

**Career Development for Asian Women
in the New Zealand Hospitality Industry**

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Abstract

This study explores the career development experiences of Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry, focusing on the barriers they face and the strategies they use to navigate and advance within the sector. A systematic literature review informed the theoretical foundation, drawing on Social Role Theory and Glass Ceiling Theory to guide both the research design and analysis. Social Role Theory explains how culturally defined gender roles influence workplace expectations and behaviours, often limiting women's opportunities. Glass Ceiling Theory highlights the invisible barriers that hinder women, especially from minority backgrounds, from reaching leadership roles despite their qualifications.

Guided by a pragmatic philosophical stance, the study employed a mixed-methods approach to capture both individual experiences and structural trends. The qualitative component involved 12 semi-structured interviews, offering detailed accounts of participants' professional journeys. The quantitative component comprised secondary data analysis, contextualising these experiences within broader industry patterns. Three key themes emerged: Barriers to Career Development, Current Strategies for Career Development, and Future Initiatives for Career Development.

Theoretically, the study contributes to understanding how Social Role Theory and Glass Ceiling Theory explain intersectional challenges in the hospitality sector. Practically, it underscores the need for culturally responsive interventions, such as recognising overseas experience, implementing inclusive workplace policies, and establishing mentorship programmes to support equity and advancement for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Table of Contents..... | iii |
| List of Tables | v |
| List of Figures..... | vi |
| Attestation of Authorship | vii |
| Acknowledgements | viii |
| Chapter 1: Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Research Background | 1 |
| 1.2 Research Aims and Questions | 3 |
| 1.3 Significance and Rationale of the Study | 3 |
| 1.4 Research Methodology..... | 4 |
| 1.5 Structure of the Dissertation | 5 |
| 1.6 Conclusion | 6 |
| Chapter 2: Methodology | 7 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 7 |
| 2.2 Research Philosophy..... | 7 |
| 2.3 Research Paradigm | 8 |
| 2.4 Research Methods..... | 8 |
| 2.4.1 Systematic Literature Review..... | 8 |
| 2.4.1.1 Eligibility Criteria..... | 9 |
| 2.4.1.2 Information Sources | 9 |
| 2.4.1.3 Search Strategy | 9 |
| 2.4.1.4 Selection Process | 10 |
| 2.4.1.5 Data Collection Process | 10 |
| 2.4.1.6 Data Items..... | 10 |
| 2.4.1.7 Quality Assessment | 10 |
| 2.4.1.8 Synthesis Methods | 11 |
| 2.4.2 Mixed-Methods Approach..... | 11 |
| 2.4.2.1 Primary Data – Semi-Structured Interviews | 11 |
| 2.4.2.2 Secondary Data..... | 12 |
| 2.5 Population | 12 |
| 2.6 Sampling | 12 |
| 2.7 Data Collection | 14 |
| 2.7.1 Interview Procedure | 14 |
| 2.7.2 Secondary Data..... | 14 |
| 2.8 Analysis..... | 14 |
| 2.8.1 Qualitative Data | 14 |
| 2.8.2 Quantitative Data | 16 |
| 2.9 Limitations | 16 |
| 2.10 Position of the Researcher..... | 17 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 2.11 Conclusion | 17 |
| Chapter 3: Systematic Literature Review..... | 18 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 18 |
| 3.2 Publication Count and Dates | 18 |
| 3.2.1 Publication Year | 18 |
| 3.2.2 Citation Count..... | 19 |
| 3.2.3 Publication Source | 21 |
| 3.2.4 Countries | 23 |
| 3.2.5 Research Methods Used..... | 25 |
| 3.2.6 Career Positions..... | 26 |
| 3.2.7 Theoretical Framework Used..... | 28 |
| 3.2.8 Key Words..... | 30 |
| 3.3 Conclusion | 32 |
| Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion..... | 35 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 35 |
| 4.2 Quantitative Findings | 35 |
| 4.3 Qualitative Findings..... | 40 |
| 4.3.1 Barriers to Career Development..... | 40 |
| 4.3.1.1 Structural Barriers..... | 41 |
| 4.3.1.2 Socio-cultural Barriers | 42 |
| 4.3.1.3 Organisational Barriers | 45 |
| 4.3.1.4 Personal Barriers..... | 47 |
| 4.3.2 Current Strategies for Career Development | 48 |
| 4.3.2.1 Organizational Strategies..... | 49 |
| 4.3.2.2 Personal Strategies | 51 |
| 4.3.3 Future Initiatives for Career Development | 53 |
| 4.3.3.1 Structural Initiatives..... | 53 |
| 4.3.3.2 Organisational Initiatives | 54 |
| 4.3.3.3 Personal Initiatives..... | 56 |
| 4.4 Conclusion | 58 |
| Chapter 5: Conclusion | 60 |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 60 |
| 5.2 Synthesis of Findings | 60 |
| 5.3 Theoretical Implications | 61 |
| 5.4 Practical Implications..... | 62 |
| 5.5 Limitations of the Study..... | 63 |
| 5.6 Recommendations for Future Study..... | 63 |
| 5.7 Final Statement | 64 |
| References..... | 65 |
| Appendix | 76 |
| Appendix A: List of Publication..... | 76 |
| Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet..... | 82 |
| Appendix C: Consent Form | 85 |
| Appendix D: Interview Questions..... | 87 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1 . Participant Profile..... | 13 |
| Table 2 . Participants' Nationality Composition | 35 |
| Table 3 . Participants' Age Distribution..... | 36 |
| Table 4 . Positions Held by Participants | 36 |
| Table 5 . Length of Work Experience | 37 |
| Table 6 . Recognition of the Existence of Career Barriers..... | 37 |
| Table 7 . Recognition of Barriers for Asian Women | 37 |
| Table 8 . Challenges Adapting to the Work Culture in New Zealand | 38 |
| Table 9 . Role Expectations for Asian Women | 38 |
| Table 10 . Is There a 'Glass Ceiling' (Invisible Barriers)..... | 39 |
| Table 11 . Support and resources for Asian women | 39 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1 . Publication Year | 19 |
| Figure 2 . Citation Count..... | 20 |
| Figure 3 . Document Type..... | 23 |
| Figure 4 . Research Location..... | 24 |
| Figure 5 . Research Methods | 25 |
| Figure 6 . Respondent Positions | 28 |
| Figure 7 . Theoretical Frameworks | 30 |
| Figure 8 . Key Words Cloud..... | 31 |

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 28/07/2025

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This accomplishment belongs not only to me, but to all of you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee Approval no. 24/381, dated
21/01/2025

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the research background, aims, research questions, significance and rationale, methodology, and structure of the study. It situates the research within New Zealand's hospitality industry, highlights the career barriers faced by Asian women, presents the research gaps, and describes the research approach adopted. The chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation's structure.

1.1 Research Background

The hospitality industry is a critical contributor to New Zealand's economy, serving as both a substantial source of revenue and a major employer. According to the Ringa Hora Services Workforce Development Council (2023), the industry generates approximately \$6.4 billion annually, representing around (2.0%) of the country's total GDP. Operating across both urban centres and regional communities, the industry supports tens of thousands of jobs and plays an integral role in New Zealand's visitor economy as well as its broader local business infrastructure (Macpherson, 2021).

New Zealand's hospitality industry is marked by significant demographic diversity, being heavily dependent on both local and migrant labour to sustain operations. Immigration-driven population changes have reshaped the national workforce, with individuals of Asian ethnicity now comprising (17.3%) of the population, a (21.8%) rise since 2018 (Statistics New Zealand [Stats NZ], 2024). This shift is mirrored in the hospitality industry, where the increasing number of Asian workers underscores the industry's growing reliance on migrant labour and its reflection of New Zealand's expanding ethnic diversity (Williamson & Rasmussen, 2022).

Gender plays a significant role in shaping the composition and dynamics of New Zealand's hospitality workforce. Women comprise (60.4%) of the sector's total workforce, surpassing the representation of men (Williamson & Rasmussen, 2022).

However, workforce data indicates that a substantial portion of hospitality employment is concentrated in operational and lower-tier roles, such as front-line worker/back of house/kitchen worker (8.2%), chefs (4.5%), admin/human resources (HR)/sales positions (10.8%), and travel workers (10.3%), while senior manager/senior HR/senior marketing/senior sales roles account for (28%) of the workforce (Williamson & Rasmussen, 2022). Given the overrepresentation of women in the sector, this distribution likely reflects broader structural imbalances, where systemic barriers continue to impede women's advancement into leadership and decision-making roles (Poquiz et al., 2023).

For Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry, the challenges associated with career advancement are compounded by a range of intersecting factors. These include language barriers, culturally embedded expectations regarding gender roles, implicit biases within the workplace, and limited access to mentorship opportunities (Hussain et al., 2024; Marasigan et al., 2021). Some migrant women in New Zealand's hospitality industry face the challenge of balancing caregiving responsibilities with economic obligations in professional environments, while their overseas qualifications and prior experience are frequently undervalued and unrecognised (Nair & Mathew, 2022).

Given New Zealand's increasing ethnic diversity and the hospitality industry's reliance on migrant labour (Hsiao et al., 2020), it is timely to examine how Asian women navigate their professional trajectories within this industry. Understanding this is essential for informing policies and practices that support their career advancement and well-being, and for building a more inclusive and equitable workforce.

This research addresses a gap in the existing literature on the career development of Asian women, defined as female individuals with nationality or legal citizenship in an Asian country, working in New Zealand's hospitality industry. It seeks to illuminate and generate insights that can guide future initiatives aimed at fostering fairer career progression and enhancing representation in leadership roles.

1.2 Research Aims and Questions

This study explores the career development experiences of Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry. It seeks to identify the barriers they encounter, examine the strategies they employ to navigate these barriers, and explore the future support necessary to facilitate their ongoing career progression and professional advancement.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What barriers do Asian women encounter in their career development in New Zealand's hospitality industry?
2. What strategies have been adopted to support career development for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry?

1.3 Significance and Rationale of the Study

This study holds particular relevance in the context of New Zealand's hospitality industry, a key economic sector characterised by significant ethnic diversity (Pereira & Wang, 2025). Although the concept of diversity is widely endorsed within academic and professional narratives, research suggests that Asian women in the hospitality industry are persistently under-represented in senior roles (Chun et al., 2024; Shan et al., 2020; Tam et al., 2022).

While existing studies in New Zealand have explored gender issues and immigrant experiences independently, limited research has addressed the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and career development, particularly in relation to Asian women employed in the hospitality sector (Macpherson, 2021; Pereira & Wang, 2025). This study aims to address this gap by examining how overlapping social identities shape professional trajectories.

Understanding the experiences of Asian women is not only important for social equity but also for enhancing the hospitality industry's performance. A more inclusive and diverse leadership pipeline can bring cultural competence and innovation, which are key assets in a service-oriented industry (Russen et al., 2021). Moreover, as the Asian population continues to grow in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand [Stats NZ], 2024), the hospitality industry needs to align its HR strategies with this evolving demographic reality to attract, retain, and promote talent effectively.

This study contributes to New Zealand's ongoing efforts to enhance workplace diversity and inclusion, with a focus on the experiences of Asian women (Pereira & Wang, 2025). It provides recommendations that could inform industry guidelines, diversity frameworks, and training programmes. By highlighting both the challenges faced by Asian women and the strategies that they have adopted, the research offers a balanced and practical contribution.

1.4 Research Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative methodology, which is well-suited to exploring complex, nuanced experiences that are often shaped by individual identity, social norms, and cultural background (Busetto et al., 2020). The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with Asian women currently employed in New Zealand's hospitality industry. These interviews captured personal narratives and descriptions of the participants' professional journeys, perceived barriers, and the mechanisms they have used to navigate the workplace.

The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, categories, and themes across the interview transcripts (Squires, 2023). This method is particularly effective in capturing lived experiences and constructing meaning from participants' reflections in a way that preserves their voice and context (Braun et al., 2019).

While this research is qualitative in nature, quantitative data from industry reports and demographic sources (e.g., Stats NZ) were used to contextualise and support the qualitative findings. Participants were recruited through community networks. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, and all participants' identities were anonymised.

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organised into five chapters, each contributing to a cohesive exploration of the research topic. The present chapter, Introduction, has outlined the background, research aims and questions, rationale, methodology, and structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2, Methodology, details the research design, including participant recruitment, data collection techniques, ethical considerations, and the process of thematic analysis.

Chapter 3, Systematic Literature Review, critically reviews existing literature relevant to Asian women's career development in the hospitality industry. It synthesises findings from past research to highlight key contradictions and gaps that this study aims to address. This review also establishes the theoretical and conceptual framework guiding the analysis.

Chapter 4, Findings and Discussion, presents the key themes and discusses how they align with or challenge existing literature and theoretical perspectives. Quantitative industry data is used to contextualise the findings and support the interpretation of the themes.

Chapter 5, Conclusion, summarises the study's key findings and discusses their implications for employers, policymakers, and industry bodies. It offers practical recommendations for promoting Asian women's career development and identifies areas for future research.

1.6 Conclusion

The New Zealand hospitality industry is a diverse and economically significant industry, yet not all groups have equal access to professional development and leadership opportunities (Pereira & Wang, 2025). Asian women, despite their growing representation, often face unique barriers rooted in cultural, structural, and interpersonal dynamics (Shan et al., 2020). Their experiences offer valuable insight into how gender and ethnicity intersect in the workplace.

This study aims to give voice to these experiences through qualitative inquiry, using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. By centring the perspectives of Asian women, the research aims to contribute to more informed, inclusive, and equitable workforce practices in New Zealand. It also proposes actions for those seeking to create pathways for diverse leadership in one of the country's most important industries.

Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to investigate the career development of Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry, examining the challenges they encounter and the strategies they implement to navigate and overcome these barriers. Anchored in a pragmatic philosophy, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach that combined qualitative and quantitative techniques to address the complexity of intersectional experiences involving gender and ethnicity.

The chapter begins by discussing the philosophical and paradigmatic foundations of the research, followed by an explanation of the chosen methods: systematic literature review, semi-structured interviews and secondary data analysis. It then describes the target population, sampling strategy, and data collection procedures. Analytical approaches for both qualitative and quantitative data are outlined, along with a discussion of the researcher's role and the study's limitations. The chapter concludes by highlighting how the chosen methodology supported a comprehensive and ethical exploration of the research aims.

2.2 Research Philosophy

A pragmatic philosophical stance underpinned the study, supporting the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore real-world issues. Pragmatism focuses on practical solutions and values methodological flexibility, allowing the research to draw insights from both empirical data and lived experiences (James, 1996). This approach is particularly suited to the complexity of intersectional issues, such as gender and ethnicity in the workplace, where no single method provides a complete picture (Biesta, 2021; Shan, 2022).

2.3 Research Paradigm

The research employed a mixed-method design to explore the career development of Asian women in the hospitality industry, guided primarily by interpretivism. The qualitative component used semi-structured interviews to uncover rich, nuanced narratives of individual experiences, consistent with interpretivism's emphasis on subjective meanings and lived realities (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Aspers & Corte, 2021). While interpretivism primarily informed the qualitative strand, the inclusion of a quantitative component based on secondary data analysis served to contextualize these narratives within broader industry patterns (Rana et al., 2021). This integrative approach emphasized micro-level perspectives and highlighted intersectional dynamics, such as the ways gender and ethnicity jointly influence professional outcomes. It enabled a contextualized understanding of participants' experiences while enhancing the robustness and credibility of the findings through data triangulation (Kelle, 2022).

2.4 Research Methods

This study employed a systematic literature review and a mixed-methods approach to explore the career development experiences of Asian women in the hospitality industry in New Zealand.

2.4.1 Systematic Literature Review

This systematic literature review was conducted by the guidelines outlined in "The PRISMA 2020 Statement" (Page et al., 2021).

2.4.1.1 Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed literature (including journal articles, conference papers, book chapters, and theses).
- Full-text articles written in English.
- Literature related to Asian women career development in the hospitality industry.
- Studies published in the past 10 years (2015 or later).

Exclusion criteria:

- Grey literature (e.g., newspaper or magazine articles, government reports, non-peer-reviewed papers, policy statements).
- Literature unrelated to Asian women's career development in the hospitality industry.
- Publications written in a language other than English.
- Studies published prior to 2015.

2.4.1.2 Information Sources

The information sources that were utilized for this review included electronic databases (Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, ProQuest, Emerald Insight) and a manual search of the reference lists of key papers (i.e., papers that are highly cited or highly relevant to the research topic).

2.4.1.3 Search Strategy

The search terms that were used in this systematic review include (“Asian women” OR “Asian female employees” OR “Asian immigrants”) AND (“career development”

OR “career advancement” OR “career challenges” OR “career barriers”) AND (“hospitality industry” OR “hospitality industry”).

2.4.1.4 Selection Process

Titles and abstracts were screened to assess relevance. Full-text screening was conducted to ensure compliance with eligibility criteria.

2.4.1.5 Data Collection Process

An Excel-based structured data extraction form was used to record key variables.

