

The Influence of Socioeconomic Factors on Women’s Career Advancement in Sri Lanka’s Apparel Industry: The Mediating Role of Educational Attainment

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>This concept paper develops a holistic framework that conceptualizes educational attainment as a mediating instrument permitting women to convert socioeconomic constraints into career advancement. Correspondingly this framework embeds the Human Capital Theory, which theorizes education as a strategic investment for women’s career advancement and also the Social role Theory which explains how societal expectation limit the women’s career advancement while the Glass Ceiling Theory assimilates the systemic barriers that hamper women advancing from junior positions to top leadership positions, despite having equivalent or greater credentials. Grounded by these perspectives this study examines the role of Socioeconomic factors on women's career advancement with the mediation effect of educational attainment among apparel sector executives in Sri Lanka. Consequently, the extensive literature synthesizes multiple disciplines which emphasizes the factors influencing women’s career advancement. Accordingly the proposed conceptual framework provides evidence based actionable recommendations for policymakers, Organization decision makers and educators to promote women’s career advancement, remove systemic obstacles and support gender equity in apparel industry in Sri Lanka.</p>	<p><i>Keywords:</i> <i>Socio-Economic Factors, Education Attainment, Women’s Career Advancement, Apparel Sector, Gender Equality, Sri Lanka</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

The apparel industry in Sri Lanka where a large proportion of women is employed is one of the key drivers of the economic growth and serves as an important platform for women's career advancement (Kuruppuarachchi & Surangi, 2023). Nevertheless, a critical issue within the apparel sector Sri Lanka is that, despite the substantial participation of women in the workforce, their career advancement remains constrained by enduring socioeconomic factors such as family background, inadequate access to credit facilities and limited accessibility to key resources (Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021). Consequently these challenges are emphasizing the necessity of investigating the impact of these substantial socio economic factors towards the career advancement hindrance of the women career trajectories in apparel sector Sri Lanka.

In light of this contested phenomenon of women career advancement which has embedded with their socioeconomic factors is controversial not only in Sri Lankan labour market but also in international labour markets beyond its borders. Gender discrimination, workplace harassment with various Organizational dynamics and extremely limited career advancement prospects persist in the apparel industry worldwide, which employs approximately 60 million workers of whom 75% are women (Kabeer & Mahmud, 2019). Most of the related studies conducted on this context demonstrate that women workers who are working in the apparel industry face considerable level of labor disparities with poor career advancement opportunities. Studies are shown that even in similar positions women's pay is 20% less than men's in Bangladesh (Sultana & Fatima, 2020). Correspondingly this women's underrepresentation in leadership positions and poor career advancement is complicatedly rooted with some socioeconomic obstructions that restrict their advancement for better pay and better positions (Smith & Bhowmik, 2019).

Therefore, women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face more obstacles and challenges that worsen their underrepresentation in leadership roles, such as restricted access to professional networks and educational attainment challenges (Sultana & Fatima, 2020). The apparel industry often serves as a springboard for women to enter the workforce and attain appropriate career advancement opportunities. However for having such a big substance for women career advancement in apparel industry, it should be applied strategical approaches and supplementary policies which address the women career advancement obstacles while pursuing higher paying jobs. And also should be implemented long term employment trajectories which leads for higher women career advancement (World Bank, 2021). Based on this rationale, these challenges demonstrate the need of investigating the impact of socio economic factors and its influence for the determination of the women career advancement in apparel sector Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2021).

Among the underlined socio economic factors the family background is playing a key role of shaping the women's career advancement. Factors like family guidance and motivation, career guidance from their families, household income levels frequently assess how much the woman is able to pursue higher career advancement (Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021). Compared to the male counterparts many of the women workers who work in the apparel sector struggle in finding a balance between professional goals and family responsibilities, which slows down career advancement (Ponnamperuma & Ganewatta, 2024).

Simultaneously the access to the credit facilities also plays a significant role of shaping the women's career advancement. Inadequate access to credit facilities represents a significant constraint on women career advancement within the apparel industry (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2020). Further the recent studies demonstrates that women oriented Organizations get 39% lower credit facilities than the firms which are managed by the males even if credit facilities are authorized, the gap broadens to 54% in nations with conventional gender standards (Grover & Viollaz, 2025).

