitivity analysis on labour force participation and women empowerment, determinants of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity. After asking general information about the respondents, the interviews started with the broad question of how respondents perceive their current living standard (under situation with no engagement in labour force) and expected living standard for future. Question aimed at exploring real-world barriers that discourage women from participating in the workforce was asked next. Most of the respondents answered in story format to showcase the barriers than providing direct answers for the questions. In the fourth section of the interview, researcher asked respondents to allocate the time (assumed, 16 hours are available per day for tasks) they would spend on tasks such as child care, household activities, grand parental care, personal care, leisure and other activities. After that time analysis, last section focused on most important part of the interview, sensitivity analysis. There was variation in psychological and behavioral responses showed by females if they receive an additional wage as a compensation to cover the extra opportunity cost of joining the labour force after sacrificing all the daily routine tasks that they mentioned in section four. In this final section, respondents were given the opportunity to express their level of sensitivity towards the wage differential compensation and story behind the sensitivity status to find out the root causes for the diversity of women's wage compensation sensitivity.

Average total time duration consumed per interview is 90 minutes. The interviews are consisted with three phases. First 10-15 minutes were used to create close and harmonious relationship with the respondents to understand each other. Approximately 1 hour was consumed to drive targeted discussion and last 10-15 minutes were spent on Post-interview conversation. However, the data collection took about three (3) months from August end to November end 2020.

All the physical interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes. In some interviews, husband and other family members also joined with the few parts of the interview. Important insights were provided by the ideas added by the husband and

behaviors of the kids in the family within the interview. Schouten also emphasize the importance of having participation of family members in interviews for some areas which are related to joint experience (Schouten, 1991).

2.3 Method of Data Analysis

This study has adopted the thematic analysis (TA) which was cited as a foundational method for qualitative analysis. This is a method which involves in recognizing patterns of meaning or themes across a qualitative data set or life narratives of respondents. Real analysis of life narratives or stories can be done by using various research strategies. This study has used mixture of psychological and biographical approach to analyze story form data. Psychological approach involved in analyzing the stories of Sri Lankan females in terms of motivations and internal thoughts. However, factors like family background, educational background, social class etc. are taken into consideration under biographical approach when analyzing the life stories of the Sri Lanka's female respondents in relation to the society.

However, this research used widely cited theoretically flexible approach to TA called reflexive thematic analysis approach which was introduced by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (Braun and Clarke, 2006) . It is different from the other approaches to thematic analysis in terms of process of theme development.

According to the recommendations of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, three aspects should be considered before begin the data analysis through above approach. Those three aspects are the type of thematic analysis, way of identifying themes and the level of identifying themes. Accordingly, the study should identify the type of the thematic analysis firstly. Researcher was fully familiarized with the data set because he was the one who conducted all the interviews for data collection. Therefore, out of the two types of thematic analysis explained by Braun and Clarke, this study has chosen the second type which involves in providing detailed accounts of various aspects of the research questions/objectives(Braun and Clarke, 2006). Then, the study should determine the way of identifying themes. According to Braun and Clarke, theoretical thematic analysis and inductive thematic analysis are the two ways available to identify potential themes. This study has adopted the inductive thematic analysis to identify theme because it's the way which is driven by data instead of

theories (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Finally, the researcher should determine the level at which themes are going to be identified. Semantic or explicit level and latent or interpretative level are the two optional levels of identifying themes. With the semantic approach, analyst is not seeing anything beyond what respondents said. But latent approach guide analyst to go beyond the semantic content. It involves in interpretative work when developing themes. Therefore, this study latent level as the level of identifying themes.

There are six phases in the reflexive thematic analysis. Table 2.1 illustrates those phases and description of the process.

Table 2.1: Phases of Thematic Analysis (TA) and description of the process

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	In this phase, researcher have to familiarize himself/herself the data. And, then initial list of ideas should be generated about what is in the dataset and what parts are interesting about them. Further, transcription of verbal data is necessary to be prepared if researcher's data collection method is an interview or similar verbal mode.
1. Generating initial codes	Code is a brief phrase. This phase involves in the coding process which is used to recognize parts from the data set that are interesting to analyst and related to answer research question. This step should ensure that all relevant actual data extracts are coded and then merged together within each code.
2. Searching for themes	Classification of the various codes into potential themes and merging of all

	relevant coded data within the identified themes are done under this phase.
3. Reviewing themes	In this phase, researcher have to review themes in two levels. Under level one, all the collated extracts for each theme are needed to be read by the researcher in order to identify whether coherent pattern is appearing in coded data extracts. If coherent pattern is there, then researcher could move to the level two in which validity of individual themes in relation to the data set is reviewed.
4. Defining and naming themes	Phase of ‘defining and refining’, involves in recognizing the ‘essence’ of each theme and determining the aspect of the data captured by each theme. An informative name for each theme is also determined under this phase.
5. Producing the report	All the themes identified in early phases are presented in written form together with the data extracts and analytic narrative under this step. Contextualizing of the qualitative analysis in relation to prevailing literatures is also done under this final step.

