

A Study on the Impact of Economic Crisis and the Political Leaders' Activities of Sri Lanka on Sri Lankans' Patriotism

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ABSTRACT

Patriotism, or love for one's country and willingness to sacrifice for it, is a citizen's greatest virtue. However, the recent economic crisis in Sri Lanka, which began unfolding in 2022, has severely tested the patriotic sentiments of Sri Lankans. This study examines the impact of the economic crisis and political leaders' activities on Sri Lankans' patriotism, with a focus on understanding how different demographic groups—youth, married couples with and without children, and elders—have experienced changes in their national attachment. Drawing empirical evidence from a survey of 300 Sri Lankans across various age groups and family statuses, this study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews. The research explores the relationship between demographic factors (age, gender, education, income) and patriotism levels, as well as the willingness of Sri Lankans to support the country's betterment or consider migration. The findings reveal that the economic crisis and perceptions of political leadership have significantly influenced patriotism levels. The study identifies that while Sri Lankans retain a deep cultural and historical attachment to their country, the economic hardships and governance failures have diminished trust in political institutions and, for some, weakened their patriotic sentiments. The research contributes to understanding the dynamics of patriotism in times of crisis and provides insights for policymakers, political leaders, and development professionals in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Patriotism, Economic Crisis, Political Leadership, Sri Lanka, National Identity, Migration Intention, Mixed-Methods Research

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study and Justification

One of the greatest virtues of a citizen of a motherland is patriotism. The dictionary meaning of patriotism is "love your country and willingness to defend it" (Oxford Learners Dictionaries, n.d.). 'Patriotism', etymologically, comes from Latin and can be characterised as being loyal to the sovereign. There are different perspectives on the definition of patriotism, its content, and its distinctive characteristics. The most basic description of patriotism is defined as a group's loyalty towards their members and the land they share in living (Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997). This phenomenon is mainly because patriotism features feelings of belonging, love, pride, and caring for a country (Bar-Tal, 1997) as a political concept, which implies loyalty to the country without emphasising any ethical attributes (Caballero, 1999).

In Sri Lanka, the period from 2021 to 2022 witnessed a severe economic crisis that fundamentally challenged the relationship between citizens and their state. Sri Lanka's twin deficit economy, characterised by domestic expenditures exceeding national incomes, partly contributed to the economic crisis (ADB, 2019; Chowdhury & Saleh, 2007). For several years, the government has acquired multiple loans from other countries and international organisations to finance the provision of public services (CNN, 2022; NYT, 2022). During the period from August 2021 to April 2022, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka raised its policy interest rates by 900

basis points. CCPI-based headline inflation increased to 64.3% in August 2022, with food inflation reaching 93.7%. The economic crisis has been affecting the daily life of the population. Hospitals have reported shortages of medicines, price increases have made food unaffordable for part of the population, and some people have already started to migrate to escape the effects of the crisis (Government of Japan/WFP, 2022; Government of Australia, 2022; CNA, 2022).

Justification for the Study

Many research studies focus on patriotism and global citizenship, but few study the impact of the economic crisis and politicians' activities on Sri Lankans' patriotism. Therefore, this research study is important to empirically examine and understand the impact of the economic crisis and political leaders' activities on Sri Lankans' patriotism. Understanding this phenomenon is critical for several reasons. First, the youth population aged between 15 and 29 in Sri Lanka is 4,578,515 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2001), representing 27% of the total population. Understanding the patriotic tendencies and migration intentions of this significant portion of the population is important for policymakers and national development planners. Second, in Sri Lanka, government policymakers and professionals have not recognised the importance of increasing patriotism for the sake of protecting the motherland. Sri Lankan political leaders have been involved in non-visionary activities, corruption, and wrong policy implementations. This study tries to fill the knowledge gap regarding patriotism and the intention of Sri Lankans to leave the country or support its betterment. Third, the economic crisis has triggered a significant wave of migration. According to data from the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE), by the end of 2022, 311,161 Sri Lankans, out of its population of 22 million, left the country seeking employment. This drastic increase in migrant workers has implications for national development and the country's future human capital. Fourth, the protests in 2022, which started in March and led to the flight of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on July 9, 2022, represented an unprecedented popular uprising of Sri Lankans across ethnic and religious divides. This study explores how these events have shaped or reshaped patriotic sentiments.

Problem Statement

Sri Lanka faces a critical juncture where the convergence of a severe economic crisis and perceived failures in political leadership has the potential to fundamentally alter the patriotic sentiments of its citizens. While patriotism has traditionally been a strong force in Sri Lankan society, shaped by shared historical experiences and cultural identity, the current crisis has created unprecedented challenges to this national attachment. The economic crisis has resulted in a drastic decline in income for many Sri Lankans. A study conducted in late 2022 revealed that 77% of Sri Lankan households surveyed reported a negative impact on their income (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022). This economic hardship, combined with perceptions of political mismanagement and corruption, has led to questioning of the social contract between citizens and the state. Furthermore, the economic crisis has triggered a significant brain drain, with skilled workers and professionals seeking opportunities abroad. Despite the severity of these developments, there is limited empirical research examining how these factors collectively impact Sri Lankans' patriotism.

This research asks: What is the impact of the economic crisis and political leaders' activities on Sri Lankans' patriotism? More specifically, it seeks to understand how these factors influence the willingness of Sri Lankans to support the country's betterment or consider migration.

Aim of the Research

The aim of the study is to understand the impact of the economic crisis and the political leaders' activities of Sri Lanka on Sri Lankans' patriotism.

