

- Vol. VII, No. II (Spring 2022) ▪ p- ISSN: 2708-2091 ▪ e-ISSN: 2708-3586 ▪ L-ISSN: 2708-2091
- Pages: 181-193 ▪ DOI: 10.31703/gsr.2022(VII-II).20 ▪ URL: [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2022\(VII-II\).20](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2022(VII-II).20)
- Citation: Shafqat, B., Rathore, K., & Salman, Y. (2022). Womens Career Growth and Top Positions – Factors Determined by Literature. *Global Sociological Review*, VII(II), 181-193. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2022\(VII-II\).20](https://doi.org/10.31703/gsr.2022(VII-II).20)

Women's Career Growth and Top Positions – Factors Determined by Literature

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Abstract: *This research study combines scholarly research work on factors influencing women and top positions. Providing a synthesis of 94 research studies published in the ISI web of knowledge, this study not only highlights significant factors influencing women's journey towards top managerial positions but also compares literature from developing and developed nations. Empirical and conceptual papers were chosen by scanning the title, abstract and stated aim of the study. Broadly two theoretical models, the Gender Organization and System framework by Fagenson-Eland & Baugh (2000) and the Systems of Career Influences Model purposed by Diane Magrane, et al. (2012) were used for the analysis. Overall three themes, Institutional Resources and Strategies, personal and professional roles and values and systemic factors were identified. By using literature each factor was placed under one theme For analysis all factors (identified by using existing literature) were coded under three main themes and analysed by using frequencies and charts. In the end, the research gap, implications and limitations are also mentioned.*

Key Words: Women Career Development, Women and Top Positions, Career Growth

Introduction

A significant feature of the employment trend, all around the globe, is the increased presence of women in the labour workforce. Particularly, nowadays, there has been a drastic increase in the number of women pursuing career development (Gordon and Whelan, 1998).

Apart from the fact that organizations are adopting new strategies to cope with the dynamic environment as well as redirecting their cultural practices, still women in the workplace face challenges and obstacles that limit their career advancement. As a result, these limitations often stop them from not only developing their expertise but also restricting their access to top-level managerial positions. According to Bombuwela (2013), though women work as much as their male counterparts yet they have to face more challenges in their career

development. Interestingly, though gender barriers in organizations have been investigated by a considerable amount of research throughout the years, advancement has been inadequate (Bevelander & Page, 2011).

According to Dainty (2000), Women are seen to have progressed averagely behind one hierarchical level than men workers male, having similar demographics, especially age and professional experience. In addition, their career development could be seen to be more inconsistent as compared to men. More specifically, the shift from a line to a middle-level managerial position is challenging for them.

The theoretical idea of this review is career development contains basically two opposing views, the traditional view and the non-traditional or modern view. The traditional view is actually the

linear organizational career path of an individual. On the other hand the modern view hand two basic metaphors, the boundaryless career and the protean career (Kuron, 2012). Boundaryless careers and traditional careers, on one hand, are conflicting in nature in the sense that the latter is bounded to an individual's upward mobility through the hierarchy of organizations (Mainiero, 2005).

This phenomenon was further discussed by Arthur and Rousseau (1996), they are of the view that the "boundary-less-ness" actually reflects multiple meanings, it not only takes into account the job hopping, dependence on resources outside to employee's workplace for completion of his task. It shows a separation of main career priorities and personal goals from the objectives and efficiency of the organization. Additionally, nowadays, rather than a driver organizations are vehicles for the employees. (Arthur, 1990)

In this study, we define career development as, traditional and flexible career upward mobility. According to a research study conducted by Mainiero and Sullivan (2005), flexible womens careers are mostly flexible and non-traditional due to the fact that they have to satisfy their relational or family needs side by side with their career growth. This reasoning was confirmed by another research study conducted by another researcher in 1999. He examined a range of economic data and found that, in spite of a move toward improved individual accountability for both, managing the career the way individuals assume risk. Additionally, the relationship between the employer and employee rests on the standard. The research questions for this systematic literature review were formulated as follows,

1. What are the significant factors that influence womens career development toward top positions?
2. What are the main theoretical concepts in the chosen studies?
3. In which context the said phenomenon is studied?
4. What are the research gaps identified by the selected studies?