Source :*(Braun and Clarke, 2006)*

3. Analysis and Findings

3.1 Sample Profile of the Study

Frequency tables were also used for the frequency distribution analysis of sample profiles in the qualitative study. Residential sector, age, education level, number of children is the demographic factors considered in this analysis.

The researcher was able to carry the study with well diverse sample in terms of demographic figures. The diversity of the participants can be illustrated from Table 3.1-3.5.

Table 3.1: Sample profile -Residential Sector

Residential Sector	Number of Participants	Percentage of representation
Urban	4	33.33%
Rural	4	33.33%
Estate	4	33.33%
Total	12	100%

Source: Data extracted from the interview participation

According to the table 3.1, Equal numbers of participants were selected from three residential sectors namely urban, Rural and Estate. That's a result of usage of proportionate stratified sampling technique.

Table 3.2: Sample profile -Age of Participants

Age range	Number of Participants	Percentage of representation
16-25	1	8.33%
26-35	6	50%
36-45	2	16.66%

46-55	3	25 %
Total	12	100%

Source: Data extracted from the interview participation

With reference to the table 3.2, majority of the sample was represented by the females who are belonging to the age category of 26-45 and minority was represented by females who are aged below 26 and above 45.

Table 3.3: Sample profile -Education Level of Participants

Education Level	Number of Participants	Percentage of representation
No education or only up to 5 years of education	1	8.33%
More than 5 years and less than 10 years of education	4	33.33%
More than 10 years and less than 14 years of education	5	41.66%
Above 14 years of education	2	16.66%
Total	12	100%

Source: Data extracted from the interview participation

According to statistics in Table 3.3, number of participants with moderate level of education is comparatively high in the sample than low educated and high educated respondents

Table 3.4: Sample profile -Number of children in the families of Participants

Number of children in the family	Number of Participants	Percentage of representation
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Single child	2	16.66%
Two children	6	50%
Three children	3	25%
More than three children	1	8.33%
Total	12	100%

Source: Data extracted from the interview participation

With reference to the Table 3.4, Majority of the participants in the sample have two or three children. Only one participant has one child and other participants have more than one child in their families.

Table 3.5: Sample profile -Co-habitation of grandparents in families of Participants

Co-habitation of grandparents	Number of Participants	Percentage of representation
Grandparents are living in the same household	8	66.66%
Grandparents are not living in the same household	4	33.33%
Total	12	100%

Source: Data extracted from the interview participation

According to the table 3.5, more than 60% of the participants are living together with their grandparents. Therefore, number of participants live separately from grandparents is limited.

3.2 Thematic analysis and Findings

Major findings of thematic analysis of the study address the research questions mentioned at the beginning. The results of the thematic analysis related to following research question are presented in detail under this section.

R1: What are the determinants of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity (WWCS) in terms of female labor force participation?

Extract from the interviews done with participants and observations based on field notes made by the researcher provide supporting evidence of the themes emerging from the data. Findings of this qualitative study are presented under seven (7) major themes in a way that research questions are addressed. These seven major themes are identified as determinants of Sri Lanka's residential sectorial diversity in women's wage differential compensation sensitivity (WWCS) in terms of female labor force participation. Themes built are presented as follows¹.

1. Motherhood and Child Age

"Motherhood & child age" is identified as the key determinant of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity. Being a mother, especially with young age children is directly associated with lower sensitivity for women's wage differential compensation among females in Sri Lanka. This has directly slowed down the labour force participation of females indirectly increased the male labour force participation. This thematic analysis shows that women are more likely to be out of the workforce even though they receive addition payment or subsidy as a wage differential compensation when they are married and have children, especially when they have young age kids.

According to the findings, majority of the females have done at least one job before they reach to motherhood. Childbearing push their steps back to house from the workplace. Women who live alone are more likely to be in the workforce than women who live with kids under a complete family. Therefore, sensitivity shown by females for financial motive like wage differential compensation is relatively low among mothers than single female in working age.

¹ When presenting extractions under each theme, fake names are given to participants by the author to protect their personal identity.

"I'm super talented in tailoring since my childhood. So, I entered to a garment factory as a tailor in my home village when I was 18-year girl. I learnt lots about tailoring techniques at there. After one year, I joined with a garment factory in Colombo area, because I wanted to earn more through my skills in my young age. Later I got married when I was in 21 year of age. However, I have resigned from my job after bearing my first baby in 1996. After that, I was not in a situation to rejoin with a job even though my factory asked me to join as a team supervisor under increased basic salary" (Shanthi, Rural Female, 45 years)

Shanthi was motivated to earn more wage within her young age. That's why she has shifted from her hometown to Colombo. This statement indirectly says that, single female with no family responsibilities or child care burden can be easily be motivated to do jobs through financial incentive like wage differential compensation. But the main root cause for Shanthi's resignation from job is the birth of her elder child. At that period, she had refused the opportunity to earn higher salary that she received through a promotion. This action of herself clearly reflects that, mothers are not that much sensitive for wage differential compensation due to child care responsibilities. On the other hand, Shanthi started to play the role of traditional woman who always get limited to unpaid child care activities which is a part of care economy.

