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Article

Opportunities for Upper Management Positions for Women Employees

W.M.C.S. Gunawardhana ^{a*}, K.N. Nadeeshani Silva ^b

a Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka.

b Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

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*Corresponding author. Tel: +94713310237.

Email: csandagomi@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4197-479>

b) <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8539-2490>

ABSTRACT

Gender inequality persists in Sri Lanka due to structural and cultural barriers, impacting women's economic, political, and personal prospects. It has observed significant gender disparities remain in job positions and executive levels in many Sri Lankan companies. This research aims to uncover the reasons behind these imbalances and identify barriers hindering women's career advancement, ultimately contributing to gender equity solutions. It encompasses three specific objectives: scrutinizing the criteria for job promotions in the company, identifying barriers hindering women's advancement, and evaluating the impact of women-specific characteristics on career progression. Data collection involved surveying 32 females at the managerial level and conducting exploratory studies with male counterparts. Both primary and secondary data sources were used, with inferential and descriptive statistical methods applied for analysis. This research delves into the complex landscape of gender inequality within the company. External factors like political connections shape promotions, while organizational, social, and individual factors collectively contribute to the disparity. Low female representation in decision-making roles, cultural stereotypes, and the absence of female role models pose substantial hurdles. While women specific characteristics may not heavily influence promotions, addressing these multifaceted barriers is vital for advancing gender equality in the workplace.



Introduction

Based on data from the International Labor Organization statistics, using World Bank population estimates, it's noted that 67% of the workforce in the United States is made up of women (World Bank Organization, 2021). However, women occupy roughly fourteen percent of board positions and forty-one (around eight percent) of CEO roles in Fortune 500 companies on average (Catalyst, 2023).

Indeed, 40% of female leaders state that their efforts towards diversity, equity, and inclusion go unnoticed in performance evaluations. Investing time and energy in work that isn't acknowledged might pose challenges for the advancement of women leaders. It also means that women leaders are stretched thinner than men in leadership. Normally, women leaders play a greater role in supporting employee well-being and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that significantly enhance retention and job satisfaction. Unfortunately, these contributions are often not formally recognized in many organizations (Women in the Workplace, 2022).

According to the International Labor Organization Statistics, using World Bank population estimates, 38% of the workforce in the Sri Lanka is women (World Bank Organization, 2021). And also, according to the Department of Census and statistics (2021) reports the contribution of females to the total employment is 33.3 percent. Among the professional's female contribution is about 63.2 percent. This group generally consist of engineers, teachers, nurses, doctors etc. Managers, senior officials and legislators' female contribution is about 19.5 percent. When considering the employment rates of Sri

Lanka after 30 years of age, which can be considered as fitting to get promoted to upper management positions, still the female employment level is comparatively lower than that of males. (This situation called as "Glass ceiling") According to Department of Census and Statistic reports in 2021 shows, estimated mean and median monthly gross wage/salary separately for monthly wage/salary earners and daily wage/salary earners. According to that estimated values of female values are comparatively lower than those of male. (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021). When considering the economically inactive population in Sri Lanka are females (73.3%). That is about 6.3 million (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021).

In Sri Lankan cultural women have much less economic, social, political and domestic power than men (Gunawardane, 2016). Normally they have played considerable role inside the family as homemakers. Rural women spend much time every day on agricultural and domestic tasks. Nowadays governments have invested heavily in education, health, and welfare programs. Therefore, both men and women can enjoy relatively high standard in health and education. However, even today Sri Lankan women facing several problems due to unequal factors of political participation, labor force participation and decision-making process (Gunawardane, 2016).

Gender inequality mean, sex refers to the biological differences that define male and female bodies. Men and women clearly differ in many biological characteristics such as average weight, height, amount of body fat, amount of body hair and genitals. This Biological difference is universal concept. Generation to generation the world is developed, at the same time women also improve in the societies. However, gender is

non-biological, culturally and socially created distinction between men and women. Despite the advanced that women have made in countries around the world. But the problem is still gender differences are continued due to basis of social inequalities (Gunawardane, 2016).

Gender equality is one of the struggles in Sri Lanka. Due to structural barriers and cultural stereotypes, women face limitations in workplace options, financial security, political participation, and personal safety. The first woman to serve as CEO of major company was appointed in 2020. And also, the first prime minister was Sirimavo Bandaranayke was elected in 1960. Anyhow, these days only 5% of women represent seats in parliament. However, in Sri Lanka challenges companies to tackle gender equality in the workplace.

Women are always discouraged from continuing to work after having children. However few companies have childcare facilities. The country has no laws requiring paternity leaves. MAS holding (clothing manufacture) set a target for a 50% gender balance at all management levels by 2025. One of the biggest gender equality success stories of Sri Lanka comes from Diesel & Motor Engineering Plc. (DIMO). This company's concept based on the "culture change". Therefore, the company isn't changing its workforce composition by hiring more women in traditional roles. But aiming at core and non-conventional jobs (Sri Lankan Companies advancing gender equality in the workplace, 2023).

When considering job promotions, according to 2008 Catalyst survey of more than 4,000 full-time-employed men and women high potentials who graduated from top MBA programs worldwide from 1996 to 2007. It shows that the women are paid \$4,600 less in their first post-MBA jobs,

occupy lower-level management positions, and have significantly less career satisfaction than their male counterparts with the same education (Ibarra et al., 2010).