In the context of Sri Lanka constrained by elevated high lending rates, collateral rigorous credit practices and deficiencies in formally recognized documentation are the most widely reported barriers (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2020). Furthermore it has noted that by being more educated and also being a male employee, increases the ability of workers to obtain more credit facilities in Sri Lanka. Thus the gender gap is evident in financial inclusion despite women comprising 52% of the population (De Mel, McKenzie, & Woodruff, 2019). Accordingly these socioeconomic factors collectively restrict women's career advancement in Organizational hierarchies.

Accordingly, limited access to credit facilities poses a significant challenge to women's long-term career advancement by restricting their opportunities to pursue higher education, particularly in the apparel sector (Ponnampereuma & Ganewatta, 2024). Especially women career advancement has been truly obstructed by hindering their performance enhancements that can be obtained through paid structured training programs which lead to well paid positions with higher career advancement in apparel sector (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2021).

Related research findings further reveal that women who have enough family funds from parents or from husband are fulfilling their career advancement needs than the women's who haven't that capacity while highlighting how household dynamics further limit women's ability to invest in their professional growth (Weerakkody, 2022). Consequently the accessibility to credit facilities works both as a direct factor of women's career advancement and also as an indirect stimulus mediator through educational attainment, highlighting the necessity to examine these relationships within an integrated framework that accounts for Organizational dynamics and family background factors (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2020)."

Further one of the another key barriers which hinder the women career advancement is the accessibility to resources that includes the resources like educational institutions, private tutoring, adequate career guidance, mentorship, skill building programs, workshops or internships and also the facilities like libraries, learning centres or online platforms (Kurupparachchi & Surangi, 2023). Some women have unequal access to professional development tools such as training programs, mentorship, and leadership development opportunities, which are critical for career advancement. Studies have shown that women are 12% less likely than men to receive leadership skills training and 15% less likely to be evaluated on leadership strengths and career advancement gaps due to their resource accessibility gaps (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2020; Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2021).

Moreover, four in ten entry level women have not received a promotion, stretch assignment, or opportunity to participate in leadership or career development programs within the past two years (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2021). In Sri Lanka, there is a gender gap due to limited access to skill enhancement programs and opportunities to enter innovation and tech spaces. With that only 57.2% digital literacy rate nationally and significant urban rural disparities are still existing, where rural digital literacy is 55.2% compared to 72% in urban areas. (Senanayake, 2022).

Accordingly based on many literature, it's shown that greater the accessibility to resources is giving more capabilities for women to be more advanced within their careers by fulfilling a proper education approaches that can be transferred in to supervisory and executive roles (De Silva & Kodithuwakku, 2022). Nevertheless the women who is disadvantaged by the resource disparities and also disadvantageous by various socio economic factors are often excluded from leadership pipelines (Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021). Addressing these discrepancies requires a better understanding of how resource availability interacts with other socioeconomic factors to determine women career advancement.

In addition to the socioeconomic factors, another important factor of career advancement determination can be mentioned as the educational attainment of women employees who work in the apparel sector Sri Lanka (Drawupadhi & Gamage, 2023). Educational attainment has increasingly been recognized as a major component which bridge the gap between socioeconomic factors and career advancement (Ponnampereuma & Ganewatta, 2024). It reveals how socio economic challenges have affected for the attainment of education of women workers and how that effect has influenced for making key problems in their career advancement (Weerakkody, 2023; Hansadhi, Wijerathne, & Thenuwara, 2024). Through the higher education pathways, females are getting much more advancements in their careers in terms of enhancing their knowledge, skills and abilities towards the mitigation of career base structural barriers which lead them for managerial positions (Kurupparachchi & Surangi, 2023).

Evidence from previous studies highlights the importance of women's educational attainment in shaping their career trajectories and the advancement. Accordingly researches have proven the educational attainment impact for economic empowerment and their career advancement with upskilling potentials by being critical for women's income generation opportunities and participation in the formal labour market (Jayawardena & De Silva, 2022). Women with bachelor's degrees or above have 70% labor force participation rates, compared to only 34% of women who have not completed high school, demonstrating education's important impact in facilitating job engagement and career advancement (Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021; De Mel, McKenzie, &