"After completion of my A/L s, I had a hope to build my own financial independence without giving further financial pressure for my parents. So, I joined a nursing home as a nursing staff member and worked there for 7 years. After my marriage, I was in confusion whether to full stop for the job or not. Anyway, I got my first child, my daughter when I was in 30 years of age. Two months after the maternal leave period, I realized that bond with my baby is valuable for me than money. So, I immediately resigned from the nursing home after writing letters to HR department" (Thamara, Urban Female 31 years)

Financial independence can be cited as an important indicator of women's economic empowerment (Golla *et al.*, 2011). As per Thamara, females also have aspiration to become financially independent individual during their pre-motherhood life and wage earned through a job is a better source to achieve that financial independence. That means, females in pre-motherhood era are highly sensitive for financial incentives like wage differential compensation. However, Thamara has highlighted bond between mother and the child as a key reason for her resignation from the job. And she also

perceived money as an inferior fact when compared with that parental bond. This implies that, emotional aspects related to child care matters a lot in determination of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity. Accordingly, motherhood is a reason for low sensitivity for women's wage differential compensation.

In addition to motherhood, child age also significantly impacts on women's wage differential compensation sensitivity. Thematic analysis found that, mothers are less likely to empower economically by joining the labour force when their children are in early childhood. Therefore, sensitivity for wage differential compensation is very low at the young age of children. But it is showing an increasing tendency with the growth of the children. As per findings, women's wage differential compensation sensitivity will start to decline after a certain age of their children.

*"At beginning, I didn't work and fully focused on children during their infant period because my children expected mother's care always during that age. They at least didn't eat anything given by an outsider. So, they wanted me to stay with them always. At that time, daily wage paid for a tea plucker is about Rs.500. Later, that payment was increased up to Rs. 700 by the government. But I thought spending time with my children is better than wasting time in a tea plantation during the young age of my kids. When children were schooling, I decided to join as a tea leaf picker because I didn't have a big role to play during children's schooling hours. Last year, I stopped working for pay because both of my sons were earning on their own after O/L s."
(Rani, Estate Female, 49 years)*

Rani is a female from estate sector. She clearly showed the relationship between child age and women's wage differential compensation sensitivity. At the young age of children, she didn't work for pay even though there's a wage increment done by the government. But her sensitivity for wage increment was gradually increased with the growth and schooling of her children, so that joined with the work force. However, that sensitivity began to wane as her children became adults with their own sources of income. Furthermore, Rani points out that children in the estate sector finish their education early and start their own separate lives. For this reason, women are not tempted to continue earning for family purposes. Accordingly, in estate sector both beginning of rise of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity and beginning of decline of that sensitivity after a certain age of their children are happened earlier than the other sectors.

"Although, I stopped working at the catering hotel canteen after the birth of loku (elder son), I had an interest to work again. So, I joined the catering hotel canteen again when loku (elder child) is in grade 3. But balance remained in the hand after deducting the transport cost and other job-related costs was like a sochchama (very small amount). Later, I decided not to do a separate job and to support my husband's job in the home barbershop. When I was 45, I got chance to look after the children of a wealthy neighborhood family for a payment. But I didn't continue it for long period because there was no big money requirement during adult age of my children. So now I want to spend time for my mental relaxation and religious activities" (Rukmani, Rural female, 54 years).

Rural female called Rukmani has rejoined with her usual job after the early childhood of her child. According to her, main root cause for stoppage of her work life is the lack of wage. It is clear that the importance given to wages by rural women is higher than that of women in other sectors. Therefore, the wage differential compensation sensitivity shown by rural women is high compared to other sectors. However, rural females also show increase in wage differential compensation sensitivity with the growth of the children. Rukmani wanted to give more attention on mental and spiritual well-being once her children reach to adulthood. This implies a reduction in the sensitivity for rural women's wage differentiation compensation after adulthood of their children.

"I don't like to do 8 am-5 pm job again, because now I'm extremely busy with my 6-moth daughter. I like to open a salon in the home once my daughter grown up to an understandable age. If the government can provide financial support, at least for the initial months, it will be a great incentive for ladies like us. However, I plan to avoid working after the 50s. Because I think it would be good to have the freedom to provide good care for my grandchildren during my old age. (Thamara, Urban Female, 31 years)

According urban lady called Thamara, most ideal worker type for herself is own account worker. This is common for almost all the urban females in the sample. Therefore, urban females like Thamara are ready to join the labour force as own account workers if they receive any subsidy as a women's wage differential compensation. Thamara is planning to start this business only after her daughter reach to good age like teenage. But she is not planning to do a job after the childbearing of her children even though she receives subsidy, because she wants to have freedom to

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young age are belonging to prime working-age. Wage differential compensation is highly essential to motivate prime age women.

