

# An Analysis on the Impact of Gender Roles on Female Managerial Level Employees: An Investigation of the Garment Industry in Sri Lanka

Dr Hemamalie Gunatilaka

*Department of Business Administration, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka*

**Abstract:-**Sri Lanka is no exception in relation to the impact of globalization on peripheral countries. The society itself had to get adjusted to changes required by globalization, such as letting go the females as unskilled labourers to foreign countries, to newly established garment factories, call centers etc. The need for females to work was all the more prominent in the background of thirty years of civil war where predominantly male armed forces were engaged in battle fields. The education system in Sri Lanka was such that more females entered tertiary level education and became qualified to get employed at managerial levels.

With the end of the three decade long civil war in year 2009, Sri Lanka is entering into a new development Era. Hence present economic trends in Sri Lanka will demand more female employees for emerging opportunities.

Sri Lankan garment sector consists of a large proportion of females, representing different levels of the organizational hierarchy. Entry of females into industry calls for new conditions of employment and addressing issues relating to diversity.

Within this backdrop this paper is written with the major objective of analyzing the impact of gender roles on managerial level female employees in Sri Lankan garment industry.

Gender roles' as they are commonly known and which are the foundations of ascribed roles for gender, affect the lives of men and women around the globe. These impacts shape and reshape different facets of their lives such as personal, work and social.

Qualitative approach was used as the main research method. The study covers two Sri Lankan large scale private sector garment organizations. Using theoretical sampling in-depth interviews will be held with female and male managers.

Findings will enable to understand the gender role attitudes held by female and male managers and the impact of such attitudes on personal and work lives of female managers.

**Key Words:** Gender Roles, Women Managers, Social Construction of Gender, Patriarchal Society, Organisational Setting

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social changes in Sri Lanka in the post globalization have indications of significant changes in the attitudes of females and the societal outlook toward them. Sri Lankan females are now can be found in all most all areas of work ranging from pilots to housemaids and also in politics.

Sri Lanka is still considered as a developing country, economy of which depends on few traditional agro-based industries, garment industry and services industries (IT, Banking, Accounting etc.). Adding to the same is the foreign earnings by individuals, mostly women who secure employment outside the country, mainly as unskilled workers. The need for females to work was all the more prominent in the background of thirty years of civil war where predominantly male armed forces were engaged in battle fields. The need was supported by the education system in Sri Lanka in which females enter tertiary level education and become qualified to get employed at managerial levels. In this backdrop, over the last three decades more and more females have moved out from home to earn a living, with well accepted educational qualifications and opportunity to start at management trainee level.

With the end of the three decade long civil war in year 2009, Sri Lanka is entering into a new development Era. Hence present economic trends in Sri Lanka demand more female employees for emerging opportunities.

Majority of Sri Lankan females from the childhood go through the traditional socialization process and in turn this affects their perceptions on gender roles. 'Gender roles' as they are commonly known and which are the foundations of ascribed roles for gender, affect the lives of men and women around the globe. These impacts shape and reshape different facets of their lives such as personal, work and social.

When taken the view of an organization, the gender role attitudes prevailing among its members have a possibility to affect the way they make decisions, develop and maintain relationships and so on. Within a context in which an increasing number of women world over entering into the labor force day by day, gender role attitudes prevailing among its members can have positive as well as negative effects on women.

There are studies that address how this issue is prevailing in different parts of the world. According to Acker(2009) "women still does not hold top leadership positions in organizations of the wealthy industrialized countries" in contrast to the developments taking place in the 'gender' arena, Similarly, in Sri Lanka, a developing country, there are

no women in boards of directors' in 70%(approx) of large private sector organizations.(Jayaweera,2008).

Accordingly this study attempts to identify how gender role attitudes affect the lives of women employees in managerial level positions in the garment industry in Sri Lanka

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Gender and gender role attitudes*

'Gender' is the central concept in a study of this nature as the total issue is woven around it. At the first premise it must be noted that this is a term that cannot be easily defined. One cannot just do it by looking at a person's anatomy, but in a deeper sense its meaning goes beyond the categorization of male and female. In a broader sociological perspective gender can be defined as a concept which is determined socially or in other words a social construction. People's mind sets are conditioned socially to assign specific traits attributes etc. to respective genders.

