

Internal Barriers for Women Career Advancement in Sri Lankan Hotel Industry (with special reference to five star hotels)

Karunarathne A.C.I.D

Department of Public Administration, Uva Wellassa University of Sri Lanka

Abstract- Hospitality industry underscores a high inequality in women's empowerment and career advancements in most of the countries. The issue is more critical in the developing countries like Sri Lanka where as they face many challenges, often concentrated in low status, low paid and unsecure jobs in the hotel industry. With the increased number of women workforce who enrolled with higher education in the past few decades, a proportional incensement for women employees has not been rooted in the higher managerial positions in most of the Sri Lankan hotels. As concerns tourism presents a wide range of prospects for an individual in the international arena, most of the hotels still do not recruit, promote or assist women workers. Women are seldom in find managerial positions. In recent years, the increased number of women in the hotel industry and their underrepresentation in top management positions has made women's status in the industry a great concern. The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which women face internal barriers in order to grant the routes to reach more opportunities for women career advancement. The study was done on 67 women executives from five star hotels in Sri Lanka. Organizational culture was traced as the major internal barrier for women employees in Sri Lankan hotels where as gender equity, lack support, and personal characteristics encountered the issue. Career advancement was apprehended by cross industry concern, strategic management, decision making and own initiatives.

Index Terms- barriers, career advancement, hospitality, internal

I. INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality sector has become an economic and social phenomenon, demonstrating above average growth for the fifth consecutive year since the 2009 economic crisis and being set to create 70 million new jobs over the next 10 years (Baum, 2015) where the hospitality industry is one of the world's largest employers (Reigel, 1998). Contributing to the achievement of the Third Millennium Development Goal – "promote gender equality and women's empowerment", women work force has been majored internationally: 33% in 1960, 43% in 1990 and 40% in 2000 (2.8 billion) which increased by 200 million compared to last decades on the past several decades. There has been an improvement in the number promoted to higher positions; women represented 20% - 40% of management position in about 60 countries (ILO, 2004).

Within the tourism and hospitality industry, women in hospitality make up close to 70% of the total workforce, under

take over 70% of all work in the informal hospitality sector (Sinclair, 1997), however paradoxically there is a marked underrepresentation of women in senior positions, with women holding less than 40% of all managerial positions, less than 20% of general management roles and between 5-8% of board positions (Baum, 2015). Regardless of these improvements, women continue to be inequitably hired, promoted, and rewarded. Unskilled or semi-skilled women tend to work in the most vulnerable jobs, where they are more likely to experience poor working conditions, inequality of opportunity and treatment, violence, exploitation, stress and sexual harassment" (Baum, 2013). Many corporate executives and managers, almost all men, argue that women have not made significant progress because they do not have the required educational backgrounds, skills, and work experience. These executives view the slow rise of women rather than discrimination (Fernandez, 1993 cited by Zhong, 2006). Although most young men and women are promoted based on performance, a gender gap still exists in the rate of promotions and women are at a disadvantage (Cobb & Dunlop, 1999).

As a result of the size and relevance of the sector within the global economy, more women have enrolled in higher education, which is viewed as a quicker route to the top level of management. Education and training providers have strong commercial interest in enabling its continued growth and development, and associated with this, in enhancing the talent pipeline in order to unlock the potential of women in the workplace. (Zhong, 2006; Baum, 2015).

Sri Lanka is now a top rated travel destination with many accolades from the New York Times, Emirates Holidays and The Lonely Planet Guide. Female population in Sri Lanka was last measured at 51.14 percent in 2013 and percentage of working-age population at 50.71 in 2013, according to the World Bank. Women play a critical role in the Sri Lankan economy and are the backbone of several of the most economically important sectors for the country including tea, garments, and migrant workers. Further, it records that 31 percent of total employees in non-agricultural sector (service and industry sector) represents women employees including hotels and restaurants in 2009 according to the World Bank. Hospitality employers should look for smart, accomplished and driven women to think out of the box to create dramatic change in the industry.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Being the fastest growing economic sector in the country, it has created nearly 125,000 employment for persons and the government has targeted 500,000 employments by 2016 (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Strategy – 2010). Due to the male dominated work places around the world, career development theories have been developed for men, and may not represent the nature of women’s careers (Schrieber, 1998). Therefore, researchers argues that women’s careers cannot be explained appropriately by traditional theory which emphasizes men’s careers. Theories of women career development indicated that women have been devaluated both in theory and in social context (Bierema & Opengart, 2002). Researchers have identified a number of factors that function as barriers to women’s career advancement; Gender discrimination and sexual harassments (Woods & Kavanaugh, 1994; Woods, 1994); glass ceiling

