

# Career Advancement of the Professional Women in the UK Construction Industry: Career Success Factors

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## Abstract

The issue regarding the lack of women in the UK construction industry has become more prominent for some time, attracting government and industry wide attention due to this potential skill shortage facing the industry. In order to meet these future demands the industry cannot rely on recruiting only from the male workforce. Therefore women's participation for the construction industry especially for professional level is important. This paper explores the importance of career success factors among professional women in the UK construction industry to achieve their career advancement. E-questionnaires were designed and data was collected from 31 professional women, consist of 10 women in idealism career phase (early career phase), 10 in endurance career phase (mid career phase) and 11 from reinventive career phase (advanced career phase). Using relative important index technique, the level of importance of career success factors were group in to three categories. The critical career success factors, moderately important career success factors and the least important career success factors were categorised among women in each career phase. The results indicated that the age and gender didn't have impact on professional women's career advancement. Ability to work with people have been identified as one of the critical career success factors both in early and mid career with the highest overall index of 1.00, while strategic vision has become the one of the critical career success factor in advanced career with the highest index of 0.95. The finding of this study will have input towards the identification of different training and development activities to advance women's career in the construction industry.

**Keywords:** career success factors, career, construction and women

# **1. Introduction**

Career success can be viewed as a means to accomplish a person's needs and desires through achievements, accomplishment and power acquisition (Lau and Shaffer, 1999). Within a specific professional environment, it is useful for career development to identify the specific individual or environmental characteristics and requirements that lead different people to career success in different industries or organisational structures (Reklitis and Trivelas, 2002). The practical meaning of this knowledge or information is vital for both organisations and individuals as it enables organisations to have the ability to plan more effectively the systems of staff training and development, and individuals can develop career strategies that will offer them greater career success in terms of job position, satisfaction and salary (Ellis and Heneman, 1990).

The UK construction industry leaders are being urged to maintain a commitment to staff training to preserve the industry's workforce during a recession, as new figures from the construction skills network paint a picture of the skills needs and growth rates for the 2009 and 2013 period (Construction skills, 2009). To meet these targets the industry cannot rely on recruiting from only the traditional male-dominated workforce. Indeed, it is said that "a major obstacle to the industry to recruit the best people is the fact that half of the population is largely ignored by the industry" (Green, 2005). Therefore, the best solution is to recruit from non-traditional groups, i.e. women, to have gender equality in the industry too. However, the issue regarding the lack of women in the construction industry has been made more prominent, attracting government and industry-wide attention, due to the potential skills need facing the industry and to have the gender equality policy within the industry. Therefore, the UK government is examining ways to encourage women into traditionally male-dominated jobs such as the construction industry. In order to identify need of different training and development activities for women in the construction industry, explore of their career success factors are vital. Therefore, this paper is to discover which career success factors have helped for professional women in the UK construction industry to get their career advancement. In order to achieve its aims, the paper is organised in the following way. First, definition of career success and followed by career advancement phases. Research methodology for the research is explained next and followed by the discussion of the findings. Results are provided the career success factors for women in the UK construction, and conclusions outlining the relevance of the findings for industry are discussed.

# **2. Career success**

The definition of career has developed through time, influenced by many factors that are external and internal to the individual and the organisation (Rasdi *et al.*, 2009). Irrespective of time, its definitions twist together the principal themes of job/work, time and hierarchy, reflecting a moving perspective in an individual's occupation, which denote to an individual's career success (Rasdi *et al.*, 2009). Accordingly, the career literature has also seen the evolution of the definition of career success. It has evolved from the traditional definition, which is based on an individual's hierarchical progression, to

contemporary definitions that have incorporated the psychological elements of how one views his or her career success (Rasdi *et al.*, 2009).

According to Judge *et al.* (1995), Seibert *et al.* (2001), Heslin (2003), Ng *et al.* (2005) and Breland *et al.* (2007), career success is described as the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or personal and professional achievements one has gathered from their working experience. Career success was further explained as having both objective and subjective components (Gattiker and Larwood, 1988; Judge *et al.*, 1995; Nabi, 1999; 2003; Baruch, 2004; Breland *et al.*, 2007).