2. Co-habitation of grand parents

According to the findings, another key determinant of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity is co-habitation with grandparents. This study found that, females who are living together with grandparents in same household are showing greater sensitivity for wage differential compensation than females who are living separately from grandparents.

"When I was working in a garment factory, my mother did all the chores like bringing son to school, washing son's uniforms, preparing lunch packet for him etc. and I would not be able to go to the factory to earn if my mother was not there to look after my son." (Mari Amma, Estate Female, 34 years)

An estate female named Mari Amma has gone to garment factory by assigning child care chores to her mother and she still believes that her mother's support was a critical factor affected for her earning decision. Therefore, estate females will highly sensitive to wage differential compensation if grandparents are living together in the same household.

" It's easy for me to go somewhere and start earning money because amamma (husband's mother) is there to take care of my children. So, if there's an increment in salaries, surely, I can join with that job after asking from my husband"(Malika, Rural Female, 35 year)

Malika has identified co-habitation of grandparents as a mean to reduce the child care burden of herself, so that she is ready join the workforce if there's a financial incentive like wage increment. Accordingly, rural women's wage differential compensation sensitivity also can be strengthened by the co-habitation of grandparents.

" We can't trust anyone. We can't expect parental protection from a third party for our children. So, my husband and I would never put my children in day care. Since we moved to Colombo after my husband's job transfer, we settled away from our parents. So, there is no one trustworthy to take care of my children except me. That's why I can't go to work even though I can earn good salary with my education" (Pavithra, Urban Female, 30 years)

Pavithra, an urban woman, was reluctant to hand over the responsibility of her children to the day care center. However, she has identified "grandparents not being with them" and "inability to find another trustworthy person to take care of their children" as significant reasons for not going for a job. Because most urban families are nuclear families, grandparents often do not live in the same house. With reference to this scenario, "absence of grandparents in the same household" can weaken the women's wage differential compensation sensitivity of urban female.

3. Male Supremacy in traditionally patriarchal families

Male Supremacy in traditionally patriarchal families is also identified as strong determinant of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity.

Male supremacy misinterprets all women as genetically inferior, weak and manipulative group in the society and that limits females only to reproductive and household activities. Male supremacists perceive that women are fundamentally inferior to men through a biological analysis, so that males specifically insult women for their gender (Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), 2019). Many scholars found that, husbands are more powerful in making decisions than wives, specifically in traditionally patriarchal families (Wagner *et al.*, 1990). Marriage functions as a social institution, limiting the role of women in Sri Lanka in certain behaviors, and shaping the role of women in society as to how she expects to be a daughter, a sister, a mother and a wife. This has created a common myth that a woman limits her role to household chores. Therefore, women in Sri Lanka seem to have a less domestic autonomy and male supremacy was identified as salient feature of Sri Lankan patriarchal families (Sumuduni Vithanage, 2015).

According to findings, absence of paid job for females further weaken the domestic autonomy of themselves because women who are unemployed and don't earn money have a weaker say in domestic decision making than women who have a job or do work for money. The male supremacy was clearly observed in this qualitative analysis as the sample consisted of non-working females.

"I don't know how to say my story.... I was schooled only until grade 6. Since there were no option to survive alone, I married a shopkeeper who is 6 years elder than me, when I was 17 years. Later, I got chance to work in a garment factory through a friend's contact. But my husband mistrusted me always because, at that time I dressed well when going to garment daily. On one day, I got bit late to come home due to over workload in the factory. As soon as I entered the house, with the strong distrust in my husband's mind, he started beating me and my son. He bit my neck like a devil and hit my son's spinal until the broom broke. Eventually my son was admitted to the hospital with vomiting blood. I finally quit my job. Even if I'm paid by Masuran (valuable coins) I will never go back to work. Mister, we are living not in a house.... (Crying) This is a big hell... (Mari Amma, Estate Female, 34 years)

Mari Amma, an estate female indicates the dehumanized behaviors of male occurred due to male supremacy in estate families. She also indicates the distrust of husbands about their wives. That is because of their less education and social experiences. According to Mari Amma, she dropped out of school at an early age and married a person who with a job to hide her poverty due to a lack of education. This is a common phenomenon in many spheres of the estate sector. As a result, wives have to say "Yes" for every decision of husbands. Under this kind of background, Mari Amma was not ready to join the work force again even though she receives any financial motive. Therefore, male supremacy is a key reason for relatively low wage differential compensation sensitivity in estate sector.

"What the hell is this.....(Aggressively). Don't you have any other questions to ask from my wife. Are you going to create new problems in my family? My wife will not take decisions according to you. She is my wife, not your wife. Get out from the house...." (Thramakumari's husband, Estate sector male, 31

Above statement shows the reply given by Thramakumari 's husband (estate sector) when researcher ask the questions regarding impact of earning cash through a job for her bargain power and domestic autonomy in the family. This husband's aggressive behavior is a good proof for negative impact of male supremacy on employment decisions of estate females.

