

A Study on the Opportunities and Challenges of Women Empowerment in Myanmar's Government Sector

Yay Pyar Oo*¹ and Ohn Mar Thein²

Department of Economics, Sagaing University of Education

No. 784, Padamya Quarter, Sagaing, Myanmar

* Corresponding author: ypo.hpw@gmail.com

Abstract

Women empowerment refers to equipping women with the tools they need to gain power and control over their own lives. This study aimed to identify the opportunities and challenges of women empowerment among public officials in selected ministries of Myanmar's government sector. A descriptive method was employed, using both primary and secondary data. In this study, a simple random sampling method is used. The findings revealed that women who are working in some ministries benefits from opportunities for women empowerment, such as the freedom to make decisions, express their opinions at work, and access equal leadership positions with men in management and leadership levels. However, challenges persist, such as the influence of male-dominant culture limiting women's leadership involvement, difficulties balancing work and family due to excessive work pressure, and limited time for networking to discuss employment opportunities. The study found that opportunities for women empowerment outweigh the challenges faced by public officials in the selected departments under some ministries. This study recommended that the government and other relevant bodies should establish equal criteria for promotion and professional development for both women and men at decision-making levels. Encouraging women empowerment is important as it enhances the efficiency of government organizations and contribute significantly to national development.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Opportunities, Challenges, Independence Decision Making, Carrier Gaps

Introduction

Women empowerment refers to enhancing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of women as individuals and within communities. It has become a significant topic in many countries nowadays (Sarkar, 2019). Nations, businesses, communities, and groups can benefit from implementing programs and policies that embrace the concept of women empowerment. Empowerment is one of the main practical concerns in addressing human rights and development issues. Furthermore, empowering women is essential for fostering the health and social development of families, communities, and countries (Mahbub, 2021).

Women empowerment is important because women aren't getting what they deserve. Women population constitutes around 50% of the world population. A large number of women around the world are unemployed and unequal opportunity for women at workplaces. Previously, women were not allowed higher education like men. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to show their talents which will not

only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large. Today, many women are holding the top positions in both government and private sectors (United Nations, 2022).

In the development of a nation, one of the most important elements is women empowerment and education, government rules, the role of nongovernment organizations and politicians are among the significant tools for women empowerment. Women empowerment comes from the root of the idea of power. Women's empowerment does not intentionally have to derogate men's power; it requires more women and men working together to improve the status of both genders for the sake of a country's development (Shunmuga & Alagarsamy, 2015).

Women in Myanmar actively pursue their careers in both public and private sectors, engaging in a wide range of professions. Women enjoyed relatively equal status in the legal, economic, and culture fields throughout Myanmar. Women where some development activities were not only desirable but also essential as well to speed up development process. In Myanmar, women face many challenges, including discriminating social norms, gender-based violence, inequality in education, work and employment, as well as minimal representation in politics and at decision-making level, among others. Many people in Myanmar still believe that men are nobler than women and are given preferences in inheritance and education, employment and politics. Therefore, this study focuses on the opportunities and challenges of women empowerment in public officials from selected departments at different levels under some ministries. Especially, this research attempts to meet the following objective, to find out the opportunities and challenges of women empowerment in public officials from selected departments under some ministries in Myanmar.

Literature Review

Women empowerment is a comprehensive concept and multidimensional. Empowerment expresses at different level and also in different aspects of life. It is based on gender equality, ability of self-assertion and enabling skill development. Women empowerment has its origin in their subordinate position in patriarchy and associated ill treatments and non-recognition to their contributions. It is important that the additional positive contribution of women general development by enabling their participations meaningfully in development process. Significantly, the promotion of women's empowerment has concerns with development goals of equality, social justice and freedom. World Bank (2001) in its reports identifies gender equality both as a development objective in itself and as means to promote, growth, reduce poverty and promote better Governance. As a means, women empowerment would be a contributing force to overall development of a nation (Reshi & Shuda, 2022).

Sharma and Mehta (2014) conducted a study entitled "Leadership: Determinants of Women Empowerment". The study aimed to identify the key factors that contribute to women empowerment and to examine the association of empowerment and leadership qualities of women. This study collected the responses from the sampled respondents across six domains using a five-point scale. These domains are sense of self and vision of future, mobility and visibility, economic security, status, and decision-making power within the household, ability to interact effectively in the public sphere, and participation in non-family groups. This study found that the women leaders are more likely to push back when they are overly bound by regulations and rules, engage in more risk taking and come up with innovative solutions. Women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done and

are more willing to take risks than male leaders. Women leader also were found to be more empathic and flexible, as well as stronger in interpersonal skills than their male counterparts.

