

## A Study on Women's Empowerment in Aviation Industry in Sri Lanka

Sahana Vithanagama<sup>1#</sup> and RMNT Sirisoma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*ExpoLanka Headquarters*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Management and Finance, Faculty of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities,  
General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University*

#sahanavithanagama@gmail.com

**Abstract:** If a person can hoist his/her spiritual, political, social or economic forte, that is where you find empowerment. Per UN Women, empowering women is what you contribute fully to economic life across all sectors and it is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability. To achieve your career goals, your gender should not matter. This paper focuses on women's empowerment in aviation sector. It discusses the factors influencing gender inequality, job quality, leadership, and glass ceiling. Global measures of gender equality show that in Sri Lanka the gender-based inequality is increasing despite the nation's dramatically improving economy and poverty levels and meeting some Sustainable Development Goals. To explain this situation in aviation, a sample of 40 was taken to explore how they experienced gender and empowerment and to explore synergies, or lack thereof, with measures of women empowerment. What the data revealed was a complementary relationship between leadership and job quality where it direct to break the glass ceiling. The Glass ceiling referred to the phenomenon where men dominate the upper limit of management. The research clearly shows that in nations like Sri Lanka, women experience 'modernization' and globalization in complex ways that are influenced strongly at workplace especially in transportation sector. The candidates

who participated in the research are personnel in aviation field and their experiences indicated that gender inequality and empowerment require far deeper analysis. As findings it is exposed that experiences could not be captured by global measures of gender equality and empowerment and suggest women empowering activities such as gender equality, leadership, job quality, job satisfaction, promotions, standards, personal growth, glass ceiling and competence have a positive relationship over women in aviation sector. As the efficiency of these functions are increased in relation the aviation sector women's empowerment will also be increased.

**Keywords:** Women, Empowerment, Aviation

### Introduction

If a person can hoist their spiritual, political, social, or economic forte that is where you find empowerment. It evolves around self-development and sureness. Per UN Women, empowering women is what you contribute fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families, and communities. The conversation of women's empowerment came to the table in an era where there was "no place for women". (Turnbull,2013) But

today the tables have turned, and we talk about gender equality as a sustainable development goal around the world. For a sustainable development role of the woman is important as a man to every sector.

Transportation is a major sector in a country's economy where we see a lesser number of women reputations, as for the records LABORSTAT data indicate that while women constitute only 1-in-7 transport workers they experienced three-quarters of the job losses in transport between 2008 and 2011. When it comes to the Sri Lankan context there is a fifty-seven percent women representation out of twenty-one million populations and out of economically active eight point five million, thirty-three-point four percent are women. Where seventy percent of the labor force constitutes of economically sedentary women. (Affairs, 2015) This gap reflects in the transportation industry as well as per the 2013 Sri Lanka labor force survey.

The fewer women involvement in the economy indicates the need for women empowerment to a sustainable future, where is gender inequality in the field. Legal, social and cultural situation in which sex and/or gender determine different rights and dignity for women and men, which are reflected in their unequal access to or enjoyment of rights, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles is known as gender inequality. (Commission, 2004) Especially in the transportation industry, where mainly we can recognize aviation, port, and land transport. Out of these three sectors, roughly aviation leads to the high participation of women in comparison to other sectors, as pilots, air hostesses, ground staff, and administration. But this is comparatively low to men. To fill the gap there is a need of finding a cause to the low involvement of women in the aviation

industry and facilitate women's empowerment to overcome the subjects.

This research covers the aviation industry's women's employability in Sri Lanka. This seeks the ratios of male and female representation in the Aviation industry in administrative, managerial, and executive levels specifically. The importance of identifying the gender representation in the industry will encourage to fill the unseen imbalance and break the glass ceiling. Here the researcher identifies the components where underlay to the above scenario. The research will be mainly based on the aviation industry which is one of the main sectors that contribute to transport internationally and the economy of Sri Lanka.

### **Methodology**

This study uses an emergent, exploratory, inductive qualitative approach. Because the basis of such an approach is that one does not predetermine or delimit the directions the investigation might take, it is especially important to detail the specific stages that this research will follow in addressing the research question by identifying the influence of women in the aviation sector and the necessity of women's empowerment. To achieve the core objective of the current study conceptual framework is based on the relationship between gender inequality, job quality which is defined as the degree of satisfaction, or the pleasantness associated with the process of working (Coulibaly, 2006), glass ceiling effect, and leadership as independent variables and women's empowerment as the dependent variable. Gender representation in a specific area of work in the workplace as indicated by the gender inequality index and the researcher based its findings from direct answering questionnaire. Laeken indicator analyzed the direct answer questions for the degree

