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Developing a Culturally Appropriate Measure of Effective Leadership for Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Research has shown that characteristics of effective leadership differ in different national cultures. Measures available for evaluating effective leadership are limited. There are tools developed in South Asian countries such as India. However, research has shown Sri Lankan cultural values differ from these countries. This paper identified behaviours and traits of leadership that are perceived as important for an effective leader in the Sri Lankan context. It also presents a Questionnaire for Evaluation of Effective Leadership (QEEL) to assess effective leadership in Sri Lanka, and explains the development process of this questionnaire. The QEEL covers eight aspects: motivation, guidance, communication, decision-making, empathy, integrity, and change management. It was designed in three steps: Item generation, Item identification and Validation. QEEL can also be used by organisations and researchers in other countries with similar cultural values.

*Keywords***:** Leadership, Culture, Effective Leadership, Measurement Development, Sri Lanka

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Introduction

Effective leadership is a leader's ability to influence followers and meet the goals of an organisation (Yukl, 2008). For leaders to be able to influence their followers and gain the behaviour they require, they need to speak in a mutual language and have a common understanding of the meanings of relationships within society (Janićijević, 2013). Leaders will not be able to impart the vision they want their followers to adopt if the followers do not have a mutual understanding. A country's national culture creates and enforces certain assumptions, values, beliefs, attitudes and norms on the people of the country, and thus determines their understanding of reality and their behaviour (Hofstede, 2001). Hence, it can be argued that culture plays a significant role in effective leadership (Sweeney & McFarlin, 2015).

The core construct of leadership is the process of interaction and an individual's ability to influence the group he or she leads. Therefore, it is apparent that effective leadership would be reliant on the compatibility of the ways in which the leaders and their followers comprehend the world around them (Janićijević, 2019). To get an accurate understanding of effective leadership it is essential that researchers and organisations use an assessment tool that is sensitive or relevant to the culture of the country.

Hofstede's research has depicted how leadership differs in different national cultures (House et al., 2004). The expectations and beliefs of what constitute a good leader is different across cultures as people in different cultures would usually hold different implicit beliefs and stereotypes (Javidan et al., 2006). For example, in masculine cultures, men are expected to act decisive and have long term careers unlike women, whereas in feminine, cultures there is little discrimination or differentiation between genders (Lee & Liu, 2012). The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Programme (GLOBE), as well as a substantial number of other empirical research (Dorfman et al., 2012; House et al., 2002) have demonstrated that, what is expected of leaders and leadership vary considerably as a result of the cultural forces in the countries or regions in which the leaders function. GLOBE found that there are attributes that are universally endorsed as being desirable in a leader, i.e., motivational, dynamic, honest. The GLOBE study also identified certain leadership attributes that are universally undesirable, i.e., being a loner, egocentric (Javidan & Dastmalichian, 2009). However, as per the GLOBE study, there are also leader attributes that were found to vary across cultures. Countries with high power distance values endorsed leaders who were rule oriented, domineering and status conscious (Dorfman et al., 2012). Thus, it can be said that

although there are some similar or identical expectations in different cultures, there are also some unique and distinctive expectations for a leader to be defined based on culture (van Quaquebeke & Brodbeck, 2008).

Sri Lanka has no tools developed to measure effective leadership taking into consideration the country's cultural sensitivities. Data gathered using tools that lack this sensitivity would not give a true picture of effective leadership. There are tools developed in other South Asian countries such as India (Taj, 2010); however, as research has shown, Sri Lanka does not have similar cultural values to countries such as India (Dissanayake et al., 2015; Hofstede et al., 2010). Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural collectivistic country, where almost 70% of the population practice Buddhism (De Zoysa, 2021). Furthermore, unlike most countries in South Asia, Sri Lanka is estimated to have a low masculine score (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Hence, Sri Lanka can be considered as a feminine society. In such context, leaders or managers resolve conflicts through negotiation and compromise, and equality is important (Hofstede et al., 2010). In general, countries in the South Asian region can be considered to have collective cultures and they also place a high importance on hierarchy; most of these countries also have masculine culture cultures. Sri Lanka is an exception in this area and is considered to have a feminine culture (Dissanayake et al., 2015). Thus, the key objective of this research is to identify leadership traits and behaviours, which are associated with an effective leadership in Sri Lanka and develop an assessment tool taking into consideration the cultural perceptions and expectation of the country. The measurement tool developed in this research would assist organisations to evaluate leadership and address the leadership competency and skill gaps which would in turn help to strengthen the leadership pipeline of an organisation. This tool would also assist other researchers in Sri Lanka in the area of leadership in their data collection and evaluation.

