

5th International Conference on Business Research

ICBR 2022

December 01, 2022

Organized by the
Business Research Unit
of the
Faculty of Business
University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

Conference Proceedings



BUSINESS RESEARCH UNIT
FACULTY OF BUSINESS
UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA

International Conference on Business Research (ICBR)
www.icbr.mrt.ac.lk

ICBR 2022, December 01, 2022

Conference venue: University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

Conference organized by: Business Research Unit (BRU),
Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

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Business Research Unit is the research dissemination arm of the Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.

ISSN 2630-7561

International Conference on Business Research

International Conference on Business Research (ICBR) 2022 is organized by the Business Research Unit (BRU) of the Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. As a Research Unit purely dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, the BRU intends to hold the ICBR annually.

5th International Conference on Business Research aims to provide a platform for both local and international researchers and industry experts and, to share their knowledge, experiences, perspectives and insights. The conference welcomes high quality empirical research papers, conceptual papers, and testing of alternative methodologies and theories that have significant contributions to the body of knowledge covering all areas of research in business while encouraging critical analysis of policy and practice.

The conference welcomes cultural and geographical diversity in submissions to better conceptualize how businesses are conducted world-wide and gather a spectrum of knowledge. The papers published in the proceedings are judged as original works of the authors and has gone through a double-blind peer-review process. Business Research Unit supports the development and practical application of consistent ethical standards in its publications.

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Printed By:

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Message from the Vice-Chancellor

Professor Niranjan Gunawardena
Vice-Chancellor
University of Moratuwa



It gives me immense pleasure to extend my compliments on the 5th International Conference on Business Research (ICBR 2022) of the Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa. It is indeed admirable to experience the continuous advancement of ICBR for the 5th consecutive year, which shows nothing but the thirst for knowledge dissemination by the Faculty of Business.

As always, ICBR serves as an annual event that unites academia and practitioners who are engaged in different research endeavours. By creating a solid platform, ICBR facilitates the process of sharing knowledge and insights while fostering a thriving research culture among scholars, practitioners, and the industry.

In a world where innovation and change have become the twin engines of growth and competitive advantage, the transformation of modern-day organizations has become challenging more than ever. Especially, in a dynamic phase of unprecedented challenges, leadership has to share a common vision to embrace challenges with proper business acumen guided by an erudite understanding of the root causes of resistance to change. Thus, decision-making in all spheres of management should be adequately assisted by scientific research to swiftly transform challenges into potential business opportunities.

Navigating in turbulent times vehemently requires visionary business leaders. Adaptability, resilience, and transformation are crucial to steer modern-day businesses in challenging times. Swift adaption to unfavourable circumstances with thorough attention to transformation can only be facilitated through visionary leadership. Thus, it is essential to empower leaders via a proper channel of scientific research at both national and global levels.

By and large, ICBR contributes to both academia and industry by critically examining the new developments in the sphere of business by bringing different ideologies, perspectives, and insights into one platform. This sharing of knowledge adds an invaluable contribution to the existing body of scientific knowledge of the world of business and I sincerely anticipate this initiative would keep growing further in the forthcoming years.

As always, I extend my heartiest best wishes to the organizing committee of the 5th International Conference on Business Research (ICBR) 2022 and all the other contributors who have rendered their enormous support to make this event a great success.

Message from the Dean

Professor Sarath Dasanayaka
Dean, Faculty of Business
University of Moratuwa



I am delighted to send my thoughts to the 5th International Conference on Business Research (ICBR) 2022 of the Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa.

As a faculty dedicated to nourishing the forerunners of business, we thoroughly believe in research and development in all areas of modern-day businesses. Generation and dissemination of new knowledge have always been our key priorities. Thus, we sincerely believe ICBR 2022 will provide a solid platform for both local and international researchers and industry personnel to share their knowledge, experience, perspectives, and insights for a better future during this uncertain time in our country.