Millet (1968) discusses the effect of social conditioning on gender differentiation and notes as follows:

"It is time that we realized that the whole structure of male and female personality is arbitrarily imposed by social conditioning, a social conditioning which has taken all the possible traits of human personality – which Margeret Mead once, by way of analogy, compared to the many colors of the rainbow's spectrum – and arbitrarily assigned traits into two categories: thus aggression is masculine, passivity-feminine, violence-masculine, tenderness feminine, intelligence masculine and emotion feminine etc., etc.....arbitrarily departmentalizing human qualities into two neat little piles which are drilled into children by toys, games and social propaganda of television and the board of education's deranged whim as to what is proper male-female Role-Building".

With the above views it is clear that gender is a clear social construct. Accordingly, males and females play their respective roles in life, decided by the prevailing values, beliefs, norms and assumptions. These are the gender roles with a prescribed set of behavior, which the society expect to play by respective gender identities.

A society being a collection of people the common way of looking at things gives them a unique identity. Hofstede (1999) name this identity as 'culture' and defines it as "the collective programming of the mind that differentiates one set of people from another."

This unique identity deliberately passed on from one generation to another, as a valuable heritage. Along with it, beliefs, attitudes, values etc. towards gender get carried forward in every society. Hence, gender appropriate behavior

or gender role is a product of culturally specific values, beliefs, basic assumptions and so on.

Gender role attitudes prevailing in cultures ascribe certain qualities as of women irrespective of their nationality, race, religion, caste etc. Following are some of such qualities: Naturally inferior, passive, dependant, sensitive, caring, irrational, non/less competitive, less capacity for judgment, nurturing, inferior, under men's control etc, etc. Respective cultures inculcate these differences in varying degrees in peoples mind sets from the childhood and they get socially conditioned to blindly accept such variances.

Accordingly such gender role attitudes on women affect their lives by assigning socially accepted behavior, limiting of study to specific study streams, employ/ not employ in some of the jobs etc. As a result women make choices that are having negative impacts on their lives. Goyal (2007) notes that Social and mental conditioning of women leads to giving up opportunities in order to benefit their families. By doing so, they place a huge damage on their capabilities. The interesting point to highlight is that they do not complain about it but they are contended in doing so.

Impact of the said attitudes is even visible in work organizations. As a result, women might tend to play their respective gender roles within organizations limiting their scope and capacity to work within the organizations.

Accordingly the need to study the issue on the impact of gender roles on females while they are at work becomes significant. Consequently, this paper is written with the major objective of identifying the impact of gender roles on female managers in the Sri Lankan garment industry. Definition on gender role for this study is taken from the following. Lober (1994), states "As a social institution, gender is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses for the assignment of rights and responsibilities. As part of a stratification system that ranks these statuses unequally, gender is a major building block in the social structures built on these unequal statuses. As a *process*, gender creates the social differences that define "woman" and "man." In social interaction throughout their lives, individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in expected ways, and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order.

When carefully analyzing the existing literature, it is evident that a plethora of factors in organizations are governed by gender role attitudes. To make the study focused on the major factors following areas will be addressed as broad categories.

### *Organization structure*

Organization structure refers to the way in which organization's activities are divided, organized and coordinated. A careful journey through related literature reveals that men are holding a majority of top positions in organizations. As found by Meyerson and Fletcher (2005) "Although women have made enormous gains in the business world – they hold seats on corporate boards and run major

companies – they still comprise only 10% of senior managers in Fortune 500 companies”

Morgan (1997) cites a same experience as, “organizations often segment opportunity structures and job markets in ways that enable men to be achieved positions of prestige and power more easily than women. It is sometimes called the ‘glass ceiling’ effect. Women can see opportunities at the top of their organizations but the path is often blocked by the gender biases”.

Jayaweera (2008) reveals the following with regards to Sri Lankan organizations. “In the private sector, in the directorates of large establishments listed under twenty different areas only 6.1% were women. Also note worthy is the fact that 68.2% of private large establishments had no women in their board of directors”.