"Mmmm.... I like to do a job. But after my first pregnancy, my husband didn't allow me to go for a job. If my husband gives me permission, I will definitely do a job for an increased salary in the future. He will not restrict me from going to work if I get it close to my home " (Malika, Rural Female, 35 year)

Malika will join the labor force if she can get a higher salary only with the permission of her husband. This means that women do not have complete freedom to make their

own decisions, in rural areas too. However, she believes her husband will give permission if the workplace is close to home. Then it will be easier for women to balance household activities with the job. According to Malika, despite the male supremacy in the rural sector, its negative impact on women's employment decisions is not as high as in the estate sector. Therefore, the sensitivity of rural women to wage differential compensation is higher in the rural sector than in other sectors.

"I can't go beyond his opinion because my husband is like a father to me and my whole family. We think he knows what's right and wrong, what should be happened and what shouldn't be happened. So, if he asked me to stay at home and look after children, that should be the right thing. Anyway, I love to do cake classes in my home for cake baking students in future. If the government can subsidize us instead of loans at least to set basic outlay, it would be great for me. I don't think my husband would say "no" if I could bring in extra income at home." (Vishaka, Urban Female, 35 years)

An urban woman named Visakha showed the background of male dominance in the urban sector. She did not intervene much to change her husband's decisions because she believed that all his decisions were right. Women's participation in decision making greatly increased with age, education, and number of children (Senarath and Nalika Gunawardena, 2009). Urban women have a relatively good education and skills, so their decision-making autonomy is greater than other sectors. But wives often have great respect for their husbands' education, profession, age, power, and experience. That's why Visakha likened her husband to a father. Despite some degree of male dominance, she still believes that her husband will not say "no" if she can earn extra income at home. However, she is expecting wage differential compensation from government in form of subsidy to start own account work. This shows that the wage differential compensation sensitivity of women in urban areas is relatively high due to the less negative impact of male supremacy on women's employment decisions.

4. Intergenerational education & learning

Intergenerational education & learning is recognized as another determinant of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity in Sri Lanka. This means, that the impact of parents' education on their children's school success can have a

significant impact on the level of sensitivity that women show for wage differential compensation.

" When I was 13, I stopped going to school because our parents did not have enough money to teach us well and they were so illiterate. I still remember my teachers blaming me for going to school barefoot and carrying books in a shopping bag. However, my eldest son was educated up to grade 10 and the youngest up to O / L. But he failed that exam. He then dropped out of school. We are the little people in this estate. So, I don't want to see my kids daydreaming about doing blue collar work. The eldest son (eldest son) is now a three-wheeler driver in town. That's enough for us... So, despite the increase in daily pay in tea plantation, I do not want to go back to work. (Rani, Estate Female, 49 years)

Rani was not a well-educated person. She says she had ended school since she was a child. Rani cited financial problems, the marginalization of poor estate students in schools, and the lack of expectation of parents to teach higher education as reasons for Rani to drop out of school at a young age in the estate sector. Furthermore, it is clear from this statement that parents' educational background has a significant impact on their children's schooling. Rani had give-up children's education after they reach to teenage and she had no plans to switch children to alternative education after failing exams. Although her children received a better education than she did, she had no desire to teach higher. As a result, despite the increase in her daily wage at the tea estate, she did not feel the need to return to work. The sensitivity of estate women to wage differential compensation is relatively low, as less educated women have less desire to earn more and provide a better education for their children.

" In my field service experience, rural women have very little education. Most girls get an education only up to the Ordinary Level and by the grade 9, very few have done the Advanced Level exam. I think low educational family background is the main reason for this educational catastrophe. Since rural women do not have much education, no institution tends to pay high wages because their labor is of no value. But I believe that if the government or NGOs pay them a reasonable extra pay or subsidy for a job without making further discrimination on education, there will be a huge competition for such jobs among non-working rural women, because they know that will not receive such benefit again due to their less education". (Malkanthi, Public Health Midwife in a rural area, 55 years)

As the researcher was interviewed rural sector females with the assistance of a MOH office, Malkanthi, a public health midwife, shared her field service experience as above. She pointed the low-income family background of rural families as a major reason why girls drop out of school in their teens. According to Malkanthi, less educated rural females will be highly sensitive for wage increment or subsidization, because of lack of opportunities to earn more by less educated females. Therefore, wage differential compensation sensitivity among rural female is relatively high.

" My mom was a teacher and dad were a post master. Since they know the value of education a lot, they wanted me also to study till university level to do a good job. Thanks to their sleepless effort, finally I ended with bachelor degree in a local university. Even though, I resigned the job because of children, I had a good income since the beginning in my Accountant job what I did after university. " (Nadee, Urban Female, 44 years)

Nadee, urban lady indicates the favorable impact of her parents' good educational background on her success in academic life. Finally, she ended up with a university degree. But She emphasize the ability of an educated urban female to do job at satisfiable high wage. Therefore, additional financial incentive will not be a that much good way to economically empower themselves. Therefore, having relatively good educational level can lower the women's wage differential compensation sensitivity among urban females.

5. Voluntary Child Labour

Another important determinant of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity is voluntary child labour. This was at a high level in the estate sector. According to the selected sample, no voluntary child labor was observed in the urban sector and rural sector.