Further understanding of career success can be illustrated by Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 presents a comparison of related concepts of career success based on the traditional, the “new careerist”, and the contemporary concepts for both individuals and organisations. The Table 1, which put together different traditional and current concepts of career success, provides evidence that the measurement of career success should incorporate both objective and subjective dimensions of career success. Subsequently, Table 2 displays a synthesis of career success measurement as used in several main studies in the related area, based on a detailed literature synthesis.

*Table 1: Measures of career success (adapted from Baruch, 2004, p. 77)*

<i>Traditional concepts</i>	<i>The “new careerist” (Derr,1986)</i>	<i>Contemporary- individual</i>	<i>Contemporary- organisation</i>
<i>Formal education</i>	<i>Getting ahead</i>	<i>Self-development, competencies</i>	<i>Empowerment</i>
<i>Lifelong employment, Job security</i>	<i>Getting secure</i>	<i>Employability</i>	<i>Investment in people (human capital)</i>
<i>Up the ladder, salary progression</i>	<i>Getting high</i>	<i>Lateral transitions, spiral movements</i>	<i>New or no career path</i>
	<i>Getting free</i>	<i>Self- management , entrepreneurship</i>	<i>flexibility</i>
	<i>Getting balanced</i>	<i>Quality of life, work-family balance</i>	<i>Alternative working arrangements(shorter working week, shared jobs, telecommuting, flexi-time) and work- family policies</i>
		<i>New psychological contracts</i>	
		<i>Search for spiritual meaning based on individual consciousness</i>	<i>True, open partnership</i>

*Table 2: Synthesis of main studies led on career success measures (adapted from Hennequin (2007,pp. 569)*

<i>Authors(year)</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Career success definition</i>
<i>Gattiker and Larwood (1988)</i>	<i>Employees from major corporations in the USA</i>	<i>Job success, Interpersonal success, Life success, Financial success, Hierarchical success</i>
<i>Boudreau et al. (1999)</i>	<i>US and European executives</i>	<i>Remuneration and promotion, Employability, Work satisfaction , Career satisfaction, Life satisfaction in general</i>
<i>Seibert et al. (2001)</i>	<i>Employees in changing occupations</i>	<i>Promotions and pay,Result in the career</i>
<i>Eby et al. (2003)</i>	<i>Borderless workers</i>	<i>Psychological outcomes, Internal employability, External employability</i>
<i>Lemire and Saba (2002)</i>	<i>Executives in public and quasi-public sectors from Quebec</i>	<i>Number of promotions, Wage level, Status occupation, Work satisfaction, Career satisfaction, Life satisfaction in general</i>
<i>Hay and Hodgkinson (2006)</i>	<i>Managers with MBAs</i>	<i>Career confidence, career climbing, career choice and flexibility, career detriment</i>
<i>Hennequin (2007)</i>	<i>Blue-collar workers in France</i>	<i>Material success, psychological success, social success</i>

The study of the career path in a contingency model (Reklitis and Trivelas, 2002) identifies which parameters influence career success of people with different demographical characteristics in different organizational contexts. This is useful for both individuals and organisations as organisations have the ability to design more effective staff development systems, and individuals have the possibility to develop these career strategies that would make them successful in their career in terms of job position, satisfaction and salary (Ellis and Heneman, 1990).

Next section discusses the women's career advancement phases particular to the impact of career contexts (societal, organisational, and relational). Accordingly, aim of the next section is to categorise different career advancement phases, by doing so to identify different career success factors in each career phase.

### **3. Career advancement phases**

O'Neil & Bilimoria, (2005) discusses on how women's careers develop over time, particularly with regard to the impact of career contexts (societal, organisational, and relational) and women's own

changing images of their careers and career success. They proposed a three-phase, age-linked model of women's career development phases these are:

- The idealistic achievement phase (phase 1)
- The pragmatic endurance phase (phase 2)
- The re-inventive contribution phase (phase 3)

Those three career advancement phases are further explained as follows.

