CHAPTER 9

Underrepresentation of Women in Leadership in Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka has mainly been influenced by India in its civilization since the sixth century BCE. For almost 400 years, from 1505 until 1948, the year of Sri Lanka's independence, the Portuguese, Dutch, and British dramatically changed Sri Lanka's traditional evolution after their invasions. The country has transformed from a self-sufficient economy to a trade-oriented cultivation economy, traditional temple-centered education to a formal schooling system, and from traditionally a Buddhist country to a multi-religious society.

Today, Sri Lanka is a multicultural society with a largely functioning democracy since 1948 (Jayaweera, 2002). Universal franchise was introduced in 1931 by which both men and women over 21 years of age were given the right to vote, which was earlier limited only to men (Jayaweera, 2002). Following independence, there were dissonance and tensions that negated some social gains and have resulted in political instability and violence (Jayaweera, 2002). This political and social instability dragged the country's development backward, and the country has missed many opportunities that Singapore and Malaysia have utilized.

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Through free education and health policies, however, Sri Lanka achieved a high level of human development. Sri Lanka ranked 73rd in the Human Development Index in 2014 and has surpassed most of the Millennium Development Goals targeted by the UN for 2015 (The World Bank, 2016). Sri Lanka's top three income sources are tourism, textiles and garments, and tea exports (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014b). Over 90% of the workforce in the textiles and garments industry (Meyer & Scott, 2011) and over 60% of the workforce in the tea industries (CEDAR Fund, 2014) are women. Further, in 2015, the highest receipts in the balance of payments account were from personal transfers of workers (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2015) from Sri Lankans working overseas. Almost all such workers who were housemaid workers and 49% of total foreign-employed workforce are women (Asian Development Bank, 2015). As such, Sri Lanka's economy is mainly driven by unskilled women labor.

Sri Lanka placed 84th out of 145 countries, according to the World Economic Forum's (2015) Global Gender Gap Index, with subset rankings of economic participation (120th place), educational attainment (57th place), health and survival (1st place), and political empowerment (59th place) in terms of women's status compared with men's status (World Economic Forum, 2015). However, in 2014, the gender gap was 79th out of 142 countries (World Economic Forum, 2014). This shows a widening of the gender gap within Sri Lanka; even though Sri Lanka's economy is mainly dependent on women-intensive labor, women's position in the country still needs vast improvement.

This chapter discusses the nature of and the reasons for women's underrepresentation in leadership positions in Sri Lanka. This is especially the case in the workforce when positions relate to decision making in both public and private sector governance, political governance, judiciary services, and the education sector. To that end, this chapter reviews literature to understand the nature of and the causes of the phenomenon in question while using content analysis and qualitative data analysis. Content analysis was used as evidence to support literature review findings and to describe the context of women in leadership in Sri Lanka. Interview data analysis was used to explore the causes of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, the facilitating factors contributing to successful women in leadership, and personal characteristics of successful women leaders. Contemporary literature on women in leadership positions in Sri Lanka is skeletal. There has been no study done in *Sinhala*, the major local

language in the country, describing the phenomenon in question. Literature was identified through researching online, using the book collection of the Center for Gender Studies of University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka's first university gender studies center. Collecting sources of relevant literature was done through preliminary discussion with women scholars specialized in gender studies. To conduct the qualitative data analysis, grounded theory procedures were used. Data was gathered from five panel discussions with fifteen women leaders who were recognized for being the most successful in Sri Lanka, and from interviews with another nine women leaders, including women political leaders, corporate leaders, an entrepreneur, and an influential women activist leader. For the content analysis, statistics on women's population and their economic contributions and women's education and employment were used.

Women Leaders in the History of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's history records several instances of women in leadership roles. First, the ancient queen, Kuveni, contributed to the colonization of Sri Lanka by Indians that greatly changed Sri Lanka's way forward and civilization. According to the chroniclers, when Vijaya arrived with 700 followers (all Aryan, from the Indian homeland of Laala or Laata), in sixth century BCE, he married Kuveni, an aboriginal princess in Sri Lanka and, with her influence, soon became the ruler of the country (Perera, 2013). When Vijaya met Kuveni, she had been weaving cloths, providing historic evidence of Sri Lanka's women's role in society.