Adding to the same point, Amarasuriya (1995) discusses the situation in the fields of science and technology and research and development in Sri Lanka. “While women are employed in substantial numbers, they are found mainly in the middle grades as research officers or as administrative officers. They rarely reach managerial or decision making positions”.

#### *Organizational policies and practices*

Organizational policies and practices are in place to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. Most of such policies are related to managing the employees. Recruitment, hiring, job evaluation, performance appraisal, training and development, rewards etc. are some of such policies while supervisory and controlling mechanisms are some of the practices.

Acker (2009) quotes: “Recruitment, hiring and promotion are processes of finding the workers most suited for particular positions. From the perspective of employers the gender and race of existing job holders at least partially define who is suitable”. (eg. Enderson, 1984) Further, “images of appropriate gendered and racialized bodies influence perceptions on hiring. Female bodies are appropriate for some jobs; male bodies for other jobs. At the managerial level, recruitment, hiring and promotion processes are informed by the images of the successful manager. This image is stereotypically masculine”. (eg. Kanter, 1977 Wajeman, 1998)

Holding a similar gender role attitude, Sri Lankan organizations prefer men to women. As expressed by Malhotra(1997) “In general in Sri Lanka, men are usually preferred over women as employees. Some employers complain that because of the possibility of the need for time off to bear children that it may disrupt the flow of the work force. Jayaweera (2002) elaborates the consequences of Malhotra’s findings.”At the higher administrative levels and managerial positions in the public and private sectors there is minimal movement toward recruitment of women to decision making positions”.

Jayewardene and Seneviratne’s (2005) case study on a leading manufacturing company found the following. “As we evidenced, majority of the female employees at CCL have chosen a [career] path that encourage them to be more passive feminine symbols though they are powerful enough [like the Pattini] to destroy the glass ceiling.

#### *Ideal work norm and work expectations*

Paid work obligations lead to the development of ideal work norms and work expectations. Attitudes on ideal work norms expect either genders to fit in to such norms forgetting the unpaid family care work and obligations shouldered mostly by women. Kelly (2010) gathers relevant literature into a nutshell to explain the above scenario.

“When feminist scholars talk about “gendered organizations” (Acker 1990,1992; Britton 2000; Ely and Meyerson 2000b), they note that most workplaces are organized as if paid work is the only, or at least the primary, responsibility of employees. White-collar workers—especially managers and professionals—are expected to work long hours, arrange their outside responsibilities around their paid work, and be willing to relocate or travel as requested (Bailyn 1993). These behaviors signal appropriate devotion to one’s work (Blair-Loy 2003) and are expected to continue throughout adulthood (Moen and Roehling 2005). These expectations, sometimes called the “ideal worker norm” (J. C. Williams 2000), reinforce gender inequality in the workplace. Because of differences in men’s and women’s family work (Bianchi et al. 2000) as well as different cultural expectations of mothers and fathers (Hays 1996; Townsend 2002), women, and especially mothers, are less likely to follow the expected pattern of continuous, full-time employment (Hynes and Clarkberg 2005; Stone 2007). Women and mothers in particular, are less likely to live up to these expectations and less likely to reap the economic rewards associated with being an ideal worker”.

Following similar norms it is the belief in Sri Lankan context that women are incapable of sticking to the ideal work norm and hence should be positioned in traditionally and socially constructed occupations such as nursing, teaching, secretarial work etc. Jayewardene and Seneviratne (2005) found the following in a case study done at a leading biscuit manufacturing company. “CCL views the female labor as a ‘trouble free’ and ‘non barraging’ kind workers who are primarily ‘dowry seekers’ for their marriage or ‘part time job occupants’.”

#### *Work family interface*

Working women around the globe face the challenge of balancing the responsibilities and commitments assigned to their roles at home and at work place. Kane and Sanchez

(1994) combine relevant literature to clarify the above situation. "One particularly consistent finding in the literature on gender-role attitudes is that acceptance of women's involvement in the labor force is greater than acceptance of changes in the domestic division of labor. Changing roles in the marketplace seem to be more palatable to both men and women than do changing roles in the home (Conover & Sapiro 1992; Herzog & Bachman 1982; Mason & Bumpass 1975; Morgan & Walker 1983; Osmond & Martin 1975; Quarm 1983; Thornton & Freedman 1979; see also Spence, Deaux, and Helmreich's 1985 literature review). It appears that many consider it appropriate for women to enter the labor force as long as they continue to provide domestic labor as well".