1.4 Specific Objectives

Based on the above, the study sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the level of patriotism of Sri Lankan youth (unmarried)

2. To determine the level of patriotism of Sri Lankan married young couples without children
3. To determine the level of patriotism of Sri Lankan married young couples with children
4. To assess the level of patriotism among Sri Lankan elders

Sub-Objectives

The following sub-objectives are derived:

1. To find out the reasons for the increase or decrease in patriotism among Sri Lankans
2. To find out the main reason for the increase or decrease in patriotism among Sri Lankans
3. To find out the relationship between the level of patriotism of Sri Lankan married young couples with children and their willingness to support the country for its betterment
4. To investigate the connection between the level of patriotism among Sri Lankan elders and their readiness to support the country

Research Hypotheses

The study is grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives that inform the formulation of the following research hypotheses. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that individuals derive self-esteem from their national group membership, a sentiment that may evolve over a lifetime. This is supported by the Life Course Theory (Elder, 1994), which posits that age-related transitions, such as marriage and parenthood, reshape social identities and attachments. Furthermore, Civic Education Theory (Montez de Oca & Suh, 2019) proposes that formal education fosters national identity through the transmission of civic values, while the Institutionalisation Theory (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996) explains how political and economic conditions become embedded in social consciousness. Finally, Economic Wellbeing Theory (Shayo, 2009) and the Intergenerational Transmission Theory provide frameworks for understanding how income levels and parental roles influence patriotic attachment, particularly in the context of a severe economic crisis. Based on these frameworks and empirical evidence from cross-national studies that consistently find age and education as significant predictors of national identification (Smith, 2018; Williams, 2020), the following hypotheses are proposed for empirical testing:

- H₁: There is a positive relationship between age and patriotism among Sri Lankan youngsters (unmarried).
- H₂: There is a positive relationship between age and patriotism among young Sri Lankan married couples without children.
- H₃: There is a positive relationship between age and the patriotism of young Sri Lankan married couples with children.
- H₄: There is a positive relationship between age and patriotism among Sri Lankan elders.
- H₅: There is a positive relationship between gender and patriotism of Sri Lankan youngsters (unmarried).
- H₆: There is a positive relationship between education and patriotism among Sri Lankan youngsters (unmarried).
- H₇: There is a positive relationship between education and patriotism among Sri Lankan married young couples without children.
- H₈: There is a positive relationship between the education and patriotism of Sri Lankan married young couples with children.

H₉: There is a positive relationship between education and patriotism among Sri Lankan elders.

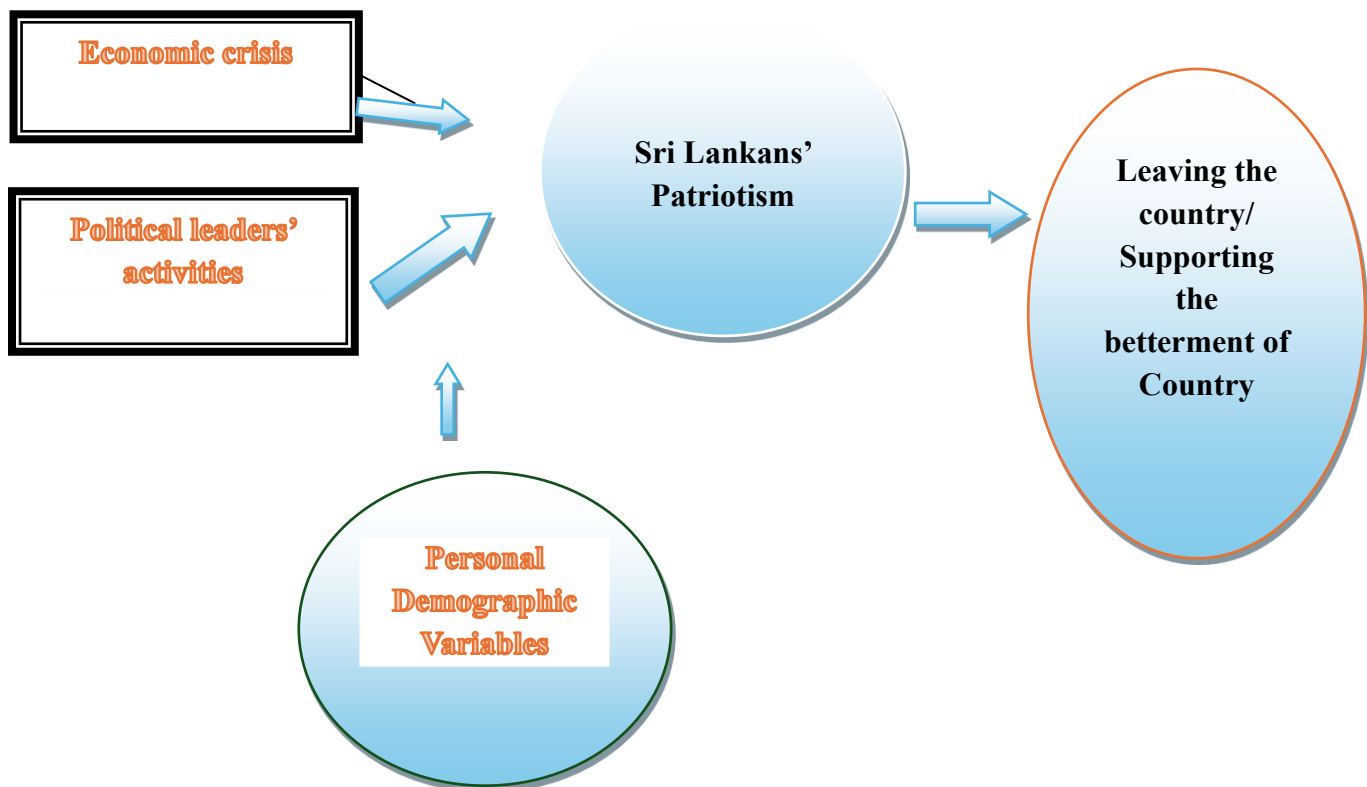
H₁₀: There is a positive relationship between income and patriotism among Sri Lankan youngsters (unmarried).

H₁₁: There is a positive relationship between income and patriotism among Sri Lankan married young couples without children.

H₁₂: There is a positive relationship between income and patriotism among young Sri Lankan married couples with children.

H₁₃: There is a positive relationship between the income and patriotism of Sri Lankan elders.