This event results from the utmost commitment and hard work of many individuals who have generously contributed their time, effort, and ideas to create a better research atmosphere in our Faculty and the University. From reviewing scholarly work to planning and organizing the entire program evidently and explicitly shows our determination in creating a sustainable research culture as an emerging faculty. Mainly, I would like to offer my profound thanks to the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the University of Moratuwa, for their wise advice and thought-provoking suggestions on organizing the conference amidst many unprecedented challenges. I am also profoundly grateful to all who contributed to making this endeavour a success. My heartfelt gratitude is offered to Dr. (Mrs) Thesara Jayawardane, Director BRU, and Conference Chair; Ms. Sathya Ramanayake, BRU, and ICBR Secretary; Ms. U.R.G.W.S. Weerasinghe, Publication Co-chair; Ms. G.V.N.M. Kanchana, Promotional Co-chair; Ms. H.A.D.N. Perera, Organizing Co-chair; Ms. N.C. Samarasinghe, Publicity Co-chair; Mr. W.M.S.N.F. Rajakarunanayake, Financial Co-chair, and all the other committee members for their invaluable contributions.

We are immensely grateful to the Registrar and the Bursar for extending support and blessings to make this important event a reality in the calendar of the Faculty of Business. Three Heads of the Depts and the Directors of the Faculty and all other staff members are also highly appreciated for extending their full blessing and support for this important event in the Faculty. We are particularly proud of our outstanding publication, ICBR 2022 – Conference Proceedings, and I deeply appreciate Prof. G.D. Samarasinghe for being meticulous and supportive in editing the conference proceedings.

My profound thanks are offered to our eminent guest of honour, Deshamanya Dr. Krishu Gomes (Group Chief Executive officer/Managing Director – Dreamron Group of Companies) for gracing our occasion today. Further, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to our Keynote speakers; Ass.Prof. Kashif Saeed (GIFT University, Pakistan), Prof. Kunpeng Li (California State University, USA), Prof. Ajantha Dharmasiri (President – Chartered Management Institute SL), Dr. Morley Muse (Director Board of Women iSTEMM, Victoria University, Australia), Prof. Gamini Gunawardena (California State University, USA), and Dr. Ruwangi Fernando (Founder/Director STEM Sisters, Victoria University, Australia) for honouring the Faculty's invitation to share their knowledge and expertise on leadership in the contemporary business world at the 5th ICBR 2022.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the paper presenters for their participation. ICBR 2022 would never be materialized unless for your willingness to share your research projects, findings and insights. Sincerely appreciating your purpose of contributing to the development of scientific knowledge, we value and respect your efforts by assuring quality through being utmost transparent in reviewing process for the publication.

Meticulously, I read most of the papers in this proceeding book, and I can assure you that they represent all management and business disciplines with the right blend of measurement, design, and tech aspects with sense, meanings, and interpretations which are critically required to understand contemporary business problems in recommending right solutions. The essence of this conference is to create an environment that facilitates learning and future research trajectories of the disciplines of management and business.

I wish you all a productive and stimulating research experience.

Thank you!

Message from the Conference Chair

Dr. Thesara Jayawardane
Director – Business Research Unit
University of Moratuwa



It is with great pleasure and pride that I welcome you to the 5th International Conference on Business Research (ICBR), at the University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka. ICBR is the key annual event of research dissemination of the Business Research Unit (BRU) of the Faculty of Business of the University of Moratuwa (UoM). Over the past 05 years, ICBR has grown to be one of the major International Conferences in Business Management providing an excellent forum for exchanging information and discussion on a wide variety of topics in Business Research. The theme for this years' conference is "Leadership: Sharing the Vision".

ICBR 2022 will be a unique conference for all colleagues involved in the fields of Management, Marketing, Economics, Entrepreneurship and Technology, representing the latest developments and future trends of Business Research. ICBR 2022 is held as a part of the Conference week of the UoM and therefore, this will be a memorable event with a high participation.