Nature and extent of prevalence of the above situation in Sri Lanka has been discussed by Jayaweera (2005) as follows. "While women's extension of their productive role has necessitated adjustment of activities in some families, overall the gender division of labor in the household was not found to have changed significantly."

The above analysis of existing literature highlights the factors prevailing in organizations and societies world over that are governed by gender role attitudes and their impacts on females working in organizations. Hence this is a global scenario that needs attention at the organizational as well as at the societal level. In the Sri Lankan context studies addressing the issue of gender roles on females employees cannot be found and this study attempts to address the gap in literature.

#### *Current Sri Lankan context and female employees in garment industry*

In Sri Lanka, like in most Asian societies, the females' role was primarily in and around household. By mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the females mostly known as 'ladies', and from elite and well to do families hardly worked. The educated females from the higher strata of the society became medical doctors, teachers, lawyers and some of them politicians.

Major development that affected the middle and lower levels was the free education. Towards the late sixties, graduates of universities, who had studied mostly in Sinhala/Tamil (local languages), faced the challenge of government not being able to recruit all of them for the government jobs, the major employer at that point of time.

The critical reality, which surfaced with the 1971 youth up-rise, was the high unemployment among rural youth both male and female. They had completed at least 10 years education with majority having completed 12 years in school. However, they were unable to get jobs due to the lopsided economic growth in the country and also could not enter universities due to low expansion of government run universities.

In this backdrop, in 1977, Sri Lanka opened its economy from a closed economy, in response to the structural adjustments advocated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The

foreign investors came into the country, making use of the tax free environment offered to them by the government.

Opening of a large number of garment factories, first in free trade zones and later all over the island resulted in the investors seeking female employees, willing to work for low salaries for longer hours, mostly away from their homes as well.

These industries also needed technically qualified middle level managers. The educated, particularly university graduates, accepted those vacancies and also there were lesser number of non-graduates who joined the industry as supervisors and then became middle level managers. Increased employment of females at various levels in the organizations is a one of the most notable features in the industry as a whole. Although women entered the workforce in large numbers women are subject to socio-cultural exclusion and subordination due to the effects of patriarchal social structure (Kurian and Jayawardena, 2014).

### III. DATA AND METHOD

Main research paradigm used is the constructivism, and hence the ontological stance is that the reality lies in the eyes of the beholder. Qualitative approach is adopted as the main methodological stance and 'Theoretical Sampling' is adopted in selecting the sample. In-depth semi-structured interviews, memos of the researcher and observations are the main data collection tools.

The study covers a sample of 8 female managers and 5 male managers with more than five years experience at the same organization, in two major contributors in the Sri Lankan garment industry. In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with each of the participants.

Interviews were held at the convenience of the participants, and hence the date time and location were decided accordingly. Time taken for an interview ranged between 30 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. Interviews were held in English as all the participants are highly conversant in the language. Following ethical considerations were addressed to prevent and resolve possible ethical issues. Informed consent from respective individuals, free from deception, and ensuring privacy and confidentiality.

All the female managers are in the age category of 35 years to 45 years and have more than 15 years of working experience in the Sri Lankan private organizations, from which 5 years or more of that experience is with the current employer. Most of the participants are graduates (local as well as foreign degree holders) and some even hold post graduate degrees in Business Management, one holds a diploma. Married with at least one to two kids is their marital status. Most of them drive their own vehicle or they do have a driver. They depend either on a maid or on an extended family member in attending to their children's needs and the household chores. The five male managers are again hold at least 10 years of work experience within which they have been with the current organization for



more than 5 years. Four out of the five are graduates and one has obtained the first degree and the postgraduate degree from the USA. And the other manager holds a diploma. All are in the age category of 35 years to 50 years.

All interviews were transcribed and the data analysis consisted coding, and thematic analysis. Concepts emerging from data at ultimately led to grounding the data in theory.

#### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implicit/blind acceptance of gender roles and lack of sensitivity on gender issues by female participants are the major finding that surfaced from the interview data. A traditional view on gender roles as a product of culture and a slight non-conservative form of view regarding a social change are the male participant's major findings that surfaced from the analysis.

The focal point is how the females perceive and experience the impact of gender roles within the organizational settings and also in relation to the reproductive responsibilities. According to their view garment industry in Sri Lanka has a majority of female employees at lower levels and more males at decision making levels of the organizations. Agreeing with Meyerson and Fletcher (2005) and Morgan (1997), irrespective of the presence of females at lower levels as well as managerial levels the general impression is that the industry is dominated by the males. Following is a direct quotation of an interview with a male manager. (R1M)

"I haven't come across a female factory manager for a long time. So that I would like to see coming up because a male dominated management managing a female dominated work force. So that is there."

When females are performing under a male dominated management and at the same time performing their reproductive and familial roles, they carry a heavy load. Similar to Millet (1968) it is interesting to note how social conditioning as made them they perceive these as certain assigned responsibilities to them. Following are the views of a senior female manager (R2F) justifying the roles assigned to her.

"Gender roles obviously, in any culture you will have that. And I guess in human psychology part of a way of stereo typing and human beings can compartmentalize information easier. And let the brain fathom it a little better. So that will be there. I don't think that there is any way of removing it. But to a certain extent gender role is there for practical reasons. We are the bearers of children and we are the nurturers of the world. I mean you can't get away from it. You tell a man to check.... Now I have a son.. I tell him to see whether the son is eating and this and that. Absolutely no interest. (A loud laugh) He says if the son wants to eat he will eat. Why are you bothering? I am doing the home work with the son. Because you know my husband wouldn't really bother too much."

She expressed the above views in a very positive and a happy tone. Further, the things that her husband neglects are seen as none of his responsibilities. It is surprising to note that she laughs but not feels angry when talking about the husband ignoring his share in life.

Not only at work even at home females are not at all hesitant to take up the responsibilities The belief is that they are totally responsible for house hold chores as well as for caring and nurturing the children. The same participant although a degree holder of USA and UK discusses her view points as follows.

"Because it's the women who hold all that together in a home environment. So I think we are ascribed that roles because that is part of our nature. So obviously not only do that but do hundred other things. Aaaa...but that is definitely a part and parcel of what we are. And I don't know how many women want to get away from it. That being a women so now while I am handling all of these I am checking what's for dinner and is my son home or you know all of that being checked kind of thing. So I think we are skilled in that way so that we can multi task and being a women no choice and we have to do it and we are part and parcel of who we are. So the role existing is not a negative thing. It is how much you enjoy being a woman. I don't see that as a negative.

Confirming Goyal's (2007) work, women managers highlight that females are the ones who should sacrifice for the betterment of the family and they willingly accept such happenings. Another female senior manager (R3F) discusses her experience as follows.

"Very tough. Obviously I do make sacrifices and I sacrifice my family to an extent. There is no choice I mean you can't do both. (Job as well as work at home) yes there is a sacrifice that you have to make if you really won't to go on with your career or else the other option is to stay at a lower level and just do your mundane work and clock off by 5 o'clock and get back home. It's a trade off yes...Before I had my small one I had a little more free time at home to sit and study but now it is a little difficult. Because you are away from home and when you go back they want your undivided attention. So it is bit difficult, because the work is so stressful by 10'clock you are just fagged out and you just go to sleep. If I am to study waking up in the morning is another hassle because you have to make the child ready to go to school."

Irrespective of the level of education and the career, a similar view point is being surfaced from the above participant's response and she believes that it is the female who should sacrifice for the betterment of the family.

Blind acceptance of the gender roles surfaced in all most all the interviews held with the female managers and they willingly accept more responsibilities. One of the participants (R4F) who speaks about her life pattern proves the effect of gender role attitudes on their career as well as personal lives.

“I know even at homes females are taking more responsibilities. So they are doing more than men. I know me, not as a manager but as a mother get up early in the morning and I am the last to go to bed.”

