Ann Appl Sport Sci, 11(04): e1186, 2023.
http://www.aassjournal.com; e-ISSN: 2322–4479; p-ISSN: 2476–4981. 10.61186 /aassjournal.1186

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Effects of Glass Ceiling Factors on Career Development among Women Athletes in Sri Lanka's National Teams

[1]Pathum Priyamal Weerakkody, [1]Issadee Kutintara, [1]Sid Terason*

[1]Sport Management Department, Faculty of Sports Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen, Thailand.

Submitted February 13, 2023; Accepted in final form April 13, 2023.

ABSTRACT

Background. Women and gender issues have become leading topics of concern around the world, and most explore women's challenges and advancement in all aspects of life. **Objectives.** To identify the effects of Glass Ceiling (GC) factors on Career Development (CD) among women athletes in Sri Lanka's national teams. **Methods.** One hundred five respondents were randomly selected using simple random sampling among 144 individuals who were eligible for this study, and a self-administered questionnaire was used to record the answers GC effects were taken as independent variables and Women Career Development (WCD) was taken as the dependent variable. **Results.** All the independent variables portrayed a statistically significant association with the dependent variable. Even though a negative association was hypothesized between all these regress and the CD, the only organization depicted a negative association with the dependent variable. Furthermore, the association among the independent variables was also statistically significant, and the most influential factor that affects WCD was organization while culture and individual were respectively given the impact on the dependent variable. The family was not significant while other independent factors were in the model. Moreover, independent variables remained unchanged even after controlling the effects of age and performance. **Conclusion.** Taken together, these results provide solid recommendations to women athletes on how GC factors affect CD in their professional life while addressing the invisible barriers that national women athletes faced during the development of their careers after retiring from sports.

KEYWORDS: ***Glass Ceiling Effect, Women Athletes, Women's Career Development.***

INTRODUCTION

In South Asian countries, including Sri Lanka, women are making a great effort to emerge from the confines of their subordinate position in life, which start from the birth of a girl child compared to a male child. On the other hand, most women around the world have been facing more obstacles, such as physiological, psychological, and social than men. In most professional fields, excluding which needed more feminism, such as beauty culture, modeling, and so on, most women are considered low performers, including sports. In Sri Lanka, women represent 57% of the total population; however, out of 8 million economically active persons, only 35.9% are women. Although the rate of women's career advancement in higher positions in organizations still significantly demonstrates low percentages (1). On the other hand, sports involvement among women did not significantly expand until the post-independence era, and even after that only a handful of women athletes seemed to have the opportunity to participate in Sri Lanka (2). Moreover, the women athletes who represented the national team have immense experience in the

*. Corresponding Author:
Sid Terason, Ph.D.
E-mail: fsssid@ku.ac.th

field but are still struggling to develop their careers as an individual.

The term "career" refers to the series of professional experiences that an individual may have throughout their work life (3) and CD is the process of improving an individual's employability to obtain the desired job (4). On the other hand, while developing and promoting the career many obstacles may arise for a variety of causes. CD barriers are perceived, experienced challenges and drawbacks that people express in pursuing and advancing their careers (5).

Women suffer more barriers than men in their careers, and the most significant of them are excluded from crucial career roles, a scarcity of leading female models, and unfavorable stereotypical women (6). Issues of gender equality infiltrate all parts of our culture and there is a special focus on issues of gender equity in most of the professional fields while males are dominating the leadership positions (7) whereas the roles of the gender demonstrations were socially determined in the conventional sphere (8) and gender roles contribute to unconsciously held beliefs that aren't in line with an individual's actual knowledge and skills and they have a negative impact on decision making (9).

Furthermore, GC refers to "situations where the advancement of a qualified person within the hierarchy of an organization is halted at a particular level because of some form of discrimination, most commonly sexism or racism" (10). GC is a modern terminology in human resource management that came among human resource management professionals a few decades ago (11). Moreover, the "GC effects imply that gender disadvantages are stronger at the top of the hierarchy than at lower levels and that these disadvantages become worse later in a person's career" (12), and the obstacles faced by women described by the metaphor GC as a transparent barrier which is a foil to the women's upward mobility of their career (13).

Moreover, women in Asian countries become unpaid family worker who engages in economic activities but is not recognized as an input to the gross domestic product in some countries as such when compared with other women in the rest of the world (14). Moreover, the existence of GC demonstrates a significant wage gap between men and women that is growing over time, and that leads to a lack of representation for women in upper management (15).

