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Impact of Glass Ceiling on Career Development of Women: A Study of Women Branch Managers in State Owned Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study is mainly focused on the impact of glass ceiling on career development of women branch managers in state Commercial Banks in Sri Lanka. The research problem addressed under this study is to identify the impact of glass ceiling on career development of women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka. The data were collected from a randomly selected sample of 100 women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka with a structured questionnaire which consisted of 28 questions with five point likert scales. Data was analyzed using correlation and regression analysis with the SPSS (16.0 Version) and the results were derived. The major finding of the study revealed that there was a negative relationship between corporate practices with women career development, family commitment with women career development, stereotypes about women with women career development. Then, there was a negative impact of glass ceiling on career development of women branch managers. More opportunities of training and development, organizational support such as mentoring, networking and flexible working hours should be provided by companies to develop women in the company.

Keywords: *Glass Ceiling, Career Development, Corporate Practices, Family Commitment, Stereotypes about Women*

Introduction

Human is the most valued resource and the contribution of the human resource is immense for the success and the growth of an organization. Hence every organization attempts to acquire and retain competent and motivated employees (Opatha 2009). Human resource management functions such as recruitment, selection, hiring, induction, training and development, performance evaluation, employee movements, pay management, grievance handling can be carried out by the Human Resources Department of an organization. In addition to that, an organization can carry out career management function and assist employees in their career development (Opatha 2009). Career development can be defined as a lifelong process of becoming aware of, exploring and experiencing factors that influence various aspects of a person's life. Knowledge, skills and attitudes evolve through this path of discovery, enable planning and decision making not only about work exploration, related employment and vocational choices but also about personal management and life/work skills (Greenhaus et al. 2010). As Mathis and Jackson (2000) states career development enables the organizations to attract and retain efficient and effective employees who would contribute to achieve the goals and objectives of the organizations. Similarly this enables the employees to

achieve their individual career goals and objectives. For successful career development, a concerted effort of the organizations, employees, their families and the wider society is essential. In the absence of these efforts, both men and women employees face many challenges as they advance through careers. Furthermore, women have reported greater barriers than men and greater difficulties in getting career development opportunities (Armstrong 2003). These barriers may cause due to individual, family, social and organizational factors as mentioned earlier. The barriers that women employees and minority face when developing through their careers are termed as glass ceiling (Afza and Newaz 2008). This has given high attention in today's world. Most of the women are limited to lower or middle level management positions in organizations due to glass ceiling. The effect of glass ceiling may vary in different countries and in different economic sectors. This research is aimed to discuss the effects of glass ceiling on career development of women employees.

Problem Background and Problem of the Study

Labour force participation of women in the world has significantly increased during the last few decades. However the increment has primarily occurred in relevant to the proportion of women at entry level and in lower and midlevel management positions, while the proportion of women reaching senior and top management positions has remained relatively low (ILO 2002; Meyerson and Fletcher 2000; Banarjee 2002). The reason for this state may be the glass ceiling or the invisibles barriers women face when developing their careers. There is very few research studies conducted in western countries on glass ceiling which hinders the career development of women in banking sector. In Sri Lankan context, it is not known to the researcher whether researches are done on this area in the banking sector. Hence, there is a need to fulfill the knowledge gap in this field. The research problem addresses under this study is to investigate the impact of glass ceiling on career development of women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

Research Framework

In early research studies, different factors under glass ceiling have identified. Based on those findings, corporate practices, family commitment and stereotypes about women are considered as the factors under glass ceiling in this study. Previous literature has proved that corporate practices in organizations have an impact on career development of women (Cooper 2001; Knuston and Schmidgall 1999). There is empirical evidence that corporate practices act as a glass ceiling (Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Man 2010). Then, the first hypothesis was proposed as:

H₁: Corporate Practices have a negative impact on women career development.

Family responsibilities are an aspect of glass ceiling (Cutler and Jackson 2002; Carnes and Radojevich-Kelley 2011). It is empirically proven that family commitment is an aspect of glass ceiling (Al-Manasra 2013). The second hypothesis was proposed as:

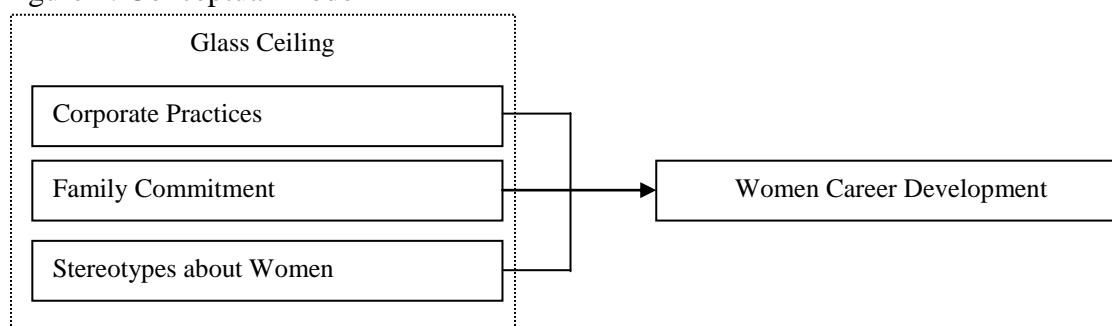
H₂: Family commitment has a negative impact on women career development.

Social attitude towards women has an impact on their career development. Hence, it is considered as an aspect of glass ceiling (Powell and Butterfield 2003; Alexander and Andersen 1993). The third hypothesis was proposed as:

H3: *Stereotypes about women have a negative impact on women career development.*

This conceptual framework emphasizes the idea that glass ceiling influence career development of women. Glass ceiling was identified as an independent variable. Under that, corporate practices, family commitment and stereotypes about women were considered. Women career development was identified as an dependent variable. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Method

Sample

This study is a descriptive study as it was undertaken to ascertain and describe the characteristics of the variables of interest in a situation. The two variables were identified and tested based on the hypotheses developed. A structured questionnaire was used for the collection of data. The target population of the study is the women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka. For the purpose of the study, the researcher only selected 100 women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka using the random sampling method.

Measures

Questionnaire method was selected as the major source of data collection and the researcher gathered first hand data by distributing this questionnaire. It was considered to be the best method to conduct the survey as the women branch managers are busy and it is the most practical way to collect data from a sample of this size. The questionnaire was equipped with three parts including closed ended questions. The first part contained five questions to measure demographic factors like age, marital status, number of children, educational qualifications and years of experience. The second part contained thirteen questions to measure the independent variable, which is glass ceiling. The third part contained another ten questions to measure the dependent variable i.e. women career development. This study used questions which were adapted from already developed standard questions (questionnaire developed by Afza and Newaz (2008) was used to measure women career development and

questionnaire developed by Bergman and Hallberg (2002) was used to measure glass ceiling). All questions were presented as statements and the branch managers were supposed to rank them according to a scale. Data was gathered through five point Likert scales which were positive and negative as “Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither agree nor Disagree, Strongly Disagree”.

Pilot Survey

After the formulation of the preliminary questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted as a prerequisite to identify and test the reliability and to make necessary improvements to the questionnaire. The respective questionnaire was directed to 15 women branch managers.

Reliability

Cronbach’s Alpha test was used to measure the internal reliability of the variables. According to the table 1, internal reliability of the dependent variable and the three dimensions of the independent variable are satisfactory.

Table 1: Reliability

	Instrument	Cronbach’s Alpha
1	Corporate Practices	0.753
2	Family Commitment	0.779
3	Stereotypes about Women	0.816
4	Women Career Development	0.713

Techniques of Data Analysis

The researcher conducted a preliminary analysis on descriptive statistics to test the reliability of the data gathered through the pilot test. Data were analyzed using correlation analysis and simple regression analysis with SPSS (16.0 Version).

Results

Under univariate analysis, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed using the frequency distribution. 55.6% of the respondents were between 51-56 age category and they all were married. All the respondents had children and among them majority had two children. A/L was the highest educational level of 44.4% of the respondents and Bachelor’s Degree was the highest educational level of 42.2% of the respondents. 67.8% of the respondents had 20-30 years of work experience.

In order to analyze the independent variable and the dependent variable, frequency distribution analysis was used. Table 2 below shows the results.

Table 2: Statistics of the Distribution of Variables

	Corporate Practices	Family Commitment	Stereotypes about Women	Women Career Development
Valid	90	90	90	90
Mean	1.74	2.01	1.89	4.11
Median	1.83	2	2	4
Mode	2	2	2	4
Std. Deviation	0.277	0.078	0.329	0.215
Variance	0.077	0.006	0.108	0.046
Skewness	-0.361	2.230	-2.203	1.172
Std. Error of Skewness	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.254
Minimum	1	2	1	4
Maximum	2	2	2	5

According to Table 2, the data recorded for corporate practices, family commitment, stereotypes about women and women career development were approximately normally distributed. The mean values of the distributions of corporate practices, family commitment, stereotypes about women were respectively, 1.74, 2.01 and 1.89. Hence, it can be stated that barriers from those factors are “low”. The mean value of the distribution for women career development is 4.11. Hence, it can be stated that women career development is “high”. The low standard deviation and low variance of the distributions indicate the fact that data points are close to the mean value.