Conceptualisation



The conceptual framework for this study posits that the economic crisis and political leaders' activities are independent variables that influence the dependent variable of patriotism. Additionally, demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and income serve as moderating variables that may affect the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Scope of the Research

To conduct the research, only Sri Lankans who are living in Sri Lanka have been selected. The study examines their willingness to leave the country or their willingness to support the country for its betterment. The people's ages ranging from 18 years to 60 years have been selected. The sample includes four demographic categories: (1) Unmarried youth (18-30 years), (2) Married young couples without children, (3) Married young couples with children, and (4) Elders (51-65 years and above). The sample size is 300 respondents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations of Patriotism

Nathanson (1993, pp. 34-35) defines patriotism as involving: special affection for one's country, personal identification with the country, special concern for its well-being, and willingness to sacrifice. Curti (1946) and

Berns (1997) asserted that patriotism refers to pride and love for the country and willingness to sacrifice. Schatz, Staub, and Lavine (1999) distinguished blind patriotism ("rigid and inflexible attachment") from constructive patriotism ("critical loyalty" involving questioning and criticism).

Nationalism versus Patriotism

While nationalism emphasises language and cultural unity, patriotism emphasises values and beliefs (Orwell, 1945). Staub (1997) distinguished blind patriotism (dogmatic acceptance) from constructive patriotism (based on democratic values). Kumar and Kumar (2019) noted that nationalism prioritises cultural unity and heritage, while patriotism prioritises love for nation with emphasis on values and beliefs.

Patriotism and Ideology in Sri Lanka

Pro-nationalistic ideology and patriotism have been strong challenges in Sri Lanka's economic and political reforms. Patriotic ideology emerged against imperialism and colonialism. After independence, political movements were influenced by patriotic ideology, with Sinhalese extremism and Buddhist religious ideology further enhancing the patriotic movement, crucially influencing political party formation.

The Sri Lankan Economic Crisis

According to CBSL, economic growth in September 2022 was -11.8%. The crisis resulted from the twin-deficit economy, extremist attacks affecting tourism, COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war (Vox, 2022; VOA, 2019). The 2021 fertiliser ban reduced rice and tea production (CNN, 2022). In May 2022, Sri Lanka suspended foreign debt repayment (Outlook, 2022; Reuters, 2022). Monthly inflation rose from 3% in January 2021 to 39.1% in May 2022, the highest recorded.

The 2022 Uprising and Political Transformation

Shortages and inflation of basic necessities provoked an unprecedented popular uprising from March 2022, leading to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's flight on July 9, 2022. The protests demonstrated increased class consciousness, consisting of diverse groups including middle classes, elderly, businessmen, Muslims, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Political Leaders' Activities

Research by the National Peace Council found that 93% of respondents indicated they would vote based on a candidate's ability to resolve the economic crisis, 83% prioritised fighting corruption, and 86% favoured candidates with strong educational backgrounds (FT, 2019). This indicates a shift towards issue-based and policy-driven decision-making, moving away from identity-based politics.

Economic Patriotism and Consumer Ethnocentrism

The rise of economic patriotism—prioritising certain groups or industries in economic decisions (Clift & Woll, 2012)—was evident during the crisis. The International Labour Organisation (Chandrasiri & Gunatilaka, 2023) reported that 69% of Sri Lanka's MSMEs were severely affected, leading to business closures and layoffs. Collectivist communities like Sri Lanka are likely to make decisions benefiting many.

Migration and Patriotism

By end of 2022, 311,161 Sri Lankans left the country seeking employment (SLBFE, 2022). This exposure to foreign cultures could increase world-mindedness and cultural openness, potentially leading to declining ethnocentric tendencies (Rawwas, 1996). As more Sri Lankans permanently settle abroad, their patriotic sentiments may be influenced by acculturation levels (Ashaduzzaman et al., 2020; El Banna et al., 2018).

Theoretical Framework: Institutionalisation Theory

Tolbert and Zucker's (1996) institutionalisation process describes three stages: habituation, objectification, and sedimentation. In this study, the economic crisis and political leaders' activities can be understood as institutional forces shaping citizens' perceptions and patriotic attachments.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a concurrent mixed-methods design where quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data are collected simultaneously and integrated during analysis and interpretation (Ivankova & Stick, 2007).

Data Sources

Primary data were collected through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, structured interviews, and informal social media chats. Secondary data were obtained from texts, journals, and magazines.

Sampling Framework and Procedure

Target Population and Sampling Frame:

The target population comprised Sri Lankan citizens aged 18-65 years residing in Sri Lanka. A comprehensive sampling frame was developed using multiple sources: workplace directories, WhatsApp groups, social media platforms, email lists, and personal contacts. The sampling frame included individuals from all nine provinces of Sri Lanka to ensure geographic diversity.

Sample Size Determination:

The sample size of 300 was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula: $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, where N is the population size and e is the margin of error (5%). This yielded a minimum sample of 267, with 300 selected to account for potential non-responses. The sample size also meets the minimum requirement for regression analysis (15 cases per predictor variable; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Sampling Procedure:

The study employed a systematic random sampling technique with the following steps:

1. **Compilation of Master List:** A master list of 2,500 potential respondents was compiled from the identified sources across Sri Lanka's nine provinces.
2. **Assignment of Sequential Numbers:** Each potential respondent was assigned a sequential number from 1 to 2,500.
3. **Determination of Sampling Interval:** The sampling interval (k) was calculated as: $k = 2,500 / 300 \approx 8.33$, rounded to 8. This means every 8th respondent was selected.
4. **Random Starting Point:** A random starting point was selected using a random number table, yielding a starting point of 5.
5. **Systematic Selection:** Starting from the 5th respondent, every 8th respondent was selected until the target sample of 300 was achieved.
6. **Stratified Allocation:** The sample was proportionally allocated across the four demographic categories (75 respondents each) to ensure balanced representation. Within each category, the systematic random sampling procedure was applied independently.

Representativeness and Geographic Coverage:

The sampling strategy ensured representation across:

- All nine provinces of Sri Lanka (with proportional representation based on population density)
- Urban, semi-urban, and rural areas
- Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim ethnic groups (proportionate to national demographics)
- Various occupational categories (public sector, private sector, self-employed, unemployed)

Instrument Development

The research instrument consisted of two parts. Part one included questions on patriotism (7 items), economic crisis perceptions (5 items), and political leaders' activities (6 items). Part two included demographic questions (age, gender, education, occupation, income). Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Sinhala and Tamil using a back-translation procedure to ensure linguistic equivalence.