(Knutson & Schmidgall, 1999; Bily & Manoocheri, 1995; Schwartz; Brownell, 1994); pay inequalities (Fagenson & Jackson, 1994; Sparrowe and Iverson 1999, Umbreit & Diaz, 1994); old boy network (Brownell, 1994; Diaz & Umbreit, 1995); working family conflict (Brownell, 1998; Mallon & Cassell, 1999), organizational culture (Eagly and Wood, 1991; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Vianen and Fischer, 2002). Weber (1998) found that perceived importance of career constraints are: old boy network, lack of assertiveness, male bias and stereotyping, family and work conflict, insufficient career planning, and unhelpful boss. Models and theories such as Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1975 cited by Zhong, 2006) and The New Home Economics Theory (Becker, 1981, 1985 cited by Zhong, 2006) also have been guided some of the research on gender - based income disparity. Based on the literature, following conceptual framework was constructed.

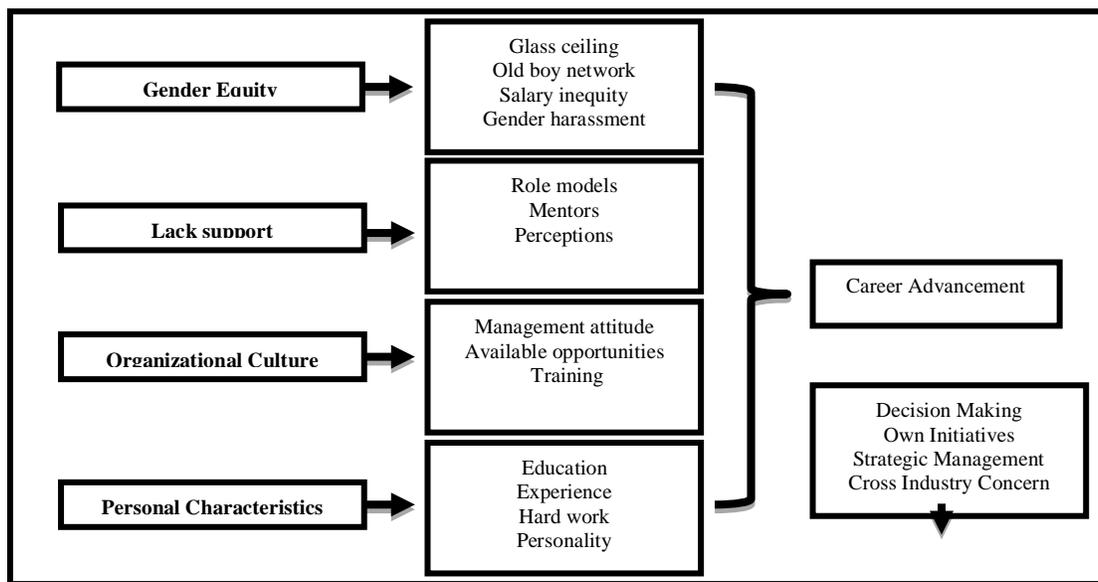


Figure 01: Conceptual Framework (Based on Literature)

Objective of this research was to identify and analyze internal barriers for women career advancement in Sri Lankan hotel industry.