In the next section, we present a review of the relevant literature. Following this, the method used for data collection is outlined and the results are described. Finally, a discussion of the findings, implications, limitations and recommendations for future research, and conclusions are presented.

Literature Review

There are almost as many definitions of a leader and leadership as there are people attempting to define it. House et al. (2002, p. 5) defined organisational leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the organisations". In simple words,

leadership is "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2016, p. 6). There have also been an extensive number of theories developed to understand leadership and effective leadership. The theories that address the relationship between behaviour and leadership, such as the trait theory and behavioural theory, have endeavoured to define what leadership and effective leadership should look like.

According to the trait theory, a leader has a collection of personality traits that differentiate them from others (Brown, 2013). Many research models and methods have been devised over the years to identify these collections of traits. Researchers have identified varying groups of traits that define a leader. The trait theory provides a very simple view of leadership. It implies that the presence of certain personality characteristics will enable a leader to be effective across different situations (Glendon et al., 2006). Critics of this theory point to the highly subjective interpretation of the value of individual traits among different researchers and writers (Northouse, 2016).

In contrast to the trait theory, the behavioural leadership theory attempts to describe leadership in terms of behaviour, or "what they do". The behavioural leadership theory identifies the following main categories of leadership behaviour: concern for the task, concern for people, directive leadership and behavioural leadership. Critics of behavioural theories argue that effective leadership varies according to the situation faced (Boje, 2000). The value of the behavioural approach was that it helped to shift the focus of leadership research towards understanding what leaders do and the impact of their actions (Yukl, 2012). However, one key limitation is the lack of empirical evidence in identifying consistent relationships between task and behaviours and work outcomes, such as performance (Yukl, 2012).

Both these theories on leadership build on the premise that certain behaviours and traits of people such as open communication, promoting teamwork, and helping people to grow are associated with effective leaders. They posit that by identifying if individuals possess these traits or behaviours, it is possible to determine whether they are effective leaders. However, it is important to understand that effective leadership is not only concerned with the individual characteristics of the leader, but also with complex interactions between the leader and followers. As discussed in the Implicit Leadership theory, people's underlying assumptions and beliefs influence the extent to which they view someone as an effective leader (Javidan et al., 2006). Hence, a potential leader's opportunity to become and remain a leader does not depend solely on their behaviour but also on the way in which the followers process the leader's behaviour through their personal, implicit leadership prototype (Felfe & Petersen,

2007). Therefore, it is important that leaders understand that the manner in which they are perceived by their followers influences the degree of power or discretion that their followers allow them (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005).

People's views can be affected by factors such as culture, gender and religion. Research on Implicit Leadership theory has focused on gender, culture and different employee groups (e.g., Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; House et al., 2004). For example, research on gender found that men had a higher probability to associate traits such as aggressiveness, domineering, and assertiveness with a prototypical leader whereas women were more likely to use terms such as being helpful, sincere, and empathetic, when defining their prototypical leader (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Research focused on culture has shown that cultures with low power distance focus less on the differences between people, prefer flatter hierarchy, and hence, they accept more decentralised leadership styles (Lee & Liu, 2012). Therefore, based on the subordinate's individual cultural values and gender, the leadership traits and styles that would be considered effective and accepted by subordinates would be different.

The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness Research Programme (GLOBE) study extended the implicit leadership theory to the cultural level by stating that individuals will share the structure and content of these belief systems in a culture. As individual implicit leadership theory is defined at a shared cultural level, it is known as culturally endorsed, implicit leadership theory (Shaeik & Müller, 2012). The GLOBE study, as well as a substantial number of other empirical research (House et al., 2002), have demonstrated that what is expected of leaders and leadership vary considerably as a result of the cultural forces in the countries or regions in which the leaders function. The GLOBE research had focused on leadership across the world and studied different cultures in order to develop "universal" attributes of leadership (Hofstede, 1996; House et al., 2004). These highlight the importance of the need for measurements for effective leadership at culture or country level.