Research methodology

Target Population

In "ABC" Private Company, the workforce is predominantly male, with certain sections exhibiting a noticeable absence of female employees due to the physically demanding nature of the work, requiring special skills and significant energy. Consequently, recruitment restrictions are in place for women in these specific sections. This survey focused exclusively on female employees at managerial and executive levels, aiming to gather insights into their perspectives on promotion opportunities. The aim is to comprehensively understand the challenges and aspirations of women throughout the organization, with the ultimate goal of establishing a fair and inclusive system that promotes merit-based advancements and equal access to growth opportunities for all employees.

Study Sample and Sample Technique

In the context of this company, there are a total of 5 departments, out of which 2 departments limit recruiting female employees. Consequently, our focus is primarily on these 2 departments for the purpose of analysis. "ABC" Private Company comprises a workforce of 149 executives, but regrettably, the representation of female executives is quite low, with only approximately 32 female executives accounted for. This percentage of female representation at the executive level is concerning and warrants further attention. At the same time an exploratory study was

also conducted with 10 male employees at the executive level.

Theoretical framework for the study

This study's theoretical framework incorporates three pivotal theories: Glass Ceiling Theory, Organizational Culture Theory and Human Capital Theory. The Glass Ceiling Theory scrutinizes gender and diversity gaps within organizational hierarchies, elucidating barriers to career advancement. It identifies these barriers under three factors: Organizational factors, social factors, and individual factors. Organizational Culture Theory delves into how an organization's values and norms impact employee experiences and growth opportunities, focusing on elements such as service period, external influence, lack of female counterparts, lack of job-related skills and potentials, work-life balance, confidence and self – promotion, lack of technical skills, being silent, and being emotional. Human Capital Theory underscores the role of individual skills and knowledge in shaping career paths, concentrating on age, marital status, educational qualifications, service period, current position, willingness to work beyond office hours, and lack of higher education for career advancement. By synthesizing these theories, this research aims to unveil the intricate dynamics between gender, organizational culture, and human capital in career progression, ultimately striving to promote diversity and inclusion in workplaces.

Data Collection

Data, needed for the study collected by using both primary and secondary data collection methods. A semi structured questionnaire

was prepared and respondents were interviewed by face- to- face interviews. Secondary data were collected through research articles, web pages, Company reports, articles in the newspapers, Central Bank reports, Department of Census and statistics reports, Annual reports of “ABC” Private Company and books which are related to the study. At the same time, Guidelines were prepared for the exploratory study and they were interviewed and information was recorded.

Analysis of Data

Collected data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Pie charts and tables were used in descriptive analysis while Wilcoxon sign rank test, Pearson Chi- Square Test and Spearman's correlation coefficient used in inferential analysis. As a data preparation method, reliability of collected data was tested by using Cronbach's Alpha value of Reliability test.

Results and Discussion

Criteria of Job Promotions in “ABC” Private Company

Descriptive Analysis

Following Equality Law when give promotions to the female

The government of Sri Lanka has ensured that, Section 12 of the Sri Lankan Constitution states that all persons should be equal before the law, making both men and women eligible for equal pay for equal work. However, only very few organizations implement the rules in considering the promotion and other benefits for the

females.

The study highlights a prevalent lack of adherence to gender equity rules in promotions and benefits within organizations. Specifically, production departments like the factory, distillery, and Agriculture are predominantly staffed by males, leading to an apparent bias in hiring and promotions contrary to equity laws. Respondents confirm this trend, with limited female representation in management positions, particularly within the factory, where the application of equity laws remains challenging due to historical gender disparities in hiring. However, in other departments, the implementation of equity laws appears more evident.

Influence of external factors, such as political considerations, on job promotions within the company

The analysis of external factors influencing promotions for female employees highlights the preeminent role of political influence. The research underscores the pervasive impact of politics on recruitment and promotions, often outweighing individual qualifications and performance. Respondents consistently stress the significance of political connections, particularly noting the influential role of recommendations from top management and Heads of Departments (HOD).

To Analyses the Barriers for Women to get Promotion in “ABC” Private Company

When study the analyses the barriers for women to get promotion in “ABC” Private Company, the barriers have been identified under main 3 factors; Organizational factors, social factors and Individual factors.

Organizational factors

Descriptive analysis

Organizational factors have been identified as the biggest obstacle to the promotion of women to leadership positions. A survey conducted among women confirmed that women's involvement in decision-making and leadership positions was low. This was further confirmed in an exploratory study with male employees. Also, it was proved that the female involvement in the hiring and promoting process is low.

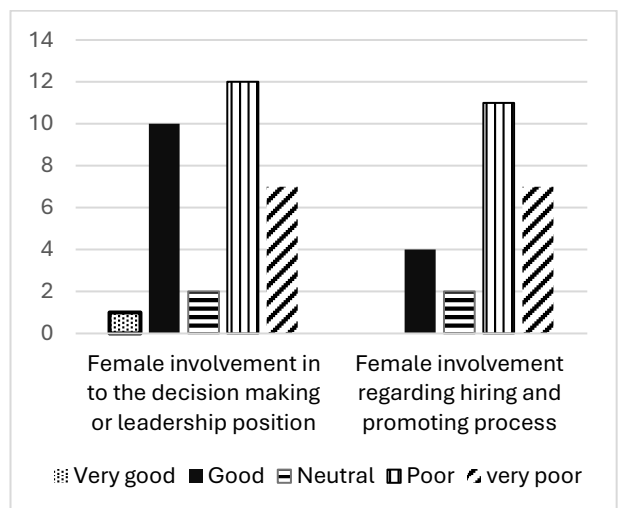


Figure 1: Female involvement into the decision making or leadership positions and hiring and promoting process

Source: Survey findings,2023

A Survey done at Perak State Secretariat, Ipoh, Perak indicate that the proportion of women in decision making especially in public sector still low (Saadin et al., 2015) . This kind of situation also exist in this “ABC” Private Company.