In order to provide an outstanding technical level for the presentations at the conference, we have invited 47 distinguished experts in the Business Management field to participate in the Technical Review Committee. Our preparation for this year's conference began from January and we received over 60 papers prior to our first dead line in June 2022. We made the submission format for papers available, that was the same as the final camera-ready paper format to improve the fairness of paper selection process and to standardize paper submission format of ICBR. All of the submitted papers underwent the first round of review. In the first round, papers were reviewed internally to decide the suitability for the conference. In the second round, the chosen submissions which aligned with the conference theme were sent to two experts in the related area, for double blind peer review. In the third round, final camera-ready paper submissions were reviewed to confirm that the papers had sufficiently addressed the comments given by the reviewers. Initial review process confirmed that only 42 papers were suitable as per the conference theme, and these papers were sent out for blind peer-review by at least 2 experts in the related area. Paper acceptance or rejection decisions were purely based on these reviewer comments. All review reports and additional comments from the reviewers were released to the authors for further improvement. Based on the reviewer comments there are 22 high quality final submissions for the ICBR 2022. All the papers underwent a similarity check with the help of Turn-it-in software facility provided by the Library of the UoM. The Technical Review Committee included eminent academics including 22 Professors from Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Australia and Sri Lanka along with 25 expert Senior Academics from the UoM and other distinguished academic institutes in the country. My gratitude extends to each of the Review Panel member of ICBR 2022 for their thorough reviews; their names are recorded with much appreciation in the front of the proceedings book.

The final programme of ICBR 2022 was divided in to four areas as per the disciplines of the study: Accounting, Finance and Economics, Marketing, Strategic Management, HR and International Business, Entrepreneurship, Decision Sciences and Project Management and, Management of Technology, Business Law and Business Communication. We have an exciting author presentation program at this conference that will allow participants to reflect upon past accomplishments, renew friendships and extend networks, and jointly explore current and future research directions. All the video recordings of the author presentations will be uploaded in to the BRU website at the end of the conference, for future references. We strongly believe that these presentations will enable viewers to get exposure to the ICBR 2022 technical programme and explore into the detailed findings of the research papers contributed by the authors.

ICBR 2022 is honoured and privileged to have the presence of the Eminent Guest of Honour Deshamanya Kishu Gomes, Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Dreamron Group of Companies. My heartfelt gratitude and appreciation is expressed to him for accepting our invitation to share his vision on 'Leadership and new ways of Leading' with the participants of ICBR 2022.

I am most honoured to have with us Prof. Ajantha Dharmasiri, President of Chartered Management Institute (SL Chapter) sharing his leadership vision on 'Conscious Leaders in better Led and Managed organizations'. My heartfelt gratitude is extended to Prof. Gamini Gunawardena, Professor of Management Emeritus, California State University and High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in South Africa, who flew from USA to deliver his key note address on 'Leadership in Current Sri Lanka'.

I am most grateful to Prof. Kunpeng Li of the California State University, USA, Prof. Kashif Saeed of the GIFT University, Pakistan, Dr. Ruwani Fernando, Founder/Director STEM Sisters, Australia and Dr. Morley Muse, Director Board of Women iSTEMM, Victoria University, Australia for joining at the opening ceremony virtually and delivering key note addresses on 'Leadership and the Vision to Success'. I believe their valuable thoughts will open the horizon of new research and practice for the conference participants coming from many fields.

I sincerely appreciate the invaluable contribution of our Vice Chancellor, Professor Niranjan Gunawardena, for making this event a reality. I wish to extend my gratitude to the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Dr. D.P. Chandrasekara, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, Professor Ajith De Alwis, Director-Research, Prof. Ruwan Gopura, Director-Quality Assurance, Mr. V.Sivahar and Bursar, Mr. K.A.D. Pushpakeerthi.

My gratitude extends to the Dean of the Faculty of Business, Professor Sarath Dasanayake and Professor Vathsala Wickramasinghe for the continuous support, guidance and encouragement. Without the moral support extended by Prof. Dinesh Samarasinghe, Dr. Darshana Mudalige, Dr. Venura Welagedara and Mr. Shenal Rajakarunanayake along with all the staff members of the Department of Industrial Management, organizing and holding this conference would not have been a reality.