Measurements of effective leadership have been plentiful and diverse. Measures include assessment of specific outcomes or subordinates' evaluation of effective leadership. One of the most common methods that uses the outcome concept is assessing a group's performance or measuring to what extent they achieve their objectives; another is measuring improvement in subordinate performance and satisfaction (Dhar & Mishra, 2001). However, some researchers believe that effective leadership should be measured through subordinate evaluation. For example, Ehrhart

and Klein's' tool requires subordinates to rate their leader on six items, such as subordinates' willingness to work for the leader and ranking the current leader against the ideal leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2010). Similarly, Yukl (2008) developed a measure that requires subordinates to assess their leaders by rating the overall effectiveness of the leader in comparison to other leaders known to the subordinate. The assessment tool developed by Vecchio and Anderson (2009) compares the leaders' assessment of their abilities against the subordinates' evaluation of the leader. To evaluate the subordinates' perception, the subordinates are asked to assess the leaders' effectiveness, rank and compare them to their ideal leader and provide their assessment on whether the leader helped the organisation to grow and perform, and finally, they are asked whether they aspire to become like the leader.

Most of these leadership measures have been developed in Anglo and European cultures. These cultures are mostly individualist societies where people are supposed to take care of themselves. They are also generally masculine cultures that indicate that they are driven and motivated by achievement and success. In addition, these countries have low power distance, and hence, hierarchy is not so important (Hofstede et al., 2010). As research signifies, the traits related to leadership are not culturally universal (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). Hence, measurements of leadership developed in such cultures might not be suitable for countries in other cultures such as South Asia where societies are collectivistic, masculine and place high importance on hierarchy (Hofstede et al., 2010). The six-item leadership effectiveness scale developed by Ehrhart and Klein (2001), taking into consideration the Anglo and European cultures, looks at some universal attributes of leadership, such as performance, which are similar to what was later identified through the GLOBE study (Javidan & Dastmalichian, 2009). However, the scale also includes participative leadership attributes such as how much the followers feel they are compatible with and get along with their leader (Irving, 2014). These attributes would not be essential attributes in leaders in South Asia where participative leadership is not considered significant (Dorfman et al., 2012; House et al., 2004).

Methodology

This study, which was part of a larger research, focused on effective leadership in Sri Lanka. The study covered a sample of both male and female subordinates and leaders in the private sector in Sri Lanka and was carried out within Colombo, which is the financial capital of the country. The research gathered perceptions on effective

leadership from both subordinates and leaders within organisations using focus groups and one-on-one interviews.

To develop the questionnaire, currently available literature and questionnaires in other countries such as the Leadership Effectiveness Assessment (LEA) questionnaire developed by the Management Research Group (MRG, n.d.) were reviewed. While gaining insights from previous tools and studies, the Questionnaire for Evaluation of Effective Leadership (QEEL) was designed based on the qualitative data gathered, and validated, from Sri Lankan organisations. The QEEL was developed in three steps: item generation, item identification and validation.

Item generation was carried out taking to consideration top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Four focus group discussions with eight subordinates in each group were conducted with the assistance of a discussion guide, and ten one-to-one interviews with Leader of Leaders (Managers who have team leaders reporting to them) were also carried out. Item identification was done utilising the content analysis method (Silverman, 2005).

The final step of validation was establishing the validity and reliability of the instrument. The face validity, consensual validity, content validity and criterion validity were checked by using the modified Delphi Technique (Jayasinghe et al., 2006). The Delphi method is a methodical process for obtaining, exchanging, and creating an informed opinion on an issue. This technique is favoured as a tool to help in problem solving or in developing policy when the knowledge about a phenomenon or problem is incomplete (Kittell-Limerick, 2005). Therefore, considering the diverse views on leadership, effective leadership and the assessment of effective leadership, this method can be considered as the most suitable method for content validity.

As per the modified Delphi Technique, a group of nine experts in the leadership area were selected according to their involvement in the research and training work. This panel consisted of educators, researchers and a human resource specialist. Content validity was assessed by checking whether or not all aspects of the measure were covered. Consensual validity was determined by assessing the agreement of the experts on whether or not the conceptual definition has been translated appropriately in this tool. The items of effective leadership derived from the focus group discussions and interviews were presented to the experts. The items to which more than 80% of the group of experts disagreed with were removed from the

questionnaire. Other items were modified according to the suggestions given by the experts. The modified items were presented again for their consensus.