In the factory and Distillery, there are fewer women working in management positions. Right now, there is only one woman in such a role. In the discussions with the male

employees, it was possible to find out that the following factors have affected the promotion in the factory and Distillery departments and the relatively decrease in female leadership.

The research reveals a pronounced gender disparity in leadership roles within the factory and distillery departments, with minimal female representation. This underrepresentation in decision-making positions is affirmed by participant responses emphasizing the scarcity of women in these roles and the perception that women lack the necessary skills. Furthermore, company policies, such as the reduction of hiring women for factory and distillery departments, contribute to this gender gap, along with women's reluctance to apply for physically demanding or high heat places. Therefore, the application for such jobs has decreased. And even if he gets that job, they resign later. Notably, the majority of male employees in the production-oriented departments which are factory, distillery, and Agriculture departments further exacerbate this gender imbalance.

In the discussion with the male employees, it was confirmed that the company has reduced the number of women and hired more male employees. This situation can be seen, not only in the factory and distillery departments, but also in some fields of the agriculture department. Therefore, participation of women is less. This situation is not seen in some sections of the agriculture department and HR, Finance departments which are doing the administrative roles. Women participation is very high in those places.

“When women are recruiting, the company needs to provide protection for them, along with transportation facilities. These factors add to the company's costs.

Moreover, many people are not accustomed to working together, and their mindset might not very open.”

“However, when women take on managerial roles in the field, they have to encounter certain challenges in their work. There are occasions when early morning arrivals and field observations are necessary. Sometime they have to use vehicles to reach the observation sites. There are also areas where elephants hang out. As a result, a certain level of resilience is required to handle such situations. These factors can be affected to a reduction in women's participation for some sections. Because of these things, women's participation has decreased from the field'. If you look at the factory and workshop, the percentage of men is high, but if you look at HR, there is a high percentage of women.”

Male female allocation differences when considering same positions

A Sri Lankan research study highlights empirical evidence of gender discrimination, particularly in steering women towards lower-paying roles and specific industries. This suggests that estimations not accounting for these factors may underestimate the true extent of discrimination (Gunawardana, 2006).

By looking at all of these, it appears that men maintain a gender imbalance in some departments. The survey with women also proves that. However, it seems that it is limited to the departments where it is produced. Below chart drawn from the responses of women employees and can see differences in salaries, duties and promotions between women and men.

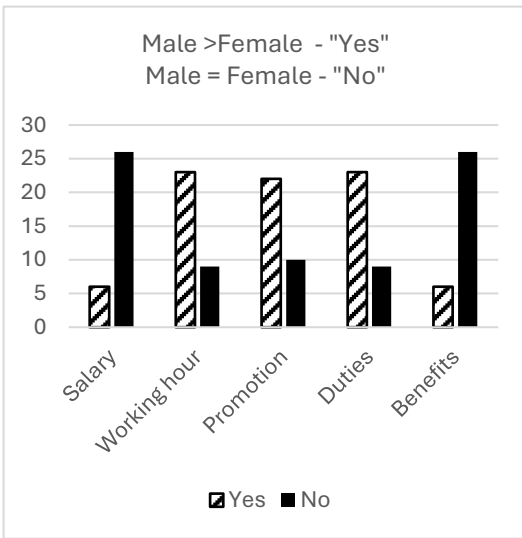


Figure 2: Male female allocation differences when considering same positions

Source: Survey findings, 2023

Perpetuate the gender imbalance by men

In some poorest countries, as a rule, girls get less education than boys, there is low investment in women’s health than in men’s, legal rights of women in the economy and in marriage are weaker than men’s rights, and women have less political power than men. As evidenced, for example, by women’s low representation in parliaments. Normally men are persuading this kind of gender imbalance (Liu & Yang, 2014). Evidence for this can also be found from the “ABC” Private Company.

“When you look at departments like HR, Finance most of the time, instead of looking at male/female, they hire those people by giving place to talent. But factory, distillery and agriculture department have that belief some extent”

It is apparent that within the organization, there exists a prevailing opinion that certain roles are exclusively suited for men, with a

belief that women are incapable of performing them. Consequently, this opinion has led to restricted recruitment of women in some departments. It was proved by above men’s statement.

Male and female discrimination in the company

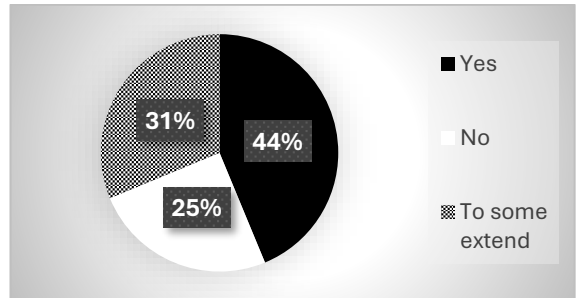


Figure 3: According to the skill of doing particular work, discrimination as male and female

Source: Survey findings, 2023

One of research findings substantiate the occurrence of gender discrimination and instances of sexual harassment within the recruitment and promotion processes of the selected organizations (Dharmawardhane & Navaratne, 2019).