Woodruff, 2019). Given this background it is clear that educational attainment plays a mediating role in women's career advancement. A number of factors, including negative societal and cultural norms, institutional and structural barriers like recruitment and selection procedures and fewer career advancement opportunities, such as a lack of mentorship and training opportunities, combine to make socioeconomic disadvantages into poor career opportunities for women workers (Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021; De Alwis & Senaratne, 2020). In addition to the key variables examined here another notable impact is there with the Organizational dynamics and the women career advancement. These dynamics can be included the various workplace cultures, gender norms and career upgrading policies which shape women's career trajectories. Nevertheless despite of the increasing improvements, gaps still exist in how companies approach gender equity and assist women's leadership development (Jayawardena & Perera, 2022). These disparities highlight the significance of blending Organizational perspectives with socioeconomic effects in order to establish comprehensive strategies for women's career advancement. By this way the intersection of the Organizational dynamics together with the other socio economic factors like family background, accessibility to credit facilities, accessibility to resources facilities collectively influences women's career advancement (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2020; Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021). And further the educational attainment also creates a complex web of obstacles and challenges which can be systematically disadvantaged for women in their career progression (Ranasinghe & Wickramasinghe, 2021).

Where women progressively disappear from career advancement pathways at each stage of their career advancement process, despite of having the interest and ability to succeed is called as "leaky pipeline". This metaphor has been used for decades related to the women career advancement and its obstacles (Fernando & Kumara, 2022). Consequently the concept of "The Leaking Pipeline" is explaining how women employees can be dropped out from the career ladders by hindering their performances. As many of the contemporary scholars points out the "The Leaking Pipeline" is a problematic terminology which depicts the passive leak out of working women within their careers driven by family background and their personal decisions or inability to fulfill professional standards.

However as per the empirical literature which were driven under this context suggests that women are not merely "leaking out" of Organizational pipelines rather than they are dynamically take out by systemic Organizational obstacles such as unconscious gender bias, inadequate access to mentorship, discriminatory gender practices, work life balances and deeply surrounded by male dominated Organizational cultures (De Alwis & Senaratne, 2020; Fernando & Kumara, 2022). Under this scenario women's career advancement gaps must be identified as structurally produced outcomes rather than individual failures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature defines the concept of career advancement as an upward mobility of the women's career in terms of getting higher positions, leadership opportunities and women empowerment outcomes emphasizing the requirement of examining how socioeconomic factors shape the women's career advancement in apparel sector (Wickramasinghe & Jayawardena, 2020). Existing empirical evidences are identified these socio economic factors in multiple ways. In general the scholars have identified these vibrant socioeconomic factors which encompass the family background of the women workers, their accessibility to various resources and also the credit accessibility context are governing the nature of their career advancement (Perera & Kumara, 2021).

Some empirical studies have defined these socio economic factors in to main antecedents like family background related antecedents, Organizational antecedents and individual antecedents (Wickramasinghe & Jayawardena, 2020). But many of these empirical studies have been investigated the relationship between the family background factor which is embedded with main caregiving responsibilities and cultural diversities on women's career advancement (Perera & Kumara, 2021). Consequently a few number of study initiatives have been undertaken by the researchers for exploring the context of women career advancement with respect to some other socio economic factors like credit accessibility and the accessibility to resources. Thus, to comprehend women's career advancement in the apparel industry this concept paper furthermore examines the Human Capital Theory, Glass Ceiling Theory and Social Role Theory into a comprehensive framework, emphasizing the effect of some other influential factors like educational attainment of women employees and also the Organizational dynamics as antecedents towards women's career advancement.

Socioeconomic factors are outlined as fundamental factors that affect the capacity of women to step in to managerial roles which are frequently interconnected with various cultural assimilators and personal perspectives (Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021). Recent studies initiated by RISE (Research Institutes of Sweden) highlight that informal social structures such as ingrained gender stereotypes and prejudices present systemic obstacles for female employees, where management commonly prioritizes male employees for leadership roles, while women are expected to meet higher performance standards than their male colleagues (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2022).

Additionally, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025 features a critical disconnect between educational attainment and workforce utilization, noting that among tertiary educated women workers who are in the labour force, just 29.5% make it to top leadership despite making up 40.3% of the workforce, the gap between women's presence in the highest positions and the whole workforce is growing as education levels rise (Jayawardena & Perera, 2022). On the basis of these research findings emphasize that despite their educated backgrounds, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles, suggesting that career advancement blockades are embedded in Organizational structures rather than individual competence. Consequently, this study will examine the women's individual competence towards their career advancement, with the socio-economic factors like family background, accessibility to credit facilities and also with the accessibility to resources (Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021).

Educational attainment can be defined as the degree of formal and informal education that people have attained by equipping them with the needed skills, knowledge, confidence and credentials which are essential for leadership positions (Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021). In the context of the apparel sector, women's educational attainment plays a mediation role that bridges the gap between their socio-economic factors and career advancement. In this manner, the women who have already attained a good educational attainment are more likely to have an executive position, higher pay grades and also sustain leadership roles (Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021).

