



The Impact of Glass Ceiling on Career Development of Executive Level Female Employees in Financial Sector in Kandy District

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author LDV designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author FAS managed the analyses of the study and literature searches. Finally, both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka even though women represent more than half of the population, their labour force participation rate is less than men. Men's participation in the labour force is twice as women's. In recent years women and gender issues have become a major area of concern. Even seminars, workshops and conferences are being held over the world to discuss women issues and women advancement in all spheres of life, still it exists the barriers for women career development.

This study was entirely design by centering the focal problem of impact of glass ceiling on career development. This study also attempts to identify the contribution factors which create the glass ceiling effect on women career development. The study was conducted to find out the impact of glass ceiling on women career development of executive level female employees in Financial Sector in Kandy district and hypotheses were developed to find out whether there is a significant impact of individual, family, organisational and cultural factors on women career development. The data were collected from 144 executive level female respondents out of 157 executive level female

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employees in Financial Sector at Kandy district with a structured questionnaire. For presenting and analysing the data both descriptive and inferential statistics were used through SPSS 19.0 version and the results were derived.

The major finding of this study revealed that the glass ceiling and women career development has small negative relationship and individual, family and cultural factors have a significant impact on women career development while organisational factors have an insignificant impact on women career development. Further, in this study Adjusted R² of women career development is 0646. It is explained that 64.6% of women career development is explained by glass ceiling. The conclusion was finally made that there are significant impact of the glass ceiling on women career development of executive level female employees in the financial sector at Kandy district.

Keywords: Individual factors; family factors; organisational factors; cultural factors; attitude toward organisation; career focused; family support.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human is the most valued resource and the contribution of the human resource is immense for the success and the growth of an organisation. Hence every organisation attempts to acquire and retain competent and motivated employees [1]. As [2] state career development enables the organisations to attract and retain efficient and effective employees who would contribute to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisations. Similarly, this enables the employees to achieve their individual career goals and objectives.

Thus, the key for organisation be succeed is to maximise its human potential. Evidence showed that managerial and professional women are not moving up to top managerial position at the comparable rates as compared to their male

counterparts [3]. Some of the reasons of this problem for women in their career are clearly connected to the idea of a glass ceiling. "Glass ceiling" refers to invisible barriers that impede the career advancement of women. It also refers to situations where the advancement of a qualified person within the hierarchy of an organisation is halted at a particular level [4]. Women at the highest levels of business are still rare [5].

For successful career development of women employees, a concerted effort of the organisations, employees, their families and the wider society is essential. In the absence of these efforts, these 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 for them [6].

Table 1. Employed population by occupation and gender – 2015

Occupation	Total	Gender		% contribution of females to the total employment
		Male	Female	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	34.9
Managers, Senior Officials and Legislators	6.1	7.0	4.6	25.9
Professionals	6.5	3.4	12.3	65.8
Technical & Associate Professionals	6.0	6.3	5.6	32.3
Clerks & Clerical support workers	4.0	2.9	5.9	51.8
Services & Sales workers	10.9	11.5	9.8	31.3
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry & Fishery workers	18.6	18.9	18.0	33.8
Craft & Related Trades workers	16.2	16.3	15.8	34.2
Plant and Machine operators & Assemblers	8.6	11.3	3.5	14.3
Elementary occupations	22.6	21.6	24.3	37.7
Armed Forces Occupation	0.5	0.7	0.2	12.6

(Source: Labour Force Survey – Annual Report 2015, Sri Lanka)

Even though women represent more than half of the population in Sri Lanka, their labour force participation rate is less than men. Men's participation in labour force is twice as women's [7].

Table 1 shows the contribution of the female employees to the total employment by each occupational group in Sri Lanka. It clearly shows that 65.8 percent contribution of female to the total employment through "professionals". The mentioned reasons for that, because the occupation group of "professionals" includes teachers, nurses, etc. In plant / machine operators and assemblers occupational group, physical ability of men may be reason for showing high rates by them than women. However, it is not applicable to the senior ranks as well, since that levels work not purely because of their physical ability but also their mental ability. However, noted women's rate on Senior Officials & Managers and Proprietors & Managers of Enterprises occupational groups. They show different rates than men and also their contribution to the employment also less [7]. In 2015 4.6 percent of female employees employed in "Managers, Senior Officials and Legislators" occupation compared with 7 percent of males in Sri Lanka.