Based on the feedback provided by female respondents concerning gender discrimination within the company, a substantial portion of them reported experiencing gender-based discrimination. Specifically, 44% of the respondents indicated that they perceive the company as having clear distinctions between male and female roles, with sentiments such as "only men can do this job" and "women cannot," while 31% acknowledged experiencing some degree of discrimination. In contrast, 25% of women employees stated that they have not encountered any form of discrimination.

Limited mentoring and sponsorship opportunities

Certain research findings emphasize that women have not been provided with formal access to opportunities for growth and development, including training and education. Additionally, they have been deprived of informal opportunities such as mentoring and peer support (Kausar & Tlaiss, 2011).

However, this organization provides very less amount of mentoring and sponsorship opportunities for women's development. However, it was learned from the conversation with male employees that it is the same not only for women but also for men. This has also been one of the reasons why women are limited in getting promoted.

“There is a decrease in sponsorship opportunities without distinction between men and women.”

Instances of failures among women holding senior positions

Upon querying women about their observations regarding instances of failures when occupying senior positions, 43.75% female individuals stated that failures occur on an occasional basis, 25% indicated rare occurrences, 18.75% stated they have not encountered failures, and 12.5% noted frequent failures.

Some literature suggest that when women successfully overcome barriers associated with the glass ceiling and attain leadership positions, they may possess a leadership advantage compared to their male counterparts (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Women's failures and setbacks is recognized as a strength, contributing to their effectiveness in leadership roles.

Inferential statistical analysis

The organizational factors were analyzed with 5-point Likert scale from very high to very low. Those factors are females’ involvement into the decision making or leadership position, Female involvement regarding hiring and promoting process, Effect of traditional and old-fashioned ideas of male leaders in the top positions, Effect of Gender stereotypes and cultural norms and Effect of "female role models" as leaders in the company. And also Instances of failures among women holding senior positions is analyzed by 5-point Likert scale from using never to very often.

Table 1:Results of One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Variable	Mean	P- value	Test value	Decision
Females’ involvement into the decision making or leadership positions	3	0.049	1.971	Females’ involvement into the decision making is not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees
Female involvement regarding hiring and promoting process	3	0.001	3.201	Female involvement regarding hiring and promoting process is not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees

Effect of traditional and old-fashioned ideas of male leaders in the top positions	3	0.005	-2.784	Effect of traditional and old-fashioned ideas of male leaders is not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees
Effect of Gender stereotypes and cultural norms	3	0.024	-2.254	Effect of Gender stereotypes and cultural norms is not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees
Instances of failures among women holding senior positions	3	0.007	-2.696	Instances of failures among women holding senior positions is not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees

Significant level is 0.05

Source: Survey findings,2023

Factors affecting as barrier to get promotions for women employees

One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test is used for identify what factors are significant and find the which factor is mostly affect as the barrier to getting promotion for women employees. There are, female involvement in to decision making or leadership

positions, female involvement regarding hiring and promoting process, effect of traditional and old-fashioned ideas of male leaders in the top positions, effect of Gender stereotypes and cultural norms, individual failures of women who are in senior positions (destructive issues such as controlling and bullying). According to that reject the null hypothesis (P<0.05). For above factors null hypothesis is rejected and that factors not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees.

Table 2:Results of One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Variable	Mea n	P- valu e	Significa nt level	Decision
Effect of "female role models" as leaders in the company	3	0.862	0.174	Effect of "female role models" as leaders in the company is being barrier to getting promotions for women employees.

Significant level is 0.05

Source: Survey findings,2023

Effect of "female role models" as leaders in the company is being barrier to getting promotions for women employees

However, only one factor’s probability value is higher than the significant level. It is female role models as leaders. Here at 5%

level of significance, there is no sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis ($P > 0.05$). The null hypothesis accepted and above factor are being barrier to getting promotions for women employees. So, most influence factor is lack of female role models as the leaders in the company.

Social factors

Descriptive analysis

Male patriarchal society affection

A research study highlights that Transport and logistics sector of Sri Lanka are male dominant and masculine characteristics are rooted in the industry in making decision mainly. In order to address the situation with more feminine essence at work, Equality and Diversity policy considerations are essential (Edirisinghe et al., 2021).

Sri Lanka exhibits characteristics of a patriarchal society, which provides insight into the extent of its influence on the organization. Women's perspectives and the responses on this matter reveal the impact of this patriarchal society. Out of 32 female employees who responded, 2 participants strongly disagreed, and 6 disagreed, indicating they do not view the male patriarchal society as a barrier. Six participants were neutral, while 14 agreed and 4 strongly agreed that the male patriarchal society poses a barrier to women's promotions. Consequently, it is evident that the impact of this patriarchal society is discernible to some degree. The reference to Sri Lanka as exhibiting characteristics of a patriarchal society impact on the cultural context and its impact on workplace culture also.

Willingness in society to accept a woman as a leader

One may anticipate that due to women's prevailing status, men may be disinclined to relinquish men's dominance, perceiving gender equality as a potential threat. This may elucidate the adverse view held by people regarding women in leadership roles. For mitigate gender inequality within professional settings, organizations should actively engage in initiatives that address the concerns of the predominant group, prioritizing a strategic approach over mere power equilibrium (Kiser, 2015).