The bivariate analysis includes the Correlation analysis and the Simple Regression analysis, which were used to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of Glass Ceiling and women Career Development. The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation between Independent and Dependent Variable

	Corporate Practices	Family Commitment	Stereotypes about Women
Pearson Correlation	-0.005	-0.014	-0.009
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.043	0.038	0.049

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

As per Table 3, the correlation coefficients between the three dimensions and women career development are negative.

The results of the simple regression analysis of the three dimensions of glass ceiling against women career development are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Results of Regression Analysis

Variables	Corporate Practices	Family Commitment	Stereotypes about women
Method	Linear	Linear	Linear
R. Square	0.009	0.019	0.027
Adjusted R Square	0.007	0.017	0.015
F	0.002	0.16	2.401
Significance	0.043	0.038	0.049
B- constant	4.114	4.183	4.309
Beta value	-0.005	-0.014	-0.009

According to Table 4, Beta values of corporate practices, family commitment and stereotypes about women are negative. This indicates that there is a negative impact of those dimensions on women career development.

Discussion and Conclusion

The hypothesis testing was carried out using the results of Pearson's Product Movement Correlation analysis and the results of regression analysis. As per the results of the two tests, alternative hypotheses of the four hypotheses were accepted and the null hypotheses were rejected proving that there is a negative impact of the dimensions of glass ceiling on women career development.

It was found that there is a negative relationship between corporate practices and women career development in state commercial banks. The correlation between these two was -0.005, which is significant at 0.043 level. This correlation was found to be weak as it is less than -0.1. According to the results of simple regression analysis, corporate practices were found to have a negative impact on women career development. Based on the responses of the sample, it was found that the barriers from corporate practices on women career development are very low in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

According to the results, it was found that there is a negative relationship between family commitment and women career development. The correlation between these two was -0.014, which is significant at 0.038 level. This correlation was found to be weak as it is less than -0.1. According to the results of simple regression analysis, family commitment was found to have a negative impact on women career development. Based on the responses of the sample, it was found that the barriers from family commitment on women career development are low in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, there is a negative relationship between stereotypes about women and women career development in state commercial banks. The correlation between these two was -0.009, which is significant at 0.049 level. This correlation was found to be weak as it is less than -0.1. According to the results of simple regression analysis, stereotypes about women were found to have a negative impact on women career development. Based on the responses of the sample, it was found that the barriers from stereotypes about women on women career development are very low in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

According to the findings, it is substantiated that there is a negative impact of glass ceiling on career development of women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

Under glass ceiling, corporate practices were accountable for 0.7% of the variation in women career development, family commitment was accountable for 1.7% of the variation in women career development and stereotypes about women were accountable for 1.5% of the variation in women career development. In fact other dimensions of glass ceiling, which were not considered in this study, should be the dimensions that may account for the unexpected dimensions which impact on women career development.

According to the findings of the research, there is a weak negative impact of glass ceiling on career development of women branch managers in state commercial banks. The findings of this research study shall be important on the theoretical as well as practical scenario. As this research model proves to be an explanatory model of glass ceiling, the findings of the study may be important to mitigate glass ceiling and to enhance women career development in state commercial banks. The top management can identify the issues they should address when making decisions regarding women and their career development.

In order to reduce the negative impact of glass ceiling on women career development, more training and development opportunities should be provided to women employees. Further, they should be given different kinds of organizational support such as mentoring, networking and flexible working hours and other family friendly initiatives (Jamali et al, 2006). When promoting employees to higher positions, the job performance, work experience and educational qualifications should be considered rather than the gender. Top management should promote diversity and their top executives should continuously advocate and push their subordinates and other employees to foster diversity within the organization (Morrison, 1992).

Further Studies

Further research studies are suggested to carry out to find out the impact of other dimensions of glass ceiling on career development of women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka. Moreover, further studies can be conducted to find out the impact of glass ceiling on career development of women in the banking sector in Sri Lanka rather than merely the state commercial banks. Further studies are similarly suggested to find out the impact of glass ceiling on career development of women in other economic sectors in Sri Lanka

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