### **3.1 Career phase 1: idealistic achievement phase (early career)**

The driving force of phase 1, early career (ages 24-35), is idealistic achievement. Women in this phase will most likely base their career choices on their desires for career satisfaction, achievement and success, and their desires to positively impact others (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). According to O'Neil & Bilimoria, (2005) women in this phase are most likely to see themselves in charge of their careers and will doubtless be proactive in taking strategic steps to ensure their career progress (internal career locus). They are;

- Achievement-oriented
- Motivated to succeed
- See their careers as opportunities to make a difference and as paths to personal happiness and fulfilment

### **3.2 Career phase 2: pragmatic endurance phase (mid career)**

As O'Neil & Bilimoria, (2005) explained the driving force of phase 2, mid-career (ages 36-45), is pragmatic endurance. Women in this phase are pragmatic about their careers and are operating in production mode, doing what it takes to get it done. As O'Neil & Bilimoria, (2005) discussed, their career patterns are reflective of both ordered and emergent tendencies. They have a high relational context and are managing multiple responsibilities both personally and professionally. They may have been in the world of work long enough to recognise that no matter how internally driven they were (when they were in career phase 1), to a large degree their career development is now impacted by others; professional others such as managers and colleagues, as well as personal others such as spouses, children, families and friends.

### **3.3 Career phase 3: re-inventive contribution phase (advanced career)**

The driving force of phase 3, advanced career (ages 46-60) is re-inventive contribution (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005). As O'Neil & Bilimoria, (2005) discussed the women in this phase are focused on contributing to their organisations, their families and their communities. They are most likely to attribute others, personally and professionally, as having had input in to the direction of their careers (external career locus) and are likely to reflect a stable, planned career path (ordered career pattern). The women in the re-inventive contribution phase have experienced their personal lives being subsumed by their professional lives at some point during their careers. They have advanced further into their careers; these women have re-conceptualised and reclaimed their careers in their lives as opportunities to contribute and to be of service to others without losing sight of themselves in the process.

O'Neil & Bilimoria's (2005) career development phases have been taken as the basis for this study in order to categorise the different stages of women's career development and to identify different career success factors in different career phases.

## **4. Research methodology**

### **4.1 Data collection**

Research objectives necessitated the identification of the career success factors of professional women in the UK construction industry. Career success factors refer in this study to factors that have helped to achieve career progressions within an organisation, such as getting promotion and climb up in the career ladder. A literature review was conducted for the purpose of identifying women's career success factors in other sectors such as marketing, finances and medicine. The review resulted were put together to rate the relative importance of those career success factors for women in construction industry. In addition to that specific career success factors, if women in construction wanted to highlight, room was provide for that within the questionnaire. Career success factors in women in construction are shown in the Table 4.

The data were collected from senior project managers, geotechnical engineers, senior highway engineer, quantity surveyors, chartered civil engineers. The method used for the collection of information was a structured e-questionnaire. The e-questionnaire was modified after an initial pilot survey and structured interviews with females' professionals in the construction industry. This was also used as a way to test the construct validity of the need of training and development activities for females' professionals. The questionnaire sought demographic characteristics of the job title, education qualifications, age category, number of children and years of experience in the construction industry. The questionnaire also contained specific questions about the level of importance of the career success factors in their career. A scale of one to seven was used to measure the level of importance of the 33 career success factors. In addition to that, in the questionnaire, room was provided in order to identify the any specific career success factors other than listed. If respondents

identified any specific career success factor, they were asked to rank them according to the scale. The respondents were asked to tick a number on the scale which reflected their opinions regarding the level of importance of the career success factors for their career advancement.

The survey sample was recruited from the personal contacts of the researcher and the supervisors, through networks built up in education and industrial conferences and workshops, and through public domains such as websites and databases. Further, a snowballing technique was also used to get more contacts through the initially contacted participants. Once the survey sample database was developed, the formal invitation sent to each participant; according to their responds and voluntary to participate for the research has been taken in to consideration. Participants who were really interest to join the research have sent a participant information sheet, web link for the e-questionnaire survey.