In responses to inquiries about whether societal acceptance of women as leaders influences their promotion, the collected data indicated that 63% of participants perceived that societal acceptance of women as leaders influenced for their promotion. These findings suggest that the dominant group may view gender equality as a threat, contributing to their negative perception of women in leadership roles. To address gender inequality in the workplace, organizations should consider strategies that actively engage the dominant group rather than merely striving for a balance of power.

Violence against women

Gender-Based Violence/violence against women in the workplace is a major problem when identifying the reasons for the gender gap in the world of work. It is an special term for any harmful act that is committed against a person's will, and that is based on socially attributed gender differences between males and females (Kalugman et al., 2014).

In the context of "ABC" Private Company, responses from female participants highlight the widespread nature of this issue. A majority of the women, 53.12%, concur that

violence against women affects their working environment. This data underscores the consensus among many women that gender – based violence has a tangible effect on their career advancement within the company.

Syndrome of legitimacy

One of exploratory study done in Bangladesh with female workers they indicate that their main barrier for the females is cultural. This can be identified as a syndrome of legitimacy. In their society and even in their organization women as the potential leader of the key departments or divisions are not recognized because most of the people believe that women are non-assertive and weak(Chou et al., 2005)

In addition, they have shown that a significant portion of people think that "women are non- assertive and weak". This collective evidence shows the imperative for concerted efforts to address deeply ingrained biases and promote equitable opportunities for women in various professional domains.

Further, survey results show that 81.3% acknowledge the syndrome of legitimacy as a barrier to job promotion for women employees, while 18.8% do not.

**Inferential statistical analysis
Effect of social factors on getting promotions for women employees.**

The Social factors were analyzed with 5-point Likert scale from Strong disagree to Strong agree. Those factors are Male patriarchal society, Society's willingness to accept a woman as a leader and Violence against women.

According to One – sample Wilcoxon

Signed Rank Test results, the null hypothesis relating to two factors accepted and those factors are being barrier to getting promotions for women employees. Null hypothesis relating to Society’s willingness to accept women as a leader rejected and it is not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees.

Table 3:Results of One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Variable	Mean	P- value	Test value	Decision
Male patriarchal society	3	0.078	1.763	Male patriarchal society is being barrier to getting promotions for women employees.
Violence against women	3	0.086	1.717	Violence against women is being barrier to getting promotions for women employees
Society's willingness to accept a woman as a leader	3	0.000	4.369	Society's willingness to accept a woman as a leader not being barrier to getting promotions for women employees.

Significant level is 0.05
Source: Survey findings,2023

Individual factors

Descriptive analysis

More often, individual factors have contributed to the reduction of promotion opportunities. Accordingly, family support, Willingness to taking risk in workplace, lack higher education for career advancement, Effect of extra talents, Lack of job-related skills and potentials, Willingness to work beyond office hours etc. have been affected. That is proved by the following responses of women.

Willingness to working beyond office hours

It has been noted that approximately 62.5% of individuals are not inclined to work beyond standard office hours. Nevertheless, in the context of their employment at the company, they frequently find themselves required to work outside of these established hours. This observation suggests a certain level of reluctance on their part.

Male employees typically engage in full-time, preferably uninterrupted work, often involving extended working hours. This practice can have adverse effects on the career trajectory of women, who generally exhibit a preference for shorter working hours (Metz, 2003).

Furthermore, survey results indicate that 37.5% are willing to work beyond office hours, while 62.5% are not. This research observation underscores the need for workplace policies that accommodate diverse work preferences to promote employee satisfaction and gender equity.

Women avoid job transfers

As a common hurdle for married women especially, in Sri Lanka also the industry

women experience the struggle in balancing work and family responsibilities. When there is an imbalance of it, majority of females select family and leave the job. This affects for the disturbed career paths for females and also inefficient paid work contribution due to great time allocation for care work (Edirisinghe et al., 2021).

Very few women have canceled job transfers. Nevertheless, it is evident that a significant number of women receive strong family support, which has not hindered their professional advancement. Survey result show that 84.37% of individuals did not avoid job transfers.

Willingness to taking risk in workplace

According to the survey results, 40.6% of them reported high willingness. 28.16% reported moderate willingness and 25% reported low willingness. It is often seen that women are less willing to take risks and prefer comfortable office environments. This tendency has been substantiated both through their responses and an exploratory study involving male employees.

"They don't want to take on responsibilities, even if they desire job promotions. They are afraid to take on such responsibilities. Most of the time, they try to depend on someone else."

"Women's participation is often seen in the work done inside the office."

Other individual factors

This shows that lack of educational qualification and extra talents has hindered them from getting promotion.

Effect on individual Factors on getting promotions for women employees

Table 5: Results of One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Variable	Mean	P- value	Test Value	Decision
Family support	3	0.00	- 4.28	Family support is not being barrier to getting promotions.
Effect of lack higher education for career advancement	3	0.00	- 3.85	Effect of lack higher education for career advancement is not being barrier to getting promotions.
Effect of extra talents	3	0.00	- 3.70	Effect of extra talents is not being barrier to getting promotions.
Lack of job-related skills and potentials	3	0.00	- 4.17	Lack of job-related skills and potentials is not being barrier to getting promotions.