2.4.1.6 Data Items

The following data were extracted from the literature:

- Authors
- Publication year
- Citation count
- Document type
- Study location
- Positions
- Research method
- Theoretical framework
- Key words

2.4.1.7 Quality Assessment

The PRISMA-S framework (Rethlefsen et al., 2021) guided the evaluation of transparency, comprehensiveness, and consistency in reporting.

Studies were assessed for methodological rigour, relevance, and credibility.

2.4.1.8 Synthesis Methods

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse trends, such as publication timelines, frequency of key words, and the geographic distribution of research.

2.4.2 Mixed-Methods Approach

The study utilised two core data collection strategies:

1. Primary data – Semi-structured interviews with Asian women currently employed in New Zealand’s hospitality industry.
2. Secondary data – analysis of publicly available labour and industry reports.

This combination allowed the research to explore participants’ subjective interpretations while also identifying trends in employment that may reflect broader systemic barriers.

2.4.2.1 Primary Data – Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were designed to elicit personal stories about participants’ career pathways, including challenges encountered, strategies employed, and perceptions of gendered and cultural expectations in the workplace. This method allowed the flexibility to pursue emerging themes while maintaining focus through a structured interview guide (Knott et al., 2022). Interviews lasted 20-30 minutes and were conducted either in person or via online platforms (Zoom or Microsoft Teams), depending on participants’ availability.

All interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ informed consent and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and preserve the integrity of participants’ narratives. Identifiable details were anonymized using pseudonyms to protect participants’ confidentiality and privacy (Portugal, 2023). Transcripts and recordings are securely stored on password-protected devices, accessible only to the researcher

and supervisor, in accordance with ethical guidelines to safeguard sensitive data and maintain research integrity (Anzaldúa, 2020).

2.4.2.2 Secondary Data

To complement interview findings, this study utilised secondary data from Statistics New Zealand, government publications, and hospitality industry reports (Dale et al., 1988). These pre-existing datasets provided objective insights into employment patterns and workforce trends in New Zealand's hospitality sector. Descriptive statistics were generated using Microsoft Excel, contextualised individual narratives within broader systemic structures, highlighting macro-level trends that supported the qualitative findings (Lemon & Hayes, 2020).

2.5 Population

The study focused on Asian women currently employed in New Zealand's hospitality industry, recognising their unique position at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. For this research, *Asian women* refers to female individuals who possess nationality or legal citizenship from an Asian country and are working in New Zealand.

The hospitality industry in New Zealand encompasses a range of roles (including front-of-house positions, back-of-house roles, and management positions). The research aimed to include women from a diverse range of these roles to represent varied career stages and perspectives, thereby strengthening the internal validity of the qualitative component.

2.6 Sampling

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select 12 participants who met specific inclusion criteria relevant to the study's aims. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves the intentional selection of individuals based on characteristics that align with the research aims (Robinson, 2024). This

approach ensured that participants offered relevant, diverse perspectives, particularly in terms of age, job role, and level of professional seniority within the hospitality industry (Ayimey et al., 2020).

The inclusion criteria for this study were as follows:

- Asian women (by nationality or legal status).
- Aged 18 years or older.
- Currently working in the hospitality industry in New Zealand.
- Possess at least one year of industry experience.
- Demonstrate fluent English proficiency to ensure effective communication.

A sample size of 12 interviews is appropriate for achieving thematic saturation, the point at which additional data no longer yield new insights (Guest et al., 2006).

Participants were recruited through professional networks, social media, and community posters, with efforts made to ensure cultural and occupational diversity.

Table 1. Participant Profile

| No. | Nationality | Position | Working Experience | Pseudonym |
|-----|-------------|---|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Sri Lankan | Guest service agent | 1 year | Participant A |
| 2 | Filipino | Residential Advisor /Housekeeper | 1 year and 3 months | Participant B |
| 3 | Sri Lankan | Food & Beverage Attendant | 1 year | Participant C |
| 4 | Chinese | Front of House | 1 year | Participant D |
| 5 | Chinese | Catering Assistant | 1 year | Participant E |
| 6 | Indian | Guest Service Associate | 1 year and 1 month | Participant F |
| 7 | Chinese | Restaurant server | 1 year | Participant G |
| 8 | Vietnamese | Assistant manager | 1 year | Participant H |
| 9 | Chinese | Food and beverage attendant Food runner /Waitress | 3 years | Participant I |
| 10 | Indonesian | /Senior front-of-house team member /Duty Manager | 6 years and 6 months | Participant J |
| 11 | Taiwanese | Porter to Welcomer | 1 year | Participant K |
| 12 | Thai | Receptionist | 1 year | Participant L |

2.7 Data Collection

2.7.1 Interview Procedure

The interview protocol covered key areas such as participants' demographic backgrounds, career progression, perceived challenges, support systems, and familiarity with concepts like the glass ceiling. The questions were open-ended, meaning they were designed to encourage participants to respond in their own words, allowing for detailed, exploratory dialogue rather than limiting responses to fixed options (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). This approach enabled the emergence of rich, nuanced insights (see Appendix D).

All participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form before the interview (see Appendices B and C). They were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Cultural sensitivity and respect were maintained throughout, with particular attention to ensuring participants felt comfortable and valued (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020).

2.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data collection involved accessing publicly available datasets and industry records containing relevant statistics on New Zealand's hospitality industry. The data were organised into structured categories for analysis and used to contextualise themes emerging from the interviews.

2.8 Analysis

2.8.1 Qualitative Data

Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), due to its flexibility and suitability for identifying patterns within qualitative data. This method allowed the researcher to systematically explore

recurring themes and meanings across participants' narratives, making it particularly effective for examining complex, subjective experiences such as those related to gender, ethnicity, and career development (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a; Squires, 2023). The following six-phase approach was used:

1. *Familiarisation with the data*: Engaging deeply with the data by reading and re-reading to become fully acquainted with its content and context.
2. *Generating initial codes*: Systematically identifying and labelling key features of the data that appear relevant to the research question.
3. *Searching for themes*: Organising the codes into broader patterns to begin forming initial thematic categories.
4. *Reviewing themes*: Evaluating the themes for internal consistency and ensuring they accurately represent the coded data and the dataset as a whole.
5. *Defining and naming themes*: Refining each theme's scope and content while assigning concise and descriptive names that capture their essence.
6. *Producing the report*: Integrating the final themes into a coherent narrative supported by data extracts, connecting them to the research aims and literature.

While qualitative data can be analysed manually or with the aid of software, NVivo 15 was chosen for this study due to its capacity to enhance rigour, transparency, and efficiency in managing complex datasets (Dhakal, 2022). Unlike manual coding, which can be time-consuming and prone to inconsistencies, NVivo offers advanced tools for systematic organisation, coding, and visualisation of large volumes of qualitative data (Wicks, 2017). Its ability to sort and retrieve text segments efficiently supports a more structured and traceable thematic analysis process (Dhakal, 2022), thereby improving the reliability of findings.

Interpretation was guided by two theoretical frameworks. Social Role Theory highlights how cultural expectations and gender norms shape individual behaviours and institutional responses, while the Glass Ceiling framework draws attention to the

invisible barriers that prevent Asian women from rising to senior leadership positions in New Zealand's hospitality industry (Eagly et al., 2020; Taparia & Lenka, 2022).

2.8.2 Quantitative Data

Secondary data were analysed using descriptive statistics to highlight trends in workforce participation within New Zealand's hospitality industry. This analysis helped in identifying structural patterns that align with or challenge the qualitative findings (Dale et al., 1988). Together, these analytical processes provide a coherent account of both lived experience and institutional dynamics (Kelle, 2022).

2.9 Limitations

While this methodology offered a balanced and thorough investigation, several limitations must be acknowledged:

- **Sample size and scope:** The qualitative sample of 12 participants, though adequate for thematic analysis, may not capture all regional or role-specific nuances within the industry.
- **Self-report bias:** Interviews depend on participant recollections and personal interpretations, which may be affected by memory errors or social desirability.
- **Secondary data constraints:** Available datasets may not provide sufficient disaggregation by gender and ethnicity, limiting the precision of some quantitative findings.

To mitigate these issues, the study emphasises methodological transparency and careful question phrasing and draws connections between qualitative insights and quantitative data to enhance the credibility of the findings (Kumar & Praveenakumar, 2025; Levitt et al., 2021).

2.10 Position of the Researcher

The researcher acknowledges the role in shaping the research process and outcomes. As someone with academic training and personal interest in equity, diversity, and inclusion, the researcher remains aware of potential biases and assumptions. Reflexivity was maintained to ensure objectivity and ethical integrity.