Second, in 250 BCE, Queen Anula's involvement in top level decisions led to the bringing of women disciples of Buddhism from India by *Sangamiththa Thero*, the daughter of *Asoka*, an Indian king. Third, another queen, Anula, was named black widow for killing five husbands by poisoning them; she exercised informal power during 48 BCE–44 BCE and was the first queen in Sri Lanka's history to exert formal power – for about four months (Mahingoda, 2003). Further, she was the first female Head of State in Asia (Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2016). Fourth, in recent history, Sirimavo Banaranayake became the world's first woman prime minister, in 1959, after the assassination of her husband, a former prime minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake, by an unknown gunman. Fifth, one of her daughters, Chandirka Banaranayake Kumaranathunga, became the first woman president in Sri Lanka in 1994 after her husband, Vijaya Kumaranathunga, was assassinated by an

unidentified gunman. This evidence shows that Sri Lanka has not rejected women leadership since ancient times.

Context of Women in Leadership in Sri Lanka

Since 2001, women have been the majority in Sri Lanka's population. From 2010 to 2013, women's portion of the population increased from 50.3% to 51.5% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2014). Importantly, in Sri Lanka's population pyramid, by 2056, the majority of the population is expected to be between 44 and 84, with women dominating (Gottret, Schieber, & Waters, 2008). Girls are well-educated in Sri Lanka, mainly due to the implementation of nearly eight decades of free state education with no discrimination in terms of gender and socio-economic circumstances. Further, there a range of incentives has been offered over the years. As families could send both sons and daughters to school, gender equality in access to primary education was achieved in the 1960s and to secondary education in the 1970s (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Women's literacy rate has vastly improved over the last few decades as well. By 2012, women's literacy rate was 94.6%, close to men's literacy rate. Women showed a huge increase from 39.1% in 1953 to 55.5% in 2012, whereas men's literacy rate grew only from 80.7% to 96.9% from 1953 to 2012. Further, over 50% of students in secondary schools and universities and 60–70% of employees in these institutions are girls and women (Jayathilake, 2016b).

The above data shows that the quality of women in the population has increased considerably with a high level of participation in formal school education. According to the Department of Sensus and Statistics (2013b), the portion of employed women with primary and higher education is higher than men. However, the women's labor force participation is at a very low level compared to men's. From 2000 to 2014, women's labor force participation increased slightly from 33.9% to 34.7%, whereas men's labor force participation dropped slightly from 76.2% to 74.6% during the same period (Department of Censes and Statistics, 2014b). The number of women in the labor force, according to the labor force survey quarterly report for the 2nd quarter of 2014 (Asian Development Bank, 2015), was approximately half of employed men. Goonesekere (2012) pointed out that Sri Lanka has been successful in giving more students access to a cost-free legal education in the public university system with notable social

achievements, yet equal access to leadership positions in public administration, political participation, and employment is still low. Amarasuriya (1995) confirmed that women's representation in decision-making positions in Sri Lanka is still as low as 10%.

Women's Underrepresentation in Leadership Positions in Sri Lanka

This section identifies the nature of women employed and then explores their leadership in management positions in the public and private sectors, in political participation, in the judiciary system, and in the higher education sectors in Sri Lanka.

Distribution of Women Employed in Public and Private Sectors

A high percentage of employed women are in the occupational groups of professionals and clerical support workers. Compared to men, women's employment in technical plants and machine operators is much lower (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Importantly, women's representation in occupational groups labeled *Managers, Senior Officials*, and *Legislators* is very low (around 22%) (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Women dominate the occupational category of *professionals* (63%) (Asian Development Bank, 2015). According to the Asian Development Bank's Country Gender Assessment (2015), 20.4% of employed women are unpaid family workers, primarily in the agriculture sector. Notably, even though more women are employed in the public sector than are men, unlike many other Asian countries, women classified as *employer* is quite low compared to men, with only 1% of women who are employed are in this category. Further, it has been estimated that, of the 80% of the small and medium-sized enterprises that drive the economy, only about 10% are led by women (Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce, 2016), implying that there is low participation of women in entrepreneurship. Adding to this, it is reported that only 2.8% of women are in administrative staff positions, whereas 32.2% of women participated in semi-skilled work (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

In the main agricultural sectors of tea, rubber, and coconut, more women are employed in laborer positions, such as pluckers, tappers, and coir (coconut fiber) workers, while an insignificant number of women hold

management positions (Asian Development Bank, 2015). The garment sector also employs more women workers, yet even fewer women are in management positions (Asian Development Bank, 2015).

