EMERGENT LEADERSHIP, GENDER, AND CULTURE: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Organizations are increasingly making use of technology to put together people from different geographic areas to collaborate and communicate in order to accomplish assigned tasks. Such virtual work arrangements are not limited by geographic or country borders. These virtual team arrangements require many new work practices, such as more proactive individual participation – or emergent leadership. While emergent leadership has been studied extensively in North America, much less work has been done in other cultures. In this paper we report the findings from a longitudinal study of emergent leadership behavior in virtual project teams in Sri Lanka with special attention paid to the impact of gender on leadership behavior. Also, the relationship between actual leadership behaviors and leadership perceptions is investigated in our study. Similar to North American studies we found that technology helped level the playing field for women enabling them to engage in emergent leadership behavior.

Key words: emergent leadership, virtual team, national culture