During data collection, the researcher prioritised building trust and rapport with participants, recognising the emotional and cultural weight of discussing personal challenges. Language sensitivity and power dynamics were carefully managed to facilitate an inclusive and respectful interview environment.

2.11 Conclusion

This study adopted a pragmatic, mixed-methods approach to examine the career development of Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry. Grounded in Social Role Theory and Glass Ceiling Theory, the methodology integrated qualitative depth and quantitative breadth, offering a framework for understanding how personal narratives and structural conditions intersect.

Ethical considerations, including anonymity, informed consent, and cultural sensitivity, were upheld throughout the research process. Ethics approval was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on January 21, 2025, and given the approval number 24/381. While certain limitations in the study have been acknowledged, its methodological rigour and dual analytical lens ensure that the findings will offer meaningful, actionable insights for advancing equity in New Zealand's hospitality industry.

Chapter 3: Systematic Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This systematic literature review on career development for Asian women in the hospitality industry aims to provide an understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Asian women in this sector. Given the significant role of the hospitality industry in New Zealand, coupled with the growing immigrant workforce (Rotimi et al., 2023; Williamson, 2019), it is important to examine how factors such as gender, cultural background, and workplace policies impact career advancement for Asian women (Collins & Stringer, 2019; Ministry of Social Development, 2008).

This review seeks to identify gaps in the current literature, particularly regarding the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and professional growth. By synthesising existing research, the review aims to offer insights into the barriers and facilitators of career progression for Asian women and guide the methodological design. This systematic literature review followed the guidelines outlined in the PRISMA 2020 Statement (Page et al., 2021), and further details are discussed in Chapter 3 Methodology.

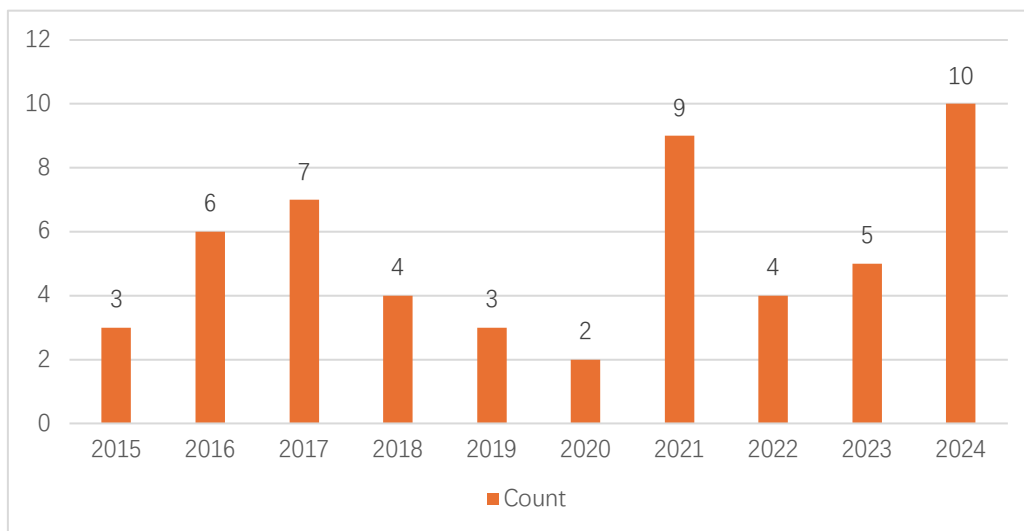
3.2 Publication Count and Dates

3.2.1 Publication Year

There has been a significant increase in literature on Asian women's career development in the hospitality industry (Figure 1). Overall, between 2015 and 2024, 53 publications were published (Appendix A). From 2015 to 2019, the number of publications remained relatively low, ranging from three to seven annually. In 2020, it dropped to its lowest point (two publications), most likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global tourism and hospitality industry, which led to reduced research activity, limited access to the field, and shifting academic priorities (Chun et al., 2024; Mazlan, 2024). However, this decline was followed by a strong

rebound. In 2021, the number of studies surged to nine, showing renewed academic attention. This momentum continued, with four publications in 2022, five in 2023, and a peak of 10 publications in 2024. The sharp rise in recent years indicates a growing recognition of the importance of understanding the career experiences of Asian women in hospitality, reflecting both industry recovery and broader shifts toward equity and inclusion in research.

Figure 1. Publication Year



3.2.2 Citation Count

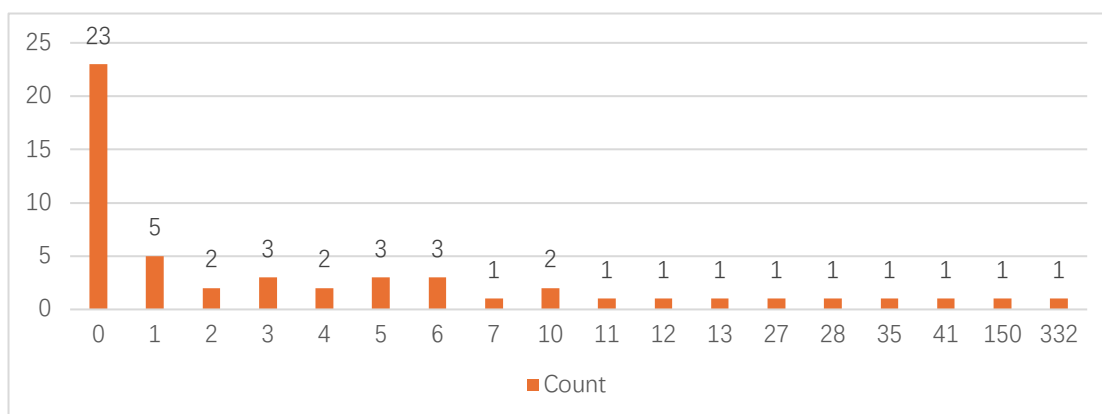
Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of citation counts among the 654 publications identified on the topic of career development for Asian women in the hospitality industry. The data reveal a highly skewed citation pattern, where academic influence is concentrated in a small number of publications.

Out of the total, 23 articles have received zero citations, highlighting a considerable portion of research that has yet to gain scholarly visibility or impact. Only nine publications have been cited more than 10 times, suggesting that a limited number of studies dominate the academic conversation, while the majority remain under-recognised.

This uneven distribution of citations is significant, as it indicates that despite growing

academic interest in this topic, the reach and influence of most studies remain limited. Several factors may contribute to this disparity, such as the niche focus of the research, limited access to or limited visibility of the publications, or the emerging nature of the field, which may not yet be widely integrated into mainstream hospitality or gender studies literature (Gebbers et al., 2020; Kumara, 2018).

Figure 2. Citation Count



Among them, “Saudi Women’s Work Challenges and Barriers to Career Advancement” (Al-Asfour et al., 2017) (332 citations) and “Supervisor Support and Work Engagement of Hospitality Employees in Malaysia: Is it Different for Men and Women?” (Suan & Nasuridin, 2016) (150 citations) stand out as the most influential contributions to the field. These works have shaped ongoing discussions about structural inequality and workplace gender dynamics in different cultural and national contexts.

In Saudi Arabia, gender inequality continues to be a major barrier to women’s career advancement. Women in the hospitality industry face numerous obstacles, including restrictive social norms, gender-based discrimination, and insufficient institutional support (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a). Although the government has made efforts to improve women’s access to education and employment, the lack of effective enforcement mechanisms allows discriminatory practices to persist. Patriarchal values, religious conservatism, and collectivist traditions further hinder women’s progress toward managerial roles (Dinakaran, 2018). Other contributing factors include the

persistence of gender stereotypes, limited access to training and mentorship opportunities, and unresolved work–family conflicts (Dukhaykh & Bilimoria, 2021). Scholars have recommended solutions such as policy reform, the introduction of flexible work models, and targeted leadership development programmes to foster a more equitable and supportive work environment for women (Sutono et al., 2024).

In contrast, the Malaysian context highlights the role of organizational culture and managerial support in reinforcing gender disparities. While both male and female employees benefit from supervisor support, the outcomes differ significantly. Male employees are more likely to be rewarded with career advancement opportunities, reflecting a performance-centric management model that favours them. Female employees, who often seek greater emotional and structural support, are less likely to receive adequate recognition (Uysal Irak et al., 2020). Moreover, the nature of shift work in hospitality often exacerbates tensions between career development and domestic responsibilities for women, lowering their level of work engagement and overall job satisfaction. Addressing these challenges requires gender-sensitive HR practices, such as enhancing support systems for women and allowing more flexible scheduling arrangements (Suan & Nasurdin, 2016; Sutono et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the citation disparity in the literature highlights the need for broader dissemination and deeper engagement with research in this field, especially studies that capture under-represented voices and propose actionable pathways toward equity in hospitality workplaces (Mazlan, 2024; Vithayaporn, 2023).