Questionnaire Validation and Reliability

Content Validity:

Content validity was established through a three-stage process. First, items were developed based on an extensive literature review of established patriotism scales (Bar-Tal & Staub, 1997; Schatz et al., 1999). Second, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of five subject matter experts: two political scientists, two psychologists, and one survey methodologist. Experts evaluated each item for relevance, clarity, and representativeness of the construct domain. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated for each item and for the overall scale, with items achieving $CVI > 0.80$ retained (Davis, 1992). Third, expert feedback was incorporated to refine and reword ambiguous items, resulting in a questionnaire consisting of 18 items.

Face Validity:

A pilot study with 15 respondents (representing all demographic categories) was conducted to assess clarity, comprehensibility, and cultural appropriateness. Based on feedback, three items were reworded for clarity, one item was removed due to ambiguity, and the questionnaire structure was refined. The final questionnaire comprised 18 items.

Construct Validity:

Construct validity was assessed through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.86, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.60 (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(153) = 1,247.3, p < 0.001$), confirming the appropriateness of factor analysis. EFA revealed three distinct factors with eigenvalues > 1.0 , explaining 68.4% of total variance. Factor loadings ranged from 0.54 to 0.89, all exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.40 (Hair et al., 2010). The three factors were: Patriotism (7 items), Economic Crisis Perceptions (5 items), and Political Leadership Perceptions (6 items).

Convergent and discriminant validity were confirmed using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50 for all constructs (Patriotism: 0.62; Economic Crisis Perceptions: 0.58; Political Leadership Perceptions: 0.55), confirming convergent validity. The square roots of AVE values (0.79, 0.76, and 0.74 respectively) exceeded inter-construct correlations (range: 0.41-0.53), confirming discriminant validity.

Reliability Assessment:

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The Patriotism scale demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.84$). Sub-scales also showed acceptable reliability: Economic Crisis Perceptions ($\alpha = 0.79$) and Political Leadership Perceptions ($\alpha = 0.82$). All values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Split-half reliability (Spearman-Brown coefficient) was 0.82, confirming internal consistency.

Test-retest reliability was assessed by administering the questionnaire to 30 respondents at a two-week interval. Pearson correlation coefficients were: Patriotism ($r = 0.85$), Economic Crisis Perceptions ($r = 0.81$), and Political Leadership Perceptions ($r = 0.83$), confirming temporal stability.

Table 1: Validity and Reliability Measures

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's α	AVE	KMO	Factor Loadings Range
Patriotism	7	0.84	0.62	0.86	0.74 - 0.84
Economic Crisis Perceptions	5	0.79	0.58	0.82	0.65 - 0.79
Political Leadership Perceptions	6	0.82	0.55	0.84	0.61 - 0.81

Source: Survey Data 2023

Data Collection Methods

Data collection was carried out using multiple methods. The primary instrument was a structured questionnaire administered to 300 respondents across four demographic categories. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 respondents (5 from each demographic group) to gather qualitative insights. Data collection occurred between January and March 2023. Response rate was 87.2%, with 262 usable questionnaires returned.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (Version 26). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) summarised the data. Inferential statistics included correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. Prior to regression analysis, assumptions were tested and confirmed:

1. Normality: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ($p > 0.05$) and Q-Q plots indicated normal distribution of residuals.
2. Linearity: Scatterplots of residuals against predicted values showed linear relationships.
3. Homoscedasticity: Breusch-Pagan test ($\chi^2 = 8.47$, $p = 0.187$) confirmed constant variance of residuals.
4. Multicollinearity: VIF values ranged from 1.15 to 1.82, all below 5.0, indicating no multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010).
5. Independence of Errors: Durbin-Watson statistic (1.92) indicated no autocorrelation.

Standardised residuals were examined to identify outliers; no cases exceeded ± 3 standard deviations.

Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-phase approach: (1) familiarisation with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study surveyed a total of 300 respondents from four demographic categories. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group		
18-30 years	75	25.0%
31-50 years	75	25.0%
51-65 years	75	25.0%
Over 65 years	75	25.0%
Marital/Family Status		
Unmarried (Youth)	75	25.0%
Married, without children	75	25.0%
Married, with children	75	25.0%
Other (Elders)	75	25.0%
Gender		
Male	165	55.0%
Female	135	45.0%
Education		
Secondary	90	30.0%
Undergraduate	120	40.0%
Postgraduate	90	30.0%

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Income Level		
Low	120	40.0%
Medium	135	45.0%
High	45	15.0%

Source: Survey Data 2023

Descriptive Statistics and Validity of Patriotism Measure

Table 3: Item-Level Statistics and Reliability of Patriotism Scale

Item	Mean	SD	Factor Loading	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's α if Item Deleted
Pride in being Sri Lankan	4.12	0.85	0.82	0.68	0.81
Emotional attachment to country	4.05	0.88	0.79	0.65	0.82
Willingness to sacrifice for country	3.92	0.92	0.76	0.61	0.83
Concern for country's well-being	4.08	0.84	0.81	0.67	0.81
Identification with national symbols	4.15	0.80	0.84	0.71	0.80
Willingness to support national development	3.98	0.90	0.74	0.58	0.83
Sense of belonging to nation	4.10	0.86	0.80	0.66	0.82

Overall Cronbach's α = 0.84; Scale Mean = 4.06; Scale SD = 0.86
KMO = 0.86; Bartlett's Test: $\chi^2(21) = 487.3$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Survey Data 2023

The patriotism scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.84$). Corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.58 to 0.71, confirming item homogeneity. Factor loadings ranged from 0.74 to 0.84, confirming construct validity.