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 middle level management positions, while the proportion of women reaching senior and top management positions has remained relatively low [7]. The reason for this state may be the glass ceiling or the invisible barriers women face when developing their careers [7].

An investigation into the relative under representation of women in senior management positions in UK travel and tourism showed that the majority of respondents cited career breaks for child birth, child care and the pressures of combining work with family and personal commitments as the key issues [8].

A Malaysian study showed that women middle managers face a glass ceiling in their working environment which inhibits the promotion of female managers and entails a barrier to the career development opportunities for women and entails that women do not have enough

organisational support [9]. In Singapore organisations the glass ceiling barriers are studied from the aspects of corporate culture, corporate climate and corporate practices finding that the common precepts of the glass ceiling theory are supported in the Singapore context [9].

On the other hand findings indicated that Malaysian respondents viewed family and personal responsibilities as their greatest impediment to attaining senior management positions; this view is strongly supported by the Australian women as well [7]. The paper has explored the relationship between women, management and globalisation in the Middle East. It has shown that women face social and organisational barriers in the labor market and through gendered organisations and cultural practices [7].

According to [7] there is a negative impact of the dimension of the 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 in Sri Lanka and the barriers from corporate practices on women career development are very low. There is a negative relationship between family commitment and women career development and the barrier from family commitment on women career development are low. Also stereotypes about women were found to have a negative impact on women career development and the barriers from stereotypes about women on women career development are very low. Overall there is a weak negative impact of glass ceiling on the career development of women branch managers in state commercial banks in Sri Lanka.

According to the [7] the Glass Ceiling influences on the Women Career Development among the female executive level employees working in private sector organisation in Sri Lanka. There is a moderate negative correlation between glass ceiling and women career development among the executive level female employees working in private sector organisations and there is a weak negative correlation between family factors and women career development. At the same time, there is a moderate negative correlation between individual, organisational, cultural factors of glass ceiling and women career development.

In the Sri Lankan context, although many research had been done about different topics or

the problems relating to women career in Sri Lanka, prevalence of the research done on the glass ceiling and women career development are limited. This study is based on female executive level employees working in the financial sector in Kandy district in order to fill the empirical research gap. Therefore this research examines the certain questions related to how glass ceiling impacts on career development of executive level female employees in the financial sector. The key research problem of the study is,

“How Does Glass Ceiling Impact on Career Development of Executive Level Female Employees in Financial Sector at Kandy District?”

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is a phenomenon which argues that a barrier is so subtle and transparent yet so strong that it prevents from moving up in management hierarchy [10]. Further, glass ceiling refers to invisible barriers that impede the career advancement of women. The barriers that women employees and minority face when developing through their careers are termed as glass ceiling. It also refers to situations where the advancement of a qualified person within the hierarchy of an organisation is halted at a particular level because of some form of discrimination, most commonly sexism or racism [4].

Gendered organisational structure (GOS) model emerged to describe the basic career barriers that created by glass ceiling. There is a significant body of literature support this model. The four factors of this models are individual factors, family factors, organisational factors and cultural factors. These factors are used as the dimensions of the glass ceiling in this study.

2.1.1 Individual factors

Individual constraints can directly affect the person's ability to function fully as a human being and in relation to his/her quality as a leader or manager. Individual factors that can affect career progression includes; education, self-perception and motivation. Low career advance of women has been explained in terms of personality traits [11].

Personal skills or competencies were considered to be the most important factor that attributed to successful promotion to a senior management role. And also communication skills, leadership skills, hard work, dedication, Self-confidences are also considered to reach the top management position [12].

2.1.2 Family factors

Work-family commitment is the factor to which relation causes affect to the performance of female employees and family responsibilities such as home and child care play a much bigger part in female employees' lives [13].