Prior research has revealed that the progression in careers and development patterns of female workers are entirely dissimilar from that of their male counterparts (O'Neil, Hopkins, & Sullivan, 2011).

This systematic Literature review contributes to the existing literature by providing a synthesis of those patterns by taking into account factors contributing to the career development of women. Secondly, the previous research was focusing largely on the perceived consequences by workers of the womens networks this study investigates not only the frustrating and supporting factors for womens career development but also takes into account the theories in the existing literature. Thirdly, this study is taking into consideration the research studies by focusing on the cultural differences of different regions.

According to Jalalzai (2008), there is a dearth of research studies containing a comparative analysis of limits the formation of general conclusions about women workers, especially in developing and non-Western countries. So this research study can be used as a starting point for primary researchers of developing countries to fill the void.

Methodology

In the data collection phase, records concerned with factors contributing to the career advancement of women workers were only. Moreover, we shortlisted the research studies on the basis of title initially. They contained three keywords women, top positions and career development in title or abstract. It is imperative to take into consideration that some other concepts synonymous with career development also existed in the literature, such as upward career mobility, career growth, career progression and career advancement. However, the term "career development" is used throughout the review due to two main reasons firstly this term is vastly used by the researchers and backed up by some theories too. Secondly, the inclusion of all mentioned concepts would lead to a massive rise in the number of records to be examined. Which, in turn, would be unmanageable.

Both empirical and conceptual papers are included in the current review by adopting the framework synthesis method of the narrative approach of systematic literature review. According to Snilstveit, Oliver, & Vojtkova (2012), this method is the middle way between content analysis and Meta ethnography. In order to have a holistic picture, the framework synthesis method not only takes into account the quantitative and qualitative research

papers but also the conceptual papers. Moreover, it can also accommodate the variations produced by different contexts.

For eligibility criteria, we considered Language, publication status and year of publication. Only articles written in the English language were chosen from the records. All those articles were published during 1998-2021. Most importantly, only published

articles from peer-reviewed journals were selected. The ISI web of knowledge was basically chosen as a search index. The index search produced a total of 324 records out of those 94 were chosen by adopting a three-step methodology. The title and abstract were considered and if found relevant to the research questions, the whole paper was considered and included for review. The table below summarizes the whole discussion.

Table 1.

Synthesis Method	Time Frame	Search Index	Target Document Type	Research Design
Narrative	1998-2021	ISI Web of Knowledge	Empirical and Conceptual Paper	Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods

Findings

The aim of this study, to find out the factors influencing women's career development towards top managerial positions, their theoretical foundation and the gap in the literature, called for the narrative analysis technique of systematic literature review. We limited ourselves to the theoretical portion of the selected studies. Firstly we discussed the journals, indexed in the ISI web of knowledge, from which the research studies were carefully chosen. Secondly, the research design opted by the selected studies was discussed. at the end of

In this section, we provided the main factors along with the research gap.

Journals

The following table shows 40 journals along with the 94 research papers selected for this study. Journals with a significant number of articles selected include Career Development International(11), Gender in Management: An International Journal(7), Gender, Work & Organization(9), Journal of Vocational Behavior(4), Leadership Quarterly(9) and Women in Management Review(7).

Table 2

Journal	Frequency
Academy of Management Journal	1
Academy of Management Review	1
Advancing Women in Leadership,	2
British Journal of Management	1
British Journal of Social Psychology	1
Career Development International	11
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal	1
Gender and Education	1
Gender in Management: An International Journal	7
Gender, Work & Organization	9
Harvard Business Review	2
High Educ	1
Human Resource Development International	1
International Journal of business studies	1
International Labor Review	1
Journal of Advanced Nursing	1
Journal of Business Ethics	2

Journal	Frequency
Journal of Competitiveness	1
Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	2
Journal of Management Development	2
Journal of Management Inquiry	1
Journal of Managerial Psychology	2
Journal of Organizational Change Management	1
Journal of Vocational Behavior	4
Journal of Vocational Education and Training	1
Leadership	2
Leadership & Organization Development Journal	2
Leadership Quarterly	9
Personnel Review emerald	1
Politics & Gender	2
Psychological Review	1
Public Personnel Management	2
Research in Organizational Behavior	2
Social Policy & Administration	1
Social Science Research	3
The International Journal of Human Resource Management	1
Women & Politics	1
Women in Management Review	7
Women's Studies International Forum	1
Work and Occupation	1

Year of Publication

In figure 1, given below, the year of publication of the selected studies is provided on the x-axis and the

frequency of research studies published in a given year is drawn on Y-axis. Not any significant dip was found in the figure.

