

**DETERMINANTS OF GLASS CEILING ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT: A  
STUDY ON FEMALE EXECUTIVES IN COMMERCIAL BANKS IN KANDY  
DISTRICT, SRI LANKA**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Even though women have been performing well in many managerial level positions all over the world, the impediments that hinder their success in career advancing still exist and has become a major area of concern in recent years. Women's career advancement encompasses the forward movement, expansion, and achievements of women within their professional domains. Further it entails the identification and surmounting of diverse obstacles and impediments that might impede women from fully realizing their capabilities in the workplace. Literature identifies that nature of women's career development varies from that of men (Bierema, 1998; Tanton, 1992), since women confront numerous challenges in their work careers. Family obligations, child care duties, and elder care duties can be extremely difficult to overcome among these distractions (Albrecht, 2003). As a result of the glass ceilings powered by traditions, conventions, values, and presumptions in societies, nations, and organizations, women face severe difficulties in developing their careers (Bierema, 1998) and experience significantly harder times in advancing their careers than males do since they must choose job and family life over their education and professional development (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013; Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Sharif, 2015; Victor & Shamila, 2018; Hussin et al., 2021), where they often suffer from the sexism, racism (Afza & Newaz, 2008), gender discrimination (Othman & Othman, 2015). On this backdrop, women secure comparatively less opportunities (Mariani, 2008), and women advance in their careers less than males do (Adler, Dafna, & Israeli, 1995). As a result, in many countries across the globe, a noticeable lack of women's representation in higher-level managerial and executive roles has been observed. Despite the slight increment of women's labour force participation in recent past, in Sri Lanka also female representation at the highest levels of hierarchy in most businesses is lacking (DCS, 2016). Researchers in the past have attempted to determine the causes of this, and the majority of them have established that the glass ceiling has a significant impact on women's career advancement. Thus, it is very important to identify the glass ceiling factors that affect the career advancement of women employees at executive level. Sri Lankan banking sector is one of the industries within which many female employees are working. When considering the data and information reported by previous researchers, it is clear that the participation of women and the number of women holding high positions in the Sri Lankan banking sector is lower than the male side (Gunatilleke, 2003; Gunawardena, 2017; Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics (2020)). Yet, there are hardly any studies that have been carried out relating to domestic commercial banks in Sri Lanka regarding the factors affecting the career advancement of female banking officers at executive level. Through this study, the main purpose of the researcher was to find out the effect of glass ceiling (individual factors, organizational factors, family factors and cultural factors) on women's career advancement in executive levels in commercial banks in Kandy district in Sri Lanka.

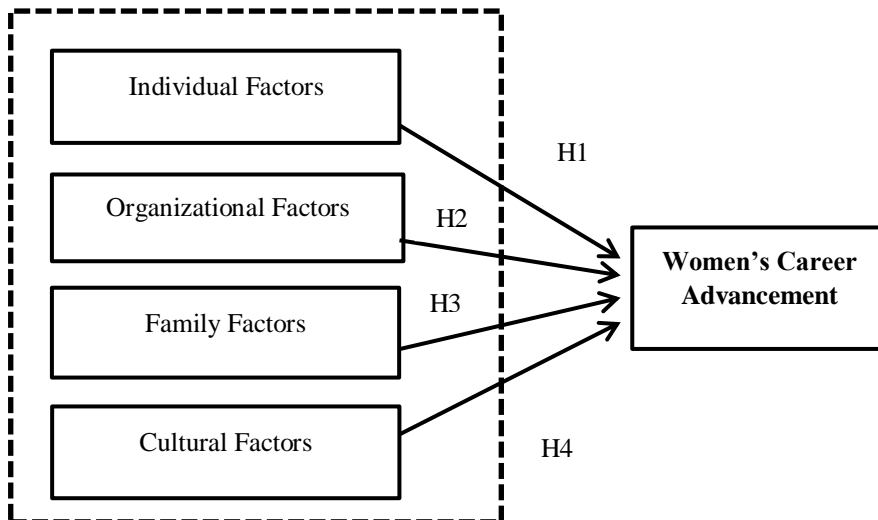
## METHODOLOGY

Since the present study is based on a positivistic and deductive approach, it chooses to utilize a quantitative and deductive approach to examine the impact of these specific factors on career advancement.

