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Examining Sri Lankan professional women's perceptions of their opportunities to undertake international careers

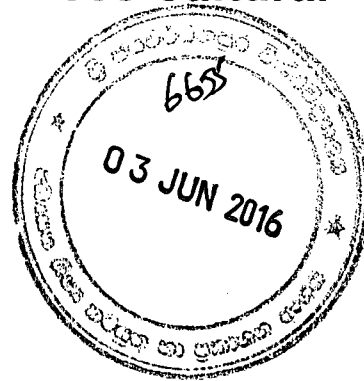
Implications for diversity among cross-cultural managers

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Abstract

Extant research has examined women's under-representation (relative to men) in international careers in respect to prejudice towards women in host countries, organizational resistance to selecting women, women's own disinterest in taking international work and host country societal expectations of women. Although research has suggested the benefits for global organizations of having management diversity, the literature has given limited consideration to barriers and opportunities for international careers for women from developing countries. This study addresses this gap in examining the perceptions of 243 professional women in Sri Lanka about factors they perceive affect opportunities for international careers. The findings suggest the women perceive that positive female role models and family/husband support may facilitate opportunities, whereas prejudice in host countries, organizational gender discrimination and home country societal values emphasizing a primary responsibility of women as wives, mothers and daughters may hinder opportunities. The research has business implications in that, given a global ageing population and increasing numbers of nontraditional families, organizations seeking to achieve gender and ethnic diversity among their international cross-cultural managers need to be cognizant of supporting employees with extended family responsibilities.