On the other hand, women were considered as underdogs in many professional fields including in the field of sports. Whether it is amateur sports or professional sports, there is a lack of women participating men in attending in most of the roles such as athlete, coach, team manager, sports executive, referee, media personal, physiotherapist, and so forth. Even in the ancient Olympic era, women were excluded from Olympic Games by the roles of competing as athletes and viewing as spectators. Moreover, even in the modern Olympic Games, which were started in Greece in 1896, are quite different from the ancient games, one of the similarities may be a shared interest in investigating the role or absence of women in this historically male-dominated event (16).

When compared with non-athletes professional careers, elite athletes retire at earlier ages from their sports career and the retirement age of the athletes typically varies from sport to sport and depends on their physical needs and demands (17). Due to the early retirement age, elite athletes have to transition to a new profession or career to continue the rest of their life by learning new skills (18). Furthermore, it is difficult for women athletes to develop their careers after retiring from sports without having a good awareness of such as significant support from others, the importance of occupational autonomy sense, determination to CD after retiring from sports, and social integration (19). Moreover, women athletes have been facing more difficulties than men in finding an appropriate career and developing their chosen career after they retire from sports. Furthermore, the Institutional practice of having disproportionately more men in leadership positions within sports organizations disfavors women's access to these positions, and sports organizations have institutionalized practices that have valued male ideals, giving men unchallenged power and minimizing the contribution of women to sport leadership (20). Even in the sport consumer decision-making process, gender independence also makes an influence on sport consumption behaviors (21).

Not only in other professional fields but also in the field of sports, women's participation is lower than men's in the South Asian continent including Sri Lanka from the perspective of administration as well. In Sri Lanka, though women's participation as athletes in sports at the

elite level is in high percentages, still most of them are not good enough to develop their careers as professionals due to invisible barriers. Even though they have good education, experience, and talent, most of them are still reluctant to climb their career ladder. On the other hand, women are aware of a GC, but they are reluctant to acknowledge it and some of the value systems ingrained in this predominantly male sports industry are being internalized by women (22). Therefore, it is important to identify the GC effects and the invisible barriers which halt the women athletes' CD in the Sri Lankan sports context. Given the chance and scope, female leaders can make significant contributions within the context of sport leadership, and the woman's professionalism is a woman's most important value, driving innovation in sport management and organizational change and the positive impact on women's athletes' community (23). There is persistent evidence that women's roles in sport administration programs are shrinking, despite the significant increase in female participation in sports in the modern world (24) and on the other hand, Women have continued to be statistically underrepresented in these administrative, managerial, and leadership roles in sport on a professional level (25).

Over the last five decades, the CD of women significantly increased by overcoming the gender barriers, and at present, most teenage women select male-dominant careers as their professional careers (26). On the other hand, apart from this achievement of women's employment, gender inequity in the workplace remains a critical problem (27). Moreover, despite the effort to address inequality, payments, promotions, and gender discrimination, it continues to affect the women CD (28). Most of the studies which illustrate the gender issues have highlighted the different types of GC factors that affected the WCD, and most of them are similar even in different professional fields. According to past studies, most of the professional fields have revealed lots of barriers with similar meanings which affected the women CD. Selection effects, cultural capital, social bonding, gender discrimination, occupational segregation, and organizing characteristics are among the key factors that contribute to the creation and maintenance of GC (29). Moreover, individual barriers are created by social and cultural stereotypes, while organizational barriers are created by social norms (30). On the other hand opinion of women's responsibilities in the workplace and family life, organization policies, power imbalance, and other organizational factors that prevent women from advancing the hierarchy (31). Therefore, according to this present study, common potential barriers for women can be identified as individual, organization, family, and culture which affected the CD among women athletes in Sri Lanka's national teams.

Conceptual Framework. This study aimed to investigate how well organization, individual, family, and cultural factors predict the CD and their variance and identify the best predictor of CD among the organization, individual, family, and cultural factors after controlling external events of age and past sports performance and identify if these factors control the possible effect of age and past sports performance and are this set of variables still able to predict a significant amount of the variance in the CD while the negative association was hypothesized between all these regresses. The author has created a conceptual framework based on available literature and logical arrangement and synthesis of literature to describe the investigated phenomenon.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework of the study.