The six-item leadership effectiveness scale developed by Ehrhart and Klein (2001) was used as the gold standard for criterion validity. This scale, similar to the QEEL, assesses leadership from the follower perspective. This scale was utilised because of its efficiency as a six-item scale (Irving, 2014) and because of its level of inclusion and reliability as shown in previous research work such as Hale and Fields (2007). Both measurements were included in a questionnaire and were given to a sample of 25 subordinates/direct reports. The Pearson Correlation test was carried out to test the association between the outcome of both the QEEL and the Gold standard. Both QEEL and gold standard use a five-point Likert scale for the evaluation each item, and based on the overall score it is decided if managers are effective or ineffective.

The reliability of the tool was tested using Cronbach's alpha, which assessed internal consistency among the factors. Furthermore, by re-administering the questionnaire to 15 participants of the study population one week after the first administration assessed the test-retest reliability, which is essential if the objective of the instrument is to measure outcomes (Abramson & Abramson, 1999). The results were compared by using reliability correlations.

The assessment tool was then tested on a larger sample of 401 participants. An Exploratory Factor Analysis was carried out using this larger dataset to further strengthen the validity of the QEEL. Hence, the reliability and validity of the measure were re-evaluated.

Results

From the interviews and focus group discussions, eight items were identified as behaviours or traits shown by effective leaders (Table 1). The eight behaviours and traits identified were, the ability to motivate, the ability to influence and guide, good communication, effective decision making, possessing job knowledge, empathy, integrity/unbiasedness, and change management. The identified items were measured on a five-point rating scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). The Likert scale was used because it is found to be suitable for studies in social sciences that have to do with perceptions, opinions, personalities, and descriptions of people's environment (Adeniran, 2019).

Table 1: Items Identified for Effective Leadership from Interviews and Focus Groups

Effective leaders are:	Interviews		Focus groups	
	Frequency in responses	Sample quotes	Number of mentions in focus groups	Sample quotes from focus groups
Motivational	60%	A person who can motivate different personalities and get them to give 110% (Interview 1)	14	He/she should also be able to motivate them, even though your followers know how to do it you should motivate them all the time.
		Motivate and empower employees to see and believe in the same vision (Interview 6)		It is not just giving guidance you have to follow them and motivate them. Otherwise, the total objective will be rubbish.
Can provide guidance	100%	A leader for me is someone who can influence people (Interview 4)	27	Leaders are people who influence others to achieve an organisational goal in a proper way, without forcing
		Inspire people and direct them towards one direction (Interview 3)		Leader gives the guideline and direction this the way you want to go this is the way you want to work
Good Communicators	100%	People who can't clearly communicate what they want and are unable to delegate and try to do everything themselves are ineffective (Interview 2)	22	Effectively communicate it to us in the correct order in the correct way. So, communication I think plays a major role

Effective leaders are:	Interviews		Focus groups	
	Frequency in responses	**Sample quotes**	**Number of mentions in focus groups**	**Sample quotes from focus groups**
		Strong communicators who can clearly communicate their intentions and provide clear directions (Interview 4)		Ineffective would be a very poor communicators, even the directions, instructions if he doesn't know how to communicate that to the employees that's a big gap
Effective decision makers	40%	Ineffective leaders are incapable of taking a decision and constantly passing the buck (Interview 8)	10	In difficulties take decisions for the whole group
		Good leaders should be able to take difficult decisions (Interview 1)		He/she should know what to prioritise
Possess job knowledge	50%	Have technical and practical knowledge (Interview 6)	20	I think there is a current problem with leaders, they can tell people what to do, but they can't demonstrate how
		They are extremely knowledgeable and skilled and can thus impart knowledge to the team and guide them (Interview 10)		Have the knowledge needed to guide people
Empathetic	60%	Leaders should also be able to relate to the people (Interview 4)	16	She/He can easily understand the difficulties, then subordinates are more

Effective leaders are:	Interviews		Focus groups	
	Frequency in responses	**Sample quotes**	**Number of mentions in focus groups**	**Sample quotes from focus groups**
				willing to work with him
		Empathetic, make the people feel they belong to a team (Interview 5)		Leader should be able to empathise with his or her followers
Possess high integrity	80%	They should have integrity and be strong ethically and are usually role models (Interview 8)	20	She/He has to have integrity and maintain equality, some leaders are really good listeners, they listen to everything we say
		leaders are ineffective when they have no integrity and are biased and show that in their decision making (Interview 6)		They take every grievance we say and inside their mind, they rank us. It is ok to have their own judgment but should not favour
Change managers	70%	Can adapt to change and have a clear vision of what they and their team need to achieve (Interview 10)	16	Should be a good thinker and have a vision, so where do we go, how do we achieve things
		They see the bigger picture the vision (Interview 1)		Leaders should be able to think broad, and should be a straightforward person