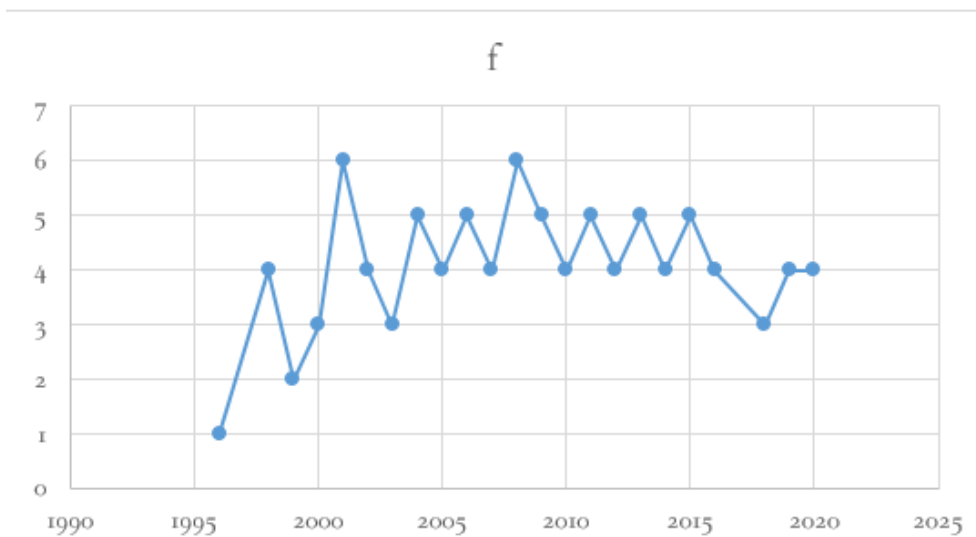


Figure 1:

Context of the Selected Studies

75 out of 94 studies mentioned the geographical region where the research activity was done. While without mentioning the countries, six studies were done across the globe. While the remaining studies included conceptual papers. Interestingly 80% of

these studies were done in developed countries. Global North-South division was used to analyze the studies and the contexts where they were carried out. Linking the results with the division concept depicts a gap between the Global Northern countries and the Global Southern countries in terms of advancement (Girvan, 2007).