III. METHODOLOGY

There were thirteen five star hotels were in Sri Lanka according to the statistics given by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). The population for the study was total number of women executives working in five star hotels in Sri Lanka, 67 number of respondents were selected using stratified sampling technique. Mainly primary data were used for the study collected through a self-developed questionnaire with five point likert scale (5= strongly agree to 1= strongly disagree) whereas direct interviews and secondary data also were utilized to achieve research objectives accordingly. Primary data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, and Pearson Co- relation Coefficient with SPSS software. Cronbach's alpha Reliability Test was used to measure internal

consistency and the alpha coefficient for the 18 variables were 0.812 suggesting that the items have excellent internal consistency.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis A

H_{A 0}: Gender equity related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{A 1}: Gender equity related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

Hypothesis B

H_{B 0}: Lack of support related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{B 1}: Lack of support related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

Hypothesis C

H_{C 0}: Organizational Culture related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{C1} : Organizational Culture related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

Hypothesis D

H_{D0} : Personal characteristics related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{D1} : Personal characteristics related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the sample

Sample of 67 women executive employees were consisted 57 percent single, 34 percent married and 9 percent divorced. Majority of women executive employees (67 percent) were in 26 to 40 age category.

Descriptive analysis

01. Internal barriers

According to the recorded mean values through descriptive analysis were fallen under moderate and highly moderate categories. Highest value which women employees have to face was the organizational culture (3.92) follows gender equity (3.89), lack support (3.87), and personal characteristics (2.7) stayed in between the range of $2 < X < 4$ tend to be there are internal barriers for women career advancements.

Internal Barriers	Mean	SD
Gender Equity	3.89	0.35
Lack Support	3.87	0.39
Organizational Culture	3.92	0.37
Personal Characteristics	2.67	0.24

Table 01: Internal barriers for women in hotel industry

Barriers	Pearson correlation	P value
Gender Equity	-0.329	0.007
Lack support	-0.295	0.015
Organizational culture	-0.299	0.014
Personal characteristics	0.204	0.184

Table 03: Internal barriers and women career advancement in hotel industry

Person correlation results for gender equity and career advancement (-0.329) was fallen within $-0.5 < r < 0$, implies a weak negative correlation between gender equity related barriers and career advancement. Thus the P value is less than 0.05 ($P=0.007 & \alpha > P$), leads to reject null hypothesis (H_{A0}), resulted to accept alternative hypothesis (H_{A1}) that there is a significant negative relationship between gender equity related barriers and women career advancement in hotel industry.

H_{A0} : Gender equity related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{A1} : Gender equity related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

Each barrier were measured with the mean and standard deviation using given indicators as in the conceptual framework. Gender harassments was the major barrier under gender equity ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.39$) followed by glass ceiling (3.89), salary (2.65), and old boy network (2.62) with the standard deviation of 0.34, 0.7 and 0.88 respectively. Perceptions ($M=4.12$, $SD=0.34$) were the major barrier under lack support where role models ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.39$), and mentors ($M=2.62$, $SD=0.86$) followed respectively. Organizational culture represented management attitudes (3.89) followed by available opportunities (3.64), and training (3.56) deviated 0.38, 0.32 and 0.39 respectively where as hard work ($M=3.64$, $SD=0.24$) recorded as the major barrier under personal characteristics followed by personal characteristics (2.67), education (2.65) and experience (2.17).

02. Career advancement

Career advancement indicators were fallen in between $2 < X < 3$ tend to be less opportunities for career advancements as recorded mean values through descriptive analysis with lower moderate category. Cross industry concerns were under moderated category (2.69) follows strategic management (2.65), decision making (2.44), and own initiatives (2.26).

Career advancement dimension	Mean	SD
Decision making	2.44	0.57
Own initiatives	2.26	0.52
Strategic management	2.65	0.70
Cross industry concerns	2.69	0.24

Table 02: Career advancement of women in hotel industry

Pearson Co- relation Coefficient analysis

Pearson co-relation analysis was done to analyze the correlation between internal barriers and women career advancement in hotel industry to test hypothesis A, B, C, and D.

$P=0.007 < \alpha$, reject null hypothesis (H_{A0}) and accept alternative hypothesis (H_{A1}): Gender equity related barriers such as glass ceiling, gender harassment, old boy network, and salary inequity issues are negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry.