3.2.3 Publication Source

As shown in Figure 3, journal articles overwhelmingly dominate the publication landscape, accounting for 41 out of 53 publications (77%). This strong presence underscores the field’s reliance on peer-reviewed scholarly outlets to disseminate

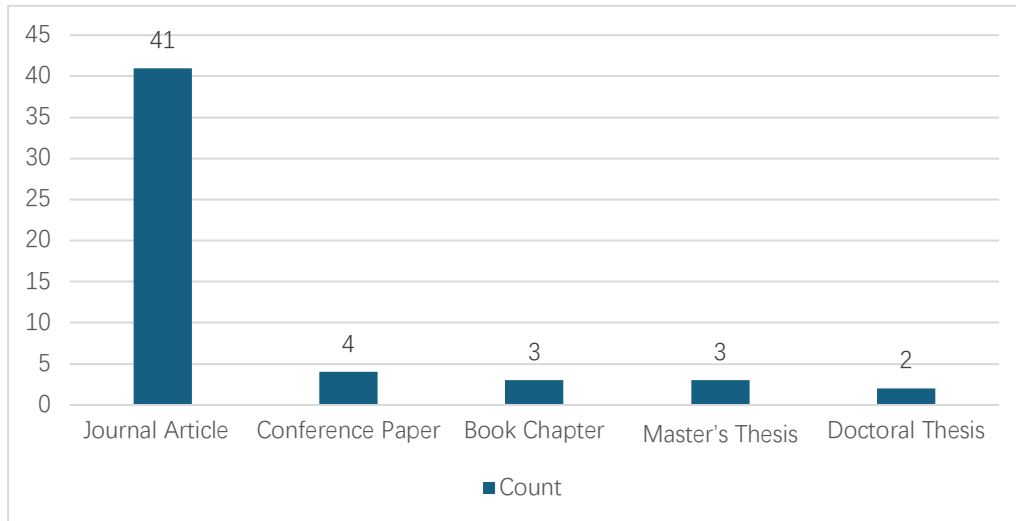
research findings, reflecting the academic community's preference for publishing in established journals.

By contrast, there were only four conference papers (7.5%). While limited in volume, these papers often capture cutting-edge developments, preliminary findings, and emerging trends that may not yet be fully explored in journal literature (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a; Mathew, 2018; Murni et al., 2021; Widiastini et al., 2019). Their lower representation may indicate missed opportunities for the early-stage idea exchange and the interdisciplinary dialogue that are typically fostered in conference settings (Sharma, 2018).

Two doctoral theses (4%) and three master's theses (6%) represent a small but valuable portion of the literature. These works often engage in deeper theoretical exploration and provide rich, context-specific case studies, particularly useful for understanding local or regional dynamics in career development (Alismail, 2016; Mazlan, 2024). Despite their relatively low numbers, such theses contribute unique insights that may not be found in mainstream publications and could serve as foundational sources for future studies (Deng, 2017).

Additionally, book chapters are relatively scarce, with the existence of just three (6%) pointing to a gap in the development and consolidation of theoretical frameworks within this research domain. The lack of book-length or edited volume contributions may limit broader conceptual synthesis and cross-cultural comparisons, which are essential for advancing the field (Arbuckle, 2021).

Figure 3. Document Type



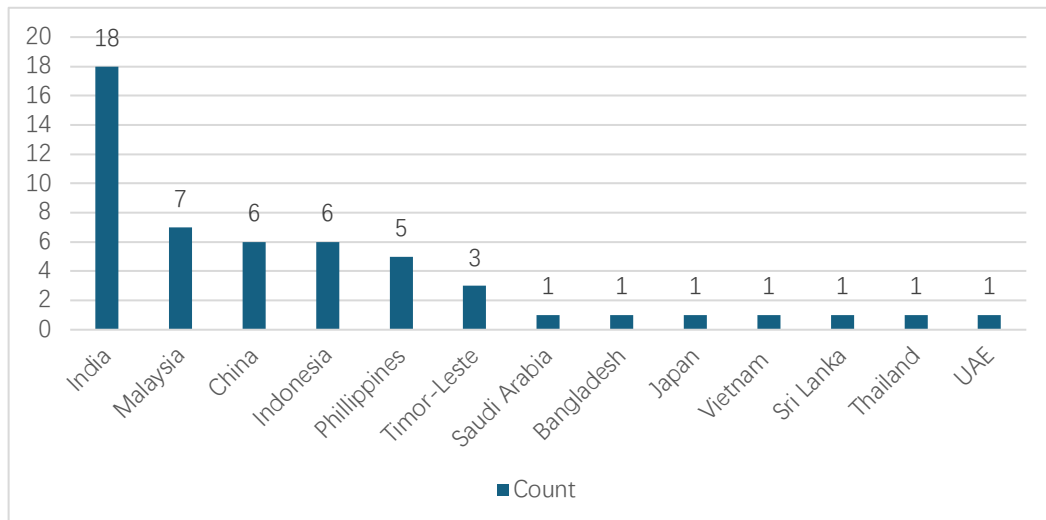
3.2.4 Countries

Among all the locations, India stands out prominently, with 18 studies accounting for (34%) of the total. This concentration of research highlights a strong academic focus on the challenges and opportunities faced by Indian women in hospitality careers, possibly due to India's large workforce, expanding tourism sector, and ongoing gender inequality issues (Dinakaran, 2015; Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Malaysia follows with seven studies, surpassing both China and Indonesia, each with six studies. This trend reflects growing scholarly interest in Southeast Asian countries where gender dynamics, labour migration, and hospitality growth intersect (Hamzah et al., 2022; Pasaribu et al., 2021).

The Philippines and Timor-Leste also contribute to this body of literature, with five and three studies respectively. These studies often focus on social mobility, gender norms, and employment in lower-tier hospitality roles, reflecting the broader economic context of these countries (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a; Zarsuela et al., 2023). However, research is notably sparse in several nations. Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are significantly under-represented, with only one or two studies each. This lack of representation

reveals a geographic research gap, particularly in South and East Asia, where women's career development in hospitality is understudied despite being socio-economically relevant (Kumara, 2018).

Figure 4. Research Location



Notably, only six studies explicitly focus on the experiences of migrant women, even though they represent a significant segment of the hospitality workforce across Asia. These studies highlight a range of unique challenges faced by migrant women, including cultural adaptation, language barriers, limited legal protection, and various forms of workplace discrimination (Chun et al., 2024; Brites Da Silva et al., 2021b; Dinakaran, 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2016; Patwardhan et al., 2016; Yasarathne & Dunning, 2023). The limited number of studies in this area underscores the urgent need for more inclusive research that considers both nationality and migration status in analysing career development.

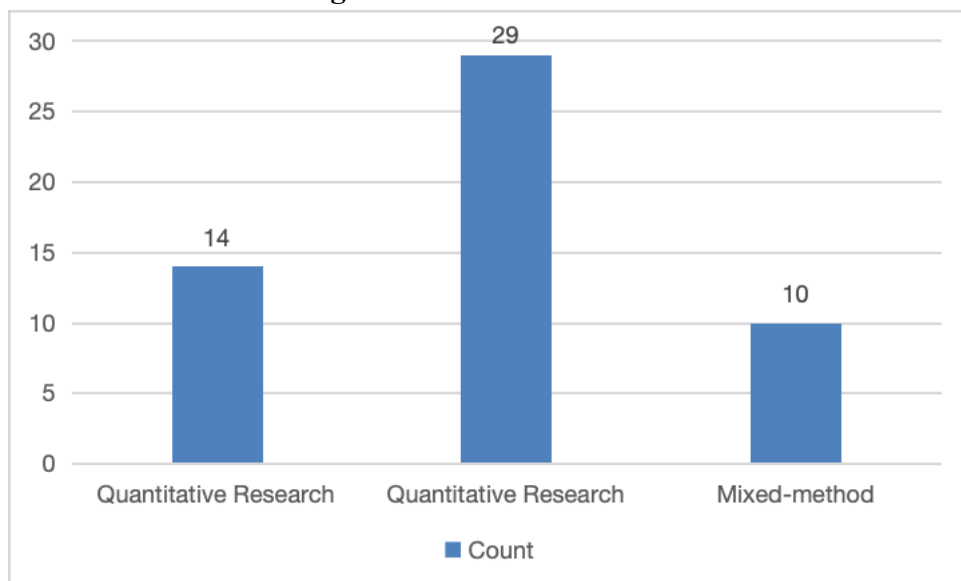
Given the vital role migrant women play in the hospitality industry, often working in front-line service roles under precarious conditions, future research should prioritise their voices and experiences (Sharma, 2018). More attention is needed on issues such as employment security, career advancement pathways, cultural integration, and access to supportive workplace policies (Vithayaporn, 2023). Doing so will not only fill a critical gap in the literature but also help inform more equitable and culturally responsive HR practices across the region (Sutono et al., 2024).