All children that engage in economic activities, paid or contributing in the production of goods and services that have an economic value, at least one hour during a reference period are belonging to child labour (ILO, 2016). The Sri Lanka government has ratified many ILO Conventions and incorporated legislative policies to eradicate child labor(Ekanayaka, 2018). Further, the government of Sri Lanka provides free education at the primary, secondary and university levels, making it compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 16 (United Nations Children's

Fund, 2013). Because of these strong government action, Sri Lanka recently showed declining tendency of child labour (ILO, 2016).

But this research found that, still there are unrecorded voluntary child labour among poor families in Sri Lanka. It has impacted on women's' wage differential compensation sensitivity of females in estate sector.

" My mother was a tea plucker. She worked in the evenings too (re-working in other houses for wages) because the income from the estate was not enough. Otherwise, we have to remain hungry on that day. She had no rest because of work. We saw her burden. So, I stopped my schooling at the age of 11 and started plucking tea as a support for my mother to achieve the kilo goal of the day. Kankanam mahaththaya (Plantation Superintendent) didn't allow children to work at estate. But we did it stealthily. because he didn't allow females to bring children. After I dropped out of school and started working, my mother gradually reduced working, especially reduced working for pay at evening hours" (Rajeswari, Estate sector female, 27 years)

Rajeswari, a woman in the plantation sector who is not currently working, shared her childhood experiences as above. According to her explanation, she started working in a tea plantation voluntarily after dropping out of school mainly to alleviate financial problems and parental burden. This means, decreasing incomes are associated with lowering in the family's ability to triage economic shocks without child labor. Since most of the families are poor in estate sector, voluntary child labour was a common phenomenon observed in estate sector. Rajeswari also said that, her mother had gradually reduced intention to work for pay as result of entrance of herself to workforce. It has been clearly demonstrated that voluntary child labor can weaken the sensitivity for wage differential compensation of women in the estate sector.

" Since there were no want for my parents to teach me to top, I was schooled only until grade 6 and got married by age of 17 years. Before the marriage, I had nothing to do in day-time. I was idle. So, I thought of going to tea plantation and earn something when I was 12. Waththe mahaththaya (head of the estate) wasn't gone against to our decision even though it was forbidden to employ children. Both my mother and I worked there in the beginning, but later my mother often took leave to bring my aachchi (grandmother) to the clinics" (Thramakumari, Estate Female, 24 years)

Thramakumari pointed out that the lack of attention paid to school education is a reason for dropping out of school life and for voluntary child labor. Thramakumari clearly showed that after enrolling herself in the labor force, the mother's working hours for pay were reduced due to adult care. Therefore, voluntary child labor can weaken the sensitivity for wage differential compensation of women in the estate sector.

6. Human trafficking for women labour exploitation

Human trafficking for women labour exploitation is the next determinant of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity according to the research findings. This determinant was observed mainly in estate and rural areas.

"Trafficking in human beings" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation(Council of Europe, 2019). Labor exploitation is a component of the criminal offenses that comprise modern slavery (GLA, 2015).

The concept of "labor exploitation" in the context of human trafficking is not clearly defined in international legal instruments. Slavery, servitude or bonded labour, forced labour are generally used to cover the concept of human trafficking for labour exploitation concept. In addition to those, carrying out work or providing services in conditions contrary to human dignity, making a person work under working conditions that are in clear discrepancy to those of other workers performing the same or a similar activity, restricting employee freedom, physical & verbal abusing are also recognized as human trafficking for labour exploitation(Council of Europe, 2019).

"These women belonged to the lowest class and caste in the villages of this plantation, and since most of them were Hindus, they believed that being a woman was a result of bad deed (a bad thing in the past). Almost all women were like slaves under male domination in the plantations too. They should work under heavy rain and scorching sun. No excuses. They cannot go against the commands of the big master. Although women are not openly shared, they are also exposed to sexual abuse and harassment. These problems cannot be solved by paying extra." (A welfare officer of an Estate, 38 years)

During the interviews at the Elpitiya Estate, one welfare officer joined the researcher and shared her experiences on the topic of the research. She provided the real picture of the estate sector that some women are afraid to share. In her experience, patriarchy & hierarchical labor regimes are the causes for human trafficking for the exploitation of women labor. She further mentioned that wage compensation is not a solution for different forms of human trafficking for women labour exploitation such as slavery, harsh working conditions, sexual abuse, harassments etc. Therefore, human trafficking for women labour exploitation can reduce the sensitivity of estate females for wage differential compensation.

" One day, I raised my voice against strict working conditions. For that reason, Kankanam Mahaththaya (Plantation Superintendent) reduces the weight of the plucked leaves and increases it for those who like him or for women who are silent even under the harsh background of work" (Rani, Estate Female, 49 years)

Rani also showed the slavery and servitude of female tea leaf pluckers in the estate sector. Slavery is the exercise of one of the powers of ownership. Servitude is an abuse of human dignity. Both slavery and servitude are included in the definition of human trafficking (Council of Europe, 2019). Since the payment of extra wages or subsidization could not have such positive impact on the reversal of slavery and slavery pressure, the sensitivity for wage differential compensation among women in the estate sector who have to work with human trafficking for the labour exploitation was relatively low.