Work whilst having family responsibilities was the most significant barrier by career women [13]. Women still take on most of the responsibilities of homemaking, which makes the issue of how to balance work and family life without sacrificing either a big concern for women. Also, the increase in dual – career couples has made the work – life balances an important factor for both women and men's career decisions [8].

2.1.3 Organisational factors

Within the organisation, there were certain factors, mainly subtle which served to hamper women's career advancement [3]. [14] Mention that, when it comes to the structure and culture of the organisation, organisations are often not structured to accommodate women's values.

Organisation culture is a system of shared meanings, values, beliefs, practices, group norms of the members to produce behavioural norms with regard to the working conditions of the organisation [15]. Organisational structure impedes women's entry to and advancement in the workplace. That structure can include job recruitment, job assignment, mentoring, retention, and training, how work and family are balanced by employees, and promotion and reward systems [16].

2.1.4 Cultural factors

The socialisation of the girl child in many societies is to blame for perceived inabilities on the part of women [11]. The life of passage of women are sacramental, celebrated or even acknowledged illustrative of the position ascribed

to women, right from the birth of the girl child, in comparison to the boy child.

Female employees can perceive their professional dreams only after fulfilling their culturally accepted roles, an expectations nearly impossible considering at what age this should be happening. Women who perform in a positive, antagonistic, self-governing mode are seen as performing outside of societal norms.

2.2 Career Development

Career development is the total constellation of psychological, sociological, educational, physical, economic and chance factors that combine to influence the career of any given individual over the life span. Career development is a "continuous lifelong process of developmental experiences that focuses on seeking, obtaining and processing information about self, occupational and educational alternatives, life styles and role options". Career development involves concerted efforts directed towards assessing a workers' potentials identifying likely career paths for that employee and designing and implementing "various forms of training and experience to prepare that person for more advanced job" [17].

2.2.1 Career focused (CF)

Employee interested in advancing or achieving their career. So, People with high career focused attempt to develop their profession [7].

2.2.2 Family support (FS)

Family support is the support given by family members to continue success of person's profession. Person who has good or high family support achieve a situation of balancing work-family life and develop their profession [7].

2.2.3 Attitudes towards organisation (AtO)

Attitude towards organisation refers the opinions of employee as regards working organisation. People with positive attitudes concerning the organisation worked stay with origination and develop their career within it [7].

2.3 Relationship between Glass Ceiling and Career Development of Female Employees

The proportion of women in lower and mid-level management positions has increased dramatically, while the proportion of women reaching top management positions or climbing up the corporate ladder has remained relatively small [18]. It is commonly believed that women have fewer opportunities in advancing through their career development than men. Some of these obstacles that lead to the under-representation of women in leadership and upper management positions are directly relevant to the phenomenon of "Glass Ceiling" [4]. [3] also indicates that the glass ceiling issue has a considerable impact on women's careers internationally. Despite, the increased number of women both participating in the workforce and reaching management positions, the evidence demonstrates that, for the majority, advancement to the very highest levels is rare and that the 'glass ceiling' is still in corporate culture, corporate practices, and corporate climate [5].

The GC is defined as, the barriers that prevent women from ascending to senior management positions in large corporations have often been described by the metaphor "glass ceiling", a transparent barrier which prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder past a certain point. It is visible that women traditionally encounter a "glass ceiling" and men are more likely to be accelerated into management positions by means of a "glass escalator". Some of them propose barriers such as attitudinal, behavioral and structural that hinders career advancement for many women [8].

Women's awareness toward their career paths is an important factor [16]. There is a common perception that men are leaders and women are the supportive followers. This perception of women as followers is strengthened by a lack of strong female role models. According to [16] the barrier to women career progression is the role stress due to multiple role demands inherent in running a career while also running a home and family. Due to male imposed pressure women are also stressed throughout the day and indirectly it affects their performances and then it would be easy to find excuse to restrain them from promotion. It has been seen that a woman, in her prime time in organisation or at the peak of her career, suddenly bounds to drop her career

to meet social obligations and responsibilities and never think of returning back due to the unwelcoming situation of the organisation.