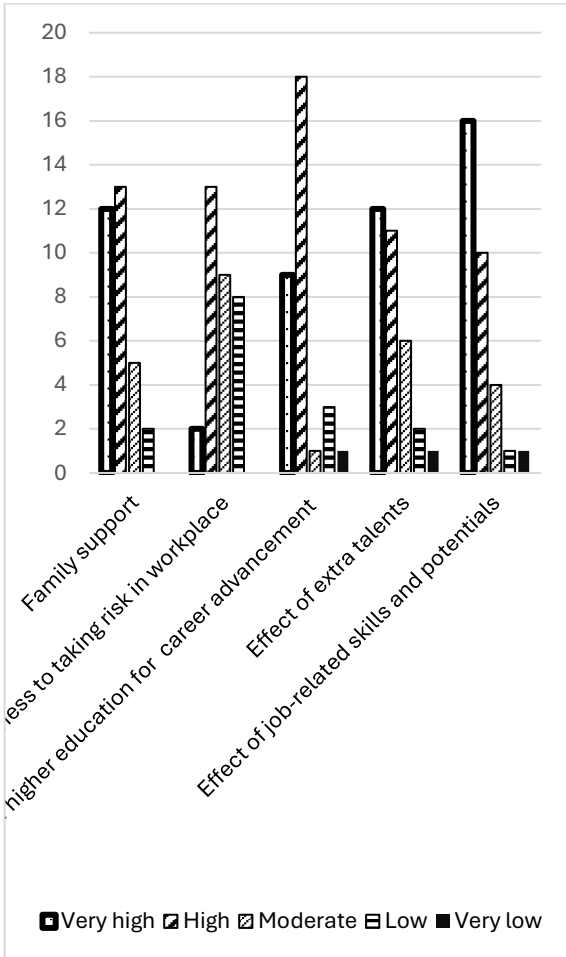


Figure 4: Other individual factors

Source: Survey findings, 2023

Inferential statistical analysis

The individual factors were analyzed with 5-point Likert scale from very high to very low. Those factors are Family support, Willingness to taking risk in workplace, Effect of lack higher education for career advancement, Effect of extra talents and Lack of job-related skills and potentials. And also Lack of female counterparts is analyzed by 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Lack of female counterparts	3	0.00	2.89	Lack of female counterparts is not being barrier to getting promotions.
Willingness to taking risk in workplace	3	0.09	-1.67	Willingness to taking risk in workplace is being barrier to getting promotions.

Negotiation skills	50%	25%	18.8%	6.3%	0%
Lack of career aspiration	9.4%	25%	43.8%	18.8%	3.1%
Mother's role	40.6%	31.3%	18.8%	9.4%	.0%
Panic quickly when problems arise	6.3%	37.5%	53.1%	3.1%	0%
Being emotional	21.9%	40.6%	28.1%	9.4%	0%
Being silent	6.3%	37.5%	40.6%	12.5%	3.1%
Representation and role models	25%	37.5%	34.4%	3.1%	0%

Significant level is 0.05

Source: Survey findings,2023

According to One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank test results almost all considered individual factors except willingness to taking risk have not acted as barriers to getting promotions for women employees.

To analysis the Impact of Women Specific Characteristics on Career Advancement Opportunities.

Descriptive analysis

Table 6: Women specific characteristics

	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low
Work life balance	56.3%	31.3%	6.3%	6.3%	0%
Confidence and self-promotion	62.5%	31.3%	6.3%	0%	0%

Source: Survey findings,2023

Work life balance

The most formidable challenge lies in the difficulty faced by women striving to reconcile professional obligations with family responsibilities in order to achieve success (Ashari, 2012).

Occasionally, the family environment can pose an impediment to women's career advancement. Women frequently assume the primary caregiving role within their households, necessitating equilibrium between their responsibilities toward their children and their professional obligations within the company. Consequently, they may exhibit reluctance to undertake substantial responsibilities. When women were questioned about the impact of these dynamics on the organization, the evidence

indicated that do indeed exert some influence.

The family environment itself can emerge as a barrier to women's career advancement, as the primary caregiving role assumed by women may necessitate a delicate balance between familial and professional duties, leading to hesitancy in undertaking substantial responsibilities. However, when considering women working in departments like HR and Finance can be observed comparatively easy to maintain work life balance due to having fewer night duties in their roles.

Confidence and self-promotion

According to Bombuwela and De Alwis (2013), person's unique qualities and characteristics can be may be hinder their competitiveness in comparison to others. These factors can include a lack of confidence, women specific, and difficulty in self-promotion, which can impede career progression (Gunawardana, 2015).

According to above collected data from women employees, it can be concluded that confidence and self-promotion will help them to move forward and getting promotions. This was also confirmed in the exploratory study conducted with male employees.

"They don't want to take on responsibilities, even if they desire job promotions. They are afraid to take on such responsibilities. Most of the time, they try to depend on someone else. Their confidence is very low"

According to the above references and collected data underscores the pivotal role of confidence and self-promotion shaping career trajectories. By addressing these kinds of aspects may prove crucial in

fostering career growth and breaking down barriers that hinder professional advancement, particularly for women.

Negotiation skills

Furthermore, the cultivation of negotiation skills can prove highly advantageous. In line with the feedback provided by these female respondents, it is apparent that many women harbor relatively modest career aspirations.