Lack of support related barriers for women career advancements implies a weak negative correlation (-0.295) fallen within $-0.5 < r < 0$ with P value of 0.015 which is less than alpha value of 0.05 ($\alpha > P$). Hence, the null hypothesis (H_{B0}) was rejected indicating a significant negative relationship between lacks of support related barriers and women career advancement in hotel industry.

H_{B0} : Lack of support related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{B1} : Lack of support related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

$P=0.015 < \alpha$, reject null hypothesis (H_{B0}) and accept alternative hypothesis (H_{B1}), lack support related barriers such as role models, job characteristics and perceptions on women employees negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry.

Pearson correlation value of the organizational culture and the career advancement (-0.299) was fallen to the range of $-0.5 \leq r < 0$. Consequently it represents a weak negative correlation between organizational culture and women career advancement. The P value of 0.14 which is less than alpha value of 0.05 ($P < \alpha$) denotes a significant negative relationship which leads to reject null hypothesis (H_{C0}) of the study.

H_{C0} : Organizational culture related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{C1} : Organizational culture related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

$P=0.014 < \alpha$, reject null hypothesis (H_{C0}) and accept alternative hypothesis (H_{C1}), organizational culture related barriers such as management attitudes, lack of available opportunities for women employees, and lack of training negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry.

Pearson correlation results for the personal characteristics of women and their career advancement (0.204) shows a weak positive relationship within the range of $0 \leq r < 0.5$. P value shows the value of 0.184 which is higher than alpha value ($P > \alpha$) implies that there is no significant relationship between personal characteristics of women and career advancement leads to accept the null hypothesis (H_{D0}) of the study.

H_{D0} : Personal characteristics related barriers do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

H_{D1} : Personal characteristics related barriers negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry

$P=0.184 > \alpha$, accept null hypothesis (H_{D0}) that personal characteristics related barriers for women employees in the hotel industry such as educational qualifications, experience, difficulties to hard works, and personality do not negatively influence on women career advancement in hotel industry.

Pearson correlation for the overall barriers encountered by women in hotel industry for their career advancement was -0.369 fallen to the range of $-0.5 \leq r < 0$ represents a weak negative relationship which is statistically significant according to the P value of 0.002 ($P < \alpha$) encountered to interpret that the identified barriers leads to make less opportunities for women career advancement in hotel industry.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of this study revealed that negative relationship between barriers and career advancement of women. Gender harassment and perceptions are considered as a huge barrier in hotel industry. Glass ceiling, lack of role models, management attitudes, available opportunities and lack of training are also

considered as a barrier for career advancement by respondents. Perceptions which under estimate women capability also is a barrier for career advancement. In Sri Lanka, a significant proportion of women are disadvantaged in labor force especially in the hospitality industry. Women are as well educated as males, but job opportunities for women are limited to only a few departments in the hotels whereas males have a wider range to choose from leads to cut women in strategic level positions. Female workers are also far more vulnerable to sexual harassment at the workplace and, given social attitudes and limited job options, are almost invariably forced to suffer in silence. Such issues discourage women from looking for work and may also account for low female participation rates.

Research identified that gender has impacted on chances of receiving promotions that have higher expectation of performance and effort from women compared to men. Insufficient number of role models in the highest levels of position also identified as a barrier. If there enough level of role models in hotel industry, it will be a motivate factor for females to join the industry and it will reinforce women capability to reach top levels of administration positions such as CEOs, general managers, etc. Personal characteristics such as education level, experience, personality and hard work were considered as facilitating factors for the career advancement. Women have sufficient educational qualification, experiences and personal characteristics for their career progression. But due to other barriers the career progressions were limited to certain extent. The career advancement of women employees caused to decrease when they have to confront with more barriers.