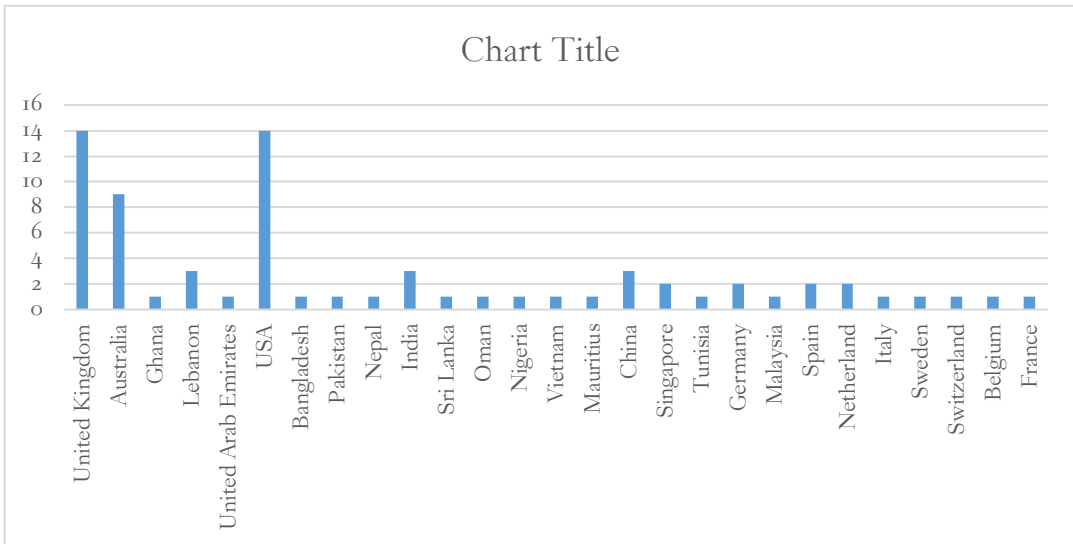


Figure 2:

The figure shows that out of 75 records, the United States of America (14) and the United Kingdom (14) represent the highest number of studies. Almost 9 of the total research studies were done in the Australian context. While the third group in terms of representation contains, India, China, Lebanon and Canada, with 3 studies each. Table 3 shows that there

exists a difference between the global north and south in terms of creating knowledge and publishing in the top tier journals when it comes to women and career development and their journey towards top managerial positions. The following section highlights the significant factors found in the literature.

Table 3.

Global North	Frequency	Global South	Frequency
Australia	9	Bangladesh	1
Belgium	1	China	3
Canada	3	Ghana	1
France	1	India	3
Germany	2	Lebanon	3
Italy	2	Malaysia	1
Mauritius	1	Nigeria	1
Netherland	2	Nepal	1
Singapore	2	Oman	1
Spain	2	Pakistan	1
Sweden	1	Sri Lanka	1

Global North	Frequency	Global South	Frequency
Switzerland	1	Tunisia	1
UK	14	UAE	1
USA	14	Vietnam	1
Total	55		20

Factors Influencing Women's Career Progression to Top Managerial Positions

We found two main models in the literature related to women and top positions and career development. For the purpose of this analysis, we took the ingredients from both models and came up with three main categories. Under the mentioned categories all factors contributing to women's career growth were placed.

Career Development Model

The existing literature on career development suggests that women's experiences are different compared to their counterparts in a way that they have to face the organizational and societal factors influencing their careers (Fagenson-Eland & Baugh, 2000). Basically, two schools of thought are taking into account the said phenomenon. One argues that there should be gender-distinct career theories while the other believes that the career of a woman is not

different from her male counterpart but is more complicated due to the barriers such as gender socialization (Mainiero, 2005).

Magrane Diane, et al. (2012) presented a model of career development that consists of multifacet adaptive systems. These professional and organisational systems are not only interdependent but also evolving. Moreover, women workers are positioned as agents in this model. Career progress continues within the strains of these three systems.

This model was purposed by taking into account medical women's career development. Basically, it consists of three important trajectories of career development, such as individual's engagement in career development, a central cyclical system of career advancement and the organizational/institutional policies and strategies or in other words influences that promote or demote career advancement trajectory (Diane Magrane, et al., 2012).

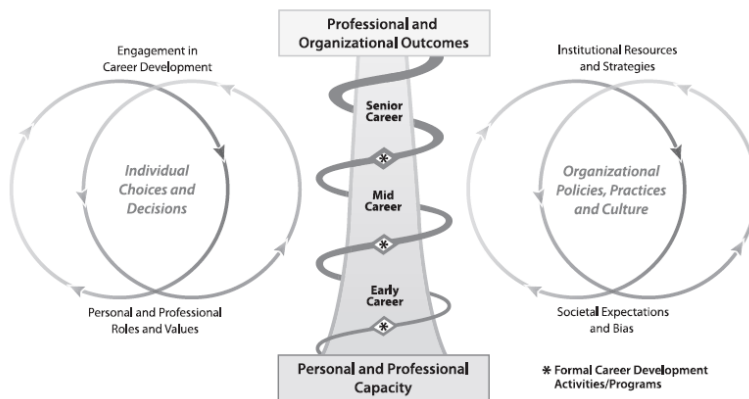


Figure 3:

According to Diane Magrane, et al. (2012), this model consists of multifacet adaptive systems. These professional and organisational systems are not only interdependent but also evolving. Moreover, women

workers are positioned as agents in this model. Career progress continues within the strains of these three systems.