As per the Modified Delphi Technique, an expert panel of nine were provided with the items to give their opinion on whether the items had a relationship to effective leadership and whether such items were suitable to measure effective leadership. The items which more than 80% of the group of experts agreed to were

included in the questionnaire. The items to which less than 80% of the group of experts agreed were removed from the questionnaire. For seven of the eight items presented, there was 100% agreement from the expert panel that they were related to effective leadership. However, the expert panel did not see the item "Job knowledge", as essential for effective leadership although it is important. Therefore, the item "Job Knowledge" was removed, and the Questionnaire for Evaluation of Effective Leadership (QEEL) was finalised. The final items included in QEEL were: the leader provides motivation, provides guidance, is a good communicator, is an effective decision maker, is empathetic, possess high integrity and is able to manage change.

The Pearson Correlation test was carried out to test the relationship between the outcome of both the QEEL and the Gold standard (scale developed by Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). The calculated Pearson r value was 0.79 ($p < 0.01$), which signifies a strong correlation between the output of the two assessment tools.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	My manager is motivational	My manager provides guidance	My manager is a good communicator	My manager is an effective decision maker	My manager is empathetic	My manager possesses high integrity
My manager provides guidance	0.686					
My manager is a good communicator	0.550	0.450				
My manager is an effective decision maker	0.573	0.625	0.667			
My manager is empathetic	0.455	0.372	0.498	0.604		
My manager possesses high integrity	0.577	0.424	0.397	0.549	0.629	
My manager is able to manage change	0.333	0.419	0.555	0.610	0.409	0.426

Note: Sig. (1-tailed) for the individual factors was $p \leq 0.000$

Exploratory Factor Analysis was carried out with a larger sample (401) to further strengthen the validity of the QEEL. The data was first screened for suitability to carry out a Factor Analysis. The correlation matrix showed that there were many coefficients in the moderate to high range (Table 2). The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) test carried out for sample adequacy, resulted in a score of 0.809 and the Bartlett's Test showed a chi-square significance of 0.000 which further indicated that the data was suitable for factor analysis.

After the data suitability was tested, initially, an unrotated principal component factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010) was carried out (Table 3). As there was only one component with an Eigen value greater than 1, no rotation was possible (Osborne, 2015). The identified component contributed to 58.64% of the total variance when all items are considered. Therefore, the Exploratory Factor Analysis shows that all seven items of the QEEL are related to the measurement of one component "Effective Leadership".

Table 3: Component Matrix

	Component 1
My manager is motivational	0.783
My manager provides guidance	0.744
My manager is a good communicator	0.772
My manager is an effective decision maker	0.872
My manager is empathetic	0.740
My manager possesses high integrity	0.745
My manager is able to manage change	0.693

Note: Extraction Method - Principal Component Analysis.

Additionally, Cronbach's alpha reliability for the factors in the QEEL was assessed. The calculated Cronbach's alpha was 0.83, which indicates a high level of internal consistency for the QEEL. Finally, the overall reliability of QEEL was tested through the test/re-test reliability method, which was calculated to be 94%.

Discussion

Leadership models and theories have evolved with time. From Laissez-Faire leadership style (Lewin et al., 1939) to most recently introduced and discussed theories such as authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) and ethical leadership

theory (Brown et al., 2005). In the development of the QEEL, the traits and characteristics that were identified show that, empathy and integrity have become equally important as the basic skills of communication and the ability to motivate and guide. Hence, the current study highlights areas such as responsibility and empathy (Waldman & Galvin, 2008) which are relevant to the current time and cultural context, yet often overlooked in early leadership models. Further, the theories introduced to bridge that gap such as ethical leadership and authentic leadership are applicable.

There are several tools available to measure effective leadership, such as the six-item leadership effectiveness scale developed by Ehrhart and Klein (2001) which was used in this study for criterion validity. However, these tools have been developed taking into consideration the values and perceptions in the respective countries/regions where the measurement tools were developed. As per the GLOBE study these values and perceptions differ from country to country (House et al., 2004). The attributes that distinguish a given culture from other cultures can predict what attributes and behaviours of a leader are most acceptable by subordinates (House et al., 2002). Attributes that are considered in some countries to enhance leadership are considered to impede leadership in other countries (House et al., 1999). Hence, a tool such as the QEEL, which is developed taking into consideration the perceptions, values and culture of Sri Lanka and evaluates leadership from the perception of the followers or subordinates may provide the most realistic and accurate assessment.