Females' mentality is such that not only at home but even at work they willingly take more responsibilities. Following quotation proves how females blindly accept what is assigned to them (at their own cost) and perceive it as an honor. (R5F)

“Now you can just see although they are not willing to tell when giving a responsibility, to whom are they giving? Lady. Even in a family the father mother are doing equal thing to the family, but when a child does something wrong who is to be blamed? Mother..... So which means the most important person is the mother”

It is interesting to note their lack of sensitivity on gender issues and as a result how they sacrifice their own lives. Following participant expresses her views not grudgingly but enthusiastically, although she undergoes a lot of difficulties. (R6F)

“I manage because the time I sleep is less. (Laughing and happily) I get up daily at 4am. I have to leave at least by 7.30am. Between 4am and 7.30pm I complete almost all the household chores done by an ordinary house wife. The things done are sweeping, cooking, washing the clothes are things no, I do all that. What I don't do is looking after the two kids during the day time”

Similar to the findings of Jayewardene and Seneviratne(2005) acceptance of gender roles make females create barriers for themselves that make them keep away even from important career related incidents. Following quotation from the interview of a senior female manager (R1F) provides evidence.

I can't be in evening discussions where they have a drink. Then we don't know what they discuss. There are some barriers that we cannot thrash.

Whatever the barrier that comes in, females are not willing to question the existing social order but rather they sacrifice their personal as well as work lives to fit into socially accepted behaviours.

Male managers too hold certain similar attitudes on gender roles as of their female counterparts. A senior level male manager (R1M) expresses the point that females perform better in some of the work areas where as males are better off with others.

“We have not done an analysis as such and especially on areas such as design because we are into the fashion business we feel that the girls have a more touch and feel than the guys to be in it. Because they are more dress savvy and this and that so in some areas we actually encourage more of getting a guy to getting a girl.”

Creation of jobs for genders with in organizations (intentionally or unintentionally) leads to the development of stereotypical jobs resulting in discrimination.

Male managers evaluating the masculine models and ideal worker norms as superior, tends to devalue the capabilities of the females. It limits the tolerance of gender specific issues at the expense of capable females. Following is clear evidence. (R4M)

“One thing is now we think about the role that they can play within the organization. There is a belief that women cannot work up to expectations of the organizations in certain positions. This affects hiring and less females come to the organization. When it comes to the higher positions company expects you to pay your full attention to your work.

Agreeing with Acker (2007) attitudes held by managers have a clear impact on their decisions and it leads to discrimination due to gender in selection and hiring processes. Hence the effects of perceived gender roles of females negatively affect not only their lives but the others about whom they make decisions. A senior female manager (RF1) goes on to talk about the way she makes decision regarding the females at work and it is a clear indication of the stereotypical view held by this female manager led by the blind acceptance of gender role attitudes.

“For me when I take a girl, now I have a couple of them here that is taken hesitantly. Now all these time all my teams were entirely male. My boss use to say you are a woman and you have all men in your team. Necessity dictates also what role you can necessarily give a woman”.

Above quotation highlights the impact of gender role attitudes on females and how such attitudes guide them in making decisions. This in turn affects the other females who are in the lower levels.

Impact of gender role attitudes is a known fact by the male managers. Agreeing with Acker (2009) a male manager working as a Human Resource Manager (R3M) accepts the fact that unintentionally they are been carried away by their gender role attitudes in decision making.

“There is a policy in the company against discrimination but without knowing we go for that. There is a belief that women cannot work up to expectations of the organizations in certain positions. This affects hiring and less females come to the organization. We have only one female

engineer, but not really involved in the production floor. People in the production floor are very demanding and for a female it is tough, and she will not be able to perform.”

At this point, it is interesting to note that with regards to gender issues, male managers are more knowledgeable than their female counterparts and they talk about a social change that will have benefits for females.

It is the culture that keeps the gender roles in action as discussed by Hofstede (1999) but things are changing is the view of a senior male manager. (R2M) His views are as follows.

“But still I think, may be because of our culture and our attitudes and beliefs coming from the past I think situation on gender roles still prevails, up to a certain level but my opinion is that things are changing... things are changing but... but... still it is there. I think, I think in the urban areas that is very less but in the rural areas, yes.”

A male manager (R1M) following his colleague above is in the view that it is about a new way of thinking.