3.2.5 Research Methods Used

Quantitative research, primarily conducted through surveys, dominates the methodological landscape. This approach accounts for 29 (58%) of all studies included in the review. The prevalence of survey-based research reflects a strong inclination toward data-driven analysis, where researchers often focus on measurable variables such as job satisfaction, promotion rates, organisational support, and workplace equality (Deng, 2017; Pasaribu et al., 2021; Wang, 2017). These structured methodologies allow for statistical generalisation, making them particularly useful for identifying broader trends across large samples (Ahmad et al., 2019).

However, this emphasis on quantitative approaches comes at the expense of more nuanced, context-rich understandings of women’s lived experiences in the hospitality workforce (Khan & Sultana, 2017). Mixed-methods research, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative techniques (e.g., combining surveys with interviews), comprises only 10 studies (20%). While still underutilised, mixed-methods designs offer a valuable bridge between numeric data and personal narratives, enabling a more comprehensive exploration of career development phenomena (Amadi, 2023).

Figure 5. Research Methods



Qualitative research methods, overall, remain significantly under-represented, comprising just 14 studies (28%) of the total. These methods, though limited in number, are essential for capturing the complexity of individual experiences, cultural dynamics, and subjective interpretations of workplace challenges, which are often overlooked by purely quantitative models (Hussain et al., 2024; Ngui et al., 2024).

The current methodological imbalance suggests a field still heavily reliant on standardised indicators and structured instruments, with insufficient exploration of personal meaning-making, social cognition, and cultural context (Brites da Silva et al., 2021b; Kumari, 2021; Yang, 2016). To build a richer and more inclusive body of knowledge, future research should expand the use of qualitative and mixed-methods approaches. Doing so would help illuminate the subtle, often invisible barriers faced by Asian women in the hospitality sector and provide deeper insights into their career aspirations, coping strategies, and pathways to advancement (Kumara, 2018).

3.2.6 Career Positions

Managerial roles, specifically manager and assistant manager positions, receive the most scholarly attention, with 17 studies (the highest count among all categories). This concentration underscores the critical challenges women face in accessing leadership and decision-making roles, often encountering barriers such as gender bias, limited promotion pathways, and unequal career advancement opportunities (Chun et al., 2024). The emphasis on managerial positions also reflects the ongoing academic focus on understanding the structural and organisational limitations that hinder women in climbing the corporate ladder in the hospitality sector (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a).

Food-related roles are another major area of study. Chef positions (12 studies) and roles in the food and beverage (F&B) department (11 studies) collectively demonstrate significant interest, indicating that culinary and service-related domains

are important employment areas for women (Dinakaran, 2018). However, despite their visibility in these positions, women often face barriers such as workplace discrimination, lack of mentorship, and under-representation in executive chef roles. These issues point to the need for more research into career development frameworks, skill training, and gender equity within food operations (Agmapisarn, 2016).

Positions in HR (11 studies) and on the front desk (11 studies) also receive considerable research attention. These areas are often considered gender-neutral or even female-dominated in practice, which may explain the relatively high volume of studies. Yet, despite higher representation, women may still struggle with upward mobility and influence within organisational hierarchies, especially in roles tied to people management or guest-facing operations (Poquiz et al., 2023).

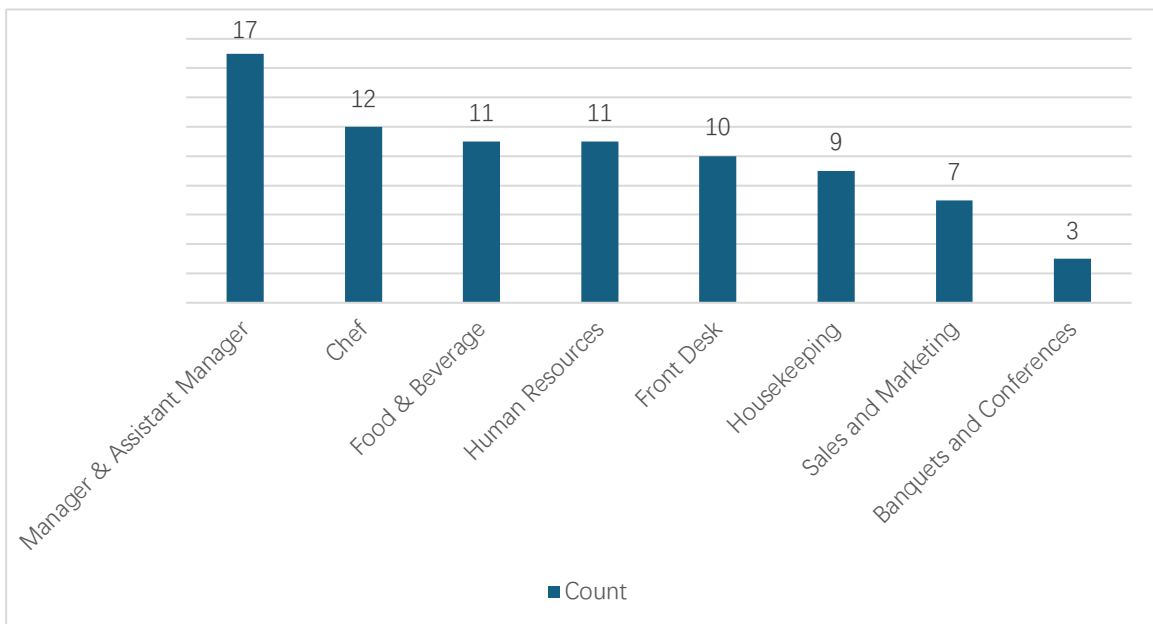
Housekeeping roles, represented by nine studies, continue to reflect traditional gender roles within the hospitality industry. Women are often concentrated in such operational and service-heavy positions, which tend to offer fewer opportunities for advancement, lower wages, and less visibility in organisational strategy. The academic interest in this area points to the persistence of occupational segregation and the need to critically examine the systemic factors that sustain it (Lakhera et al., 2020).

Conversely, research on sales and marketing (seven studies) remains relatively limited. This is noteworthy given the strategic importance of this department in driving revenue, building brand image, and influencing customer engagement. The under-representation of women in this field, along with the corresponding lack of academic focus, suggests a potential blind spot in both practice and scholarship that warrants further investigation (Widiastini et al., 2019).

Finally, banquets and conferences, with only three studies, is the least examined area. Despite its relevance to hospitality revenue and event management, this domain has

received minimal academic attention in the context of women’s career development (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a). This gap indicates the need for future studies to explore women’s roles, advancement opportunities, and challenges in the event and conference services sector, which remains an important but under-researched part of the hospitality industry.

Figure 6. Respondent Positions



Note. People may hold more than one position.

3.2.7 Theoretical Framework Used

Job satisfaction theory emerges as the most frequently applied theoretical framework, appearing in seven studies. This reflects a strong academic interest in understanding how job content, workplace environment, and perceived career fulfilment influence women’s motivation, retention, and progression within the sector. Job satisfaction is often linked to variables such as compensation, work culture, recognition, and opportunities for advancement, which are critical dimensions for evaluating the quality of women’s professional experiences in hospitality settings (Wang, 2017).

