

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The term ‘Glass Ceiling’ was introduced into the business world two decades ago. It is a belief that there are certain barriers or hierarchical influences that hold back career advancement for female employees in middle to top-management levels. The problem is recognized by male and female executives in many organizations, both private sectors and government agencies. There are different indicators towards the problem. Some research suggested that women are perceived as lacking leadership skills and are uncomfortable in exercising authority over male subordinates. Other research suggested that women are committed to domestic responsibilities and are happy to quit their job in favor of their family. Many still believe that the ‘glass ceiling’ is a result of gender discrimination.

Based on the statement from Gender and Development Research Institute, women represented more than half of the workforce globally, however, the number of women on the board of directors or at top management level are still far below the proportion of women in the workforce. In Thailand, women have made only minimal progress in the management area in the past 10 years; they assumed only 20 per cent of management occupational group, with the rest (80 per cent) being men (more detailed statistics is available in Appendix A). It is evident that there must be certain obstacles or barriers to their career growth.

In general, there is an obvious wage gap between female and male workers. Women were found to be clustered in female-dominated lower-paid occupations (Mathana Phananimai, 1997). For example, at the four occupational levels as appeared in Appendix B, women’s income was in the range of 80 to 85 per cent of men’s (calculated from National Statistical Office and Office of the Civil Service Commission, 1998).

The study of ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon had been carried out in many countries in the past ten years. A number of the studies addressed the problem of glass ceiling as gender issue, work-family conflict, networking and competency. In Thailand, this issue has been discussed within a small group of people, so there are

only a few research studies available. The trend is more advanced in Australia and Europe, where research studies were conducted more extensively to focus on every aspect of the glass ceiling phenomenon such as recruitment, retention, and promotion; behavioral and cultural causes such as stereotyping and preferred leadership style; and structural and cultural explanations rooted in feminist theory (Weyer, 2007).

This study is aimed to focus on the obstacles that contribute to women's career advancement. The researcher has categorized the indicators into 3 main groups; *social influence*, *domestic responsibility* and *personal aspiration*. The researcher wants to find out what is the most influential factor that delays women's career progression. A combination of qualitative and quantitative study was conducted in this research. Foreign transportation companies and local petrochemical companies in Sathorn were selected for the area of the study.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Main Problem

This study was conducted to answer the question below:

What is the most influential factor that delays women career advancement?

1.2.2 Related-Problems

With the above main problem, the researcher wants to find the answers for the following related-problems.

1. How much is *social influence* viewed as a barrier for women's career advancement?
2. How much is *domestic responsibility* viewed as a barrier for women's career advancement?
3. How much is *personal aspiration* viewed as a barrier for women's career advancement?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of the study was to find out the most influential factor among *social influence*, *domestic responsibility* and *personal aspiration* that delays women's career advancement.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To figure out how much social influence contributed to the barrier for women's career advancement.
2. To explore how much domestic responsibility contributed to the barrier for women's career advancement.
3. To find out how much personal aspiration contributed to the barrier for women's career advancement.

1.4 FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

In the researcher's point of view, there are certain barriers that prevent women from assuming top positions in the corporate world. Interesting indicators of the barriers can be categorized into three main points; social influence, domestic responsibility and personal aspiration. This research is to find out which indicators are the most influential factors that prevent women from assuming top positions in the company.

Diagram: Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Social Influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gender bias or stereotyping ▪ Unequal career opportunity ▪ Corporate culture ▪ Social networking ➤ Domestic Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility for taking care of children ▪ Responsibility for housework ▪ Responsibility for taking care of elders ➤ Personal Aspiration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women life's interest ▪ Happiness & freedom ▪ Self-Employment 	Career Advancement

The dependent variables are indicators for social influence, domestic responsibility and personal aspiration

- *Social influence* factors include gender bias (stereotyping), unequal career opportunity, corporate culture and social networking.
- *Domestic responsibility* factors include responsibility for taking care of children, responsibility for housework and responsibility for taking care of elders.
- *Personal Aspiration* factors include life interest, career success (happiness & freedom) and self-employment.