In the theoretical perspective, the Human Capital Theory explains the educational attainment as a key function in achieving increased productivity within women's career advancements (De Alwis & Senaratne, 2020). Even so, the Social Role Theory underscores the gender-related social norms and societal expectations frequently limit women's capacity to fully maximize their commitment in the workplace (Fernando & Kumara, 2022). Building on these ideas, the Glass Ceiling Theory emphasizes the structural and invisible obstacles that hinder women from advancing to top leadership roles, despite equal or higher qualifications. Bonding all three theories together reveals that while the educational attainment is facilitating with essential skills, knowledge and competence, entrenched social roles and Organizational dynamics limit the transformation of educational attainment into equitable career advancement, reinforcing persistent gender disparities in Organizational hierarchies.

Workplace culture, prevailing gender norms and promotion policies constitute key Organizational dynamics that significantly influence women's career advancement. These Organizational dynamics are shaping the women's upward career advancement by transforming their socio-economic factors and educational attainments into leadership opportunities through better promotional opportunities (Jayawardena & Perera, 2022). Organizations that adopt gender equality-oriented policies and implement career advancement strategies steadily improve women's progression into executive managerial positions (Fernando & Kumara, 2022). Unfair Organizational practices and rigid hierarchies continue to limit women's career advancement notwithstanding their socioeconomic advantages and educational attainment (Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021).

Moreover, the intersection of the family backgrounds, accessibility to credit facilities, accessibility to resources and career advancement opportunities under a dynamic Organizational support system are connectively generating further complexities for women's career advancement in the apparel sector, Sri Lanka. McKinsey & Company, 2025 report draws attention to these continuous structural impediments of women's career advancement which has inadequate career support and underappreciated women's performance at all the career layers of the corporate pipeline, notably in senior positions, where they hold only 29% of C-suite jobs (Jayawardena & Perera, 2022). Furthermore, the majority of existing studies have examined that the apparel supply chain has revealed that lack of family support prevents women from pursuing career advancement, with some women delaying job progress for fear of losing their family and community networks and unstructured employment

systems, marked by ambiguous performance standards and a lack of transparency in promotion processes, generate substantial obstacles to equitable career advancement (Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021)."

These type of comprehensive obstacles are pointing out that the critical need of addressing the relationship between the women career advancement and socio economic factors together with the intermediary impact of educational attainment of the women employees who work in the apparel manufacturing industry Sri Lanka. For the reason that this relationship is notably influencing for the career trajectory determination of the women workers in this industry (Wijesinghe & Perera, 2022; Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021).

Consequently this concept paper is examining on five major socio economic factors toward the women career advancement in the apparel manufacturing sector. In that way women's family background, accessibility to resources, accessibility to credit facilities, educational attainment and also the Organizational dynamics were identified as aforementioned five variables (Wijesinghe & Perera, 2022; Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021)." Regardless the rapidly expanding scholarly discourse on women's career empowerment and gender discrimination in the apparel sector, only few empirical evidences are available on a collective framework of these five variables towards the women career advancement of executives in Sri Lanka's apparel sector (Wijesinghe & Perera, 2022; Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021).

Socioeconomic factors such as family background, accessibility to credit facilities and accessibility to resources are considered as external and internal factors that influence women's career advancement. Family background which encompasses family history, parental financial support, family views regarding women's labor and the level of emotional and practical assistance shapes women's ability to balance family view with professional aspirations (Wijesinghe & Perera, 2022). Accessibility to credit facilities enables women to invest in professional development and entrepreneurial ventures, thereby enhancing career opportunities and development (Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021). Accessibility to resources including training, mentorship and workplace support, ensures women's readiness for leadership roles (De Silva & Rathnayake, 2022). Organizational dynamics, such as promotion policies and workplace culture, further determine whether women can translate their socioeconomic resources into better career advancement (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2022).

