

**Prabhashini Wijewantha**

**Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Commerce  
and Management Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka**

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ROLE OF RELATIONSHIP NETWORKS ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

Despite women constituting more than half (approximately 57%) of the total estimated population of 21 million (Salary.lk, 2017), statistics from Sri Lanka regarding women in employment are very disappointing. According to the Gender Profile, the country produces almost 55.6% female graduates a year from the state university system disregarding the females graduating from other private higher education institutions (MacDonald, Wong, and Sheldon, 2015). But the women have not been able to sufficiently reap the benefits of their education when it comes to the circles of employment. Although Sri Lanka had played a lead role in appointing women to positions of top political leadership, only a very limited number (below 10% according to Mitra and Kumar, 2004; 17% according to Gupta, Koshal, and Koshal, 2006) of females have reached the senior managerial and administrative echelons in both the public and private sectors of the country. Taking these statistics into consideration, it is obvious that there is a huge underrepresentation of women at the top strata of both public and private sector organizations in Sri Lanka (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2015). These trends associated with women in employment in Sri Lanka are in parity with the global trend where only 22% of the senior management positions are held by women (Grant Thornton International, 2015). In the Sri Lankan private sector, only 8% of the senior management positions are held by women, whereas that figure is 19% in the public sector (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015). Though this appears to be a very low percentage value, surprisingly, the figures are far above the largest country in the region, in terms of geography and demography – India, which has only 3%