In examining women's contributions to foreign labor, listed as departure for foreign employment in 2012 (Country Gender Assessment Sri Lanka Report of Asian Development Bank, 2015), women represent all of the house maid jobs, whereas women make up only a small number of professionals and other skilled and non-skilled workers. Weerakoon (1998) highlighted Sri Lanka as the only Asian country at that time that reported such a high number of woman labor migration as foreign domestic workers. It appears that a majority of the educated women population in Sri Lanka is either unemployed or employed in non-skilled jobs locally and abroad. Further, only a few women in Sri Lanka hold leadership positions.

Women in Top Management Positions

Women's participation rate in public and private sectors in Sri Lanka has increased from 54.9% in 2006 to 56.1% in 2012 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2013a). However, according to Jayathilake (2016b), women remain underrepresented in top management positions in both public and private sectors. Gunawardane (2013a) highlighted that women held only 25% of the positions in grade 1, the highest position in the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, and in all other public sector leadership levels (Jayatilake, 2016b). This indicates that women's upward occupational mobility has been limited in the public sector (Gunawardane, 2013b).

In the private sector, there were only 106 women on Boards of Directors of establishments registered in the Colombo Stock Exchange, out of a total of 1,730 directors (6.1%) (Gunawardane, 2013a; Jayathilake, 2016b). Further, Gunawardane (2013a) found that the number of women in top positions (Director Board, Senior Management, and Corporate Management) in the banking sector in Sri Lanka was also low, but much better than on private sector boards (38.8%). However, there are no women leaders on boards of directors in four of the nine major banks. Only 9.3% of the directors in these nine banks are women. Further, in the senior management teams of these nine major banks, only 13.4% are women. In corporate management teams, only 20% are women. Thus, a high number of women professionals are stuck in middle or lower levels of management.

Women in Political Leadership

Women were granted voting rights in 1931, and in 1977 Sri Lanka's economy was liberalized (Lakshman, 1998), yet women's representation in Parliament has been deplorably low (Perera & Chandrasekera, 2005). According to Kodikara (2009), proportional representation (PR) was introduced in 1989 to increase the representation of minorities with a potential to increase the number of women in politics. However, there has been no noticeable impact on women's political representation in Sri Lanka, though other countries, such as Germany and Australia, have increased women in politics through PR.

In 2005, by presenting a women's manifesto (Perera & Chandrasekera, 2005), among other things, many women campaigned for a 30% quota for women in political participation, yet successive governments have ignored this quota, and the target has not been achieved. There were only two women representatives, accounting for 3.4% of the total, in the first Ceylon State Council (1931–1936) (Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs, 2012). In the 14th parliament (2010–2014), there were only 13 women representatives, accounting for just 6% of the 225 members of parliament, even 83 years after the first Ceylon State Council. There have been only 6 parliaments out of 14 from 1931 to 2014 in which women's representation has reached two digits, and the maximum number has been only 13 (Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs, 2012).

Women's representation in the parliament of Sri Lanka in 2004 was the lowest in South Asia, excluding Bangladesh (Perera & Chandrasekera, 2005). Further, women's representation in Provincial Councils, Municipal and Urban Councils, and *Pradheshiya Sabha* (the lowest level of local government in the government of Sri Lanka) has also been less than 4%. In the general elections of 2000, there were 5,048 men nominated and only 117 women. Women have also been marginalized in the hierarchy of decision making in political parties (Kodikara, 2009).

Women in Leadership in the Judiciary Service

Sri Lanka is unique in the region and even globally in giving access to over 80% of female law students a cost-free legal education in public universities (Goonasekere, 2012). However, women's representation in the Judiciary Service, such as women judges of the Supreme Court, Appeals Court, and High Courts, has been low (Jayatilake, 2016b). Of 280 judges in Sri Lanka,

64 (28.9%) are women (Department Census and Statistics, 2013a). Further, from the same source, in the Supreme Court, of 11 judges, 4 are women; in the Court of Appeals, of 12 judges, 2 are women; in the High Court, of 7 judges, 3 are women; and of a total of 250 Magistrates, District Judges, and Additional District Judges, 57 (22.8%) are women.