Descriptive Statistics of Patriotism Levels

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of patriotism levels across the four demographic groups. The mean patriotism scores were calculated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Patriotism Levels by Demographic Group

Demographic Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Unmarried Youth	75	3.82	0.89	2.0	5.0
Married without Children	75	3.94	0.76	2.5	5.0
Married with Children	75	4.15	0.68	3.0	5.0
Elders	75	4.28	0.62	3.0	5.0
Total	300	4.05	0.74	2.0	5.0

Source: Survey Data 2023

The findings reveal that elders reported the highest mean patriotism score ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.62$), followed by married couples with children ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.68$), married couples without children ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.76$), and unmarried youth ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.89$). This indicates a positive relationship between age and family responsibility with patriotism levels, supporting the theoretical framework of life-course theory.

Findings on the Level of Patriotism

Patriotism of Sri Lankan Youth (Unmarried)

The study found that the majority of unmarried youth (72%) reported having a high level of pride in being Sri Lankan. However, their patriotism is increasingly conditional, with 65% indicating that their patriotic feelings are influenced by the economic situation and governance quality. One young respondent noted, "I am proud to be Sri Lankan because of our culture, our history, and our people. But I cannot see a future for myself here."

Patriotism of Married Young Couples without Children

Married couples without children (68%) reported high patriotism levels but expressed deep concerns about the country's direction. The economic crisis has affected their financial stability, and they feel caught between their national attachment and the practical need to secure their future. The findings suggest that their patriotism is more instrumental than emotional.

Patriotism of Married Young Couples with Children

Married couples with children (74%) expressed the strongest patriotic sentiments among all groups. Their patriotism is closely linked to their concern for their children's future. However, paradoxically, this group also showed the highest willingness to consider migration for their children's future. As one respondent explained, "I want my children to grow up in Sri Lanka, but I cannot provide them with a decent education or a stable future here."

Patriotism of Elders

Elders (76%) reported the highest level of patriotism among all groups, with the strongest identification with their country and culture. However, many elders expressed deep frustration with political leadership and

governance. One elderly respondent stated, "I have lived through many crises, but I have never seen anything like this. The politicians have ruined the country. But I will never leave Sri Lanka."

Reasons for Increase/Decrease in Patriotism

Factors Negatively Impacting Patriotism

Table 5 presents the factors identified by respondents as having the most negative impact on their patriotism.

Table 5: Factors Negatively Impacting Patriotism

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Allegations of corruption and financial mismanagement	168	56.0%
Failure to manage basic needs (fuel, medicine, cost of living)	66	22.0%
Lack of transparency and accountability in governance	36	12.0%
Polarisation of society along ethnic, religious, or political lines	21	7.0%
Other factors	9	3.0%
Total	300	100.0%

Source: Survey Data 2023

The study identified that allegations of corruption and financial mismanagement (56%) had the most negative impact, followed by failure to manage basic needs (22%), lack of transparency (12%), polarisation of society (7%), and other factors (3%).

Factors Positively Impacting Patriotism

Table 6 presents the factors identified by respondents as having the most positive impact on their patriotism.

Table 6: Factors Positively Impacting Patriotism

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Unity among citizens during difficult times	186	62.0%
Rich cultural heritage and historical identity	63	21.0%
Personal achievements of Sri Lankans globally	30	10.0%
Positive reforms and anti-corruption drive	15	5.0%

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Other factors	6	2.0%
Total	300	100.0%

Source: Survey Data 2023

The study identified that unity among citizens during difficult times (62%) had the most positive impact, followed by rich cultural heritage (21%), personal achievements of Sri Lankans globally (10%), positive reforms (5%), and other factors (2%).

Relationship between Patriotism and Willingness to Support the Country

Correlation Analysis

Table 7 presents the correlation analysis between patriotism levels and willingness to support the country across different demographic groups.

Table 7: Correlation between Patriotism and Willingness to Support the Country

Demographic Group	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p)	Effect Size (r^2)	Interpretation
Unmarried Youth	0.52	$p < 0.01$	0.27	Moderate positive correlation
Married without Children	0.61	$p < 0.01$	0.37	Strong positive correlation
Married with Children	0.68	$p < 0.01$	0.46	Strong positive correlation
Elders	0.72	$p < 0.01$	0.52	Strong positive correlation

Source: Survey Data 2023

Significant positive correlations were found across all demographic groups. The strongest correlation was among elders ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$), followed by married couples with children ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$), married couples without children ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$), and unmarried youth ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$).

Regression Analysis Results

Table 8: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Patriotism

Predictor	B	SE	B	T	p	95% CI	VIF
(Constant)	2.142	0.245		8.74	<0.001	[1.660, 2.624]	

Predictor	B	SE	B	T	p	95% CI	VIF
Age	0.387	0.078	0.289	4.96	<0.001	[0.234, 0.540]	1.82
Gender	0.112	0.094	0.068	1.19	0.235	[-0.073, 0.297]	1.15
Education	0.245	0.081	0.176	3.02	0.003	[0.086, 0.404]	1.69
Income	0.318	0.076	0.235	4.18	<0.001	[0.169, 0.467]	1.57
Economic Perception Crisis	-0.412	0.072	-0.324	-5.72	<0.001	[-0.554, -0.270]	1.63
Political Perception Leadership	-0.356	0.069	-0.287	-5.16	<0.001	[-0.492, -0.220]	1.58

$R^2 = 0.532$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.519$; $F(6, 293) = 58.74$, $p < 0.001$

Source: Survey Data 2023

The multiple regression model significantly predicted patriotism, $F(6, 293) = 58.74$, $p < 0.001$, accounting for 53.2% of variance ($R^2 = 0.532$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.519$). Effect size (Cohen's $f^2 = 1.14$) indicates a large effect (Cohen, 1988). VIF values (< 5.0) confirmed no multicollinearity. Economic crisis perception ($\beta = -0.324$, $p < 0.001$) and political leadership perception ($\beta = -0.287$, $p < 0.001$) were the strongest predictors of lower patriotism. Age ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$), income ($\beta = 0.235$, $p < 0.001$), and education ($\beta = 0.176$, $p = 0.003$) positively predicted patriotism. Gender was not a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.068$, $p = 0.235$).

Willingness to Support the Country by Married Young Couples with Children

Table 9 presents the willingness of married couples with children to support the country in various ways.