Different tools also look at effective leadership from different angles. Some tools look at tasks carried out by leaders, i.e., implementing a vision and achieving results (e.g., Leadership Effectiveness Assessment (LEA) questionnaire) and some others look at it solely from the subordinates' perspective i.e., enjoying working for the leader and admiring the leader (e.g., six-item leadership effectiveness scale). The QEEL looks at leadership from a subordinate's perspective and is focused on the behaviours and traits required to lead effectively. The researchers did not pre-define what effective leadership is, the research allowed the subordinates or followers to define what behaviours or traits would be essential from their perspective for a leader to be effective. Thus, ensuring that certain behaviour and traits would not be overlooked due to researchers' bias and that all factors that are believed to be relevant to effective leadership in Sri Lanka is evaluated through the assessment tool.

When compared with factors measured in other effective leadership tools such as the Leadership Effectiveness Assessment (LEA) questionnaire developed by the

Management Research Group (MRG, n.d.), the seven factors identified through this research has certain similarities. For example, communication can be found in both tools. Thus, giving the insight that certain traits are universal expectations from an effective leader. However, in cultures such as Sri Lanka, which are a more collectivist, empathy becomes a very important factor as well. Employees have an expectation that leaders should be sensitive to their work demands, feelings and predicaments (Kock et al., 2019), Another factor which is not found in either the LEA or the leadership effectiveness scale developed by Ehrhart and Klein is "change management". This could be linked to a cultural characteristic of Sri Lanka. As per Dissanayake et al. (2015), Sri Lanka has a relatively high score for uncertainty avoidance, indicating that people choose to avoid uncertain situations and prefer to be given instructions on how to carry out their jobs (Dissanayake et al., 2015). Any change would create a period of uncertainty for both organisations and employees as they adapt to the new norm. Therefore, in a culture where uncertainty is not preferred, for a change to be embraced it is important that the change is managed effectively in way there is minimum uncertainty created. It may have been due to this that effective change management has been identified as an important factor for effective leadership in this study. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is a country that has gone through many social and political changes during the past 20 to 30 years; it is a country in a process of re-building after a 30-year civil war and is heavily dependent on developed countries. Hence changes in these countries also have a ripple effect on Sri Lanka. In such circumstances, the macro environment is very volatile and constantly changing (Asian Development Bank, 2019), requiring Sri Lankan organisations to make many changes such as re-structuring, and processes re-engineering to adapt to variations. Thus, change is a constant experience in companies and the leaders' ability to effectively manage it becomes important.

The Leadership Effectiveness Scale developed by Taj in India (2010) is more comparable than the previously discussed ones since both India and Sri Lanka are South Asian countries. When comparing the Leadership Effectiveness Scale to the QEEL there are certain similarities, which reflect the similarities in culture. Both have given priority to integrity or ethical and moral behaviour as it is considered an important aspect of leadership in Asian or, more specifically, South Asian countries. South Asian countries are greatly influenced by religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, which has a strong emphasis on moral values and integrity (Dissanayake et al., 2015). It is interesting to note that while change management is included in QEEL it is not in the Leadership Effectiveness Scale. This could also be attributed to the factors mentioned above; while Sri Lanka faces a relatively volatile macro

environment, India is much more stable both economically and politically (Siddiqui, 2018). Therefore, managing change may not be as important in the Indian organisational environment as it is in Sri Lanka.

Another interesting behavioural factor identified through the respondents and measured in the QEEL is the ability to provide guidance. In an era where employee empowerment is discussed as an important aspect of employee satisfaction (Flohr & Host, 2000), it is ironic that employees still also consider the ability to provide guidance as an important leadership behaviour. However, the cultural factor of "uncertainty avoidance" can explain this to a certain degree. As previously noted, Sri Lanka has a relatively high score for uncertainty avoidance, with a preference to be guided on how to carry out their jobs (Dissanayake et al., 2015). Consequently, the ability of a leader to provide guidance would be important for employees in Sri Lanka and thereby seen as part of effective leadership. Requirement for guidance is not found as a factor in the leadership effectiveness scale developed by Ehrhart and Klein (2001); however, the Leadership Effectiveness Assessment (LEA) questionnaire does look at the ability of a leader to delegate.