The independent variable is career advancement with extraneous variables of age, marital status, education and position.

1.5 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

One of the basic limitations of this study was the sample size. The sample size is small, thus, the result will be difficult to generalize. In addition, the sample was somewhat selective which may not represent the characteristics of the whole population of women who work in the same industries in other locations.

1.6 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purpose of clarification, the following terms used in this study are defined.

Glass ceiling

‘Glass ceiling’ is an unofficial barrier to an upper management or other prominent position within a company or other organization which certain groups, particularly women, are perceived to be unable to cross, due to discrimination. The term refers to the inconspicuous nature of such barriers, compared to formal barriers to career advancement’ (Wall Street Journal, March 24, 1986). The term is most often used to refer to women’s access to upper management. However, the glass ceiling also refers to the general tendency for women to be underrepresented at

higher levels of the occupational hierarchy (Hymowitz, C. & Schellhardt, T.D., 1986, p. D1).

Career Advancement

Opportunity to get promoted to higher position or climbing to the top levels.

Social Influence

It is the perception of the people in the society that influences certain beliefs and practices about certain things.

Gender Bias

It is a belief or perception of people about the differences of skills, competency and knowledge between men and women in which it limits career opportunity for women in particular jobs or positions.

Unequal Career Opportunity

A career opportunity given to both men and women that is unequal. A consideration that is not based on knowledge, skills and capabilities but gender.

Corporate Culture

Organizational values, symbols, behaviours and assumptions. It is revealed by the way an organization handles success, failure, innovation and change.

Social networking

The practice of expanding the number of one's business and/or social contacts by making connections through individuals.

Domestic Responsibility

Family responsibility for married women includes taking care of children, housework and elders.

Career Commitment

An obligation or devotion of a person towards his/her job in order to achieve best results.

Marital Status

The fact of whether a person is single, married, divorced or widowed.

A Number of Children

The number of children within one's family.

Personal Aspiration

It is something that a person hopes or intends to accomplish for the sake of happiness and independence.

Life Interest

A particular interest in one's life. It may or may not generate income.

Career Success

A consideration of achievement and/or recognition of one's career.

Self-employment

An active involvement in the management and operating of a business in which a person has established or purchased or has made a substantial investment in.

Perception

Understanding, comprehension or idea that a person has towards something as a result of realizing or noticing it.

Opportunity to get promoted to management positions

The length of time it takes a person to move up from their existing position to a higher position.

Sathorn Area

Business Area in Bangkok City center where small to large corporations are located. The boundary of the research target will be foreign transportation companies and petrochemical-related business industry located in the Sathorn Area.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The usefulness of the study can be defined in three aspects:

1.7.1 It will provide an overview of the key barriers towards career advancement for women who work in two foreign transportation companies and two local petrochemical companies in the Sathorn Area.

1.7.2 The results of the study can be used for human resources management.

1.7.3 The results of the study can be used for further research on women's career advancement or other related topics.

1.8 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One provides a brief introduction, background of the study and statement of the problem. The objective and scope of the study are also presented,

terms are defined, the significance of the study is mentioned and the organization of the study is outlined.

Chapter Two contains a review of related literature concerning social influence, domestic responsibility and personal aspiration attributed to women's career advancement.

Chapter Three provides the methodology applied in this study, starting from the subjects chosen for the survey, the materials used for gathering information and the procedures for distributing materials. Then, data analysis is presented.

In Chapter Four an interviewing result are displayed in the first two pages and the results of the survey are displayed according to the demographic information of the respondents, overview of factors against women's career advancement, result of the factors against women's career advancement in local Petrochemical companies and result of the factors against women's career advancement in foreign transportation companies.

Chapter Five includes a summary of the study, discussions, conclusions and recommendations for further research.