The scarcity of female leaders is linked to ongoing prejudice and discrimination against women in the workplace. This refers although women are now capable of moving to upper levels, at some point they are halted by an invisible barriers. It applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women. According to [19] explanations for the extremely low number of women in the position of CEO and other senior management positions go beyond corporate policies and practices and also embrace the impact of gender-based behavioural dynamics. [20] mentioned that many jobs are still seen as men's or women's jobs and this influences the initials of a particular gender to organisations.

According to the [21] Glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels. And the Glass ceiling inequality represents inequality that increases over the course of a career. Women middle managers face a glass ceiling in their working environment which inhibits the promotion

of female managers and entails a barrier to the career development opportunities for women and entails that women do not have enough organisational support, such as: networking, mentoring and family friendly initiatives [9]. Women are under-represented in top management positions because of fear that they are not confident enough to act as managers. The reason is because society generally perceives that women do not and cannot function effectively as managers. It is believed that management is best suited to men [22].

According to [22], that women have a desire to advance their careers, but are limited by the following key factors, gender role, work-family commitments, personal factors, work and family conflict, stereotype of women as managers, male-dominated environment, organisational structure and culture, gender discrimination, job characteristics and lack of support systems at work, sexual harassment and lack of mentoring and coaching called glass ceiling. The certain biographical characteristics such as age and marital status play a role in career advancement. It was noted that women in different marital groups (single, married, divorced or widowed) have a desire and willingness to advance their careers, but are deterred by particular marital concerns and/or commitments.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

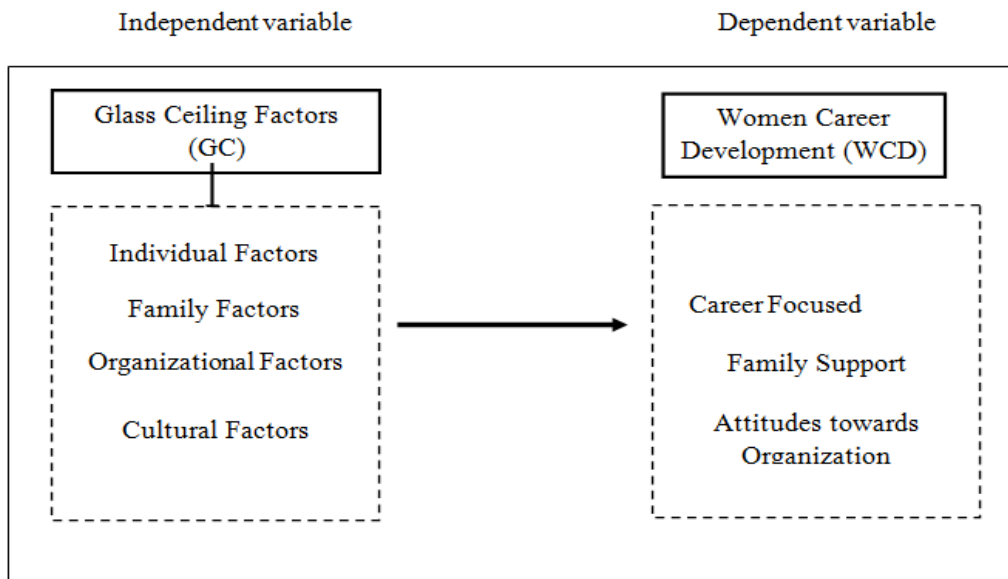


Fig. 1. The conceptual framework
(Source: Developed for Research Purpose)

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Study Population

Study population for this research identified as executive level female employees in financial sector in town area of Kandy District. Main bank branch network of commercial bank in Sri Lanka: there are major five banks which are Bank of Ceylon, People's Bank, Commercial Bank, Hatton National Bank, and Sampath Bank. Based on that article particular five (5) banks and nine (9) other financial institutions including insurance companies, leasing and financial companies' executive level female employees at Kandy district was considered as study population. The population of financial sector was taken as one hundred and fifty seven (157) executive level female employees in town area at Kandy district.

4.2 Sampling Technique

According to Sekeran [18]. every element in the population has a known and equal chance of being selected as a subject and it has the least bias and offers the more generalisability. There were one hundred and fifty seven (157) executive level female employees in selected five (5) banks and other nine (9) financial institutions in town area at Kandy district. For the study total number of one hundred and fifty seven (157) executive level female employees was selected without any further filtering.