After reviewing the literature it has been notified three major gaps on this context of women career advancement. The existing theoretical gap underscores that there isn't an appropriate holistic model or a theory for combining the ideas given by the three theories as Human Capital Theory, Social Role Theory and also the Glass Ceiling Theory for examining the mediation effect of the educational attainment on women's career advancement (De Silva & Rathnayake, 2022). Moreover the empirical research gap draws the attention for the paucity of the empirical evidences towards this integrated relationships of family background, accessibility to credit facilities, accessibility to resource and Organizational dynamics on women's career advancement in the apparel sector of Sri Lanka (Wijesinghe & Perera, 2022). Ultimately the contextual gap reinforces the minimal research focus on the women career advancement in apparel sector executives in Sri Lanka despite the industry significance of embedding the women labor for shaping the nation's economic development. In that way the subsequent sections of this concept paper conceptualize the theoretical construct integrating these perspectives of these variables, offering future research directions to address the identified gaps (Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is structured as conceptual framework development paper which underscore the theoretical development of conceptual frame work for examining the relationship between the socio economic factors and women's career advancement rather than the analysis of empirically collected data (De Silva & Rathnayake, 2022; Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021). Consequently this study conceptual framework is having its key intention is to construct a framework that that explains the relationship between socioeconomic factors such as family background, accessibility to credit facilities, accessibility to resources and women's career advancement in the apparel sector Sri Lanka, with the mediating effect of educational attainment and also the moderation effect of Organizational dynamics. Thus the conceptual framework is formulated in accordance with accepted principles for theory construction. Accordingly this study contributes to the development of conceptual frameworks in management and social science researches with the intention of forming a fundamental foundation for forthcoming empirical research endeavours under this domain.

For the literature review under this concept paper was based on peer reviewed scientific articles, theoretical papers, industrial reports and conference proceedings published between the period of 2013 and 2025. The main justification for choosing 2013 as the beginning year for the collection of evidence is that it was during this time that discussions about women's empowerment and the value of gender equality in the apparel industry were much more intense on a local and international level. It was stemmed from the initiatives which were taken by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Better Work Programme in Sri Lanka (ILO, 2014; Better Work, 2023). Subsequently, the literature was retrieved from databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, as well as reports from international organizations and local advocacy groups (De Alwis & Senaratne, 2020; Fernando & Kumara, 2022; Wijesinghe & Perera, 2022). In reviewing the literature the following keywords and phrases were utilized, "Socio economic factors", "family background", "accessibility to credit facilities", "accessibility to resources", "educational attainment" and also the "Organizational dynamics". Further the theoretical phase related "Human Capital Theory", Social Role Theory", "Glass Ceiling Theory" and also the terms like "gender equality in the apparel industry", "Women leadership". Consequently the study literature will be facilitated for the ascertainment of empirical, theoretical and also the contextual gaps which can be rationally applied for the conceptual framework development. Thus this conceptual framework examines the interplay between socioeconomic factors and women career advancement with educational attainment serving as a mediator and Organizational dynamics functioning as a moderator.

DISCUSSION

Drawing on existing literature this study is proposing a conceptual framework examining the association in between the socio economic factors and the women's career advancement in the apparel sector Sri Lanka incorporating the mediating role of educational attainment and the moderation effect of Organizational behaviour. Accordingly, the integrated framework proposed herein is theorized by the Human Capital theory, Glass Ceiling theory and also the Social Role theory for assessing the relationship between the socioeconomic determinants such as family background, accessibility to credit facilities, accessibility to resources and Organizational dynamics interrelate with women's educational attainment to drive women's career advancement (De Silva & Rathnayake, 2022; Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021).

As conceptualized in the proposed framework socio economic factors of women employees are recognized as critical antecedents that shapes women's ability to access leadership opportunities and upward shifts of their career ladders achieving the career advancement. Women's ability to integrate parenting responsibilities with their career objectives can be affected by their family background and their ability to invest in career development and entrepreneurial endeavours is determined by their access to credit facilities (Wijesinghe & Perera, 2022). Subsequently the women's accessibility to resources including training, mentorship and favourable Organizational dynamics is recognized as a key facilitator that improves women's preparedness for executive positions and their career advancements (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2022; De Silva & Rathnayake, 2022).

Moreover the level of education attained by women employees such as primary, secondary, postgraduate and also the tertiary education (degree or diploma) also has a noteworthy role in their career advancement (Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021; Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021). Apart from that an another influential factor coupled with the women's career advancement is the Organizational dynamics which is driven by Organizational hierarchies, internal Organizational cultures, leadership approaches, communication strategies, team work, learning ventures and the gender equality in the work space working together for shaping the women's career advancement (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2022; De Silva & Rathnayake, 2022).