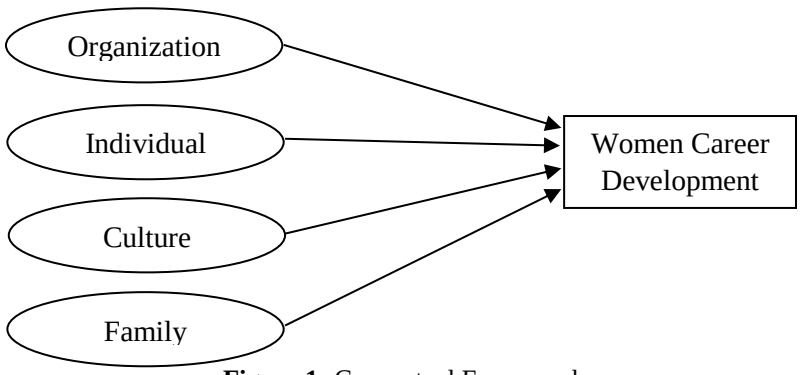

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design. The objective of this study is to identify the effects of GC factors on CD among women athletes in Sri Lanka's national teams. Furthermore, this descriptive research study aims to describe the CD characteristics of women athletes who represented the national teams in Sri Lanka by using a survey method. Moreover, quantitative data were used to investigate the relationships among independent variables of organization, individual, family & cultural factors, and dependent variables as WCD in the Sri Lankan sport context.

Participants. The respondents (N=105) in this study consisted of the national team represented women athletes who were between the age of 20-60 years. Most of them (65%) were between the age of (31-40) years; the least number was in the 51-60 years old group (6%). The participants held only two occupations: private company employees (63%) and government employees (37%) (Table 1).

Women athletes who represented and retired from Sri Lanka's national teams competing in the South Asian Games, the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games, and the Olympic Games from 1995 to 2016 were chosen as the target population for this research project. Respondents were randomly selected using simple random sampling among 144 individuals who were eligible for this study and under the inclusion criteria respondent who is working or had worked under an employee are considered as the sample and women athletes who represented and still not retired from the national teams in Sri Lanka in each above-mentioned games and women athlete who have their own business were excluded from the sample.

Instrument. A self-administrative questionnaire is used as the survey instrument to record the answers of respondents and the questionnaire for this study was developed with previous literature which is related to the GC effects and WCD. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: Demographic data were collected from subjects such as age, marital status, highest sports participation level, present designation, education qualification, average income, retirement age, and so forth as the first part and the second part of the questionnaire consisted of the independent variable of organization, individual, family and cultural dimensions which affect the CD of women on five-point scale range. Moreover, the questionnaire was arranged on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree in ascending order.

Table 1. Demographic Data

Variable (N-105)	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Age		
1.(20-30)	13	12%
2.(31-40)	68	65%
3.(41-50)	18	17%
4.(51-60)	06	06%
Employment		
1. Government	39	37%
2. Private	66	63%

RESULTS

Testing Regression Assumptions. The data on WCD, organization, individual, family, and culture dimensions were collected by distributing a questionnaire among the sample, and 105 respondents were selected according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Four vital Regression Assumptions were diagnosed in this study to validate the results obtained. The first assumption tested was the linearity and additivity of the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The plot of residuals versus predicted values was used in this regard. Furthermore, the points should be around a horizontal line in the residuals versus the predicted plot, with a roughly constant variance. Therefore, the data provide evidence for the non-violation of the assumption as the data points are around a horizontal line.

Statistical independence of the errors in the next assumption tested. In this regard, the serial correlation in the errors was tested by using the Durbin-Watson measure. When the calculated Durbin-Watson value is close to two, that is

between 1.6 and 2.3, then the researchers have enough evidence to accept the assumption. That means the fitted model has satisfied the statistical independence of the errors assumption as well.

As the third assumption, the homoscedasticity (constant variance) of the errors was tested by using the residuals versus the predicted plot. The data depict a constant variance over the observations. Therefore, it provides evidence for the acceptance of the homoscedasticity assumption.

Finally, the normality of the error is tested. Therefore, it evidences the normality of the errors. In addition to that, the error observations in the Normal Probability plot shoulder the diagonal line. Thus, it further confirms the normality of errors. Further, the multi-collinearity bias was also tested as some of the independent variables are significantly associated. Herein, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used. As the calculated VIF values are well below, the results do not suffer from multi-collinearity bias.