“For some reason, may be for different reasons. So for me gender biasness is not an issue. And I will not promote anything like that nor will I encourage something like that. There is no impact by the attitudes, I won't say you are a lady I am not going to take you for production. I don't get the applications. If I advertise for the post of a factory manager it is the total responsibility of the factory. I have never got a CV for a production manager from a female. And in my last seven years I have never seen. I think it is a social and something to be done in education to change it. It is about thinking in a different way.”

Sharing the responsibility is the change that should occur at present, is the opinion of one of the male managers. (R2M)

“My feeling is that those things (gender roles) should change with the time. Because in the current context you know you can't expect wife to cook and to do the rest of the work or you to earn a living for the family. In my opinion it has to be a shared responsibility”.

Following the same line of thinking another manager believes that males should help the females, whenever a need arises, irrespective of the type of work. (R5M)

“We have to work according to the situation...er....though I am the father at home, now think ....if there is something to sweep, clean, wash plates and if there is no one to do this, and if the wife is also sick, I will definitely do all this work. I will never quit such work”

It is interesting to note that the male managers possess a more rational view about the gender roles than the female managers within the changing environmental conditions. Further, not a single female manager, but only the male managers pointed out the necessity for a social change that should occur to minimize the negative effects of gender role attitudes.

Accordingly the above analysis narrates the impacts of *gender role attitudes* in two organizations in the garment industry in Sri Lanka. Similar organizational factors highlighted in the literature review got surfaced from the interview data as factors leading to prevalence of gender role attitudes in the organizations under study. Apart from the above, an in-depth analysis to understand the factors leading to the prevalence of the existing gender role attitudes, and the blind acceptance of such attitudes without questioning, surfaces *social conditioning* as the causal condition. This social conditioning occurs within a patriarchal social structure.

A person gets exposed to the society from the day that he/she is born to the world. Individuals having a similar world view, living together, the collection of their common world view form a culture. Hence a person living in a culture begins to understand the world with his/her cognition within the given socio-cultural frame work. This way of thinking and the resulting behaviors can be understood as social conditioning. ‘Gender’ is also a social construct. Males and females become men and women by acquiring ascribed traits or roles to either genders. For instance, Kate Millett takes gender differences to have “essentially cultural, rather than biological bases” that result from differential treatment (1971, 28–9). For her, gender is “the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression” (Millett 1971, 31).

Being in a patriarchal society, females from their childhood are trained to obey the rules of patriarchy without questioning. According to Johnson (1988) Patriarchal social structures are:

Male dominated, Organized around an obsession with control, Male identified and Male centered.

Accordingly, being in a patriarchal society Sri Lankan females naturally get into *implicit acceptance of gender role attitudes* even as grown up working women. With in such a backdrop it is quite natural that they get ingrained with the *gender role attitudes*. As a result, responses of female managers in two Sri Lankan private sector organizations in the garment industry signals a very low understanding about the negative impacts of gender role attitudes on their personal and work lives.

It is interesting to note that what is surfacing from the data has evidence regarding a comparatively high level of knowledge and sensitivity on gender role attitudes possessed by the male managers. This may be due to their knowledge on current global discourses. Although they do have knowledge and talk about a social change, any signs of active engagement to bring about change did not surface at any point in the analysis. Females’ willingness to blindly accept their role and their

inability to go against any discrimination may be the reason behind males taking the advantage out of it.

### V. CONCLUSION

Sri Lankan female managers blindly accept the gender roles and without questioning they carry out the assigned tasks willingly. This occurs at home as well as at work. Further, their level of knowledge on gender issues is minimal and hence there are no active engagements in questioning the existing social orders.