My gratitude extends to Mr. Nuwan Gamage, President of the Sri Lanka Institute of Marketing, Mr. Kumar Galhenage of Brandix, Ms. Keshavi Puswewala of Uniliver, Mr. Sirimal Fernando CEO of Astron, Mr. Charith Abeywardane of Union Assurance and Mr. Dilupa Pathirana CEO of Barista for accepting our invitation and becoming partners in the ICBR 2022. I would like to recognise the support from all the members of the organizing committee, whose names are recorded in the front pages of the proceedings, for their cooperative spirit, extraordinary efforts, and professionalism depicted in all aspects of their duties.

My earnest gratitude is expressed to Mrs. Sathya Ramanayake, ICBR secretary, for her diligent effort in making all detailed conference arrangements. I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable support received from Mrs. Sadeetha Fernando, Ms. Mahimi Kanchana, Ms. Nadeesha Perera, Ms. Warangana Weerasinghe, Mrs. Navodi Samarasiri, Mr. Mithula Vidanapathirana and Mr. Achala Thushan for their contribution in the conference activities. We are also grateful to Dr. Shantha Fernando, Director of the Centre for IT services and, the webmaster of the University Mr. Lalinda Rathnabharati for creating and maintaining BRU and ICBR websites. I thoroughly enjoyed working with such a dedicated and focused team who sacrificed a significant portion of their valuable time to make ICBR 2022 a success.

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors for their contribution for ICBR 2022 and, for being here in person with us to create an environment of knowledge sharing and learning. I hope that this conference will allow you a productive discourse not only in aspiring excellence in research but also in establishing valuable networks while having an enjoyable time.

I sincerely hope you would enjoy the ICBR 2022 as much as we all enjoyed delivering it. I am privileged to be chosen as the Conference Chair and I look forward to receiving any feedback you may have on ICBR 2022.

Message from the Eminent Guest of Honour

Deshamanya Dr. Kishu Gomes
Group Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director
Dreamron Group of Companies



It is with immense pleasure I write this message to the 5th International Conference on Business Research (ICBR) 2022 organized by the Business Research Unit, Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa.

I strongly believe that the theme selected for the conference “Leadership; Sharing the Vision” is timely and of high significance. Leadership is a topic that often escapes clear definition and mutual understanding, despite the plethora of books and articles written about the topic over decades. Leadership has been defined in terms of traits, behaviours, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupation of an administrative position. The study of leadership has become widespread in both academia and in the business world. Leaders are needed in all fields and at all levels to set the direction, create teamwork and inspire people to contribute their best.

Leadership has long been considered the smart composite that brings employers, employees, and other stakeholders together in ways that facilitate organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness creates long-term sustainable growth thus and progress of an organization. To be successful, organizations must constantly adapt to their operating environment, acquire, train and nurture necessary resources, and conduct operations in an efficient way. Leaders can influence organizational performance in several ways, including setting the direction, rallying people around the vision, deciding on the competitive strategy, human resources, and the management structure and accountability model systems and processes for right execution, and programs to inspire people to reach goals. The determinants of organizational performance are closely interrelated, and leaders should understand the inherent trade-offs and potential synergies when deciding how to continuously improve performance. Success is more likely if leaders articulate a vision of the desired future that is attractive enough to justify the sacrifices and related hardships that are required. The vision can provide a sense of continuity for followers by linking past events and present strategies to a vivid image of a better future for the organization.

Today’s global leaders have to perform leadership roles in an increasingly complex, unpredictable, ambiguous, multicultural and diverse environment. The current economic crisis in the country compounded by the global recession has made things more challenging and consequently the need for better aligned leadership is critically needed than ever before. Nevertheless, major innovative changes in an organization are less likely to occur in periods of relative stability and economic growth thus there is no better time than the prevailing crisis situation to sharpen leadership abilities to ‘challenge the challenge’. Hence, take the opportunity to be that leaders not just for your benefit but to benefit all Sri-Lankans.

