

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP SKILLS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: ROLE CONGRUITY THEORY OF PREJUDICE

A.A. Udayangani¹, E. Basnagala¹, U.G.L.B. Jayasooriy²

¹*Department of Philosophy and Psychology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Sociology, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*
anushkaud@yahoo.com

Leadership skills as a social phenomenon play a major role in the society. It is subjected to many social discourses in different disciplines and practices. Research conducted in different parts of the world show that leadership skills are determined by various factors. Gender can be recognized as one of the significant factors that determine leadership skills. While there are many findings in relation to the gendered aspects of leadership, Role Congruity Theory of Prejudice describes descriptive and prescriptive gender role expectations of others. The descriptive aspect of gender roles refers to consensual expectations about what members of a group actually do while injunctive norm describes consensual expectations about what a group of people ought to do or ideally would do; Perceivers correspondent inferences from the observed behavior of men and women commonly performed in their typical social roles to the personal qualities that are apparently required to undertake these activities. This research was conducted to further explore gendered patterns and influence of gender towards leadership skills. A sample of 70 was selected for the study using nonprobability, purposive sampling covering six different faculties in the University of Peradeniya including 35 male and 35 female participants for the quantitative study. Twenty participants were selected from the main sample for the interviews. The research was carried out using mixed method. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires to measure three major strategies: behavior focused skills, natural reward skills and constructive thought pattern skills that determine leadership skills using a five-point Likert scale. Independent sample t-test was performed for the analysis. Interviews which were supported by a semi structured questionnaire were used to gain an in-depth understanding of the qualitative analysis. The results showed a significant difference between male and female leadership skills based on behavior-based strategies; mean score male= 55.8, female=63.9 and $t=3.476$, $p<.05$. Females were seen as more likely to use behavior-based strategies than male respondents. Other two strategies did not show any significant difference between male and female respondents. Qualitative study proved that there is a significant influence from the gender for the performance of leadership skills. Further it was found out that rather than the biological aspects, cultural aspects related to gender have shown a greater reference to the performance of leadership skills. The results provide a better insight into the future policy planning and curriculum changes that focus on leadership skills of school students and teenagers. Replications and developed versions of research related to this area are further needed to verify and emphasize the importance of the findings.

Keywords: Gender differences, Leadership skills, Gendered patterns, Role Congruity Theory