Previous literature studies have hypothesized that individual factors, organizational factors, family factors and cultural factors have a statistically significant effect on the career progression of female executives in commercial banks in Sri Lanka. The population of the study consisted of the four hundred and thirty one (431) female executives who were currently employed in thirteen (13) commercial banks in Kandy district of Sri Lanka, where two hundred and five (205) of them were randomly selected for the sample of the study as per the Krejick and Morgen (1970). Out of the selected sample of 205, only 153 responded. Accordingly, data were gathered on both dependent and independent variables using an online questionnaire developed by the researchers upon literature and validated for the sample. With a view to ascertain the validity of data, the dependability of the inter-item consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the level of career advancement and each factor that affects career advancement among the sample while performing regression analysis for identifying the extent to which career advancement is determined by each specific factor.

**Figure 2**

*Conceptual Framework*



*Source: (Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Jayathilaka & Uduwella, 2018; Victor & Shamila, 2018)*

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis was commenced with an evaluation of the dependability of the inter-item consistency using Cronbach's Alpha, which resulted alpha values for all the constructs ranging from 0.722 to 0.930, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability.

**Table 1**  
*Reliability Analysis of the Study*

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Individual Factors	06	0.892
Organizational Factors	11	0.930
Family Factors	06	0.853
Cultural Factors	04	0.889
Career Focus	05	0.908
Attitudes towards organization	03	0.811
Family support	02	0.722

And also the suitability of data for the analysis was assured by running statistical tests for descriptive statistics. The individual, organizational, family, and cultural factors exist to a moderate level among the selected sample with mean values of 2.99, 2.57, 2.64 and 2.76 respectively. The career advancement of female employees were observed as fairly high ( $u=2.74$ ) with moderate career focus ( $u=2.84$ ), and attitudes towards organization ( $u=2.82$ ).

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistics*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Individual Factors (IF)	153	1.00	5.00	2.986	0.857
Organizational Factors (OF)	153	1.00	5.00	2.574	0.741
Family Factors (FF)	153	1.00	5.00	2.641	0.840
Cultural Factors(CF)	153	1.00	5.00	2.766	0.910
Career Focus (CF)	153	1.00	5.00	2.843	0.822
Attitude Towards Organization (AO)	153	1.00	5.00	2.821	0.801
Family Support (FS)	153	1.00	5.00	2.745	0.877

The Pearson's correlation value for Individual, Organizational, Family and Cultural Factors and Women's Career Development was 0.761, 0.722, 0.558, 0.678 and it was a positive relationship. According to the above data, the significant value (P) was 0.000 and which was less than 0.05 ( $0.000 > 0.05$ ). Therefore, it was statistically proven that there was a significant and positive relationship between glass ceiling factors and women's career development.

**Table 3**  
*Correlation Analysis*

	GIF	GOF	GFF	GCF	WCD
GIF	1				
GOF	0.689**	1			
GFF	0.439**	0.531**	1		
GCF	0.675**	0.642**	0.651**	1	
WCD	0.761**	0.722**	0.558**	0.678**	1

The results of the multiple regression analysis clearly highlighted the impact of Individual Factors, Organizational Factors, Family Factors, and Cultural Factors on Career Advancement of Female Executives. According to the results of the multiple regression model of the study, the value of R squared was revealed as 0.686 and indicated a goodness of the model.

According to the ANOVA result, significant level of regression line is less than 0.05 (0.000<0.05). It means than regression line is strong enough to explain the impact of independent variable (Glass Ceiling effect) on dependent variable (Women's Career Development).