Women in Leadership in Higher Education

In the education sector (elementary though higher education), in 2013, 78% of teachers are women (Ministry of Education, 2013), whereas only 25% of principals are women (Gunawardane, 2013b), even though the recruitment and promotion of teachers are highly qualifications based with no consideration of gender. In the detailed statistics available in the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka database, although data on teachers' leadership positions are presented, gender disaggregated data are not available. Morley and Crossouard (2015) found that, in Sri Lanka, 53.4% of lecturers were women, 38.4% of senior lecturers were women, and 27% of professors were women. In 2014, in all 15 national universities in Sri Lanka, there were no women chancellors, only 1 woman vice-chancellor, only 9 women deans of 82, 140 heads of 479, only 3 women registrars of 15, and 8 women librarians of 16 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2014a). In higher education, women appear to be stuck in the middle; few women reach the highest leadership positions in the university administrative system.

Causes for Women's Underrepresentation in Leadership in Sri Lanka

Women's underrepresentation in leadership positions is influenced by many factors, including cultural and social influences, lack of economic feasibility, desire for work–family balance, society's psychological contract, and other situational forces.

Cultural and Social Influences

Women's acceptance of leadership roles is mainly led by cultural and social values (Herath, 2015). The reasons for a majority of women in education, according to Jayatilake (2016b), are cultural and other factors. However, the masculine culture in organizations demands that women behave like

men, which has caused the low level of women's upward career mobility as the majority of women cannot or do not want to deliver the same outcomes as men do (Jayatilake, 2016b). As reported by Morley and Crossouard (2015), the Asian Development Bank's country gender assessment in 2008 highlighted negative gender norms as a reason for there being fewer women participating in leadership positions in higher education. Harmful traditional attitudes, attitudes of society (especially of husbands), patriarchal values, and cultural taboos have led to lower level of participation of women in politics (Liyanage, 2005).

Role division between men and women in the Sri Lankan culture has mainly been attributed to paddy-growing cultivation and *chena cultivation* (traditional cultivation of villages in the jungles in the dry zones) as highlighted by contemporary feminist scholars (Goonasekere, 2012). However, Goonesekere (2012) argued that diversified social factors affect women's roles in society. According to Jayathilaka (2016b), women fail to reach high decision-making positions because of socialization processes in the occupational choices of women, gender discrimination, the work culture, and the glass ceiling. Kodikara (2009) noted that men and women have different socialization processes. Accordingly, men are raised to be aggressive and independent at work, while women are raised to be more social and dependent and to be at home for child rearing, homemaking, and domestic organizing (Jayatilake, 2016b).

There are barriers to women being in political leadership: fierce competition among candidates; political culture characterized by thuggery, voter intimidation, and vote rigging, as well as assault against candidates and supporters; burden of poverty; economic exploitation; political exclusion; legal discrimination; social oppression; violence against women; and patriarchal practices (Kodikara, 2009; Liyanage, 2005). As well, women are dependent on men, and men and family adults control women's public activities, sexuality (i.e., women's sexual orientation and freedom for sex), and mobility (Kodikara, 2009). According to Morley and Crossouard (2015), barriers to women in leadership in higher education in South Asia, which also apply in Sri Lanka, are because women are largely identified as more fit for domestic activities of caring/nurturing, and extended family roles; corruption; and emphasizing gender-appropriate behavior, such as women should not be in authority over men. However, women from more privileged socio-economic backgrounds with high social class and caste can navigate leadership opportunities in education employment. According

to the interviews we did with women leaders, lack of role models in the country has also caused fewer women entrepreneurs to emerge. In many cases, women start businesses not to be successful entrepreneurs but due to unsatisfactory experiences as employees, or due to forced unemployment created by loss of income-earning sources (Attygalle et al. 2014).

Lack of Economic Feasibility

Women who have poor economic backgrounds confront challenges in participation in politics, the labor force, and decision-making processes (Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs, 2012). Lack of opportunity to invest in developing their leadership contributes to their struggle to find leadership positions. They may lack opportunities to learn on the job, seek out development through overseas experiences, experience formal mentoring arrangements, or have structured capacity-building or career advice, all of which hinder women's leadership development in higher education (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). Lack of commitment and investments by political parties to support and nurture women's leadership within the party hierarchy, especially those from the lower classes, has caused fewer women to be nominated for elections (Kodikara, 2009). As reported in the website of the Women's Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Sri Lanka (2016), successful women entrepreneurs have been largely those from families with more economic resources. It means that the majority of women are not in entrepreneurship partially due to lack of resources.