Woman employees play an important role within the industry. Currently, the responsibility of preparing women to be involved in to a successful career in hospitality industry has been taken by the educational institutes. In future women contribution for human resource is vital factor, due to ongoing current tourism projects. Therefore it is an imperative factor that woman employees should get a supportive environment, motivation and satisfaction in order to provide a superior service to the hotel industry. The policy measures needed to enable women to progressive career advancement in hospitality industry and access superior jobs that pay better wages. A supportive working environment should be created in the industry with a persuaded attitudes and perceptions towards women employees. A positive reinforcement should be given to encourage such as more flexible work arrangements, investments on skill training, provision of a secure environment by maintaining law and order for women to travel to and from work to emphasize more favorable organizational culture for female employees in the hospitality industry. Women should be well represented to be working at professional or decision-making level rather than a service or clerical.

REFERENCES

- [1] Baum, T., (2015), "Women in Tourism & Hospitality: Unlocking the Potential in the Talent Pool", White Paper, Launched at the Women in Tourism and Hospitality Forum in Hong Kong
- [2] Baum, T., (2013), "International Perspectives on Women and Work in Hotels, Catering & Tourism", International Labour Organization
- [3] Bily, S., & Manoochehri, G., (1995), "Breaking the Glass Ceiling", American Business Review, June. 33-40.

- [4] Bierema, L., & Opengart, R. (2002), "Emotions in Women's Career Development: A merging of literatures", Paper presented at 2002 AHRD Conference: the Women and Career Development, Honolulu
- [5] Brownell, J. (1994), "Women in hospitality management: General managers' perceptions of factors related to career development", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*
- [6] Brownell, J. (1998), "Striking a Balance: The future work and Family Issues in the hospitality industry" *Marriage & Family Review*
- [7] Cobb, C., & Dunlop, Y. (1999), "The role of gender in job promotions", *Monthly Labor Review*
- [8] Diaz, P.E., & Umbreit, W.T. (1995), "Women leaders: a new beginning", *Hospitality Research Journal*, 19(1)
- [9] Eagly, A.H., & Johnson, B.T. (1990), "Gender and leadership style: A meta-analysis", *Psychological Bulletin*
- [10] Eagly, A.H., & Wood, W. (1991), "Explaining sex differences in social behavior: A meta-analytic perspective", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*
- [11] Fagenson, E.A., & Jackson, J. (1994), "The group of women managers in the United States" in N.J. Adeler and D. Izraeli (Eds)
- [12] International Labour Office, (2004), analysis of female employment
- [13] Knuston, B.J. & Schmidgall, R.S. (1999), "Dimensions of the glass ceiling in the hospitality industry", *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*
- [14] Malon, M., & Cassell, C. (1999), "What do women want? The perceived development needs of women managers", *The Journal of Management Development*
- [15] Reigel, C.D. (1998), "An introduction to career opportunities in hospitality and tourism", In a Guide to College Programs in Hospitality and Tourism, (5th ed.) p.3-13. NY: John Wiley and Sons
- [16] Sinclair, T., (1997), "Gender, Work and Tourism. London: Routledge"
- [17] Schrieber, P.J. (1998), "Women's career development patterns", In L.L.Bierema (Ed.), *Women's career development across the lifespan: insights, and strategies for women, organizations and adult educators*, New directions for adult and continuing education
- [18] Share of women employed in the nonagricultural sector (% of total nonagricultural employment) in Sri Lanka
www.tradingeconomics.com
- [19] Sri Lanka Tourism development authority (statistics on list of registered hotels in Sri Lanka), <http://www.slttda.gov.lk/node/489>
- [20] Sri Lanka Tourism Development Strategy- 2010 by Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority
- [21] Umbreit, W.T., & Diaz, P.E., (1994), "Women in hospitality management: An exploratory study of occupation choice variables", *Hospitality and Tourism Educator*
- [22] Woods, R.H., & Kavanaugh, R. R. (1994) "Gender discrimination and sexual harassment as experienced by hospitality industry managers", *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*
- [23] World Travel and Tourism Council, (2014), Economic Impact Report
- [24] Zhong, M.S.Y., (2006), "Factors affecting women's career advancement in the hospitality industry: perceptions of students, educators, and industry recruiters"

AUTHORS

First Author – Karunarathne, A.C.I.D., Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management, Uva Wellassa University, Badulla, Sri Lanka, chandikarunarathne@yahoo.com