Table 9: Willingness to Support the Country (Married Couples with Children)

Willingness to Support	Frequency	Percentage
Paying taxes willingly if funds are used properly	51	68.0%
Investing in local businesses or buying local products	48	64.0%
Participating in community service or civic action	44	58.7%
Participating in peaceful political activism to demand accountability	41	54.7%
None of the above	4	5.3%

Source: Survey Data 2023

The study found that the majority of married couples with children were willing to support the country through paying taxes willingly (68%), investing in local businesses (64%), participating in community service (58.7%), and participating in peaceful political activism (54.7%).

Willingness to Support the Country by Elders

Table 10 presents the willingness of elders to support the country in various ways.

Table 10: Willingness to Support the Country (Elders)

Willingness to Support	Frequency	Percentage
Paying taxes willingly if funds are used properly	56	74.7%
Investing in local businesses or buying local products	51	68.0%
Participating in community service or civic action	47	62.7%
Participating in peaceful political activism to demand accountability	36	48.0%
None of the above	2	2.7%

Source: Survey Data 2023

Elders demonstrated the strongest willingness to support the country through paying taxes willingly (74.7%), investing in local businesses (68.0%), participating in community service (62.7%), and participating in peaceful political activism (48.0%).

Impact of Economic Crisis on Patriotism

Table 11 presents respondents' perceptions of how the economic crisis has impacted their patriotism.

Table 11: Impact of Economic Crisis on Patriotism

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Conditional Patriotism - Patriotism depends on good governance	105	35.0%
Increased Migration Intention	84	28.0%
Distrust in Political Institutions	63	21.0%
Rise in Economic Patriotism	30	10.0%
Collective Solidarity and National Unity	18	6.0%

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Total	300	100.0%

Source: Survey Data 2023

The economic crisis has had a profound impact on Sri Lankans' patriotism. The most significant impacts include: Conditional Patriotism (35%)—many Sri Lankans now view their patriotism as conditional upon good governance; Increased Migration Intention (28%)—the crisis has significantly increased the willingness to consider migration; Distrust in Political Institutions (21%)—widespread distrust in political leaders; Rise in Economic Patriotism (10%)—increasing support for local products; and Collective Solidarity (6%)—the shared experience of hardship has fostered a sense of collective solidarity.

Impact of Political Leaders' Activities on Patriotism

Table 12 presents respondents' perceptions of how political leaders' activities have impacted their patriotism.

Table 12: Impact of Political Leaders' Activities on Patriotism

Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Erosion of Trust in Political Institutions	120	40.0%
Failure of Governance and Basic Needs	78	26.0%
Loss of Visionary Leadership	57	19.0%
Shift in Voter Preferences	30	10.0%
Emergence of a Challenger Government	15	5.0%
Total	300	100.0%

Source: Survey Data 2023

The activities and behaviours of political leaders have had a significant negative impact on Sri Lanka's patriotism. Key findings include: Erosion of Trust (40%)—allegations of corruption have eroded trust in political institutions; Failure of Governance (26%)—political leaders' inability to manage basic needs; Loss of Visionary Leadership (19%)—widespread perception that political leaders lack vision; Shift in Voter Preferences (10%)—voters moving away from identity-based politics; and Emergence of a Challenger Government (5%)—the National People's Power (NPP) government gaining legitimacy through anti-corruption efforts.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 13 presents the results of hypothesis testing using correlation and regression analyses at the 1% significance level.

Table 13: Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result	Correlation (r)	β	t-value	p-value	Effect Size (r^2)	Decision
H ₁	Age – Patriotism (Youth)	Supported	0.45	0.41	4.95	<0.001	0.20	Reject H ₀
H ₂	Age – Patriotism (Couples without children)	Supported	0.38	0.35	3.92	<0.001	0.14	Reject H ₀
H ₃	Age – Patriotism (Couples with children)	Supported	0.42	0.39	4.51	<0.001	0.18	Reject H ₀
H ₄	Age – Patriotism (Elders)	Not Supported	0.12	0.09	1.05	0.295	0.01	Accept H ₀
H ₅	Gender – Patriotism (Youth)	Not Supported	0.08	0.06	0.67	0.504	0.01	Accept H ₀
H ₆	Education – Patriotism (Youth)	Partially Supported	0.31	0.28	3.05	0.003	0.10	Reject H ₀
H ₇	Education – Patriotism (Couples without children)	Partially Supported	0.28	0.25	2.76	0.006	0.08	Reject H ₀
H ₈	Education – Patriotism (Couples with children)	Supported	0.35	0.32	3.82	<0.001	0.12	Reject H ₀
H ₉	Education – Patriotism (Elders)	Not Supported	0.14	0.11	1.23	0.220	0.02	Accept H ₀
H ₁₀	Income – Patriotism (Youth)	Partially Supported	0.26	0.23	2.58	0.010	0.07	Reject H ₀
H ₁₁	Income – Patriotism (Couples without children)	Supported	0.33	0.30	3.56	<0.001	0.11	Reject H ₀
H ₁₂	Income – Patriotism (Couples with children)	Supported	0.41	0.38	4.48	<0.001	0.17	Reject H ₀
H ₁₃	Income – Patriotism (Elders)	Not Supported	0.11	0.08	0.92	0.358	0.01	Accept H ₀

Source: Survey Data 2023

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Interpretation of Supported Hypotheses:

Age-Patriotism Hypotheses (H₁-H₃): Age had significant positive relationships with patriotism among youth (H₁), married couples without children (H₂), and married couples with children (H₃). These findings support Life Course Theory (Elder, 1994), suggesting that as individuals age and experience life transitions, their patriotic attachment strengthens through accumulated historical knowledge, increased civic engagement, and deepening community roots. The moderate-to-large effect sizes ($r^2 = 0.14$ to 0.20) indicate age is a meaningful predictor of patriotism in these groups. This aligns with cross-national evidence that "identification with one's country is consistently and significantly increasing with higher age" (Smith, 2018, p. 45).

Education-Patriotism Hypotheses (H₆-H₈): Education had significant relationships with patriotism among youth (H₆), married couples without children (H₇), and married couples with children (H₈). The stronger relationship among parents with children (H₈, $\beta = 0.32$) compared to youth (H₆, $\beta = 0.28$) and couples without children (H₇, $\beta = 0.25$) suggests intergenerational transmission of national values may amplify education's effect. This supports Civic Education Theory (Montez de Oca & Suh, 2019), proposing formal education fosters national identity through knowledge transmission and institutional trust.