Desire for Work–Family Balance

Women strive to balance family and work life. Handapangoda et al. (2006) found that women in the state universities in Sri Lanka must fulfill dual responsibilities of household and workplace. Accordingly, women with a culturally masculine and career-oriented nature strive harder to become effective leaders than women who value women's traditional roles and family orientation (Jayatilake, 2016a). Kodikara (2009) highlighted that women's political participation has increased when family supports them. As revealed by the interviews with women leaders, women do not enter business without family support.

Societal Psychological Contract and Role Expectations

Women accept secondary performance or take a subordinate role in society when they do not see themselves becoming a leader (Gunawardane, 2013b; Herath, 2015; Ponnambalam, 1982). Their abilities beyond traditional roles are often disregarded by society (Handapangoda et. al., 2006). Further, women are expected to place a higher value on their husband's career than on their own (Jayatileke, 2016a). According to Jayatilake (2016a), one of the reasons for the *glass ceiling* has been women's personal aspirations, though this sounds, to some degree, like blaming the victim. Family expectations of caregiving have limited women's involvement in the higher education sector to mid-levels of leadership (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). According to Morley and Crossouard (2015), many women academics are reluctant to aim for senior leadership positions and perceive it as an unattractive career option. Kodikara (2009) mentioned that domestic roles also deter women's political involvement. Providing evidence for women's withdrawal in politics, Perera and Chandrasekera (2005) reported that two women members elected to provincial councils resigned to make way for their husbands who both subsequently assumed the office of Chief Minister in 1999. Jayasena (1996) highlighted that most managers perceive men to be better in areas such as decision making, using power, analyzing, and being innovative. This strengthens the belief that most men are efficient planners and possess superior leadership qualities compared with their women counterparts.

Situational Factors

According to Jayatilake (2016b), situational factors that affect women's under-representation are discrimination, men-dominated gender stereotyping, masculine-based stereotype of managers, biased decisions against women, lack of organizational support of women, lack of association of women with peer mangers, less support to work alone, and fewer opportunities for professional development. In higher education, organizational cultural values of patriarchy, gender discrimination, and bias; politically biased recruitment and selection; and domestic responsibilities are situational barriers (Morley & Crossouard, 2015).

Based on our empirical data analysis, we identified causes for the under-representation of women in leadership positions, facilitating factors that

contribute to successful women leaders, and personal characteristics of successful women leaders in Sri Lanka. These are depicted in Fig. 9.1.

A lack of skills and exposure leads to women's incapability to perform in leadership roles within their relevant contexts. Low expectations and the withdrawing attitudes of women mean that women's tendency is to define their own roles as secondary and supportive of men, giving priority to the family and motherhood. Structural barriers exist within families, organizations, and society that discourage women's participation in leadership positions. Lack of institutional support refers to all kinds of external support that empowers women as leaders. Lack of political sponsorship refers to the non-availability of sufficient national policy directions that facilitate compulsory representation of women in political, governing, and corporate leadership positions. Finally, socio-cultural expectations of a subordinate role refer to cultural and social acceptance by society that women should play a caring and subordinate role.

Facilitating factors that have contributed to women leaders succeeding are shown in Table 9.1.

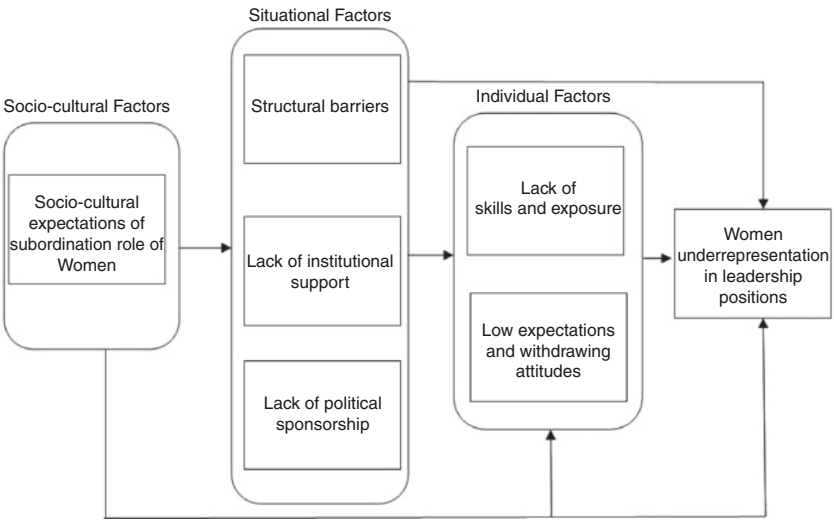

Fig. 9.1 Causes for underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in Sri Lanka