" I had faced lots of challenges while working at a catering hotel canteen. We also had night shifts to cook for special occasions like weddings in next day. We had sleepless nights. But I worked with other workers in the hot kitchen. Only one dry toilet and one tap for washing was there for all 12 workers. Although, the restaurant owner had previously asked us to do night shifts only till 11 pm, later he forced us to work till 2 am on next day too. He also promised to pay Rs. 15,000 for 10 days but at the end he paid salary of 6 days only. They showed artificially manipulated records on working days to make pretend us. Finally, I resigned from that job with nothing because we were poor helpless people in the village "(Rukmani, Rural female, 54 years).

According Rukmani, because of helpless nature of the rural females, employers have tended to exploit women's labour in many ways. More importantly, Rukmani had

suffered with forced labour because hotel owners have asked them to work even after midnight forcefully. Forced labour is defined as the act of forcing a person, through violence or threat, to carry out work without remuneration or for remuneration manifestly bearing no relation to the scale of the work carried out. It is identified as a part of human trafficking for labour exploitation (Council of Europe, 2019). In addition, poor working conditions, restrictions on freedom, deception about wages / earnings are the other forms of human trafficking for the exploitation of female labor that pulled Rukmani to resign from the job. Although women are paid extra, they are less likely to join the workforce due to pressure of human trafficking. Therefore, human trafficking for the exploitation of women labor could weaken the sensitivity of compensation for the wage differentiation of women in rural areas too.

7. Growth Needs and Domestic financial requirements

There is another argument that women's wage differential compensation sensitivity is also determined by growth expectations and domestic financial requirements. This research identified that, there is a clear impact of women's growth needs to their financial requirement and financial requirement to women's wage differential compensation sensitivity.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory of psychology, consisting of a five-tiered model for human needs, often represented as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy, the needs are: physical, safety, love, respect and self-verification. This five-stage model can be divided into deficiency needs and growth needs. The first four levels are often called deficiency needs (D-needs) and the upper level are called growth needs (B-needs). (McLeod, 2017). Self-actualization needs which is explained by Maslow as the top level of need that an individual can achieve was identified under Growth Needs by Alderfer's ERG theory(Castellanos, 2014).

Growth need or self-actualization need is the person's desire for self-satisfaction, that is, his tendency to become truthful in what he can potentially do(McLeod, 2017). Females may have growth needs regarding themselves as well as their children too. According to research findings, women with such growth needs are having high level of financial requirements to achieve those growth needs. Such set of women show relatively high sensitivity for wage differential compensation.

" I feel that the present life at home is good for me. I don't have big ambitions in my life. I like to live a simple life with my child and husband. The husband works in a shop at Waduramba town. His income is enough for our survival." (Rajeshwari, Estate sector female, 27 years)

Rajeshwari's expression indicates the absence of big aspirations and growth needs among estate females. This means, she had focused on satisfying deficiency needs and not thought about growth needs, so that she didn't see any big financial requirements in the family. Rajeshwari has been living a life based on her husband and thinks that his income is enough to support their survival or satisfaction of deficiency needs. This implies that, estate females are less likely to join the labour force although they receive additional wage or subsidy as a wage differential compensation. This is a cause for relatively low women's wage differential compensation sensitivity in estate sector.

" I want to see my son entering a local university. So, I wanted to teach him very well somehow. We sent him to tuition classes in town too. With the elderring of children, money requirement increased gradually. So, I decided to do a job. But No one gave me job for enough. I finally went abroad as a female attendant to earn money for my children and I do not regret that decision as my eldest child was selected for the University of Colombo in 2017" (Kamala, Rural female, 52 years)

A rural woman named Kamala had great aspirations for her children and hoped to see a superb improvement in her children's lives with regard to academics. Although this growth needs of herself motivate her to join the labor force, rural women in general did not have high-paying jobs opportunities, possibly due to poor education. With rising financial requirements to meet growth needs, she eventually ended up going abroad for a job, mainly to earn higher salary. This clearly showed that, sensitivity shown by rural females is relatively high because of presence of growth needs and high financial requirements.

" Now a days, there's very big demand for beauty salon industry noh. So, I have already completed a training course at NAITA, rajagiriya I like to open a salon in the home once my daughter grown up to an understandable age. One day, I can develop it do build a good brand name in salon industry of this area, if government can encourage us through a subsidization programme" (Thamara, Urban Female, 31 years).

Thamara reflects the growth mindset of urban females. She has an expectation to develop a salon with good brand name in salon industry of her resident area. But she is expecting subsidy or financial support from the government to fulfill financial requirements related to accomplishment of her growth need. This concludes that, women's wage differential compensation sensitivity of urban females is also higher because of presence of growth needs and high financial requirements.