of satisfaction associated with the process of work of female employees. The phenomenon where men dominate the upper limit of management of the aviation sector was indicated by the glass ceiling index through the Likert scale data collection method. The challenging model and confirming model of the alpha female inventory indicators were used to analyze direct answer questions and Likert scale data to identify the matter of equality and the right to have the same opportunity as men in the industry of aviation. Because of the complexities involved in this type of research, the proposal is divided into several broad stages with funding and time estimates provided for each. The research will be secondarily based on secondary data which will be collected through Sri Lankan Aviators. This sample was selected as it is convenient to conduct surveys and gather more specific data with the support and contribution of the selected executives, managers, and employees, which were given a survey form to collect primary data. This method of data collection is inconsistent with the researcher Gary Gereffi (2010) who also collected data using questionnaires. The data will be collected per the Primary method by conducting a survey using questionnaires and interviews as this method helps to get more accurate and up to date data which was also adopted by the researcher Gary Gereffi to conduct his research.

The relevant data and variables will be evaluated through multiple regression analysis, percentage analysis, and coefficient of correlation and factors analysis with the use of SPSS software. Which will be an advantage to minimize data analytical errors. All the data collected by the researcher is analyzed per application or model. In SPSS the data are analyzed using the sum of each profile in the questionnaire except for profile 'A' and

the rest of the profiles consist of three univariate and two bivariate statements in which the response is taken six-point Likert scale. The reliability test is measured using Cronbach's Alpha. Analysis of data relevant to the study begins as soon as the data collection is finalized. The relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable will be identified and calculated in this process per the significance of the study. This process will be conducted using an analytical tool such as MS Excel, which was also used by Gereffi et al in 2010. Data interpretation and presentation will be done in the means of a textual method, graphical method, and tabular method for a clear and precise declaration.

Data is analyzed descriptive, quantitative, and qualitative methods. Data is univariat, bivariat, and multivariable. The significance is measured using 90% confidence interest. Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s. The self-defined purpose of grounded theory is to develop a theory about phenomena of interest. For this study, several key analytic strategies were used based on ground theory. The strategic process of Memoing was used for recording the thoughts and ideas of the researcher as they evolve throughout the study. Early in the process, these memos tend to be very open while later they tend to increasingly focus on the core concept. Finally, Integrative diagrams and sessions are used to pull all the detail together, to help make sense of the data concerning the emerging theory of women's empowerment.

## Discussion

The participant-approved close-ended interview transcriptions were analyzed using a modified grounded theory method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

When the data is analyzed by the research questions to identify the job quality which is defined as the degree of satisfaction or the pleasantness associated with the process of working of the participants, 41.46% highly satisfied with their job designation while 56.10% satisfied and 2.44%, not in the least satisfied.

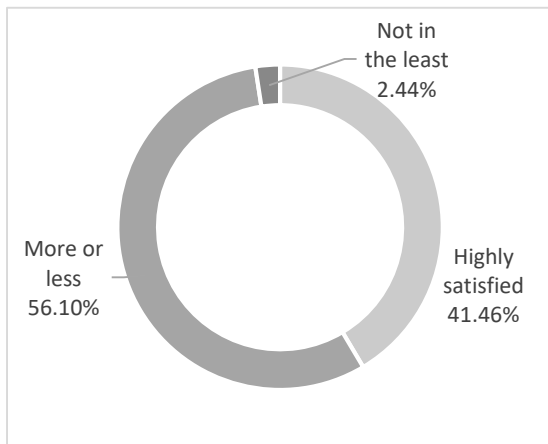


Figure 5 The degree of job satisfaction  
 Source: Research questionnaire

Measuring the relationship with the supervisor shows that 42.5% candidates have a strictly business relationship with their supervisors where 55% has a very good relationship and 2.5%, not a good relationship. 67.5% of the interviewees agree on sometimes they have praised for their work output while 32.5% tells that they are praised for their work. Thus, 38.5% is very confident about the personal progress in the company, 35.9% somewhat confident, and 25.6% unsure about their progress. Among the participants, 19.35% very agreeable on the case where women and men are equally treated at the workplace, 59.14% Agreeable, 19.35% somewhat agreeable, 1.08% disagree and, 1.08% very disagreeable on that statement.

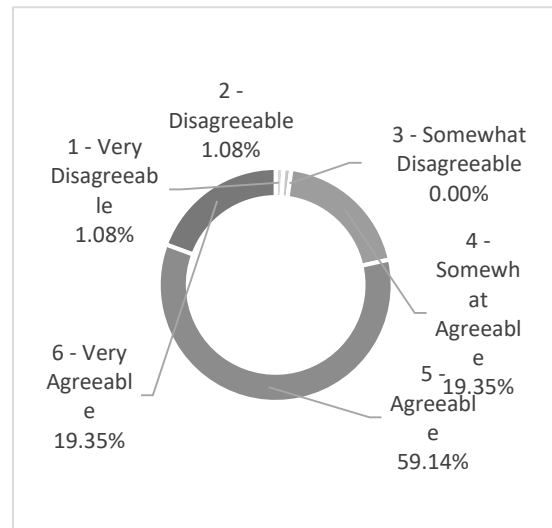


Figure 6 Workplace equality  
 Source: Research questionnaire

67.5% of the candidates think that people should be rewarded based on their performance, regardless of whether they are men or women. 22.5% agree on it but 5% disagree on that statement too. 35% believe that women and men can perform the same work equally well while 2.5% very disagree on that. 35% agree and 30% somewhat agree on that. A person who devotes extra time to the job can be a better employee than who does not as per 40% where they somewhat agree on. 5% highly disagrees while 20% agrees and 2.5% highly agrees. Per 2.5% an employee who has geographically relocated for the job has a chance to get promoted. But 12.5% highly disagree and 20% agree on that statement.