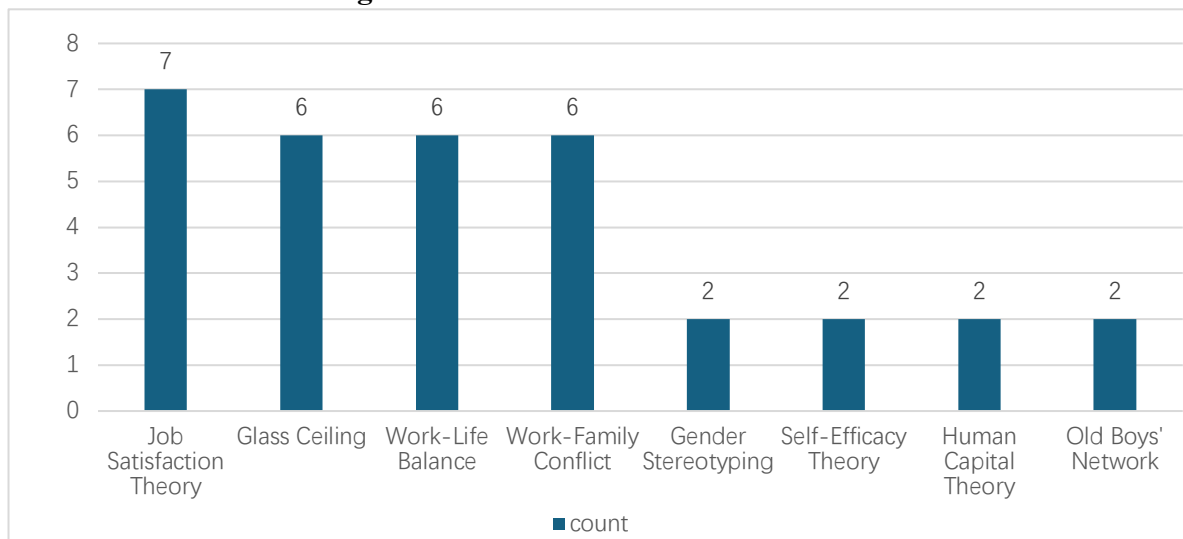
Closely following are Glass Ceiling Theory, work–life balance, and work–family conflict frameworks, each cited in six studies. These theories collectively highlight

the complex interplay between structural barriers, organizational culture, and personal responsibilities that hinder women's career growth. The glass ceiling metaphor is particularly potent in illustrating how invisible, yet pervasive limitations prevent women from ascending to leadership positions, despite equivalent qualifications or performance (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Similarly, work–life balance and work–family conflict theories underscore the challenges women face in reconciling professional ambitions with familial and societal expectations, especially in a sector known for irregular hours, emotional labour, and high turnover (Mathew, 2018; Yasarathne & Dunning, 2023).

In contrast, theories such as gender stereotyping, self-efficacy theory, human capital theory, and the old boys' network are less frequently used, each appearing in only two studies. Despite this, their contributions are no less significant. Gender stereotyping, for example, remains a foundational lens through which traditional beliefs about women's roles and capabilities are analysed. These stereotypes often influence hiring practices, leadership perceptions, and access to training, ultimately limiting women's upward mobility in male-dominated domains such as executive management or culinary leadership (Bryan, 2017; Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a; Khan & Sultana, 2017; Ngan & Litwin, 2022; Sharma & Kaur, 2019).

Self-efficacy theory focuses on individuals' belief in their ability to succeed in specific roles or tasks and is crucial in understanding how internal confidence levels and perceived barriers impact women's pursuit of higher positions (Hamzah et al., 2022). Human capital theory, which links educational attainment and professional development to productivity and career outcomes, offers insights into how investments in training and skills development affect female employees (Kumari, 2021). The notion of the old boys' network highlights the exclusivity of informal male-dominated professional networks that often exclude women from mentorship and advancement opportunities (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021b).

Figure 7. Theoretical Frameworks



Note. The chart shows the common theoretical frameworks that were used in studies.

Overall, the distribution of theoretical frameworks shows a strong focus on workplace barriers and psychological dimensions but also indicates room for expanding theoretical diversity. Future research could benefit from integrating intersectional and socio-cultural perspectives, as well as emerging theories on organizational justice, leadership identity, and inclusive management practices to deepen the understanding of Asian women’s career development in hospitality (Kumara, 2018; Liu et al., 2021).

3.2.8 Key Words

‘Career advancement’ is the most prominent and recurring phrase in publications on Asian women’s development in the hospitality industry. This emphasis underscores the academic community’s growing interest in understanding how women navigate their professional trajectories and the systemic barriers that hinder their progression within the hotel and hospitality sectors (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021b; Khan & Sultana, 2017; Patwardhan et al., 2016). The focus on career advancement encompasses not only promotion and leadership opportunities but also broader structural issues such as gender equality, organizational culture, mentorship availability, and the effectiveness

Additionally, the prevalence of terms like ‘glass ceiling’, ‘gender’, ‘gender stereotyping’, and ‘gender equality’ highlight the underlying socio-cultural and organizational dynamics that shape women’s career outcomes. These reflect ongoing concerns about how traditional gender norms, workplace biases, and societal expectations influence women’s roles and visibility in the hospitality workforce (Ngan & Litwin, 2022). The inclusion of terms like ‘India’, ‘Philippine’, ‘Vietnam’, and ‘Arab’ also indicates the geographic diversity of the research, though regional disparities in study frequency remain.

Moreover, the word cloud presented in Figure 8 shows a substantial presence of the terms ‘chef’, ‘culinary’, ‘front desk’, ‘sales’, and ‘housekeeping’, pointing to the various occupational roles where career progression is studied. Meanwhile, the appearance of terms such as ‘work–life balance’, ‘family structure’, and ‘workplace conflict’ suggests that researchers are also attentive to the personal and social constraints that shape career mobility for women, especially in roles that require long hours, emotional labour, or rotational shifts (Marasigan et al., 2021).

Overall, the prominence of career advancement in this body of literature reflects both the urgency and complexity of gender equity issues in hospitality employment. The consistent focus across studies points toward an evolving research agenda that seeks not only to diagnose challenges but also to identify actionable strategies such as policy reform, flexible work arrangements, and inclusive leadership training that can promote more equitable career outcomes for women in this globally significant industry (Dwivedi et al., 2016; Yasarathne, 2023).

3.3 Conclusion

In recent years, the amount of research on the career development of Asian women in the hospitality industry has grown significantly, particularly between 2021 and 2024, indicating a rising academic interest in this area. Despite this growth, citation patterns

remain highly concentrated, with a few widely cited papers dominating academic discourse, while many studies have yet to gain broader recognition. Journal articles are the predominant publication type, with quantitative methods prevailing. However, qualitative and mixed-methods research remains limited. This imbalance reflects a preference for large-scale data over in-depth exploration of individual career narratives. Geographically, India accounts for the largest proportion of studies, while immigrant women, a vital labour force in the hospitality sector, are largely under-represented. Only six studies specifically address immigrant women, highlighting a substantial research gap.

A recurring focus in the literature is ‘career advancement,’ a phrase that underscores persistent barriers such as gender stereotypes, the glass ceiling, and work–family conflict. Several studies have called attention to the importance of institutional support, including inclusive industry policies, accessible career training programmes, and managerial encouragement (Dahiya et al., 2024b; Lakhera et al., 2020; Suan & Nasurdin, 2016).

Despite this growing body of work, systematic research on the career development of Asian women, particularly in New Zealand, remains scarce (Rotimi et al., 2023; Williamson, 2019). Most existing studies focus on adjustment challenges such as language barriers, cultural conflicts, and balancing family and work responsibilities (Mathew, 2018; Vithayaporn, 2023), but offer little insight into long-term career pathways, organisational support structures, or the implications of industry policy. In New Zealand, although Asian women are widely employed in the hospitality sector, especially in entry-level roles such as housekeeping, F&B, and front office, they often face limited mobility into higher-skilled or managerial positions (Pereira & Wang, 2025).

This study is grounded in a systematic review of the literature and draws specifically on Glass Ceiling Theory and Social Role Theory, both of which were thoroughly

explored during the review process. Glass Ceiling Theory (Pereira & Wang, 2025) provided a foundational lens through which to examine the institutional and often invisible barriers that hinder women's upward mobility. The literature repeatedly emphasizes how Asian women face compounded barriers, not just due to gender but also race, culture, and language (Yuan et al., 2014). Social Role Theory (Mistry et al., 2024) was also a critical framework in the reviewed studies, helping to explain how ingrained gender stereotypes shape occupational roles and expectations. As documented in prior research, the hospitality industry tends to stereotype women as being better suited for service-related roles while leadership positions are typically associated with men (Sharma, 2018).

The integration of these theories informed both the theoretical foundation and methodological design of this study. By applying Glass Ceiling Theory and Social Role Theory, this research adopted a dual-lens approach to investigate how structural and socio-cultural barriers intersect to shape the career trajectories of Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality sector. Methodologically, the study emphasized qualitative inquiry to capture the nuanced experiences of these women—an approach that addressed the gaps in prior literature and offered a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities they face.

Ultimately, this study aimed to fill a research gap by focusing on an under-represented population and context. Its core contribution lies in offering insights and practical policy recommendations for promoting equity, inclusion, and career development opportunities for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the career development of Asian women in New Zealand’s hospitality industry, based on both quantitative and qualitative data. The analysis addresses the research questions by identifying and examining three key themes: Barriers to Career Development, Current Strategies for Career Development, and Future Initiatives for Career Development. These themes shed light on the challenges Asian women face in career advancement and highlight both current efforts and future strategies to support their professional growth.