Gender organization and System Model

The most cited model regarding the current phenomenon was gender organization and system framework. Fagenson (1990) presented the gender organization and system framework (GOS) by combining two views on gender, such as gender-centric views and organizational structure views. The gender-centric view attributes women's internal factors to their lack of representation in executive positions. The latter suggests that there are certain organizational and environmental factors that hinder female representation in key positions. Thus, the GOS framework proposes that women's certain traits and together with the organizational context and/or the larger social and institutional system in which they function hinder/support their career development.

In order to synthesize the selected research studies, mainly the supporting/frustrating factors contributing to women's career development and their journey towards top leadership were categorized under three main themes taken from the two mentioned models, such as,

Theme 1: Institutional Resources and Strategies

Theme 2: Personal and Professional Roles and Values

Theme 3: Systemic Factors

Below provided table enlists 37 significant factors contributing to women's career development along with the number of times (150) they were found in the records. We linked the factors with the main themes and presented them in the third column.

Table 4.

Factors	f	Theme
Glass Ceiling, Cliff and Escalators	14	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Mentoring	17	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Socializing/Networking	16	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Organizational Policies	1	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Females at the Top	1	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Education	5	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Gender Roles	4	Systemic Factors
Male Power Elites	1	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Career Commitment	3	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Organizational Structures and Policies	13	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Career Planning	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Gender Bias in Hiring & Promotion	7	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Stereotyping	10	Systemic Factors
National Culture	5	Systemic Factors
Organizational Culture	9	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Gender Similarity & In-Group Favoritism	4	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Conscientiousness	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Youthful Appearances	2	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Workplace Hostility	1	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Social Roles	2	Systemic Factors
Lack of Motivation	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Social Class	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Family Responsibility at Home	9	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Perceived Organizational Support	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Achievement Orientation	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Learning Orientation	2	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Religious barriers	2	Systemic Factors
Political Slant	1	Systemic Factors

Factors	f	Theme
Supportive Work Environment	1	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Legislative Framework	4	Systemic Factors
Women Development only Programs	2	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Confidence and Trust in Ability	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
No. of Females in an organization	2	Institutional Resources and Strategies
Interpersonal Skills	2	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Ingratiation	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Mobility	1	Personal and Professional Roles and Values
Profession traditionally associated with Men(numbers)	1	Institutional Resources and Strategies

The following table shows factors classified by the categories mentioned before.

Table 5

Themes	f
Institutional Resources and Strategies	90
Personal and Professional Roles and Values	32
Systemic Factors	28
Grand Total	150

The theme of institutional resources and strategies was found the most in literature based on women's career development and top managerial positions. While a significant number of papers consider women's personal and professional roles & values. Systemic factors were reported the least.

The following table shows the theories and theoretical concepts related to women's career development and their journey toward top managerial positions. We tried to link these with the themes and the majority of them were studied in accordance with the institutional resource and strategies.

Theoretical Foundation

Table 6

Themes and Factors	Theories Found in the Records
Women Minority in Decision-making positions	Think manager, think male, Think manager, think masculine (Stoker, Velde, & Lammers, 2012). Person-Job fit (Heilman, 2001) Role congruity theory of prejudice towards females (Eagly, 2002) The Mintzberg typology of Yin and yang face of management (Mintzberg, 2001) Kanter's structural theory (1977) as cited by (Lyness & Judiesch, 1999) Queen's Bee effect (Mohamad, Houssami, & Ismail, 2015)
Organizational Sources of Support (Mentoring, Networking and Socializing)	Brass's early findings of homophile interaction (1984 as cited by Timberlake, 2005).
Organizational Policies & Practice (Performance Evaluation, Training and Education)	Theory about double standards for competence. Foschi (2000) Great Man Theory (Jogulu & Wood, 2006).

Themes and Factors	Theories Found in the Records
Organizational Culture	Similarity-attraction theory (Insch, 2008). Glass ceiling (Gelissen, 2006). Glass escalators and Glass cliff (Ryan, Haslam, & Postmes, 2007). Theory of tokenism (Eran Shor, 2012).