I am sure that the conference of this magnitude will inculcate the much needed research culture among the academics and trigger interactions among researchers to exchange the ideas of recent advances in all areas of business and this is an opportune platform for the young researchers to share their findings and create new knowledge for the betterment of the society.

Whilst I consider it as an honour to be the chief guest of the ICBR-2022, I convey my best wishes to the Business Research Unit of Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa, authors and researchers who have contributed enormously to make this event a great success.

Message from the Keynote Speaker

Professor Ajantha Dharmasiri
President – Chartered Management Institute
CMI (UK) – Sri Lanka Chapter



Reaping the Research Richness

I am indeed delighted to share my thoughts, when the Business Research Unit (BRU) of the Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa conducting its fifth annual conference on business research, titled, ICBR 2022. It is a significant step taken by the BRU not only for raising the awareness on research among the business community but also to apply research for upliftment of the socio-economic wellbeing of our nation.

The ICBR 2022 comes with an opportune theme highlighting the need to have leadership in sharing the vision. A strategic vision is the starting point of sustained success. Amidst a planetary pandemic, economic resurgence of Sri Lanka has become an increasingly challenging endeavour. The needed support by comprehensive research to take data-driven decisions is felt more than any other times. We need to realize the required a research symposium of this nature fulfils such voids in focusing on deeper and broader issues shedding much light through rigorous analysis and right interpretations.

As we are aware, management research falls into the broader category of social research. Whilst positive initiatives are being taken, current situation with respect to research in Sri Lanka is far from a satisfactory level. We have an acute gap to bridge with regard to the current and desired levels of engaging in management research, with publishable quality and practical relevance. It is encouraging to note that the BRU is tirelessly pursuing to link research insights to relevant practical implications. It reminds me of my reminiscent memories as the former editor of Sri Lankan Journal of Management (SLJM) published by the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM), my employer that became the first Sri Lankan management journal to be electronically available through EBSCO Host, one of the largest online research databases in the world.

Having taken over the reins of the Sri Lankan Chapter of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) - UK as the new “servant leader”, I see the prospects of working closely with the BRU for mutually beneficial value creation. Whilst experiencing the absence of management and leadership in many fronts, our intent becomes increasingly important. CMI endeavours to build “conscious leaders” in “better led and managed” organizations in line with CMI vision. Practicing CMI core values in being professional, progressive, passionate, and practical, will pave way for sustained success. Applied research plays a key role in such a worthy cause.

Leadership has always been a fascinating subject to me. Leadership literature is full of fancy jargon and multitude of packaging as well as re-packaging. One significant trend in recent past in the east and west alike is the focus on authentic leaders. As we are aware, leadership is all about inspiring, influencing and initiating. It is more than positions and titles as it involves decisions and actions. It is essentially a mindset. We mistakenly look only at the leaders at the top but not the “leaders at the tap.” It invites for collective action towards creating a conducive future for humanity.

May I take this opportunity to thank the BRU team for their committed collaboration in vibrantly showcasing the ICBR 2022. Let me wholeheartedly wish this prestigious event a phenomenal success.

Message from the Keynote Speaker

Professor Gamini Gunawardane
Professor of Management Emeritus, California State University
High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in South Africa
Founder, Sri Lanka Institute of Service Management



Leadership in Current Sri Lanka

Leadership, as a concept in management of organizations, has been studied extensively over the years. Bennis WG (On becoming a leader. New York: Basic Books, 2009) notes that 'leadership is the most studied and least understood topic of any in the social sciences.' Effective leadership is generally recognized as a key factor in the success of an organization.

Evolution of Leadership theories began with Great Man theory (1840s) and trait theories (1930s-1940s) followed by behavioral theories (1940s-1950s), contingent and situational theories (1960s), new leadership era transactional and transformational theories (1990s), and other theories developed in the 2000s, such as Servant Leadership, Inclusive Leadership, and Complexity Leadership theories. I am certain that management curricula at University of Moratuwa, especially at the Faculty of Business, address this evolution of Leadership theories and the theories themselves.