Table 9.1 Facilitating factors for women leaders to be successful in Sri Lanka

Facilitating Factors	*Description*
Supportive family Support from good mentors, coaches, and role models Acceptance by others Non-discriminating environment Networks Flexwork arrangements	– Educated family background, parenting style that empowers children, father's role model and encouraging guidance given to face challenges freely, children's culture, and socialization are cushioned against the weaknesses of national culture and social norms so that girls are brought up to enable them to be leaders, extended family support in caring role performance of women, husband's support in balancing the work–family role – To be in political, high class family background, family's political engagements, spouse's good name in politics, and popularity of family names among the community – Especially for women leaders in private sector, mentors, coaches, and role models in same organization and industry or in local contexts; in most cases, males; in some occasions, role models from foreign contexts; husband's support also strong – Successful with attention, recognition, and acceptance, especially from male leaders and colleagues, subordinates, and service receivers – Successful women leaders have not perceived in any discriminative environment, especially by the women leaders in the private sector. – In public sector, successful women perceived and experienced discriminating contexts that managed successfully – Especially in the private sector, successful women have built successful relationships and networks that helped in role performances – Some women leaders supported by flexwork arrangements, especially after becoming leaders

Source: Our research data

As per the data analysis, we found that family status, family facilitation, parenting styles, fathers' role models, support from coaches and role models, and women's personal characteristics act as crucial factors to women to emerge as successful leaders. The hindrances are mainly rooted in Sri Lanka's macro level socio-cultural factors that favor women's secondary or subordinate role in the society.

Further, the personal characteristics of successful women leaders in Sri Lanka have also been identified by us as shown in Table 9.2.

Recommendations

To increase participation of women in leadership, recommendations are made for an amendment in the country's policy direction, women's human capital development, civil society's role adjustments, and research on women in leadership.

Table 9.2 Personal characteristics of successful women leaders in Sri Lanka

Personal Characteristics	*Description*
Traits/in-born qualities Expectations Attitude Skills and competencies	Integrity, authenticity, balanced and positive mind, patience and wisdom, out of the box thinking Desire for success, explore differences, desire for multitasking, visionary and dedicated, broad thinking for high achievement, continuous reenergizing, overcome challenges, adapt to situations, stand by self, "learn to live with guilt of not caring about the family," hard work, perseverance, honesty, be human with "motherly touch," "I don't feel gendered," think equal to men, "if the family is not happy, then people are also not happy," think big, "no such things as jobs for men and women," how you look at things, "it is not what you have, but what you do with what you have," "never compare yourself with men or feel inferior or 'womanish,'" doing little bit more, stand on your own feet Educated; exposure and experiences; multiple role performance; self-care; teamwork, less hierarchical, networking; time management and work prioritization; getting men's support; care for others at work; forgive and forget past; exercise (practice and prepare); work with heart as well as head; sharpen competencies in man-dominated culture; never keep a margin for lapses; extra-curricular engagements when working; "have fun with everything you do"; compete with yourself; reliable; believe in yourself and what you do; situation management; believe in teamwork; accept challenges; work with coaches/mentors and be guided by role models; build networks (and social capital); language skills; develop sixth sense (see things with foresight); build confidence; respect others; collaborate not compete; discipline for performance; prioritize time for family; delegate; brand yourself; develop employability skills

Source: Our research data

Policy Directions

In the education sector, policies on gender equality and gender mainstreaming need to be developed, accompanied by policy guidelines, strategic action plans, resource allocation, and reporting mechanisms. Setting institutional policies and practices, including affirmative action and family-friendly policies supporting work–life balance, are also suggested (Morley & Crossouard, 2015).

With regard to women in political leadership, it is recommended to allocate a quota for women at all levels of political governance, nominations from the national lists (a mechanism for appointing members to parliament who are not elected but appointed by a political party based on their share of the national vote), political parties, and young women; caucuses of women in the legislature cutting across party lines to focus on women's issues; and giving voting rights to Sri Lankan migrant workers abroad as a great number of women are in that category (Liyanage, 2005; Perera & Chandrasekera, 2005).