The results of the thematic analysis related to following research question are presented in detail under next section.

R2: What is the nature of residential sectorial (Urban, Rural & Estate) diversity of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity in Sri Lanka?

According to the findings, the lowest women's wage differential compensation sensitivity is observed in estate sector. That means, estate females are not that much sensitive to join the labour force although they will be paid with extra wage to compensate the additional opportunity cost of working female. This tendency is influenced by several factors. Extreme male supremacy, negative impact of parental less education on children's school dropouts at early age, high voluntary child labour, oppressive human trafficking for the exploitation of female labor and less growth needs are recognized as facts which weaken the wage differential compensation sensitivity of estate females. Accordingly, "Wage Compensation" is not a string tool to bring economically inactive estate females to labour force. That's why female labour force participation in estate sector of Sri Lanka is relatively high even under lowest wage rates (Kotikula & Solotaroff, 2006).

However, rural sector females showed highest wage differential compensation sensitivity as per results. Therefore, "Wage Compensation" is a highly productive tool to bring economically inactive rural females to the labour force. This high sensitivity resulted mainly because of financial deprivation prevailing among rural females to meet their needs including growth needs. Although estate females too struggled with financial issues, it was not a severe problem for them because estate females are able to satisfy more survival needs instead of growth needs. But, since rural females are attempting to fulfill their growth need even under financial deprivations, they are highly sensitive to join labour force if they could earn additional wage to compensate

their domestic works. This study recognized poor educational background as a key reason for severe financial stress in rural sector.

Urban females show moderate wage differential compensation sensitivity according to the results of in-depth qualitative study. However, urban females not sensitive much like rural females because existing wage rates are relatively higher for urban females than rural females, so that it is relatively sufficient for their needs (International Labour Organization (ILO) , 2019). Therefore, economic sensitivity shown by urban females for “wage Compensation” is relatively lesser than the rural females. This study interestingly found that, economically inactive urban females have strong preference to turn housewife role into own account worker role because of interest of females to earn at home is high. Urban females show relatively high level of education plus good status of family background with compared to rural female which results relatively higher wealth for urban females. Accordingly, since prevailing wealth is at a good level, they are not ready to sacrifice their domestic life more for “wage compensation”, that’s why “own-account work at home” became a common interest of majority of urban females. However, urban females are also showing relatively high sensitivity for wage differential compensation with compared to estate females mainly because of their rising growth needs.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

This study found seven (7) determinants of women's wage differential compensation sensitivity (WWCS) namely motherhood and child age, co-habitation of grandparents, male supremacy in traditionally patriarchal families, intergenerational education & learning, voluntary child labour, human trafficking for women labour exploitation and growth needs & domestic financial requirements. Ultimately each of the analyses successfully answered the respective research questions. Ultimately this proved that extreme male supremacy, negative impact of parental less education on children's school dropouts at early age, high voluntary child labour, oppressive human trafficking for the exploitation of female labor, less growth needs have been identified as the main causes why estate women are least sensitive to wage differential compensation. Financial deprivation prevailing among rural females to meet their needs including growth needs is the main reason for relatively high wage differential compensation sensitivity of rural females. Less education is identified as a key reason behind the financial deprivation. Urban females are also showing relatively high sensitivity for wage differential compensation mainly because of their rising growth needs and they are more into own-account works at home.

4.2 Policy recommendations

Based on the results, Sri Lanka women can be economically empowered by paying additional wage as compensation to cover extra opportunity cost of working mother. This compensating programme will be more effective in term of labour force participation among rural and less educated females. However, to make this wage differential compensation more productive, it's necessary to focus on some other non-wage factors too. Establishing regulatory framework to minimize gender-based discrimination in firms, creating an efficient market for domestic activities with the intervention of government, removing social and cultural barriers for women's economic activation, expanding the flexibility of female jobs can be cited as some policy recommendations to make wage compensation programme more productive.

According to the backward bending nature of WWCS curve, wage differential compensation should be paid for females in prime working age (25-45 years) instead

of mothers with infants or elder children. Since lack of education is the root cause for many barriers for female labour force participation, Sri Lankan government should give extra ordinary focus on improving educational level of rural and estate girls, especially should design a national long-term project to get more girls educated in STEM. Further, government should give more focus reducing oppressive human trafficking for the exploitation of female labor and voluntary child labour, especially in estate and rural sectors by creating new laws or by strengthening existing labour laws under continuous supervision programme.

Government should come up with subsidization programme especially for urban females in order to turn housewives into own account workers because interest of females to earn at home is high. That may create employment opportunities for economically inactive neighboring females too. When implementing such subsidization programme, own account works of females should be monitored by Regional Secretary Office under regular basis. Subsidization should only be a temporary programme which will be stopping after female reach to growth level. Otherwise, females will tend to over depend on subsidies and also it will be a fiscal burden for the government.

4.3 Limitations and areas of further research

The study sample was limited on to twelve respondents and. It is suggested that more valid outcome could be generated if data is collected from a bigger sample.

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