Murthy (2017) conducted research on “Women Empowerment: Issues and Challenges in India”, to address this issue and enhance the socio-economic status of women. The study found that there are various issues and problems which women generally face in the society in India. Some of the problems are selective abortion and female infanticide, sexual harassment, dowry and bride burning, disparity in education, domestic violence, child marriages, inadequate nutrition, low status in the family, women are considered as inferior to men and status of widows. Women are continuously facing many problems even after having self-confidence, individuality, self-respect, personality, capacity, talent, and efficiency more than men. They are facing problems in their daily life even after they are given equal rights and opportunities like men by the Constitution of India.

Nigist Melese (2019) studied “Challenges and Opportunities of Women Empowerment in Leadership Position in Ethiopia”. The purpose of the study was to explore the key challenges and opportunities for Women Empowerment in Leadership Position in Ethiopia. The study found that there are some opportunities of women empowerment in leadership position in Ethiopia. The researcher stated that to ensure gender equality and to empower women in Ethiopia, the government has taken a number of measures recently which includes: affirmative action, quotas, advocacy, lobbying and awareness creation in order to increase the participation of women in the decision-making structures of the country. Ethiopia has increased women’s participation in decision making activities in various sectors.

Misikir Getachew (2021) studied “Challenges of Women Empowerment in Public Service Organization (A Case of Woreda 01 of Nifas Silk Lafto Sub City)”. The aim of the study is to enforce women's capacity in the public service organization and increase the amount of women participation in leadership role that will achieve gender equality as per agenda 2030. Findings from this study explain that women employees have challenges from her own weakness, organizational challenges, societal perspectives, and environmental factors that limit women upward move as men coworkers. Here are the major contributors that make the women remain incapable such as career gaps, double burden responsibilities, poor organizational women inclusive policy, gender discrimination, economic problem, lack of enabling environment, minimal husband/family support and societal perception are the major factors that deny gender equality. Besides, male-dominant culture and stereotyping are also other contributing factors that exclude half of the workforce which has not been seen. As a result, female employees are discouraged to participate in decision making role in an organization. To mitigate these challenges, the individual, the organization, and the government should collaborate and build a foundation of an enabling environment that outshine women employees and achieve gender equality upon agenda 2030.

Methodology

The descriptive method was based on primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a survey questionnaire administrated to 150 women public officials, selected using a simple random sampling method. Secondary data are gathered from relevant websites, officials documents, departmental reports, and articles from libraries. The analysis was conducted using SPSS 25, focusing on women public officials holding five key decision-making positions: Assistant Director, Deputy Director, Director, Deputy Director General, and Director General.

Questionnaire items were measured using a standard five-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Findings

The data is collected by interview method with the use of structured questionnaires. The structured questionnaires consist of two sections. In section one, the general information of the selected ministry department such as marital status, education, position and work experiences and so on. Section two consists of information concerning women empowerment. There are four factors and include (40) items. The names of these factors are Independent of Decision Making, Professional Growth, Culture Barriers and Carrier Gaps. For this study, (150) women in public officials from different departments under some ministries will be selected to study the opportunities and challenges of women empowerment in public sector organizations.

Demographic Profile Information

To study the opportunities and challenges of women empowerment, descriptive statistics was used. The demographic characteristics of the 150 respondents are summarized below. Table 1 indicated that 52 % (n=78) of the respondents are married, while 48% (n=72) are single. In term of age distribution, 22.67% (n=34) are aged between 30-39 years, 44% (n=66) fall within the 40-49 age group, and 33.33% (n=50) are 50 years old and above. Regarding educational qualifications, 55% (n=83) hold a bachelor degree, while 45% (n=67) possess master and PhD degree. In terms of job position, the majority of respondents are Deputy Director with 44% (n=65) followed by Assistant Director at 41% (n=62), Director at 13% (n=20), Deputy Director General at 0.67% (n=1), and Director General at 1.33% (n=2). Additionally, working experience varies among the respondents, 40% (n=60) have between 16-25 years of experience, 39% (n=58) have up to 15 years of experience, and 21% (n=31) have over 26 years work experience.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=150)