While concepts and theories on Leadership applicable to top level managers in business and public organizations are well established, little research is available on suitable Leadership styles and characteristics at country/nation level, e.g., political leaders such as Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers of nations, especially developing and smaller nations/states.

In recent times, three leadership theories that have attracted attention as most applicable to political leaders are Transformational Leadership, Servant Leadership and Complexity Leadership.

Transformational Leadership is a theory in which leaders encourage, inspire and motivate followers. Nelson Mandela is recognized as a transformational leader. So are, Mahatma Gandhi and Winston Churchill.

Servant leaders seek to support their team members and are most concerned with serving staff and communities first. Notable examples of servant leaders are Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Theresa.

Finally, contemporary leadership theory also includes Complexity Leadership, which attempts to address the complexities of the modern world. This theory takes a whole-system view, considering contextual interactions that occur across a nation's social system, and across global bilateral and multi-lateral international systems. As such, this theory appears quite suited for modern political leaders.

Overall, borrowing from these three theories, characteristics of good political leaders are recognized as: Local and global conceptual view (including ability to decide when to challenge or respect constraints), Person with a vision and purpose; Good communicator; Honesty and integrity; Transparency; Decision maker (unafraid to make difficult decisions); Openness to information; Ability to inspire others; and Delegating tasks effectively (including good appointments).

During my invited lecture, I will present a brief description of Leadership concepts and theories at organizational level, followed by a review of Leadership styles and characteristics identified in successful leaders of countries/states. I would expect the participants to present and exchange their ideas, research and experiences on the subject.

I recommend University of Moratuwa, especially the Faculty of Business, undertake research on Leadership at the national leadership level suitable especially for small developing countries like Sri Lanka.

Message from the Keynote Speaker

Professor Kunpeng Li
Stelmar Faculty Fellow
Department of Systems and Operations Management
David Nazarian College of Business and Economics
California State University, Northridge
Northridge, California, U.S.A.



I am honored to be invited to be a keynote speaker at the International Conference on Business Research - ICBR 2022.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has introduced unprecedented challenges and disrupted the supply chain on a global scale. Pandemic-related shutdowns and work restrictions have caused labor shortages that have hobbled production. Shipping and port disruptions have resulted in chaos and delays in imports arriving and being processed. This, together with rising freight rates, have caused import prices to surge resulting in significant price increases and high inflation rates in many countries. Due to the global nature of supply chains, shutdowns, trade restrictions and production delays in one country cause supply problems in many others. The mismatch between supply and demand caused by the pandemic has led to global shortages. For example, disruptions in semiconductor production in Asia led to a 2.3 million shortfall in the production of new automobiles in North America in 2021, which has resulted in an average price increase of 13% for new automobiles and over 35% for used automobiles.

Globalization increases supply chain risks due to high geopolitical uncertainty. Supply chains in the future must build resilience, agility and efficiency. Organizations need to reassess supply chain models and take advantage of technical advances to balance supply and demand, cost and reallocation, as well as opportunities and risks. Green supply chains can create long-term value and reap the benefits of sustainability's multiplier effect. It is important for businesses to develop corporate sustainability strategies and to use emerging technologies for emission tracking. New and advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, block chain technology and 5G capabilities, are on the frontline for global competition and coordination.

Although the pandemic caused unprecedented volatility in supply and demand that significantly increased pressure on the supply chain, many opportunities have been created due to the rise of digital-first priorities and e-commerce. As the pandemic recedes, urgent attention is needed to correct the supply chain issues caused by the pandemic. Supply chain models must be transformed with the aid of new technologies. I expect to see many agile and innovative solutions being discussed at the conference.

Message from the Keynote Speaker

Professor Kashif Saeed
GIFT University
Pakistan



It is with great pleasure I write this message to the 5th International Conference on Business Research – ICBR 2022 organized by the Business Research Unit, Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa.

Leadership is a vibrant and timely topic to be discussed and utmost important in any context with universal appeal. Throughout the years, leadership has been defined and conceptualized in many ways. The component common to nearly all classifications is that leadership is an influence process that assists groups of individuals toward goal attainment. After the unprecedented negative implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, all economies are thriving in a turbulent time, consequently the importance of leadership has convinced more than ever before.