## 4.2 Data analysis

To clarify survey findings, the women's career advancement has been divided in to three career phases: idealism phase, endurance phase and reinventive phases. Table 3 shows the proportions of survey respondents. The response rate was over 30% which is considered appropriate because of the nature of the information required and the lukewarm response to questionnaire surveys in construction generally.

*Table 3: Proportion of respondents*

<i>Women's career advancement phase</i>	<i>Respondents</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Idealism Phase</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>32.26</i>
<i>Endurance Phase</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>32.26</i>
<i>Reinventive phase</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>35.48</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>100.00</i>

### 4.2.1 Women's career success factors in the UK construction industry

The seven point scale mentioned earlier was transformed to relative importance indices using the relative index ranking technique, to determine the ranks of the career success factors. The mean and standard deviation of each need are not suitable statistics to determine overall rankings because they do not reflect any relationship between them. The relative importance indices were calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Relative importance index} = \frac{\sum W}{A \times N}$$

Table 4: career success factors in idealism, endurance and reinventive phases

Career success factors	Idealism Phase		Endurance Phase		Reinventive Phase	
	<i>RII</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>RII</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>RII</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<i>Ability to bring teams together</i>	0.71	5	0.86	3	0.90	2
<i>ability to take risks</i>	0.50	7	0.71	5	0.76	5
<i>Ability to work with people</i>	1.00	1	1.00	1	0.90	2
<i>Accessible to Training and Development</i>	0.86	3	0.79	4	0.71	6
<i>Adaptability</i>	0.93	2	0.79	4	0.90	2
<i>Age</i>	0.29	8	0.64	6	0.43	9
<i>Communication skills</i>	0.86	3	1.00	1	0.81	4
<i>Competence</i>	0.79	4	0.93	2	0.90	2
<i>Confidence</i>	0.86	3	0.93	2	0.90	2
<i>Dedication</i>	0.86	3	0.93	2	0.86	3
<i>Direction</i>	0.79	4	0.79	4	0.76	5
<i>Experience</i>	0.71	5	0.86	3	0.76	5
<i>Flexible working arrangement</i>	0.71	5	0.50	7	0.76	5
<i>Focus</i>	0.86	3	0.86	3	0.86	3
<i>Gender</i>	0.21	9	0.21	8	0.38	10
<i>General industry knowledge</i>	0.86	3	0.64	6	0.67	7
<i>Good mix of skills</i>	0.79	4	0.79	4	0.90	2
<i>Hard work</i>	0.79	4	0.64	6	0.90	2
<i>Having a track record</i>	0.86	3	0.86	3	0.71	6
<i>Honesty</i>	0.71	5	0.86	3	0.86	3
<i>Integrity</i>	0.79	4	0.93	2	0.86	3
<i>Intelligence</i>	0.86	3	0.64	6	0.86	3
<i>Leadership skills</i>	0.93	2	0.71	5	0.90	2
<i>Logically approaching business problems</i>	0.86	3	0.64	6	0.86	3
<i>Managing resources</i>	0.71	5	0.50	7	0.86	3
<i>Networking</i>	0.79	4	0.79	4	0.86	3
<i>Right place at the right time</i>	0.79	4	0.71	5	0.76	5
<i>Sensitive to other people</i>	0.64	6	0.71	5	0.81	4
<i>Strategic vision</i>	0.79	4	0.50	7	0.95	1
<i>Supportive line management</i>	0.93	2	0.79	4	0.86	3
<i>Taking opportunities</i>	0.93	2	0.93	2	0.90	2
<i>Technical knowledge</i>	0.79	4	0.79	4	0.71	6
<i>Upgrading educational qualifications</i>	0.64	6	0.50	7	0.50	8

Where W is the weighting given to each factor by respondents, ranking from 1 to 7, A is the highest weight (i.e. 7 in the study) and N is the total number of samples. Based on above equation, the relative importance index (RII) will be derived that ranges from 0 to 1. Examining the indices (Table 4), it can be seen that some career success factors are more important than others. In different career phases, importances of career success factors are different from each other.

The research findings are grouped into three categories, the critical career success factors, moderately important career success factors and the least important career success factors. This categorisation was undertaken in order to show the critical career success factors of women in the industry and to advance their career define those which are less important for those who want to develop their career in the construction industry. The practical implication from this categorisation is that professionals can see those that have been most important, and what they could develop.