Profile	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Marital Status	Single	72	48.0
	Married	78	52.0
Age	30-39 years	34	22.67
	40-49 years	66	44.0
	50 and above	50	33.33
Education	Bachelor	83	55.0
	Master & PhD	67	45.0
Position	Assistant Director	62	41.0
	Deputy Director	65	44.0
	Director	20	13.0
	Deputy Director General	1	0.67
	Director General	2	1.33
Work Experience	Under 15 years	59	39.0
	Between 16 & 25 years	60	40.0
	Over 26 years	31	21.0

Source: Author

The Opportunities and Challenges of Women Empowerment

In my research area, they were asked (10) questions for each opportunity and challenge of women in public officials under some ministries. Two factors used for this analysis of the opportunities for women empowerment such as Independent Decision Making and Professional Growth. Table 2 shows the respondents have expressed their opportunities for women empowerment regarding independence decision making factor. The mean value for each statement described the opportunities for women empowerment of public officials for some ministries.

Table 2: Independence Decision Making (N=150)

Sr. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
1.	As a female employee, she has the right to make independent decisions in the workplace.	1	7	9	84	49	4.15
2.	Women with more work experience and higher levels of education have more opportunities to make independent decisions in the workplace.	2	2	15	91	40	4.10
3.	As a female employee, she has the opportunity to fully demonstrate her leadership skills in their department or organization.	1	3	3	98	45	4.22
4.	It is important that women have the freedom to express their opinions about independent decision-making.	-	9	12	91	38	4.05
5.	As a female employee, she is the freedom to use her skills and knowledge in the workplace.	1	4	4	86	55	4.27
6.	As a female employee, she has the right the opportunity to actively participate in social and religious associations.	3	4	35	96	22	3.87
7.	As a female employee, the decision and the results of the service in the workplace are recognized equally with the male officers.	3	7	21	82	37	3.95
8.	Women's network enables them to be effective in their leadership position and decision-making ability.	2	7	5	98	38	4.09
9.	The more work experiences the woman has, the more likely to be effective decision-making.	1	3	5	75	66	4.35
10.	As a female employee, the freedom to decision-making gives women more confidence in their workplace.	3	1	6	90	50	4.22
Overall Mean							4.13

Source: Author

Among of the mean values of these ten statements, “The more work experiences the woman has, the more likely to be effective decision-making” is the highest mean value 4.35 and “As a female employee, she is the freedom to use her skills and knowledge in the workplace” is the second highest mean value 4.27. It means that women in public officials are independent and free to make decisions at work, freedom to express their opinions, freely can use their skills and knowledge in their workplace. The freedom to decision-making gives women more confidence and higher levels of education have more opportunities to make independent decisions in the workplace. As they may make decisions on their own, women in the workplace have the chance to fully exhibit their leadership abilities within their department or organization. They also have greater confidence in the results of their decisions. Furthermore, it was observed that women in the workplace are recognized equally with males for decision

making results in their department or organization and fully receive the same recognition for their contributions to the department or organization.

Table 3 shows the respondents have expressed their opportunities for women empowerment regarding professional growth factor. The mean value for each statement described the opportunities for women empowerment of public officials for some ministries.

Table 3: Professional Growth (N=150)

Sr. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
1.	As a female employee, opportunity and full education access to the workforce and recognition of women's contributions are essential.	1	3	27	106	16	3.89
2.	As a female employee, she is getting learning opportunities to study and advance in her current department/organization.	2	1	6	87	54	4.27
3.	Being able to learn skills and other knowledge as a female employee is an opportunity for personal and professional growth.	2	-	4	76	68	4.39
4.	As a female employee, if the opportunity to study in the department/organization, she will be more effective and successful in her work.	1	-	32	86	31	3.97
5.	The department/ organization will be able to develop with the leadership of female employees.	1	2	12	101	34	4.10
6.	Society has a positive perception towards women leaders and encourages more women to be empowered.	1	1	5	83	60	4.33
7.	Equal gender equality and employment opportunities in government organizations are important factors for women's professional growth.	1	1	6	78	64	4.35
8.	A female employee's decision and work results should be recognized on an equal footing with a male employee.	1	5	21	82	41	4.05
9.	I believe that when a female employee's decisions and results in the workplace are recognized on an equal footing with male employees, women's performance and confidence will increase.	-	8	20	86	36	4.00
10.	A female employee is entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out important duties.	2	2	4	84	58	4.29
Overall Mean							4.17