Data Validation. The reliability of the data collected was tested by using Cronbach's alpha, which is a measure of internal consistency that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. According to the reported results, the reliability of data collected for WCD (0.716), organization (0.768), and family (0.786) is acceptable as Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.7. Even though Cronbach's alpha values for the individual (0.520) and culture (0.466) variables are relatively low, the researcher decided to continue the analysis with them also as they might play a significant role according to the model developed. The regression variables were developed by using factor analysis. All the regression variables depict a content validity (WCD=48.52, organization=59.877, individual=45.827, family=68.862, culture=49.407) as the % of variance explained is significant.

Correlation Analysis. Bivariate correlations among these variables were obtained as a pre-test to determine the type of regression analysis suitable for the data. These bivariate correlations are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Intercorrelations for WCD and Predictor Variables

Variable		*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
WCD	–				
Predictor Variables					
1. Organization	-.665**	–			
2. Individual	.431**	-.205*	–		
3. Family	.550**	-.316**	.625**	–	
4. Culture	.534**	-.259**	.503**	.914**	–

Note: *$p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

All the independent variables (organization, individual, family, and culture) show a statistically significant association with the dependent variable (WCD) at a 95% confidence level as the P-values are less than 0.05. Even though a negative association is hypothesized between all these regresses and WCD, only the organization is depicting a negative association with WCD. The association among the independent variables is also statistically significant at a 95% co-confidence level as the p-values are less than 0.05. Moreover, some of the associations are very strong. For instance, the association between family and culture is 0.914. Therefore, it is decided to use the Stepwise Regression Analysis technique for further analysis as these statistically significant and strong associations among the independent variables might lead to multicollinearity bias.

Regression Analysis. Table 3 reports the results obtained from the stepwise regression analysis conducted to identify the relationship between WCD and organization, individual, family, and culture variables.

The reported results in Table 3 indicate that the first variable of the model is an organization, which depicts a statistically significant negative relationship with WCD as expected. Therefore, the most influential factor that affects WCD is organization. Meanwhile, the second variable in the model is culture. That means, given the impact of the organization on WCD, the next most influential variable in the list is culture. The final variable of the model is the individual factor. This indicates that given the impact of organizational and cultural factors on WCD, the next most influential variable is the individual factor. The other independent variable, family, has not entered

into the model, indicating that the impact of family is not significant while organization, cultural, and individual factors are in the model. However, the family factor might carry a significant influence on WCD if it is regressed individually because the association between WCD and family is statistically significant. This indicates that the presence of influences from organizational, cultural, and individual factors would lead to mitigating the effect of family factors on WCD.

The effect of organization factors WCD is significantly negative. According to the reported results, one standard deviation increase in organization factors would lead to a decrease in WCD by 0.552 standard deviations. The relationship between WCD and culture is significantly positive. That means one standard deviation increase in cultural factor would lead to an increase in WCD by 0.309 standard deviations. Meanwhile, the individual factor also carries a positive effect on WCD. One standard deviation increase in individual factors would lead to an increase in WCD by 0.162 standard deviations.

Table 4 above reports the three ANOVA tables obtained from the three models fitted under the stepwise regression analysis. The third model is the final fitted model and it is a statistically significant model at a 95% confidence level as the P-value is less than 0.05.

The best fitness of the model can be measured by using the R2. The R square value for model three is 60.20%, which indicates that out of the total variability of WCD, the fitted model has the power of explaining 60.20%. A R square value of more than 10% is acceptable in social science research if at least one independent variable is statistically significant in the model (32). This is mainly because, in social science research on human behavior, the intention is to understand the relationships between the variables but not to predict human behavior.

Controlling for the effects of age and performance. It is intended to see the effect of organization, family, individual, and cultural factors on WCD after controlling the effects of age and performance as the final objective of this study. There is no significant association between WCD and age at a 95% confidence level as the P value (0.222) is higher than 0.05. Similarly, the association between WCD and Performance is also not statistically significant because the P value (0.075) is higher than 0.05.