#### 4.2.1.1 The critical career success factors

The career success factors of this group were rated over 0.80 on RII and are presented in table 5, rank order with the highest ratings first. Taking the relative importance indices as a measure of the importance of the career success factors of the professional women in the UK construction industry, “ability to work with people” ranked the most important career success factor with an overall index of 1.00 in idealism and endurance phase. In the reinventive phase, the most important career success factor was “strategic vision” with an overall index of 0.95. In idealism phase “Adaptability”, “Leadership skills”, “Supportive line management” and “Taking opportunities” were identified RII rank of 0.93. Rest of career success factors in idealism phase with the RII rank of 0.86 and those were “Accessible to T&D”, “Communication skills”, “Confidence”, “Dedication”, “Focus”, “General industry knowledge”, “Having a track record”, “Intelligence”, “Logically approaching business problems”. In endurance phase RII rank of 0.93 were identified “Competence”, “Confidence”, “Dedication”, “Integrity” and “Taking opportunities”. Rest of 5 career success factors were identified with RII rank of 0.86 and those were “Ability to bring teams together”, “Experience”, “Focus”, “Having a track record” and “Honesty” in endurance phase. In reinventive career phase, 9 out of 21 career success factors were identified with RII rank of 0.90 and 0.86 each. However, “communication skills” and “sensitive to other people” were identified RII rank of 0.81 in the reinventive career phase.

#### 4.2.1.2 Moderately important career success factors

The next career success factors were ranked from 0.50 to 0.80 and are listed in ranked order in the table 6. In the idealism phase, 9 out of 16 career success factors RII rank was 0.79. Those were “competence”, “Direction”, “Good mix of skills”, “hard work”, “integrity”, “networking”, “right place at the right time”, “strategic vision” and “technical knowledge”. 5 of rest of 7 career success factors ranked were 0.71, those were “ability to bring team together”, “experience”, “flexible working arrangement”, “honesty”, and “managing resources”. Remaining career success factors were “sensitive to other people” and “upgrading educational qualifications” with the RII rank of 0.64. Similarly, in endurance phase, 7 out of 16 career success factors RII rank was 0.79. “Accessible to Training and Development”, “Adaptability”, “Direction”, “Good mix of skills”, “Networking”,

“Supportive line management” and “Technical knowledge” were grouped within the RII rank of 0.79. RII rank of 0.71 of career success factors were identified as “Ability to take risks”, “Leadership skills”, “Right place at the right time” and “Sensitive to other people”. “Age”, “General industry knowledge”, “Hard work”, “Intelligence” and “Logically approaching business problems” were identified as RII rank of 0.64 in the endurance career phase. In reinventive career phase 5 career success factors were 0.76 of RII rank. Those were “Right place at the right time”, “Experience”, “Ability to take risks”, “Flexible working arrangement” and “Direction”.

*Table 5: The critical career success factors*

<i>Critical career success factors</i>		
<i>Idealism Phase</i>	<i>Endurance Phase</i>	<i>Reinventive phase</i>
<i>Ability to work with people</i>	<i>Ability to work with people</i>	<i>Strategic vision</i>
<i>Adaptability</i>	<i>Communication skills</i>	<i>Ability to bring teams together</i>
<i>Leadership skills</i>	<i>Competence</i>	<i>Ability to work with people</i>
<i>Supportive line management</i>	<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Adaptability</i>
<i>Taking opportunities</i>	<i>Dedication</i>	<i>Competence</i>
<i>Accessible to T&amp;D</i>	<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Confidence</i>
<i>Communication skills</i>	<i>Taking opportunities</i>	<i>Good mix of skills</i>
<i>Confidence</i>	<i>Ability to bring teams together</i>	<i>Hard work</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Leadership skills</i>
<i>Focus</i>	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Taking opportunities</i>
<i>General industry knowledge</i>	<i>Having a track record</i>	<i>Dedication</i>
<i>Having a track record</i>	<i>Honesty</i>	<i>Focus</i>
<i>Intelligence</i>		<i>Honesty</i>
<i>Logically approaching business problems</i>		<i>integrity</i>
		<i>Intelligence</i>
		<i>Logically approaching business problems</i>
		<i>Managing resources</i>
		<i>Networking</i>
		<i>Supportive line management</i>
		<i>Communication skills</i>
		<i>Sensitive to other people</i>

