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Challenges faced in introducing the 'theory of collective leadership' to the third world context: a case study on Sri Lanka

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The term 'leadership' has been differently defined over years and a number of theories for example the main two leadership theories- the Traditional and Collective Leadership Theories have been raised. In consideration of the module of these two theories, the Traditional Leadership Theory is leader-centred while the Collective Leadership centres on the follower. Albeit the fact that the Collective Leadership Approach is being popular within the development discourses, the application of it to the Third World context has become a failure. Considering all these, the research focuses on analysing the challenges faced in introducing Collective Leadership Approach to the different cultural structures of the Third World and introducing a new leadership theory that can overcome these challenges. In most occasions, the secondary data were used in the research and in collecting primary data; thirty distinctive situations in Sri Lankan context were studied. According to the case studies, it was observed that in the Sri Lankan context, the 'leadership' concept is intimately allied with religion and cultural values and there lacked 'responsible followers' to apply the Collective Leadership Approach. Owing to aforementioned causes, the application of Collective Leadership into Sri Lankan milieu has become unsuccessful and in Sri Lankan situation, the Traditional Leadership theory is discovered inappropriate. Thus, the study illustrates the need of a new leadership theory besides these two theories in order to develop a strong leadership within Sri Lankan context. The research findings reveal that the cultural values and social perspectives that are used to define 'leadership' can be successfully applied in developing strong leadership in Sri Lankan context. This can be identified as 'Culture Based Leadership Theory' and the theory is clearly distinguishable from Collective and Traditional Leadership models as it centres on cultural values rather than 'leader' or 'followers'.

Keywords: traditional leadership, collective leadership, cultural based leadership