Nevertheless, the role of educational attainment is playing a critical role of shaping the women's career advancement leveraging the women's socio economic factors for well informed career decisions as its heavily dependent on their educational attainment (Jayawardena & Perera, 2022). In this manner educational attainment is well denoted in the proposed conceptual framework as the mediating variable equipping women to successfully comprehend and utilize their socioeconomic resources for attaining more career advancement. The International Labor Organization recognized this situation as illustrating the duty that educated women possessing the requisite abilities, self-assurance and credentials are essential to confront discriminatory practices and maintain leadership positions in any Organization, regardless of other Organizational viewpoints (Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021).

Therefore, this concept paper emphasizes educational attainment as the enabling capability that increases the affiliation of socioeconomic factors with the women's career advancement rather than thinking that socioeconomic circumstances directly safeguard the women's career advancement. In consequence this concept paper embeds the relationship between the educational attainment towards the women career advancement through the Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), the association of women's socio economic context with the career advancement through the Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) Besides addresses Organizational dynamics and their barriers to women's career advancement through the Glass Ceiling Theory (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987). Together these theoretical stances offer a well structured comprehensive conceptual framework for examining how and why women executives in the apparel industry should have proper educational attainment to get above socioeconomic obstacles and take on leadership roles defeating the adverse Organizational dynamics.

By this means the suggested conceptual framework defines the career advancement as an indispensable vital metric and a significant benchmark for measuring women's empowerment and Organizational inclusivity in the apparel sector. Thus by integrating the socio economic factors with the educational attainment, the study conceptual framework underlines the strategic significance of upward the women's leadership ladder with more career advancement opportunities to obtain higher Organizational competency and contribute to national economic development (De Alwis & Senaratne, 2020; Fernando & Kumara, 2022).

Furthermore, this conceptual framework is a new theoretical integration that looks at individual potentials through Human Capital Theory and external socioeconomic factors collectively through Social Role Theory. The previously identified theoretical vacuum of no comprehensive model integrating multiple perspectives to explain women's career advancement in the apparel sector which is filled by this amalgamation. In the end, the framework's insights can be used for a variety of decision making processes and departmental operations such as training departments and human resource management. In addition, the study findings can be useful for government agencies to create focused interventions that improve women's educational opportunities and leadership readiness as women can be more empowered within their Organizational career hierarchies (Perera & Wickramasinghe, 2021; De Silva & Rathnayake, 2022; Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The study's conclusions emphasize how crucial it is to address socioeconomic issues including family background, credit facility accessibility, resource availability, and organizational dynamics in order to support women's career growth in the clothing industry. It also highlights that having supportive regulations or resources alone does not ensure a major impact; rather, women executives need to be well educated to understand, take advantage of, and convert these socioeconomic chances into worthwhile career advancement (Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021). Managers in the apparel sector, human resource departments, training facilities, and governmental organizations can use the framework's insights to create focused interventions that improve women's access to education and leadership development. Organizations like the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, and the Sri Lanka Apparel Exporters Association, in particular, can direct clothing companies through national programs that match organizational dynamics with women's career development strategies and enhance female executives' access to professional training and education (Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021).

5.2. Academic and Research Implications

Meanwhile the related empirical evidences are available for examining the association between the socio economic factors and related obstructs towards the women's career advancement in apparel sector distinctly, this concept paper representing an integrated framework by adjoining the mediating effect of educational attainment of women employees and also the moderation effect of Organizational dynamics towards the women's career advancement in Sri Lanka (Fernando & Jayawardena, 2022; Gunawardena & Kumara, 2021; Karunaratne & Samarasinghe, 2021)

In addition, this concept paper sheds light on a holistic and a comprehensive model that multifaceted theoretical framework for further study by integrating Human Capital Theory, Social Role Theory and Glass Ceiling Theory. Thus this study framework provide directions for empirical investigations employing quantitative

approaches such as Structural Equation Model (SEM) for testing the mediating role of educational attainment and also the moderation effect of Organizational dynamics.

As the population of this study 7860 of women executives who work in export oriented apparel manufacturing sector under Export Processing Zones (EPZs) will be considered (Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, 2024). Out of that population, 709 women executives are employed outside the Export Processing Zones (EPZs). Thus 7151 of women executives are to taken as the study population. This adjustment ensures that the study focuses specifically on women executives in export oriented apparel firms located in EPZs, which represent the core of Sri Lanka's apparel industry. The sampling frame will be prepared using the official registry provided by the BOI, ensuring accuracy and representativeness. To reach respondents, study will work with EPZ group managers, who will facilitate access to women executives across zones. Using a simple random sampling technique, a maximum sample size of 384 respondents will be selected from the target population, ensuring statistical reliability and generalizability of the findings.

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