Table 6: Moderately important career success factors

<i>Moderately important career success factors</i>		
<i>Idealism Phase</i>	<i>Endurance Phase</i>	<i>Reinventive phase</i>
<i>Competence</i>	<i>Accessible to Training and Development</i>	<i>Right place at the right time</i>
<i>Direction</i>	<i>Adaptability</i>	<i>Experience</i>
<i>Good mix of skills</i>	<i>Direction</i>	<i>Ability to take risks</i>
<i>Hard work</i>	<i>Good mix of skills</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangement</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Networking</i>	<i>Direction</i>
<i>Networking</i>	<i>Supportive line management</i>	<i>Having a track record</i>
<i>Right place at the right time</i>	<i>Technical knowledge</i>	<i>Accessible to Training and Development</i>
<i>Strategic vision</i>	<i>Ability to take risks</i>	<i>Technical knowledge</i>
<i>Technical knowledge</i>	<i>Leadership skills</i>	<i>General industry knowledge</i>
<i>Ability to bring teams together</i>	<i>Right place at the right time</i>	
<i>Experience</i>	<i>Sensitive to other people</i>	
<i>Flexible working arrangement</i>	<i>Age</i>	
<i>Honesty</i>	<i>General industry knowledge</i>	
<i>Managing resources</i>	<i>Hard work</i>	
<i>Sensitive to other people</i>	<i>Intelligence</i>	
<i>Upgrading educational qualifications</i>	<i>Logically approaching business problems</i>	

#### 4.2.1.3 The least important career success factors

The following career success factors proved to be the least important for the women in construction industry, listed in rank order. RII rank of 0.50 were identified in idealism phase as “ability to take risk” , endurance phase as “Flexible working arrangement”, “Managing resources”, “Strategic vision” and “Upgrading educational qualifications” and in reinventive phase “ upgrading educational qualifications”. In idealism phase “age” RII rank was 0.29 and “gender” RII rank was 0.21. Similarly, “gender” RII rank was 0.21 in endurance phase. In reinventive phase, “age” and “gender” have RII rank of 0.43 and 0.38 respectively.

Table 7: The least important career success factors

<i>The least important career success factors</i>		
<i>Idealism Phase</i>	<i>Endurance Phase</i>	<i>Reinventive phase</i>
<i>Ability to take risks</i> <i>Age</i> <i>Gender</i>	<i>Flexible working arrangement</i> <i>Managing resources</i> <i>Strategic vision</i> <i>Upgrading educational qualifications</i> <i>Gender</i>	<i>Upgrading educational qualifications</i> <i>Age</i> <i>Gender</i>

## 5. Discussion of results

### 5.1 The critical career success factors

Following critical career success factors are common for three career advancement phases. Those all factors are personal strategies.

- Ability to work with people
- Taking opportunities
- Communication skills
- Confidence
- Dedication
- Focus

Females who are in the early careers, mid careers and advanced careers have been identified importance of being able to work with people in their work place, in order to get success from their careers. “Ability to work with people” is an essential element for anybody in the any industry, without that it is very difficult to get the career advancement. This argument is supported by Wood (2006), she discovered in her research there is recognition of the necessity to work “with and through other people” rather than to simply rely on personal experience, in order to advance the career.

Communication skills are also an important career success to get the career advancement. According to Wood (2003) female managers believed communication skills and “drive” (ambition, endurance, discretion, and specific skills) are more important than did their male counterparts.

The literature has underscored that male managers have more confidence in a managerial role than female managers (Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Snyder, 1993). Therefore, it is vital factor for female managers to build up confidence in order to get success in the career.

The following critical career success factors have been identified by the female in idealism and reinventive phases.