The Ministry of Women's Affairs needs to be empowered further to formulate policies and strategies to collect and disseminate gender disaggregated data in relation to political and electoral processes and to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women by reviewing the laws, regulations, and policies at all levels. Further, it is recommended to establish gender-sensitive rules for the selection of candidates for elections, establish a funding source for women candidates, and take corrective actions to transform a violent political culture that has completely marginalized women in electoral politics (Kodikara, 2009).

The industrial policy reforms, boosted after 1977 in Sri Lanka, focused mainly on creating assembly type of work for women (Lakshman, 1998). Therefore, new industrial policy reforms should be put in place by diversifying the country's industrial sector to attract educated and skilled women into the workforce as the majority of educated women are unemployed (Department of Senses and Statistics, 2015). Provision is needed for special welfare facilities to support women's caring roles in the workplace (Lakshma, 1998), such as on-site daycare and nursing room facilities, and new job roles in society to replace the unpaid caretaker roles.

Women's Human Capital Development

Preparing women to accept leadership positions in the current contexts is essential. This task begins at birth with appropriate parenting and continues throughout a girl's education at elementary and secondary levels

into higher education. Then, as adults, skills and competency training and gender sensitization training for men and women are strongly recommended to improve work performance and career success. Further needs include adjustability and adaptability to work contexts; ability to face, endure, and overcome masculine cultures; and deliver results in organizations and political governance (Kodikara, 2009; Lakshma, 1998; Morley& Crossouard, 2015; Perera & Chandrasekera, 2005). Assessing organizational support for women's career advancement to allow women to surmount various types of impediments is also highly recommended (Jayatilake, 2016b).

In higher education, exposing women faculty to internationalization and mobility, networks and research partnerships, mentoring, and women-specific learning opportunities and professional development for women to enter leadership positions is essential (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). Special programs on leadership development, such as women-specific leadership development courses, are recommended as a strategic tool in preparing women for organizational and political leadership (Kodikara, 2009).

Curriculum changes in schools, universities, and vocational education institutions will be crucial to facilitate equal representation of women in all contexts, to produce employable women, and to change both men's and women's attitudes from preschool through kindergarten and every level of education in shaping society's psychological contract regarding men's and women's roles in the society as equal (Kodikara, 2009; Morley & Crossouard, 2015).

Civil Society's Role

In civil society, leaders in villages, towns, and cities, as well as community activists, need to encourage women to voice their opinions; brand themselves and build their profiles through media; create networks among women politicians at local, regional, national, and even international levels, and with civil societies; participate in education and awareness programs for women, girls, men, and boys on women in politics and governance, and women empowerment; organize national campaigns to promote more women in politics and in decision-making processes; demand allocation of resources, space, and time to discuss women's issues; seek to fund a trust fund for women in politics; and demand monitors to ensure elections free of malpractice, corruption, violence, and violations against women (Kodikara, 2009).

Encourage More Research on Women Leadership

Paying more attention in research to producing and disseminating gender-disaggregated statistics that are updated regularly and made readily accessible is critical in women leadership studies (Morley & Crossouard, 2015). More evidence is required from explorative research studies to understand why educated women withdraw from leadership positions. Explanatory research on how to encourage men and women to value women's equal leadership role is also needed, as are case studies and phenomenological studies to allow for greater understanding of women's experiences related to leadership.

Conclusion

Women representation in leadership positions in Sri Lanka is low even with educated women dominating the population. Women's underrepresentation in leadership positions was observed in the workforce, top management of the public and private sectors, political governance, judiciary services, and in education and higher education. The main causes for women underrepresentation are cultural and social influences, lack of economic feasibility, lack of work–family balance, societal psychological contact, and situational factors. Further, according to our data analysis, the main reason for women's underrepresentation is society's social-cultural expectations of the subordinate role of women that influence situational factors. Individual factors are crucial in determining the underrepresentation of women in leadership. Importantly, family factors, support from coaches and role models, and women's personal characteristics were found to cushion the negative influences of the causes that create underrepresentation. Finally, important policy directions, suggestions for women's human capital development, a role set for civil society's activists and government officials at all levels, and insights for further research on women in leadership are recommended to eliminate women's underrepresentation in leadership positions in Sri Lanka.

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