4.3 Sample Size

According to [23] that the sample size larger than thirty (30) and less than five hundred (500) are appropriate for most research and where samples are to be broken into sub samples, a minimum sample size of thirty (30) for each category is necessary. The current study purposively selected one hundred and fifty seven

(157) female executives from fourteen (14) financial institutions in Kandy District in order to collect required data for the study. Table 2 shows the sample distribution of the study.

Table 2. Sampling distribution

Financial Institutions	Head count of female executives
Bank of Ceylon	43
People's Bank	38
Commercial Bank	8
Sampath Bank	5
Hatton National Bank	3
Central Finance	23
SL Insurance	7
People's Leasing Company	7
Janashakthi Insurance	6
HNB Assurance	6
Fair First Insurance	3
Co-operative Insurance	3
AIA	3
Ceylinco Insurance	2
Total	157

(Source: Developed for Research Purpose)

The questionnaires are issued to 157 executive level female employees in Financial Sector at Kandy district. However, the data were collected from 144 executive level female respondents out of 157 executive level female employees in Financial Sector at Kandy district with a structured questionnaire.

4.4 Survey Instrument

A questionnaire is a pre-formulated written set of questions to which respondents record their answers. In this study questionnaire is developed with the support of previous studies carried out by expert in the relevant subject areas.

Table 3. Survey instrument

Dimension	No. of items	Source	Cronbach's alpha values
Individual Factors	13	Nchabira, 2013	0.818
Family Factors	8		0.782
Organisational Factors	15		0.812
Cultural Factors	5		0.806
Attitudes toward Organisation	3	Afza & Newas, 2008	Not Mentioned
Career focused	5		
Family Support	2		

(Source: Developed for Research Purpose)

Table 4. Decision Attributes of Cronbach's Alpha Co-efficient

CAC < 0.5	Unacceptable Reliability
0.5 ≤ CAC < 0.6	Poor Reliability
0.6 ≤ CAC < 0.7	Questionable Reliability
0.7 ≤ CAC < 0.8	Acceptable Reliability
0.8 ≤ CAC < 0.9	Good Reliability
0.9 ≤ CAC	Excellent Reliability

(Source: [24])

Table 5. Decision criteria for bivariate analysis

Range	Decision Attributes
r = 0.5 to 1.0	Strong Positive Relationship
r = 0.3 to 0.49	Medium Positive Relationship
r = 0.1 to 0.29	Weak Positive Relationship
r = -0.10 to -0.29	Weak Negative Relationship
r = -0.3 to -0.49	Medium Negative Relationship
r = -0.5 to -1.0	Strong Negative Relationship

5. DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSES

5.1 Reliability Analyses

In this study, result of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.837 of glass ceiling and Cronbach's Alpha is 0.753 of women career development. All items considered in this study are to be reliable. Whole questionnaire was considered reliable because reliability is responsibly acceptable since Cronbach's alpha coefficient is greater than 0.70.

5.2 Analyses of Demographic Variable

In this study, out of 144 respondents of executive level female employees in selected financial institutions, 16.7% respondents are Managers and Assistant Managers, 35.4% represents Junior Executives, while 45.8% is represent by Senior Executives. Executive Generals are representing only 2.1% of the sample.

Further, the results show that, the 6.3% female executive level employees are between age group of 18-30, 40.3% of the sample represents the employees less than between 31-40 years because most of the Junior Executives come under this category, 36.1% are from the age category of 41-50 years while executive female employees above 51 years represent 17.4% of the sample, 71.5% of respondents of the sample