Consequently, impacts of gender role attitudes result in discrimination and at the same time place a huge burden on women while they are at work as well as at home. Hence it is important to understand that women endure the accumulated impacts of gender role attitudes. Accordingly women, especially working women sacrifice their lives for the betterment of the others by shouldering dual responsibilities mostly under non-rewarding conditions.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. Acker, J. (2006), "Inequality Regimes; Gender, Class and Race in Organizations", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 4:441-464
- [2]. \_\_\_\_\_, (2009), "From Glass Ceiling to Inequality Regimes", *Sociologie du travail*, 51: 199-217
- [3]. Amarasuriya, N. R., "Women and Technology", *Economic Review*, Vol. 20, No.12, Colombo: People's Bank Publication
- [4]. CENWOR, (1995) [on line] Available from: <http://www.idrc.calen/ev69000-201-1-d-topic.html>
- [5]. \_\_\_\_\_, (1991), "Women, Poverty and Family Survival", Colombo
- [6]. Cernic, M. I., (2007), "Attitude Towards Gender Roles and Gender Role Behavior Among Urban, Rural and Farm Populations in Slovenia", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, June 2007
- [7]. Herath, H. M. A., (2010), "The Place of Women in Sri Lankan Society: Measures for Their Empowerment for Development and Good Governance", Unpublished
- [8]. Hofstede, G. (1999), "Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values", New Delhi, SAGE
- [9]. Goyal, Ashima, (2007), "Women making choices: Masked but aware", *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 14 No 3:409-437
- [10]. Jayaweera, S., (2002), Women in Education and Employment. In Swarna Jayaweera (Ed.), *Women in post independence Sri Lanka*, Colombo, CENWOR: 99-142
- [11]. \_\_\_\_\_, (2005), *Continuity and Change: Women Workers in Garment and Textile Industries in Sri Lanka*, [on line] Available from: <http://www.unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents>
- [12]. \_\_\_\_\_, Gunawardene, C., Edirisinghe, L., (2008), "Beyond the Glass Ceiling: Participation in Decision Making in the Public Domain", Colombo, CENWOR
- [13]. Jayawardene, D., Seneviratne, P., (2005), [When] the Goddess Pattini reach t[he ] Glass Ceiling ; A Reaffirmation of Female Labour Role within and beyond 'HRM', 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Business Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura.
- [14]. Kane, E., W., Sanchez, L., (1994), "Family Status and Criticism of Gender Inequality at Home and at Work", *Social Forces*, Vol. 72
- [15]. Kelly, E. L., Ammons, S.K., Chermack, K., Moen, P., (2010), "Gendered Challenge, Gendered Response: Confronting the Ideal Worker Norm in a White -Collar Organization", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 24, No. 3: 281-303
- [16]. Kandiyoti, Deniz,( 1988), "Bargaining with patriarchy", *Gender & Society* vol. 2 no. 3,274-290
- [17]. Kelly, Erin L., Samatha K. Ammons, Kelly Chermack, and Phyllis Moen. 2010. "Gendered challenge, gendered response: Confronting the ideal worker norm in a white-collar organization". *Gender & Society* 24:281-303.
- [18]. Kurian, R. and Jayawardena, K. (2014) Persistent Patriarchy, Colombo, Social Scientists' Association [online] Available from: <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/77889/>
- [19]. Lane, N., (2000), "The Management Implications of Women's Employment: Disadvantage in a Female Dominated Profession: A study of NHS Nursing", *Journal of Management Studies*, 37(5): 701-731
- [20]. Lober, J., (1994), "Paradoxes of Gender" Yale University Press.
- [21]. Malhotra, A., Mason, K., (1987), "Difference between Women's and Men's Reproductive Goals in Developing Countries", *Population and Development Review*, 13(4)
- [22]. Meyerson, D. E., Fletcher, J., K., (2005), "A Modest Manifest to Sheltering the Glass Ceiling", *Harvard Business Review on Women in Business*
- [23]. Millet, K., (1968) *Sexual Politics*, [on line] Available from:[www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org)
- [24]. Morgan, G., (1997), *Images of Organizations*, New Delhi, SAGE
- [25]. Ridgeway, C., Correll, S. J., (2004) , "Unpacking the Gender System: A theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations", *Gender and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 4: 510-531
- [26]. Sands, D. M. etal, (1999), *Gender Lens*, Center for Gender in Organizations, Washington D.C.
- [27]. Spock, A., (1989), *Gender Roles*, [on line] Available from:<http://www.faqs.org>
- [28]. [http://gray.intrasun.tcnj.edu/Coming%20of%20Age/a\\_basic\\_definition\\_of\\_patriarchy.htm](http://gray.intrasun.tcnj.edu/Coming%20of%20Age/a_basic_definition_of_patriarchy.htm)