Research GAP and Comparative Analysis of Contexts

By reviewing the articles, it was observed that the research done on the concerned area was basically focused on the institutional resources and strategies that influence women's career development. While the personal and professional roles and values and systemic factors need more investigation. It was in line with (Garavan, O'Brien, & O'Hanlon, 2006). They gave importance to personal and professional roles and values over the Institutional factors and showed that career development can be predicted best by the former and to a lesser extent organization-level variables.

The majority of the articles, that were discussing women's career development and top managerial positions by focusing on the context, discussed national culture (Hien & Dao, 2013), organizational culture (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Dowdy, 2011), family responsibilities (Sidani & Hakim, 2012), and governmental laws (Parella, Petroff, & Solé, 2013) as the most important factors that influence women career development. However, few studies showed that religious interpretation also hinders women to excel in their careers. These studies were done in the global south more specifically the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Oman.

According to Garavan, O'Brien, & O'Hanlon (2006) past research studies showed that cross-cultural dissimilarities in careers and managerial advancement exist. Moreover, countries can be grouped according to resemblances on the basis of a few dimensions of culture. Additionally, prior research supports that on cultural dimensions Germany, America and Europe are homogeneous and hence on the basis of cultures, career advancement opportunities may or may not be available to women workers in a certain region.

However, further research should be done in order to figure out differences in a career context. One similarity, that the research studies included in

the current systematic literature review, is the presence of rules and regulations. Gender rules and policies of a country equally benefit women across the world. For instance, a research study by the Inter-parliamentary Union revealed that women politicians in many countries nominated unfriendly attitudes toward females' political participation as one of the most significant obstacles to running for parliament. (Norris & Inglehart, 2008). Linehan & Walsh (2001) are of the view that usually the past research on women and career advancement was done in North America. So, they conducted a cross-cultural research study by taking into account England, France, Belgium and Germany. Though their focus was on expatriate women workers in Europe ultimately they were in search of the patterns of female executives and how they manage their careers and hence progress. The results showed that discrimination, lack of role models and formal networks were evident. More specifically, when it comes to international careers and family responsibilities women are pressurized to choose family. This phenomenon was also pointed out by Omair (2010), though her research study was done in the United Arab Emirates. But interestingly the results were negating the fact that there exists a conflict between a woman worker's family life and profession. White (2011) conducted a research study by taking into consideration three countries of the global south, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. She asserts that though culture and religious misinterpretation are the main factors that influence the career entry of women's workforce still some women are able to excel in their careers. Her basic sector of research was media, as a male dominating profession. She showed that besides these barriers some institutional barriers also exist in these countries and "invisible nets" is one of them. These nets do not allow women workers to progress. These nets include male-dominating and transactional leadership styles.

Cheung & Halpern, (2010) conducted a research study by taking into account the patterns of women workers in China and the United States of America. Their focus was on work-life balance. Quite surprisingly, the results showed that American and Chinese female workers were almost alike in the sense they were of the view that they have to face barriers in their countries. The finding was not in line with the past literature and theories of management showing that American women separate their personal and professional roles clearly on the other hand Chinese women integrate them.

Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations which should be taken into consideration while going through the finding of the study. Though I have tried my level best to report generalizable information few studies were focusing on a certain sector which can create distortion. Secondly, the ISI Web of Knowledge was used as a search index. It contained sophisticated databases like springer, sage and emerald and hence the peer-reviewed journals. Due to their superiority, many research studies from the underdeveloped

world were not included in the review. Lastly, the available time and resources were limited.

Conclusion

This systematic literature review has explored the available literature so that the crucial factors for women's career development can be figured out. It has also taken into account the major similarities and differences within the countries. Basically, by following two frameworks, gender organizations and system framework and The Systems of Career Influences Model were combined from gender and career development perspectives respectively. Ultimately the majority of the available research articles were focused on organizational factors. They were considered crucial for the career development of women. However, mentioning countries helped us to find from where exactly the main literature on the current research study comes. It was aligned with Wendt (2007) the most of the research studies were done in the global north (more specifically, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States) global north needs to fill the void by producing more research studies on women and career developmen.

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