



Barriers to women's succession to executive level positions in Sri Lanka: A case in apparel industry

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Today women are active everywhere in the global context. Job opportunities for women in labour market are increasing. Women's education and entrepreneurship are rising more than ever before leading them to move into management positions. The influx of women into the workforce and their growing interest in managerial and professional careers is one of the major developments during recent decades. However women continue to be underrepresented in management positions compared to their overall employment. The present context of the apparel industry in Sri Lanka is given with a high potential to investment prospects by deploying a glut of women to the worker categories. Between 70-80% of the labour force in the apparel sector consists of women. The majority of these women is unmarried and has secondary school leaving qualifications. The jobs do not typically correspond to their training and educational attainments or to their aspirations. The majority is concentrated in low skilled jobs with poor career prospects and there are many barriers associated with climbing to higher levels including staff and executive positions.

Therefore, this study investigated the career barriers associated with the women's succession to executive level. The study considered three favourable factors such as Equal Employment Opportunities, Affirmative Actions and Dignity at Work and six barriers such as Stereotypical Assumptions, Sex Discrimination, Glass Ceiling, Content Plateauing, Personal Plateauing and Other Barriers. The sample was taken from apparel industry at the various level hierarchy including executive level, staff grade level and worker category level.

Findings showed that Equal Employment Opportunity Practices and Dignity at Work were considered as the favourable factors to women to succeed to the executive level. The affirmative actions taken in to consideration by the organisations were negligible and it has a substantial impact to hinder women's succession. The lack of education was the profound barrier to the women those who are at the staff grade level and content Plateauing due to work saturation was the next factor affecting for women's succession. Considering the Glass Ceiling, 45 per centum women at staff grade level agreed that their organisation is facilitating Glass Ceiling. Meanwhile, 41 per centum women were stagnated with their current job position due to the family spill over. The other barriers such as; Stereotypical Assumptions and Sex Discrimination did not hamper women to succeed in their career advancement.

Keywords: women; women's succession; career barriers; job positions