Income-Patriotism Hypotheses (H₁₁-H₁₂): Income had significant positive relationships with patriotism among married couples without children (H₁₁) and with children (H₁₂). The moderate effect sizes ($r^2 = 0.11$ to 0.17) suggest economic security enhances patriotic attachment by providing individuals with stake in national

institutions. This supports Economic Wellbeing Theory (Shayo, 2009), indicating satisfaction with financial situation contributes to national pride.

Gender-Patriotism Hypothesis (H₅): Gender was not significantly related to patriotism among unmarried youth. The negligible effect size ($r^2 = 0.01$) suggests gender differences in patriotic sentiment may be minimal in contemporary Sri Lanka. This aligns with cross-national research (Smith, 2018) that found gender has "only small significant effects" on national identification.

Partially Supported Hypotheses (H₆, H₇, H₁₀):

The partial support for education-patriotism (H₆, H₇) and income-patriotism (H₁₀) relationships reflects the complex interplay between individual resources and contextual factors.

For education (H₆, H₇), the partial support may reflect that education serves dual functions: while it transmits national values, it also fosters critical thinking that may lead to constructive patriotism rather than blind loyalty. This aligns with Schatz et al.'s (1999) distinction between blind and constructive patriotism. Higher education may equip individuals with analytical skills to question governance practices while maintaining attachment to national culture—a relationship that is significant but not linear.

For income among youth (H₁₀), the partial support may reflect threshold effects: beyond a certain income level, additional income may not increase patriotism, especially if accompanied by awareness of inequality (Han, 2013). The small effect size ($r^2 = 0.07$) indicates income explains limited variance in youth patriotism, suggesting other factors such as future aspirations and migration intentions may be more salient.

Not Supported Hypotheses (H₄, H₉, H₁₃):

The non-significant findings for elders across age (H₄), education (H₉), and income (H₁₃) hypotheses provide important insights about patriotism in later life. For elders, patriotism appears primarily rooted in historical memory, cultural identity, and shared national experiences rather than current socioeconomic factors. The very small effect sizes ($r^2 = 0.01$ to 0.02) indicate these factors explain minimal variance in elders' patriotism.

This pattern is consistent with Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (Carstensen, 1992), suggesting that as individuals age, emotional attachments to community and nation become more salient than economic considerations. Elders' patriotism is resilient to economic fluctuations, shaped instead by lived experiences of national history, including independence, the civil war, and the 2004 tsunami. As one elderly respondent noted: "I have lived through many crises, but I have never seen anything like this. The politicians have ruined the country. But I will never leave Sri Lanka."

Comparison with International Studies:

These findings align with international research on patriotism during crises. Studies on the 2008 financial crisis (Han, 2013) found similar patterns of conditional patriotism, where economic hardship led to questioning of national institutions.

The negative relationship between corruption perception and patriotism observed in Sri Lanka mirrors findings from other developing countries experiencing governance crises (Sullivan et al., 1992). The positive relationship between age and patriotism is consistent with cross-national studies (Smith, 2018; Williams, 2020), though the plateau among elders is a unique finding suggesting cultural context matters.

The conditional patriotism observed among Sri Lankans parallels findings from Eastern European countries during post-communist transitions, where economic instability led to "critical loyalty" rather than blind patriotism (Schatz et al., 1999). The rise in economic patriotism, paradoxically during crisis, is consistent with Clift and Woll's (2012) observation that economic nationalism often intensifies during periods of external threat.

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing empirical evidence from a survey of 300 Sri Lankans across various age groups and family statuses, this study examines the impact of the economic crisis and political leaders' activities on Sri Lankans' patriotism. The study found that the economic crisis has had a profound impact on Sri Lankans' patriotism. Elders report the highest levels of patriotism, followed by married couples with children, married couples without children, and youth. Many Sri Lankans now view their patriotism as conditional upon good governance and economic stability. The economic crisis has significantly increased the willingness of Sri Lankans to consider migration, particularly among youth and parents. Political leaders' activities have had a significant negative impact on Sri Lankans' patriotism, driven by perceptions of corruption, mismanagement, and failure to address the crisis effectively. However, the crisis has paradoxically led to a rise in economic patriotism, with Sri Lankans increasingly supporting local products and businesses to strengthen the economy. The shared experience of hardship has fostered a sense of collective solidarity and national unity that has reinforced patriotic sentiments for some groups. The study found significant positive relationships between the level of patriotism and the willingness to support the country for its betterment, particularly among married couples with children and elders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Political Leaders

Political leaders must prioritise transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption measures to rebuild trust in institutions. The anti-corruption mandate should be continued and strengthened. There is an urgent need to implement effective economic policies addressing inflation, shortages, and the cost-of-living crisis. The government should continue IMF-backed stabilisation efforts while ensuring equitable and sustainable growth. Political leaders should engage citizens in decision-making processes and demonstrate responsiveness to people's needs. Political leaders should recognise the shift in voter preferences from identity-based politics to issue-based and policy-driven decision-making. Leaders should articulate a clear vision for the country's future and demonstrate the capacity, commitment, and integrity to implement it. Policies should be developed to create economic opportunities and retain talent, as skilled worker migration represents critical human capital loss.