The above points show that though there are factors common to other effective leadership measures developed across the world, QEEL appears to have captured unique requirements and expectations of the Sri Lankan culture in the current environment, such as possessing high integrity, being empathetic, being able to manage change and providing guidance.

Practical Implications

QEEL has shown a high level of validity and reliability and thus can be considered as a suitable tool for the assessment of effective leadership. Though it is developed in consideration of the Sri Lankan cultural sensitivities, it is a tool that can be used by researchers in other Asian countries with similar cultural values. As leadership is culturally sensitive and dynamic, considering the limited tools developed thus far in Asian countries to measure effective leadership, this tool would assist researchers in countries with similar cultural values to more accurately measure effective leadership.

QEEL looks at leadership from subordinate's perspective and focuses on the behaviours and traits required to effectively lead. As such, QEEL can also be used by organisations as part of the 360^0 evaluations of their managers. Leaders can utilise the QEEL to evaluate where they stand in regard to their team members. Therefore,

it provides guidance to a leader on what they may need to develop to effectively lead in Sri Lankan culture. Further, QEEL would enable organisations to capture the subordinates' perception and then, based on the areas the leaders score low, organisations can decide on areas of development and improvement. Thus, organisations would be able to create customised development plans for the managers.

In the development of the QEEL, "change management" was identified as a factor in the demonstration of effective leadership. This factor has not been found in other leadership effectiveness tools such as the Leadership Effectiveness Analysis (LEA) or the leadership effectiveness scale developed by Ehrhart and Klein (2001). Therefore, this research has identified a behaviour to be cultivated by leaders and considered by organisations and researchers in the evaluation of effective leadership, especially in Sri Lanka and countries with similar cultural values.

The current study also highlights that the expectation from followers is not one type of a leadership model or style i.e., empathetic leadership but composition or combination of styles and models. Along with empathy and integrity, traits and behaviours such as change management and ability to influence have also been captured in the QEEL. Hence, managers adopting or focusing on one leadership model or theory may not be effective leaders.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The present study did not include employers and employees from public sector. The recruitment criteria, promotion and performance evaluation of the public sector are very different from the private sector. The public sector was excluded because the differences in public and private sector organisational cultures would have made it difficult to generalise the outcome. Therefore, the applicability of the scale is limited to the private sector.

Furthermore, QEEL is a unidimensional tool to evaluate effective leadership only from the aspect of behaviours and traits as perceived by their followers/subordinates. In future, it can be expanded to include other dimensions of effective leadership, such as followers' engagement level, to give a more robust view of effective leadership. A tool to measure effective leadership from others' perspective such as peers, stockholders/investors can also be developed. This is an area researchers can further develop to help create an assessment tool that looks at effective leadership from

multiple dimensions and multiple perspectives and thus provide further insight into individual's leadership.

The QEEL was developed taking into consideration the cultural perceptions and sensitivities of the country and thus would be suitable to be utilised by other South Asian countries with a similar culture. There are measurement tools developed in other regions and by studying and comparing the outcome of the different tools, it would be possible to gain further understanding and insight into the cultural impact on the assessment design and outcome. Thus, countries and organisations would be able to pick the most suitable tool that would give the most accurate assessment.

This research aimed to understand the perception of effective leadership in a given country's cultural context. However, there are other factors that affect effective leadership such as organisational culture (Bass & Avolio, 1993) and situational factors (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Therefore, research that look at different organisational cultures could provide a more in-depth understanding of leadership.

Conclusion

The study identified seven behaviours and traits that were associated with effective leadership in the Sri Lankan cultural context. The seven factors, ability to motivate, ability to influence and guide, good communication, effective decision making, empathy, integrity and change management were then used to develop the Questionnaire for Evaluation of Effective Leadership (QEEL). The QEEL was developed utilising qualitative data, which was effective in capturing the behaviours and traits that are expected by Sri Lankan subordinates and followers from their leaders. The tool captured what could possibly be religious (e.g., empathy, integrity), political and economic environmental (e.g., decision-making) influences and possible cultural influences such as high uncertainty avoidance (e.g., change management, providing guidance). The tool also reflects universal factors such as communication and providing motivation. The QEEL has a strong correlation with the gold standard and showed a high level of internal consistency. Hence, it can be an effective tool for measuring perceived effective leadership.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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