**Table 4**  
*Coefficients of Regression Model*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		t	Sig.
		Coefficients	Std. Error	Coefficients			
1	1 (Constant)	0.303	0.147			2.057	0.041
	GIF	0.386	0.063	0.430		6.106	0.000
	GOF	0.283	0.072	0.272		3.941	0.000
	GFF	0.136	0.057	0.148		2.380	0.019
	GCF	0.100	0.063	0.118		1.570	0.119

a. Dependent Variable: WCA

According to the Regression Analysis of Coefficient Results mentioned above, unstandardized coefficients for individual, organizational and family factors significantly affect women's career development. Its B values are respectively, 0.386, 0.283, 0.136 and p is 0.000 and 0.019. But cultural factors had an insignificant and positive effect on women's career development ( $\beta=0.100$ ,  $P<0.119$ ).

So, analysis has made advantage of multiple regressions. The following regression equation may be obtained from the data.

$$Y (\text{WCA}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{IF} + \beta_2 \text{OF} + \beta_3 \text{FF}$$

$$Y (\text{WCA}) = 0.303 + 0.386 \text{IF} + 0.283 \text{OF} + 0.136 \text{FF}$$

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study aimed to determine the impact of the glass ceiling on female executives' career development in domestic commercial banks in Kandy district, Sri Lanka. A multiple regression analysis revealed a positive relationship between independent and dependent variables, with individual, organizational, and family factors having a significant effect. Cultural factors, however, did not have a significant effect on women's career advancement, leading to the rejection of the fourth hypothesis.

According to the correlation sig value of the Individual, Organizational and Family Factors towards Women Career Development is less than 0.05 ( $P<0.05$ ). And also, the sig value of regression is less than 0.05 ( $p<0.05$ ). It indicates that there is a positive correlation between Individual, Organizational and Family Factors and Women's Career Development. That means when increasing these factors it bring positive impact toward women career development. When consider the past studies, some research had found a positive significant impact of this factors towards Women's Career Development. (Victor & Shamila, 2018; Edirisnghe & Thalaspitiya, 2016; Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Jayathilaka & Uduwella's, 2018; Lakmal et al., 2019; Hussin et al., 2021). It was further reconfirmed by the present study showing a

statistically significant and positive impact of Individual, Organizational and Family Factors on Women's Career Development.

According to the correlation sig value of the Cultural Factors towards Women's Career Development is 0.000, it is less than 0.05 ( $P < 0.05$ ) and also, the sig value of regression is 0.119 ( $p > 0.05$ ). It indicates that there is an insignificant and positive correlation between Cultural Factors and Women's Career Development. Considering the above studies, considering the cultural background of Sri Lanka, a very limited number of researchers have found that cultural factors have a significant impact on women's career development (Bomuwela & De Alwis, 2013; Victor & Shamila, 2018). But contrary to these findings, another group of researchers has found that cultural factors do not have a significant effect on the women's career development (Jayathilaka & Uduwella, 2018). This finding contradicted in some ways the conclusions of previous research. However, according to this study fourth hypothesis (H4) could be unsupported. In this study, the researcher has considered the cultural aspects of Sri Lanka. Therefore, there may be differences between findings in foreign countries and Sri Lankan findings.

Regarding the questionnaire made indicators the survey found that female executives often lack confidence, leading to postponing promotions. To increase confidence, mastery experiences and mentoring are recommended. The study also suggests training programs to manage stress, anxiety, and emotions. Successful management requires self-confidence, emotional transformation, and emotional transformation. However, only women can change personal boundaries.

Organizational factors, including policies, structure, management beliefs, and environment, significantly impact the career development of women executives. Top managers in commercial banks should create a supportive environment for female employees, ensure equal representation of male and female managers, and promote women to management positions at a comparable pace to males. The study suggests adopting friendly policies and practices for female executives in recruitment, selection, training, development, and promotions to improve their professional development. Senior management often prioritizes men's productivity and efficiency over women's.

The study found that family factors significantly impact women's career development. Respondents prioritized child safety over housework, spouse care, and elderly care. Women face role conflict, leading to a desire to balance work and childcare. In Sri Lanka, inadequate childcare facilities have become a career barrier for women. Organizations should focus on establishing safe day care centers to ensure child safety.

The exodus of women from management diminishes the pool of competent female employees, so it is crucial for banks to recognize and remove the obstacles to women's career advancement in the context of global competition.

**Keywords:** Glass ceiling effect, women's career advancement, individual factors, organizational factors, family factors, cultural factors

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