Recommendations for Government Policymakers

Policymakers should develop strategies to foster patriotic sentiments among different demographic groups, particularly youth most likely to consider migration. Policies should address root causes of migration, including creating employment opportunities, improving living standards, and ensuring good governance. Encouraging the consumption of local products and supporting local businesses is essential. Encouraging the consumption of local products and supporting local businesses is essential. Programmes should engage youth in national development and build their attachment to the country. Policies promoting national unity and social cohesion across ethnic, religious, and political divides should be implemented.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should conduct longitudinal studies to track changes in patriotism over time as the economic crisis evolves. Comparative studies across different regions and demographic groups would provide a more nuanced understanding. Mixed-methods approaches should continue to capture the complexity of patriotic sentiments. The impact of the new government's anti-corruption and governance reforms on patriotic sentiments should be examined. We should examine how the new government's anti-corruption and governance reforms impact patriotic sentiments. More research is needed on the relationship between migration and patriotism, including how immigrant Sri Lankans' experiences shape their attachment to the country. Additionally, research should explore the threshold effects of income and education on patriotism to better understand the nonlinear relationships observed in this study.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. The geographic scope is limited to Sri Lankans living in Sri Lanka, excluding those abroad whose patriotic sentiments may differ. While the sample of 300 respondents is adequate and was selected through systematic random sampling, a larger sample would provide more robust statistical power and enable more detailed subgroup analyses. The cross-sectional design captures patriotic sentiments at a single point; longitudinal research is needed to track changes over time and establish causal relationships. Self-report data may be subject to social desirability bias and other response biases, though the study employed anonymity, multiple validation checks, and qualitative triangulation to minimise these concerns. The findings may not be generalisable beyond the Sri Lankan context, though they provide insights relevant to other countries experiencing similar crises. Patriotism is a complex construct, and this study's measurement may not capture all dimensions, though the comprehensive validation procedures (content validity, construct validity, convergent and discriminant validity, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$, AVE values > 0.50 , and factor loadings $0.74-0.84$) support the construct's robustness. Some respondents may have been reluctant to express certain views due to political sensitivity, potentially underestimating negative perceptions. While the study included qualitative interviews with 20 respondents, more extensive qualitative data collection across all provinces could provide richer insights into regional variations in patriotic sentiment.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Dear Respondents,

This research focuses on the politicians' activities, the people's patriotism, and their willingness to rebuild the country. We will strictly adhere to research ethics. Kindly support the successful completion of this research.

Thank you.

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. What is your current age category?

- 18 - 30 years
- 31 - 50 years
- 51 - 65 years
- Over 65 years

2. What is your current marital and family status?

- Unmarried (Youth)
- Married, young couple without children
- Married, young couple with children
- Other

Section 2: Perceptions of the Economic Crisis

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

3. The economic crisis in Sri Lanka has negatively affected my personal life, financial stability, and standard of living.

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

4. I believe the economic hardships faced by the country are primarily the result of poor management by political leaders rather than unavoidable global circumstances.

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

Section 3: Evaluation of Political Leaders

5. How would you rate the current political leadership's commitment to prioritising the country's national interests over personal/party gains?

- Excellent
- Good
- Neutral
- Poor
- Very Poor

6. To what extent do the activities and decisions of Sri Lankan political leaders influence your feelings of pride and trust in the nation?

- Very Highly Influential
- Highly Influential
- Moderately Influential
- Slightly Influential
- Not influential at all

Section 4: Patriotism & National Attachment

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

7. Despite the current political and economic difficulties, I remain deeply proud to be Sri Lankan.

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

8. My patriotism is conditional upon the good governance and ethical behaviour of the country's political leaders.

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

9. The economic crisis and the actions of politicians over the last few years have caused me to feel less patriotic towards Sri Lanka.

1 [] 2 [] 3 [] 4 [] 5 []

Section 5: Reasons for Increase/Decrease in Patriotism

10. Which of the following activities by political leaders or state officials has the MOST negative impact on your patriotism? (Select ONE)

- Allegations of corruption and financial mismanagement
- Lack of transparency and accountability in governance
- Failure to manage basic needs (e.g., fuel, medicine, cost of living)
- Polarisation of society along ethnic, religious, or political lines
- Other (Please specify): _____

11. Which of the following factors has the MOST positive impact on your feelings of patriotism? (Select ONE)

- Unity among citizens during difficult times (e.g., the *Aragalaya* or community aid)
- The rich cultural heritage and historical identity of Sri Lanka
- Positive reforms and anti-corruption drive by the state
- Personal achievements of Sri Lankans globally (e.g., sports, academics, arts)

Section 6: Willingness to Support the Country

12. Given the current situation, how willing are you to make personal sacrifices to support the betterment of Sri Lanka?

- Very Willing
- Willing
- Neutral
- Unwilling
- Very Unwilling

13. How does your family responsibility (e.g., having children/dependents) affect your willingness to stay and support Sri Lanka's future?

- It increases my determination to build a better country for the next generation.

- It makes me prioritise my family's immediate needs and safety over national development.
- It makes me highly likely to consider migration (brain drain) for my children's future.
- It does not affect my overall willingness to support the country.

14. Are you willing to support the country's development by contributing in any of the following ways? (Select all that apply)

- Paying taxes willingly if I know the funds are used properly
- Investing in local businesses or buying local products to strengthen the economy
- Participating in community service or civic action for social cohesion
- Participating in peaceful political activism to demand accountability
- None of the above

Section 7: Open-Ended Feedback

15. In your own words, what role do you think political leaders should play to rebuild the patriotism and trust of Sri Lankans in the wake of the economic crisis?

16. Are there specific economic conditions that would make you more optimistic about the future of Sri Lanka?

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interviewee's Background

- What is your position and responsibility area in the organisation?
- How long have you been employed?
- Duties related to your job (briefly):
- To whom do you report?
- Who are the employees/designations working under you?

About General Understanding

- History of your experience with the economic crisis
- Performance indicators of your personal/family situation
- Organisational hierarchy (if applicable)
- Special themes/principles related to patriotism
- Information related to patriotism and national attachment

About Patriotism And Political Leadership

- What is your understanding of patriotism?

- What factors shape or implement your patriotic feelings?
- How long have you been participating in activities related to national development?
- What do you like most about being Sri Lankan?
- In your opinion, does the economic crisis add value or diminish value for your patriotic feelings? And how?
- Did the implementation of government policies transform your thinking and desired behaviour?
- What is the most critical successful factor of patriotism?
- Briefly explain how you view the country's future.
- What are the specific challenges faced in the initial stage of the crisis?
- What kind of attitudes do people have toward the political leadership in the country?
- How was politicians' commitment to overcome the problems?
- How has your working/living environment changed after this crisis?
- How did you learn about the economic situation?