Source: Author

Among of the mean values of these ten statements, “Being able to learn skills and other knowledge as a female employee is an opportunity for personal and professional growth” is the highest mean value 4.39 and “Equal gender equality and employment opportunities in government organizations are important factors for women's professional growth” is the second highest mean value 4.35. It means that the respondents agree that professional growth is achieved by allowing female employees the chance to attend further education and training while carrying out their job responsibilities. Women in the workplace have the opportunity to acquire other knowledge and professional growth in their current department/organization, thereby increasing their ability to carry out important responsibilities within the department. It is also noted that society has a positive view of women serving in leadership positions because they can perform their duties better. In addition, women having equal rights with men in

employment opportunities in government organizations is an important factor in women's professional growth.

Overall Mean of Opportunities of Women Empowerment in Public Officials

According to the survey data, overall mean of the study area is summarized in Table 4. The findings highlight key opportunities of women empowerment among public officials, particularly in areas such as independent decision-making and professional growth.

Table 4: Overall Mean for Opportunities of Women Empowerment

Sr. No.	The Opportunities of Women Empowerment	Overall Mean
1.	Independence Decision Making	4.13
2.	Professional Growth	4.17
	Average	4.15

Source: Author

According to Table 4, the overall mean for the opportunities of women empowerment is 4.15. This means that most women working in various government ministries perceive having meaningful opportunities for women empowerment. These include independent and free to make decisions at work, freedom to express their opinions, freely can use their skills and knowledge in their workplace, achieved by allowing female employees the chance to attend further education and training while carrying out their job responsibilities, women have the right to equal leadership positions with men in the management and leadership levels and employment opportunities.

The Challenges on Women Empowerment in Public Officials for Study Area

Two main factors were considered in analyzing the challenges to women empowerment, such as culture barriers and career gaps. Table 5 presents the respondents have expressed their challenges for women empowerment regarding Culture Barriers in their workplace. The mean value for each statement described the challenges for women empowerment of public officials for some ministries.

Table 5: Culture Barriers (N=150)

Sr. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
1.	Women leaders face challenges that society perceives women as less capable and less confident.	2	7	20	91	30	3.93
2.	The stereotype and male dominant culture affect the women not to be involved in decision-making role.	1	2	22	88	37	4.05
3.	In traditional, male-dominated cultures, men are held to a lower standard than women are the main barrier to career advancement and success for women.	2	-	2	81	65	4.38
4.	Organizational culture and trends favor the appointment of men in decision-making matters.	-	5	34	89	22	3.85
5.	Women lack confidence and are afraid to ask for what they deserve and needs.	2	3	14	95	36	4.07
6.	A male-dominated culture affects women's performance and qualities.	1	3	1	122	23	4.09
7.	Male dominated societies hinder the women empowerment of the public sector.	2	10	14	109	15	3.83

Submitted: 21 May 2024

Accepted: 2 January 2025

Published: 30 June 2025

Sr. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
8.	Fewer opportunities of job for female are one of the major factors that affect the women empowerment in the public sector.	1	8	24	91	26	3.89
9.	Women is responsible for home duties is one of the major barriers of women empowerment.	1	3	5	76	65	4.34
10.	Lack of effective family or husband support causes a barrier to effective women empowerment of the public sector.	1	4	14	113	18	3.95
Overall Mean							4.03

Source: Author

According to Table 5, among of the mean values of these ten statements, “In traditional, male-dominated cultures, men are held to a lower standard than women are the main barrier to career advancement and success for women.” is found with the highest mean value 4.38 and the statement “Women is responsible for home duties is one of the major barriers of women empowerment” is found with the second highest mean value 4.34. It means that the respondents agree that not all opportunities are created equally for professional development between men and women. Discrimination creates barriers for women to advance in their career’s development. Moreover, traditional male-dominated cultures often hold men to lower standards, making it more challenging for women to advance. This is reflected as one of the most significant barriers to empowerment. Male-dominated societal structures hinder women’s empowerment, particularly in public-sector roles. This study found that limited job opportunities for women are a significant hindrance to their empowerment, particularly in professional fields and a lack of effective support from family or spouses limits women's ability to achieve empowerment and leadership roles.