are married while 17.4% of them are single. Majority of them are married respondents of the sample. 11.1% of the sample represents the divorced and other situations out of 144 respondents. 30.6% of them are having two children while, one, more than two and none children of respondents 18.8%, 21.5% and 29.2% respectively. The sample includes the six categories of educational level of executive level female employees. 4.9%, 8.3% of the respondents have completed Master degree and Post Graduate Diploma respectively while 27.1% of them are graduates. 36.8% of them completed Diplomas and 17.4% possess Certificate level qualifications among the sample. 2.1% of the sample represents the employees less than 5 years and 22.9% represents the employees between 5-10years work experience. Mainly Junior Executive level respondents include in this category. 75% of the sample represents the respondents that having experience more than 10 years. 15.3% of the sample represents the employees that have the salary between the Rs. 30000-50000. Most of the executive female employees receive salary in between Rs. 50001-70000 and it represents the 43.1% of the sample. 31.3% of them possess the salary level of Rs. 70001-90000 while 10.4% respondents are having more than Rs. 90000.

5.3 Multiple Regression Analyses

In this study, R, 0.810 is the Multiple Correlation Coefficient of the independent variable with the dependent variable after all the inter correlations are taken into account. Adjusted R square 0.646 is the explained variance in career development by the combination of these variables. F value 66.372 is significant at 0.000 level. The results indicate that 64.6% of the variance of career development has been significantly explained by glass ceiling. Hence it can be clearly said that other factors have 35.4% influences on career development. Coefficients table helps to identify which among the independent dimensions influences most the variance of career development.

The strength of the influence that each of the independent variable had on the dependent variable (Career Development) were determined by the use of multi regression coefficients of the independent variables. The influence of each independent variable is show in the Table 7.

Table 6. Results of multiple regression analysis

Model	Multiple R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.810 ^a	.656	.646	.23321

a. Predictors: (Constant), Cultural factors, Individual factors, Family Factors, Organisational factors
(Source: Survey Data)

Table 7. Influence of the independent variables on career development

Model		Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.881	.135		43.542	.000
	Individual Factors	-.255	.069	-.242	-3.665	.000
	Family Factors	-.119	.045	-.142	-2.651	.009
	Organisational Factors	.102	.054	.122	1.888	.061
	Cultural Factors	-.594	.042	-.725	-14.119	.000

(Source: Survey Data)

By looking at Beta value under standardised coefficients, it is concluded that cultural factors are the most influenced factor to the career development and it is significant at 0.000 level. Individual factors, family factors' P value indicate 0.000, 0.009 respectively and that is less than the value of 0.05. But the P value of organisational factors is 0.061 that more than 0.05.

From coefficient tab can be seen that when the other variable are controlled individual factors, family factors, cultural factors show significant correlation with women career development. Organisational factor's p value is more than the values of 0.05; hence it is not significantly predictive of women career development. As per this result except organisational factors other factors are significantly predictive of women career development.

5.4 The Impact of Personal Factors on Women Career Development

A one way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the Personal Factors on WCD.

The results of the comparison of Designation of female executive level employees with their career development represent the p value of 0.048 which is less than 0.05. This indicates that there is a significant impact of current working capacity on WCD at the $p < 0.05$ level. This result suggests that according to the position female employees held, the GC influence can be different. There is no significant effect on age, marital status and number of children of female executive employees on their career development and P values are 0.251, 0.098 and 0.543 respectively which is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). When it considering the education qualifications, work experience and salary level of the female employees, educational qualifications has the p value of 0.516 while work experience and salary represents the p values of 0.780, 0.305 which is $p > 0.05$ respectively.

Hence it can conclude that except the Designation of the respondents, other personal factors have no significant impact on WCD and suggest these Personal factors have no significant different in GC influence.

Table 8. Impact of demographic factors on WCD

Demographic factors	Sig. value	Dependent variable
Designation	0.048	Women Career
Age	0.251	Development
Marital Status	0.098	
Number of Children	0.543	
Education Qualifications	0.516	
Work Experience	0.780	
Salary	0.305	

(Source: Survey Data)

6. CONCLUSION

According to this study it identified that, there is a lower level of glass ceiling and high level of career development exist among the executive level female employees in Financial Sector at Kandy district.

Further, glass ceiling has a small negative but definite relationship with career development executive level female employees in Financial Sector at Kandy district. The individual, family and cultural factors that create glass ceiling barriers have significant impact on career development while organisational factors have insignificant impact on career development of executive level female employees in financial sector at Kandy district.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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