Lack of career aspiration

According to above results (figure :5) their career aspiration is somewhat low.

"Women often like to work from comfort zones. Most of the time, they like to work from inside the office. Even if the salary is low, they care about their mental freedom. But trying to get promotion somehow. There are times when they don't have the capacity to do it after getting the promotion."

As well as research finding shows insufficient provision of information regarding career prospects for women in the transport and logistics sector. The predominant trend observed is that a considerable number of female employees enter the industry not by deliberate choice but rather as a result of job-seeking endeavors, often prompted by familial obligations or the need for immediate employment. Therefore, these women tend to forego their inherent aspirations and constructive career planning. The intricacies of talent mapping further compound this situation, posing challenges for both female employees and employers alike, as individuals possessing the requisite interest and aptitude are found to be scarce within the industry (Edirisinghe et al., 2021).

Efforts to enhance career prospects should consider not only performance-based promotion criteria but also the need for comprehensive information dissemination and support for women navigating career choices in traditionally male-dominated fields in “ABC” Private Company.

Mother’s role

One of research done with Worldwide studies of professional and managerial dual-earner couples in specific professions have indicated that with the double burdens of work and mother’s role in family, working long hours limit women’s career aspirations (Kodagoda, 2018).

Here, it has been shown that a higher percentage of women said mother's role affects their progress and getting promotions. Women who are in so far away often encounter challenges due to limited facilities compared to urban areas. As they balance their maternal responsibilities, they confront various obstacles. This assertion was substantiated during the exploratory study conducted in conjunction with male employees.

“In the past, this “ABC” Private company was like a paradise. They gave free houses to anyone who came, water, electricity and all those things were given for free. But people from far away were hired for this. Then they don't go to another company...Anyone have day care facilities. Then it was be easy for them to come here and live with their families. Because of these things, many women applied for jobs here. But now due to the weakness of the administration, those things have been limited. Applying has also decreased.”

However, changing in administration and a reduction in these supportive measures have led to a decline in applications from women. The reduction of daycare facilities is specifically highlighted as a deterrent, making it challenging for women to balance maternal responsibilities with their professional commitments. This research thus underscores the importance of organizational support, especially in terms of facilities and policies, in fostering a conducive environment for the career advancement of women in dual-earner couples, particularly those in remote areas.

Panic quickly when problems arise

The professional environment often subjects women to scrutiny for displaying heightened emotions. This differential perception about women contributes to women being labeled as "weak" and deemed "unprofessional" in the workplace. Instances of women being perceived as "emotionally unstable" arise, with tendencies attributed to expressions of anger, sadness, despair, or jealousy occurring more frequently than observed in their male counterparts in the workplaces. Addressing such gender-specific biases is important for fostering an equitable and inclusive workplace culture (Edirisinghe et al., 2021).

Numerous women have expressed a tendency to experience some degree of panic when faced with challenges or problems. This observation was further corroborated by the findings of an exploratory study conducted in collaboration with male employees.

“Sometimes, no matter how much they have studied, they are panic to some problems and do not face the problems properly. Such things can become a problem when going to

higher positions.”

And also, this study shows that these biases contribute to women being less able to face challenges and ultimately affect their career development. Interestingly, an exploratory study involving male and female employees supports the idea that women develop a sense of dread when faced with challenges.

Being emotional

There is also a tendency to be emotional when they are making decisions. Male employees also said that frequent problems can be seen among women. Discussions with them revealed that maintaining control in such situations can be particularly challenging.

Lack of technical skills and Lack of interpersonal skills

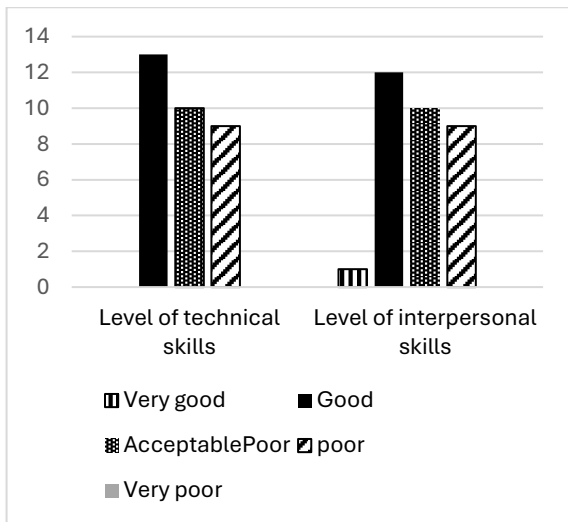


Figure 5: Level of technical and interpersonal skills

Source: Survey findings, 2023

It can be seen that their technical skills and interpersonal skills are somewhat lacking. This was also confirmed in the exploratory

study conducted with male employees.

“When we look at the technical skills of women, we can see that some people’s technical skills are low. The reason is that sometimes they don’t receive proper training. There are instances when such factors affect promotions.”

In the service industry women are easier to get into managerial positions but in like high-tech companies and more of the producing industries, like car company or something it’s very difficult for women to be in a managerial position. That research indicates they difficult to get managerial positions due to lack of technical skills.(Chou et al., 2005)

Furthermore, gender dynamics come into play when considering management positions in some companies. When considering service sector, it seems relatively easy for women to rise to management roles.

Inferential analysis

Chi-Square test enables us to explain whether two attributes are associated with each other or not. So, it is used to test the significance of association or relationship between two attributes.