A woman must perform better than a man to be promoted according to 2.5% but 40% very disagreeable on that statement. 40% think that standards are not higher women than men in the workplace. 50% agree on the viewpoint of a woman is often heard at a meeting. Per 44.7% women are not placed in positions beyond their level of competence. 41% disagreed that women face the barrier of the glass ceiling at the workplace, but 12.9% say she does. Out of 20 characteristics, 8% think making decisions make you a leader, 14.4% thinks a

good leader is a good communicator, 8.5% see a person who pulls people together is a good leader and 8% agree that a good leader sets a good example.

93.9% of candidates highly agree that a leader can be taught and learned while 6.1% see that a true leader is born. 51.5% of the candidates consider themselves as a leader in the organization despite their job title. Contenders were more likely to seek out leadership opportunities in the workplace. 60.6% of them pursue learning and professional growth opportunities and 54.5% think strategically about their career. The data illustrate that a quality job complements the leadership ability of women. Have a balance personal and professional life leads to break the glass ceiling effect in the workplace. Per department in the organization, they have flexible working schedules to accommodate female employees. In the aviation sector management, does have a moderate perception of female's career progression.

## Results

The focus of the conduct of this study is to identify the women's empowerment need in the aviation sector which is not given much focus. The mastering of the above four independent variables will ensure women's empowerment. The positive effect on gender equality, job quality, and leadership will lead to breaking the glass ceiling. These may influence regardless of the department, the number of years worked in the organization, the gender, the designation, and marital status. Therefore, if the foundation of something is laid properly the outcome of it would also be impressive. In this study, the foundation is the women's empowerment which determines the gender balance in the aviation sector Sri Lanka. As stated in this study if the country wants to regain its lost

position in the International markets the organizations must do something extraordinary by seeing into different aspects of the workplace.

Describing what they valued about their careers, most participants said that their work provided a sense of goal fulfillment as well as interpersonal support and comradeships. Half to most of the women cited other benefits of their careers, including interpersonal rewards resulting from helping others, career self-confidence, the enjoyment of challenging work, and money/financial independence. Finally, twenty-seven of the participants emphasized their preferences for careers that provided personal fulfillment in contrast to external rewards based on performance. Most of the women in the sample (seventeen participants) spoke about a feeling of accomplishment arising from the fulfillment of long-term or short-term career goals. The gender imbalance of the sector is showing where a high number of male representations in the industry. The job quality is identified through job satisfaction and confidence in the workplace. According to sixteen participants, the glass ceiling is a barrier to female employees. Leadership can be taught and learned where communication is a basic skill to pursue it.

## Conclusion

The outcomes of the present study highlight the need for research in several less reputable areas. The theory of life meaning, until now represented by partial constructs in the disparate research literature, deserves attention as a variable in its own right, one that adds an important dimension to the study of career development, and women's career development. Most expressively, the life meaning construct may help in explaining the often-non-linear path of women's life

and work decisions. As seen in this study. Our models of career expansion for women and men must mirror the multiple and interdependent roles/sources of meaning that shape individuals' lives and the non-linear career paths that result from those multiple obligations. Another variable that may be of significance to the study of women's career choices but that has not been explored much in the literature is autonomy.

Finally, it is critical that career development models explicitly acknowledge the significant contributions of structural and cultural (broadly defined) factors to individuals' particularly women's career decision-making (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994). These include economic and sociopolitical climate, workplace barriers, and supports e.g., glass ceilings, job quality, and leadership. These recommendations include individual career counseling interventions that explore clients' career questions and decisions in the context of sources of life meaning, that expand individuals' horizons about what careers and life roles might be possible, and that assist clients in emerging strategies for assimilating family and career along their life/career paths.

The outcome of this specific research would have been more accurate and specific if the researcher were able to gain more knowledge through a bigger sample survey. Also, the meeting of all department employees is recommended. It is also recommended to survey every aspect of the aviation sector rather than the managerial side. Further research can be carried out to see the impact on other transport sector's needs of women's empowerment. Also, research on what are the current practices done in the transportation sector to encourage women to enter the industry. Studies can be done to identify other factors that influence women's

empowerment broadly. Likewise, many other types of research can be conducted in relevant to women's empowerment.

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