Table 6 shows the respondents have expressed their challenges for women empowerment regarding Career Gaps in their work place. The mean value for each statement described the challenges for women empowerment of public officials for some ministries.

Table 6: Career Gaps (N=150)

Sr. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
1.	Women employees’ academic qualifications and work performance are not equal to men coworkers in the public organizations.	1	9	36	77	27	3.80
2.	Women employees lack courage and confidence towards herself career development and personal growth.	3	3	14	81	49	4.13
3.	Work experience, education qualification and networking are the major criteria for getting the leadership position in the organization.	3	-	6	61	80	4.43
4.	Lack of flexible working hours arrangement increases the number of leave women and contributes to less women's empowerment.	-	10	39	81	20	3.74
5.	Women who work at an executive level need a flexible work schedule.	1	9	7	98	35	4.05
6.	Unequal career growth opportunities are one of the major factors in the career gap for women empowerment.	1	3	5	70	71	4.38
7.	Often, female employees do not take higher positions within organizations.	2	3	19	99	27	3.97

Submitted: 21 May 2024

Accepted: 2 January 2025

Published: 30 June 2025

Sr. No.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
8.	Gender bias in the workplace is one of the most significant barriers that hinder women's career advancement.	1	3	20	91	35	4.04
9.	Lack of management experience in female's employees is a barrier to women's participation in leadership positions.	2	-	4	73	71	4.41
10.	Women spend twice as much time as men on unpaid care work, which can significantly impact their work lives.	1	-	10	102	37	4.16
Overall Mean							4.11

Source: Author

According to table-6, among of the mean values of these ten statements, “Work experience, education qualification and networking are the major criteria for getting the team leader position in the organization” is found with the highest mean value 4.38 and the statement “Lack of management experience in female’s employees is a barrier to women's participation in leadership positions” is found with the second highest mean value 4.34. It means that a lack of management experience among female employees is often cited as a barrier to their participation in leadership roles. This reflects systemic gaps in training and mentorship opportunities for women. Women often face unequal opportunities for career advancement. This systemic issue limits their ability to achieve senior or leadership roles within organizations. Moreover, women spend significantly more time than men on unpaid care work. This disproportionate burden reduces their availability and focus on professional responsibilities, hindering their career progression. Workplace gender bias is a significant barrier to women’s career advancement. These biases reinforce traditional gender roles and limit recognition of women's contributions. This study found that the challenges to women's empowerment stem from a combination of societal expectations, workplace biases, lack of institutional support, and systemic inequalities. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions to build confidence, promote equal opportunities, and provide flexible work environments.

Over Mean of Challenges of Women Empowerment in Public Officials

According to the survey data, overall mean score of challenges of women empowerment for some ministries are described in the following Table 7.

Table 7: Overall Mean Score of Challenges of Women Empowerment

Sr. No.	Challenges of Women Empowerment	Overall Mean
1.	Culture Barriers	4.03
2.	Career Gaps	4.11
Average		4.07

Source: Author

According to Table 7, the overall mean for the challenges of women empowerment is 4.07. This means that many women working in government ministries face challenges for women empowerment, such as receiving lower performance evaluations, less recognition, and fewer job opportunities compared to men. A male-dominated workplace culture influences women's involvement in the leadership role. Additionally, women struggle to balance work and family responsibilities due to excessive work pressure, lack of time for themselves, and access to information about employment opportunities is also relatively weak.

Conclusion

This study indicated that most of women who are working in some ministries have some opportunities and faces some challenges for women empowerment. The opportunities of women empowerment are independent and free to make decisions at work, freedom to express their opinions, freely can use their skills and knowledge in their workplace, achieved by allowing female employees the chance to attend further education and training while carrying out their job responsibilities, women have the right to equal leadership positions with men in the management and leadership levels and employment opportunities. Furthermore, one of the key challenges to women empowerment is traditional male-dominated cultures, which often hold men to lower standards. This is reflected as one of the most significant barriers to empowerment. Male-dominated societal structures hinder women's empowerment, particularly in public-sector roles. A lack of management experience among female employees is often cited as a barrier to their participation in leadership roles. This reflects systemic gaps in training and mentorship opportunities for women. Women often face unequal opportunities for career advancement. This systemic issue limits their ability to achieve senior or leadership roles within organizations. Moreover, women spend significantly more time than men on unpaid care work. This disproportionate burden reduces their availability and focus on professional responsibilities, hindering their career progression. Workplace gender bias is a significant barrier to women's career advancement. These biases reinforce traditional gender roles and limit recognition of women's contributions. The most crucial and essential instrument for women's empowerment is education and it raises women's awareness of their obligations and rights. Quality education without discrimination offers an opportunity for women to contribute to the development process and boosts the movement of women in society. Personal and professional growth in the workplace is also a positive factor for women empowerment and women need to spend more time improving their professional growth to fulfill career gaps. Women in public officials need to study and acquire knowledge continuously to improve women empowerment and they should also pay attention to be able to carry out their work efficiently. Society must take initiative to create a climate in which there is no gender discrimination and women have full opportunities of self-decision making and participating in social, political and economic life of the country with a sense of equality. Women empowerment should be actively encouraged, as it enhances the functioning of government organizations and plays a significant role in national development.