Table 7: Results of Pearson Chi-square test

Factor	Chi-square value	Sig.	Decision
Work life balance	10.589	0.014	Work life balance is dependent on the change in

Confidence and self-promotion	8.4954	0.014	Confidence and self-promotion are dependent on the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences	Being silent	2.5516	0.636	Being silent is independent of the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences
Negotiation skills	10.667	0.014	Negotiation skills are dependent on the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences	Representation of role models	9.6791	0.021	Representation of role models is dependent on the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences
Lack of career aspiration	4.2118	0.378	Lack of career aspiration is independent of the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences	Lack of technical skills	5.7915	0.055	Lack of technical skills is independent of the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences
Mother's role	10.279	0.016	Mother's role is dependent on the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences	Lack of interpersonal skills	6.8407	0.077	Lack of interpersonal skills is independent of the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences
Panic quickly	4.5290	0.210	"Panic quickly" is independent of the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences				
Being emotional	11.711	0.008	Being emotional is				

Significant level is 0.05

Source: Survey findings, 2023

In this analysis, it is observed that certain factors exhibit the Chi-square Test "P" value is less than the significant level. Here significant level is 5%. Therefore, null

hypothesis is rejected ($P < 0.05$). Hence; that factors are dependent on the change in promotion opportunities based on gender differences. That factors are work life balance, confidence and self-promotion, negotiation skills, mother's role, being emotional, representation of role models.

Used the correlation test to find the relationship between promotion opportunities for women and barriers to getting promotions. Spearman's correlation coefficient measures the direction and strength of the association between two ranked variables when data is measured at ordinal, interval or ratio scale (Tulsian & Jhunjnuwala, 2010).

Table 8: Results of Spearman's correlation coefficient

Factors	Significant level(2-tailed)	Decision
Change on promotional opportunities based on gender differences & Work life balance	0.008	Significantly correlate between each other
Change on promotional opportunities based on gender differences & Confidence and self-promotion	0.005	Significantly correlate between each other
Change on promotional opportunities based on gender differences & negotiation skills	0.004	Significantly correlate between each other
Change on promotional	0.002	Significantly correlate

opportunities based on gender differences & mother's role	0.001	Significantly correlate between each other
Change on promotional opportunities based on gender differences & being emotional	0.007	Significantly correlate between each other
Change on promotional opportunities based on gender differences & representation of role models		

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In summary, the results of the analysis support the alternative hypotheses (H_1) for each of the examined factors. The p-values for work-life balance, confidence and self-promotion, negotiation skills, mother's role, being emotional, and representation of role models are less than the significant level. ($p < 0.05$). As a result, the null hypotheses (H_0) are rejected in each case, confirming a significant correlation between these factors and the changes in promotion opportunities based on gender differences. These findings underscore the importance of considering these variables in the context of gender-related disparities in promotion opportunities within the studied population. Based on the above findings, it is evident that certain factors significantly influence promotion opportunities for women compared to men. These factors encompass work life balance, confidence and self-promotion, negotiation skills, mother's role, being emotional, representation of role models.

However, it is worth noting that certain characteristics specific to women, such as a relatively lower prevalence of career aspirations, a tendency to become flustered when confronted with challenges, a proclivity towards maintaining silence, and limitations in technical and interpersonal skills, do not appear to exert a notable impact on women's promotion prospects in comparison to men.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted involving female and male employees, several key findings have emerged. Regarding the implementation of equity laws in promotions, it was observed that very few organizations adhere to these rules when considering promotions and other benefits for female employees. This is particularly evident in departments responsible for production, such as the factory, distillery, and Agriculture departments, where male employees are predominantly favored in hiring and promotion processes.

The study also revealed that political influence plays a significant role in promotions and hiring processes, often superseding performance-based criteria. Recommendations from top management or Heads of Departments (HODs) carry considerable weight in the promotion decisions. The analysis of barriers to women's promotion within "ABC" Private Company identified three main factors: organizational, social, and individual. Women's limited involvement in decision-making and leadership positions, as well as their minimal participation in the hiring and promotion process, were evident. However, these barriers were more pronounced in departments like the factory and distillery, where women are not typically hired.

Recruitment challenges and the costs associated with providing protection and transportation for female employees contributed to these limitations.

Discrimination was apparent in salary, duties, and promotions, with certain roles believed to be exclusively suitable for men. The institution offered limited mentoring and sponsorship opportunities for women's development; a pattern also noted for male employees. Interestingly, factors such as gender stereotypes, cultural norms, and individual failures in senior positions did not appear to be significant barriers to women's promotions. The most influential barrier was the lack of female role models in leadership positions within the company. The study also pointed to the impact of a patriarchal society and violence against women as additional social barriers. It was noted that many individuals perceived women as non-assertive and weak. Individual factors, including family support, willingness to take risks in the workplace, lack of higher education, lack of job-related skills, and working beyond office hours, occasionally hindered promotion opportunities for women. While some women received strong family support, others were reluctant to take workplace risks and preferred office-based roles.

In conclusion, the research findings indicate that certain factors, such as work-life balance, confidence, self-promotion, negotiation skills, and the representation of role models, significantly influence promotion opportunities for women compared to men. However, characteristics specific to women, such as lower career aspirations, a tendency to become flustered in challenging situations, and limitations in technical and interpersonal skills, do not appear to notably impact women's promotion prospects relative to men.

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