



Piercing the glass ceiling: proposed personal brand equity framework for enhancing women career success

Asphat Muposhi¹ · Melissa Zulu¹ · Miriam Mugwati² · Oslie Matsikenyeri²

Accepted: 19 February 2025
© The Author(s) 2025

Abstract

Workplace gender inequality is a persistent challenge that constrains the realisation of sustainable development goal 5 in developing and developing countries. In Zimbabwe, a developing country in southern Africa, women remain under represented in senior management positions in stock exchange listed companies. This study examines the views of women in middle and senior management on the role of personal brand equity as a tool for enhancing career success. A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 523 women in middle and senior management positions employed in Zimbabwe stock exchange listed companies. Covariance-based structural equation modelling was utilised to test posited hypotheses. For women in middle management, brand differentiation was found to have a significant positive influence on career success, whilst the influence of brand appeal and brand recognition was insignificant. For women in senior management, brand differentiation and brand recognition were found to have a significant positive influence on career success, whilst the influence of brand appeal was insignificant. Education level and industry type were found to influence career success for women in both middle and senior management. This study contributes to promote gender equality in management by extending the application of personal brand equity model to address the glass ceiling challenge.

Keywords Women in management · Glass ceiling · Personal brand equity · Career success · Zimbabwe

Introduction

Career progression for women in middle management to senior positions remains a challenge in developed and developing economies (Catalyst, 2020; Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The International Labour Organization (2018) reports that less than 5% of the Chief Executive Officers of the world's largest corporations are women and only 19% of corporate boards globally are gender balanced. The disparity

Extended author information available on the last page of the article