- Adaptability
- Leadership skills
- Supportive line management
- Intelligence
- Logically approaching business problems

“Except supportive line management”, all other factors are personal strategies for career success. Early career and advanced career females have identified “leadership skills” as critical career success factor. Once female begin their career in the industry and once they are in the later part of the career and in order to climb up in the career ladder need of leadership skills are essential. This argument is supported by Wood (2003), “Leadership skills” has been identified as an important factor in females’ career advancement .However, it is not considered as a critical career success factor in women in the mid career phase. Therefore, it is an interest to find out why women in mid career “leadership skills” are not considered as a critical career success factor.

“Competence”, “honesty & integrity” and “ability to bring teams” together have been identified as critical career success factors for women in both endurance phase and reinventive phase. Those are important career success factors to the going up in the career ladder.

In advanced career, “strategic vision” has been identified the critical career success factor. Women in advanced careers see careers as learning opportunities and as chances to make a difference to others (O’Neil and Bilimoria,2005). Therefore, clear strategic vision; have helped them to get success from their careers.

The implications for the industry of the critical career success factors illustrate which ones are seen as important for female who want to going up in the career ladder. Additionally, organisations which are offering training programs could include modules that would support the development of these strategies.

## **5.2 Moderately important career success factors**

In this category of career success factors; direction and right place at the right time are common for three career phases. According to Wood and Lindorff (2001) females appeared to reflect more of the “individual qualities” female managers noted as important in achieving promotions.

Following are identified by women in idealism and endurance phase as their moderately important career success factors.

- Good mix of skills
- Hard work
- Networking
- Technical knowledge
- Experience
- Sensitive to other people

Ability to take risks, general industry knowledge and accessible to Training and Development have been identified by the women in both endurance and reinventive phases. While, flexible working arrangement is common for endurance phase and reinventive career phase. Though, it is not a critical factor, it has been identified as moderately important especially for women who have children.

## **5.3 The least important career success factors**

“Gender” has been identified the least important career success factor in all three career phases. This provides the important finding of this research as “gender”, shouldn’t be considered as an important factor and also shouldn’t be a gender prejudice, especially for the construction industry, though it is a male dominated industry. This finding is supported by the Management theory which, Hearn (1994) argues gender issues neglected throughout the twentieth century. However, He comments that it is truly amazing how men's domination of management has not become a serious topic of concern in management theory and management thought. The result of the domination of management as being male paradigm is that women managers are out of place, in foreign territory, “travellers in a male world” (Marshall, 1984, quoted in Wajcman, 1998).

Further, “age” considers as the least important career success factor in early career and advanced career. This could be due to Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 implemented in the organisation. However, in mid career “age” has become as moderately important career success factors. Therefore, why this age discrimination act didn’t implement for the mid career or is there any other reason for that. Because of that it is vital to be investigated further.

Moreover, “upgrading education qualifications” has been identified as the least important in mid career and advanced career. However, it is moderately important in early career. Once you enter in to the industry as a beginner upgrading education qualification is an important factor to get promotion since you don’t have the work experience as such. While you are in the industry for a longer period of time you gain the experience and you know about the industry and employers. Therefore, getting career advancement is easier with your experience and upgrading education qualifications are less important according to above findings.

## **6. Conclusions**

This research has outlined career success factors of women in the construction industry, which has helped them to achieve career advancements. The implication of this research to the industry, with regard to training it is clear that individuals are constantly striving to improve their skills. Training opportunities may be one way in which organisations can look assist the retention of those developing a professional career. If opportunities are available within the organisation, employees will not look elsewhere in the external labour market. Related to the retention of staff, it does not appear that money is a motivating factor in the development of careers. Whilst salaries would be important in attracting staff, they are not the main driver behind career advancement.

## **7. The way forward**

Having identifying the critical career success factors and moderately important career success factors next step of this research is to explore need of training and development activities to develop those career success factors. For instance; one of the critical career success factors of idealism phase is “ability to work with people”. Then next step is to explore need of training and development activities in order to improve ability to work with people within the organisation. Once those training and development activities have been identified next stage of this research will be based around developing a training and development framework to advance women’s career in the construction industry.

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