In addition, leadership has gained the attention of researchers worldwide. Through the years, leadership has been defined and conceptualized in many ways. A review of the scholarly studies on leadership shows that there is a wide variety of different theoretical approaches to explain the complexities of the leadership process. Some researchers conceptualize leadership as a trait or as a behaviour, whereas others view leadership from an information-processing perspective or relational standpoint. Leadership has been studied using both qualitative and quantitative methods in many contexts.

Having no doubt, ICBR – 2022 will be a better platform for the researchers to demonstrate their findings and share knowledge with different groups. While thanking for inviting me as a keynote speaker, I wish this conference a great success.

Message from the Keynote Speakers



Dr. Ruwangi Fernando
Founder/Director STEM Sisters
Victoria University, Australia



Dr. Morley Muse
Director Board of Women iSTEMM
Victoria University, Australia

Women in Leadership: Opportunities beyond Academia

Thank you for inviting us to be the keynote speakers at the 5th International Conference on Business Research organized by the Business Research Unit of the Faculty of Business, University of Moratuwa.

When we think about Business Research, it is so easy to view from an Academic lens. However, with the changing form of education to digital space and the global economy transitioning to a circular economy, there is an increased demand for sustainability in all aspects of life.

Considering the current gender gap and statistics from the Global Gender Report 2020, which shows that it will take approximately 100 years to close the gender gap, we need to broaden the minds of female academics/researchers to think beyond Academia by developing new strategies and harnessing opportunities. Currently, in the Asian region, South Asia has the highest number, leading the gender gap. Hence, it is imminent to create other approaches for women to harness their skills.

There are several means of creating and developing visibility of women in business research. Some of these include; the collaboration of female academics with industry partners, entrepreneurship, building and honing leadership skills. A broad view of business research from an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary approach to solve global issues is important for new knowledge creation

As a business leader, to ensure sustainability of your idea/concept, is to share the vision and rebirth it in others, which in essence is the key to true leadership. There are three important aspects to this: choosing your vision, communicating that vision and identifying mutual benefits to others.

In respect to the work we do, our focus is empower women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) through employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership. iSTEM Co. is a research, consulting and talent sourcing company that enables employment of Australian women in STEM including women of colour and women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in STEM as they experience over four times unemployment rates according to Australia Chief Scientist Report (2020).

5 years ago, I (Ruwangi) observed the issues around the lack of support for women of colour in STEM and began STEM Sisters. Through my leadership journey, I observed the main problems that needed to be tackled to make progress in my cause. These include: unemployment, underemployment and retention. The cascading effect of proffering solutions to these highlighted issues will lead to more women in leadership across STEM. So, when Morley contacted me early this year to address this issue, it was only natural to get on board.

Morley, similarly to my journey has been tackling the issue of under-representation of women in STEM through one of Australia's largest NFP STEM organisations, Women in STEMM Australia (WISA), where she operates as a board director. Currently, there are only 29% of women in the STEM workforce across Australia with engineering having the lowest numbers at 11%. The key focus of WISA is addressing gender equity and increasing the statistics of women in STEMM. Through her board directorship, she has worked with very reputable STEM organisations including CSIRO, Australia's leading research organisation, where she was an ambassador on the Innovation Catalyst Global project, promoting the 'Find Her' tool, a unique search engine that connects female academics to industry partners. In addition, she currently sits on the advisory panel of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (ATSE) Elevate program, which facilitates scholarships for women in STEM through a \$41.2 million funding.

We both observed however, that the discussion around gender equity stops at gender most times without a proper delve into gender intersectionality which involves race, ethnicity, disability and so on. Hence, the need address this through iSTEM Co.

Our collective STEM journey has been sharing our vision for women in STEM including women of colour and women from CALD across Australia. Through our leadership journey, we have been able to rebirth our idea in others, which has led to women gaining employment across academia, industry and also becoming entrepreneurs.



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