The finding of the study indicated that the opportunities for women empowerment are more than the challenges of women empowerment in public officials from selected departments under some ministries. Women in this field of study have access to opportunities such as being independent and free to make decisions at work, having the freedom to express their opinions, being able to use their knowledge and skills freely at work, and getting the same rights to leadership positions in management and employment as men. Then, there are the challenges to women's empowerment such as a male-dominated culture discourages women from decision-making roles and holds them to higher standards than men, significantly impacting their advancement. Women lack confidence and fear advocating for their needs, affecting their career progression. Societal expectations that women prioritize home duties over professional growth hinder empowerment. Women leaders are seen as less capable and confident due to societal perceptions, creating barriers to empowerment. Moreover, leadership positions heavily rely on work experience and networking, areas where women face systemic disadvantages. Inflexible work schedules and disproportionate care responsibilities hinder

women's career progression and gender bias and unequal career growth opportunities prevent women from attaining higher positions. For addressing cultural barriers, the governments need to implement campaigns to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality in society and workplaces and develop policies that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in leadership and decision-making roles. For reducing career gaps, the government should introduce family-friendly policies that support women in balancing their work and home responsibilities. This includes offering flexible work environments, such as part-time positions, remote work options, and adjusted working hours to better accommodate women's needs. By addressing these barriers, women can be empowered to bridge career gaps and achieve equitable representation in leadership roles and the workforce. This study suggested that the government and any other concerned body should set equal criteria for women and men about promotion issues and other professional development at the decision-making level.

Limitation and Future Research

The current research has several limitations. First, data were only collected solely from women in government ministries, which limits the scope of the findings. Future research should include women from the private sector, other industries, and the diverse occupational fields to provide a more comprehensive perspectives. Second, there are many factors can use for the analysis of the opportunities and challenges of women empowerment. Among them, only two factors can used for the analysis of the opportunities for women empowerment such as independent decision-making and professional growth and two factors used for the analysis of the challenges for women empowerment such as cultural barriers and career gaps. Thus, future research should explore additional relevant factors to gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges of women empowerment.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank my respectful gratitude to all members of BJSSH teams and to the University of Technology Sarawak (UTS) for their generous financial support.

References

- Getachew, M. (2021). Challenges of women empowerment in public service organization Ethiopia. *ST. Mary's University*, 1-59.
- Mahbub, M. (2021). Women empowerment, definition, theory, process, practice, and importance- an analysis. *Research Gate*, 9, 1-9.
- Melese, N. (2019). Challenges and opportunities of women empowerment in leadership position in Ethiopia. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 9, 21-30.
- Reshi, I. & Sudha, S. (2022). Women empowerment: a literature review. *International Journal of Economic, Business, Accounting, Agriculture Management and Sharia Administration (IJEBA)*, 2, 1353-1359
- Sarkar, M.A. (2019). Women empowerment in the 21st century in India: prospects and challenges. *International Journal of Social Sciences Arts & Humanities*, 7(2), 18-22.
- Sharma, P.M. (2014). Leadership: determinant of women empowerment. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, 18-25.
- Shunmuga, M. & Alagarsamy, S. (2015). Women empowerment: role of education. *International Journal of Management and Social Science*, 2(12), 76-85.

Murthy, A.T.S. (2017). Women empowerment: Issues and challenges. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 4(2), 68-89.

United Nations. (2022). Empowering women for sustainable peace. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Retrieved from <http://aiapacific.unwomen.org>