Table 3. Stepwise Regression Coefficients

	Model	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*	*Tolerance*	*VIF*
1	(Constant)	-2.322E-17	.073		.000	1.000		
	Organization	-.665	.074	-.665	-9.043	< .000	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	-1.192E-16	.064		.000	1.000		
	Organization	-.565	.066	-.565	-8.528	< .000	.933	1.072
	Culture	.387	.066	.387	5.848	< .000	.933	1.072
3	(Constant)	-1.044E-16	.062		.000	1.000		
	Organization	-.552	.065	-.552	-8.457	< .000	.925	1.081
	Culture	.309	.074	.309	4.182	< .000	.722	1.386
	Individual	.162	.073	.162	2.227	.028	.741	1.350

a. Dependent Variable: WCD

DISCUSSION

This study attempts to determine the effects of the GC factors (organization, individual, family, and culture) on CD among women athletes in Sri Lanka's national teams, and further, some characteristics that cause GC impacts have been uncovered by this study. According to the results of the study organization, which shows an expectedly negative association with women's CD is statistically significant. Therefore, the organization is the main component that influences WCD. Performance at work has not been fairly evaluated, not having enough possibility to develop the career, not appointed for any prominent positions, co-workers who are men are not regraded, selection of candidates for particular positions is influenced by gender and so forth organization factors are negatively affected to the WCD. Culture and individual variables are the next two factors on the list in order of their significance. Additionally, while organization, cultural, and individual factors have a relationship

with WCD, the impact on the family is not notably significant. Though previous research (13) has shown the majority of the participants revealed a minor indication of GC impact and sub-variables lay within a low level of range while most respondents had a satisfactory level of family support and organization attitude toward WCD, in this study organization factor was the most highlighted dependent variable on WCD. In addition, these findings supported the idea of which showed social, individual, and organizational barriers prevent women from achieving the CD in their professional life (33).

Table 4. ANOVA Table of Residual Analysis

Model		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
1	Regression	46.026	1	46.026	81.774	.000[a]
	Residual	57.974	103	.563		
	Total	104.000	104			
2	Regression	60.584	2	30.292	71.167	.000[b]
	Residual	43.416	102	.426		
	Total	104.000	104			
3	Regression	62.617	3	20.872	50.941	.000[c]
	Residual	41.383	101	.410		
	Total	104.000	104			

a. Predictors: (Constant), organization.

b. Predictors: (Constant), organization, culture

c. Predictors: (Constant), organization, culture, individual

d. Dependent Variable: WCD

Thus, the results indicate that the effects of age and performance on WCD may not statistically be significant and therefore, the relationship between organization, family, individual, and cultural factors and WCD might remain unchanged even after controlling the effects of age and performance. The study's data analysis has demonstrated that among the women athletes who competed for the national teams in Sri Lanka, there is a moderately negative association between GC effects and WCD. According to the findings, it is demonstrated employment opportunities in the sports sector should have been facilitated and associated with the women who served the country as an athlete moreover once they are in the working environment the leading barrier to the organization must be addressed fairly to uplift the CD of women athletes in Sri Lanka.

CONCLUSION

Finally, these findings may assist in expanding the understanding of specific GC effects on CD for women athletes in Sri Lanka, and only when the positive aspects that are affecting women's professional advancement are increased will they be able to break through the GC in their CD.

APPLICABLE REMARKS

- The sample consisted of women athletes who represented and retired from Sri Lanka's national teams competing in the South Asian Games, the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games, and the Olympic Games from 1995 to 2016.
- Women athletes who represented and still have not retired from the national teams in Sri Lanka in each above-mentioned game and women athletes who have businesses were excluded from the sample.
- Women athletes who are living outside of Sri Lanka were not taken as the sample.
- Contextual variables such as level of education, age, social class, and marital and motherhood status influence the perceptions of the role of the variable factors in forming the GC.
- Perceptions of organizational good practices against GC would promote equity in women's advancement.

FUNDING

This research received a graduate scholarship grant for the fiscal year 2020 from the Graduate School, Kasetsart University, Thailand.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Study concept and design: Pathum Priyamal Weerakkody, Issadee Kutintara, Sid Terason. Acquisition of data: Pathum Priyamal Weerakkody. Analysis and interpretation of data: Pathum Priyamal

Weerakkody, Sid Terason. Drafting the manuscript: Pathum Priyamal Weerakkody. Critical revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content: Issadee Kutintara, Sid Terason. Statistical analysis: Pathum Priyamal Weerakkody, Sid Terason. Administrative, technical, and material support: Issadee Kutintara, Sid Terason. Study supervision: Issadee Kutintara, Sid Terason.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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