4.2 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data provided a foundational context regarding the participants’ backgrounds and perceptions about their careers. This data was collected to identify general trends, offer demographic insights, and establish a basic understanding of the factors influencing their career development, which could then be further explored through qualitative analysis.

Table 2. Participants’ Nationality Composition

| Nationality | Count |
|-------------|-------|
| Vietnamese | 1 |
| Chinese | 4 |
| Indonesian | 1 |
| Sri Lankan | 2 |
| Thai | 1 |
| Filipino | 1 |
| Indian | 1 |
| Taiwanese | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

The majority of participants were Chinese (33%), (17%) were Sri Lankan, and (8%)

each came from six other Asian countries (see 错误!未找到引用源。). This geographic demographic offered an insight into eight different Asian communities within the hospitality industry in New Zealand.

Table 3. Participants' Age Distribution

| Age Range | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| 18 – 30 | 8 |
| 30 – 40 | 4 |
| Total | 12 |

As seen in 错误!未找到引用源。 , (67%) of the participants were in the 18–30 age group, and (33%) were aged between 30–40 years. These two groups showcase the early-to-mid career stages.

Table 4. Positions Held by Participants

| Position | Count |
|---------------------|-------|
| Assistant Manager | 1 |
| Restaurant Server | 1 |
| Waitress | 1 |
| Front of House | 2 |
| Duty Manager | 1 |
| Food and Beverage | 2 |
| Catering Assistant | 1 |
| Guest Service | 2 |
| Receptionist | 1 |
| Residential Advisor | 1 |
| Housekeeper | 1 |
| Porter to Welcomer | 1 |
| Total | 15* |

Note. * More than one position was held by the participants.

The roles held were varied, including both entry-level and supervisory positions. The most frequently held roles were front of house, F&B, and guest service (13% each). Other positions—assistant manager, restaurant server, waitress, duty manager, catering assistant, receptionist, residential advisor, housekeeper, and porter to welcomer—were each represented by one participant. The distribution reflects a concentration in front-line service and mid-level roles, with limited representation in

upper management.

Table 5. Length of Work Experience

| Working Experience | Working Experience |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Year | 10 |
| 3 Years | 1 |
| 5 Years | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

Most of the participants (83%) had only one year of experience, while one had three years and another had five. This distribution indicates that most respondents were relatively new to the hospitality industry in New Zealand, and insights are primarily drawn from individuals in the early stages of their professional journeys.

Table 6. Recognition of the Existence of Career Barriers

| Responses | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes | 9 |
| No | 3 |
| Total | 12 |

The majority of participants (75%) recognized the presence of barriers impacting their career development, suggesting that career-related obstacles were experienced among Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry. This high proportion points to the existence of systemic or structural challenges that may hinder equitable progression (Pereira & Wang, 2025). In contrast, the (25%) who did not report such barriers may reflect individual differences in experience, resilience, or workplace context (Kumara, 2018).

Table 7. Recognition of Barriers for Asian Women

| Responses | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes | 9 |
| No | 2 |
| Yes/No | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

*Note.** Yes/No: indicates recognition of certain barriers, though these were perceived as not severe and potentially surmountable.

The majority of participants (75%) identified specific barriers faced by Asian women, while (17%) did not, and one participant (8%) gave a mixed response, suggesting a context-dependent view. This variation indicates that while barriers are commonly perceived, individual experiences differ, likely influenced by personal background, workplace culture, or support systems (Dashper, 2020).

Table 8. Challenges Adapting to the Work Culture in New Zealand

| Responses | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes | 11 |
| No | 0 |
| Yes/No | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

*Note.*Yes/No:* indicates acknowledgement of certain challenges in adapting to New Zealand’s work culture, though these were perceived as moderate and manageable.

Nearly all the respondents (92%) reported difficulties adapting to New Zealand’s work culture, with only one answering Yes/No. This overwhelming majority suggests that cultural adaptation is a significant challenge for Asian women in the hospitality industry, potentially affecting communication, integration, and overall career progression (Sutono et al., 2024). The mixed response may reflect a transitional stage of adjustment or varying experiences across different workplaces, highlighting the complex and individual nature of cultural adaptation in professional settings (Gebbers et al., 2020).

Table 9. Role Expectations for Asian Women

| Responses | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes | 7 |
| No | 4 |
| Yes/No | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

*Note.*Yes/No:* indicates acknowledgement of certain role expectations for Asian women, though these were perceived as flexible or negotiable rather than strictly imposed.

Seven participants (58%) believed that there are role expectations for Asian women,

four (33%) did not perceive any specific expectations, and one participant (8%) expressed a mixed view. The findings suggest that more than half of the participants recognized stereotypical or predetermined roles associated with their identity as Asian women within the New Zealand hospitality industry. This indicates the presence of cultural or gendered assumptions that may influence how Asian women are perceived and positioned in the workplace, potentially limiting their opportunities for role diversity and career advancement (Hussain et al., 2024).

Table 10. Is There a ‘Glass Ceiling’ (Invisible Barriers)

| Responses | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes | 9 |
| No | 2 |
| Yes/No | 1 |
| Total | 12 |

*Note.**Yes/No: indicates recognition of invisible barriers limiting advancement opportunities for Asian women, though these were perceived as less rigid or possible to overcome through persistence or organisational support.

Nine respondents (75%) reported experiencing the glass ceiling effect, two (17%) said they had not, and one participant (8%) expressed a mixed view. These findings indicate that the majority of participants felt they had been prevented from advancing to higher-level positions by invisible barriers. This suggests the presence of systemic inequality within the industry, where subtle forms of discrimination, such as bias in promotion practices or leadership perceptions, may hinder Asian women’s upward mobility despite their qualifications or performance (Yasarathne & Dunning, 2023).

Table 11. Support and resources for Asian women

| Responses | Count |
|-----------|-------|
| Yes | 3 |
| No | 3 |
| Yes/ No | 6 |
| Total | 12 |

*Note.**Yes/No: indicates recognition of available support and resources for Asian women, though these

were perceived as limited in scope or effectiveness.

Responses were mixed on the issue of support and resources: half of the participants (50%) were unsure about whether there was adequate organizational support, while the remaining responses were evenly split—(25%) agreed and (25%) disagreed that support and resources were available for Asian women to advance in their careers. This uncertainty suggests that support systems may not be clearly communicated or consistently implemented. The divided opinions also indicate that access to support may vary across workplaces, highlighting potential gaps in how organizations address the needs of Asian women in their career development (Hamzah et al., 2022).

4.3 Qualitative Findings

The thematic hierarchy developed in this study comprised of three primary themes: Barriers to Career Development, Current Strategies for Career Development, and Future Initiatives for Career Development. Under these themes, nine sub-themes and twenty-four tertiary codes emerged, offering a detailed exploration of barriers, current strategies and future initiatives affecting Asian women's career development in the hospitality industry in New Zealand.

4.3.1 Barriers to Career Development

Barriers to Career Development emerged as one of the most significant themes. This theme includes four sub-themes: Structural Barriers, Socio-cultural Barriers, Organizational Barriers, and Personal Barriers. These barriers arise from a complex interplay of systemic issues, cultural biases, workplace dynamics, and personal challenges. Participants highlighted how their career progression was frequently hindered by external factors such as stereotyping and limited access to mentorship or leadership opportunities, compounded by cultural expectations and individual constraints beyond their control.

4.3.1.1 Structural Barriers

Structural barriers refer to external systems or institutional practices that restrict individuals' opportunities for career advancement, regardless of their personal abilities or efforts. These may include unequal access to promotions, lack of diversity in leadership, or discriminatory policies. Such barriers can significantly shape and limit career pathways. This interpretation aligns with Alismail's (2016) findings, which describe structural barriers as systemic limitations that, while outside the individual's control, have a profound impact on their career trajectories.

Two dominant codes within this sub-theme were the limited job market and visa restrictions, both of which shaped participants' access to opportunities. Participants described how the limited job market in New Zealand's hospitality sector poses a critical obstacle. Participant K explained:

“Businesses here are small which means that you kind of need to wait till someone resigns so that you'll have a chance to rotate.” (participant K)

This indicates a scarcity of upward mobility within smaller establishments, where hierarchical layers are fewer and promotional opportunities are infrequent. The constrained scale of operations reduces opportunities for role diversification, thereby bottlenecking career progression (Ngui et al., 2024).

The visa restrictions faced by many migrant workers, particularly international students, further compound structural limitations. Participants stated that temporary visas curtailed their ability to gain full-time work experience, often disqualifying them from roles requiring stability or long-term commitment. Participant I highlighted this point:

“My student visa restricts the number of hours, usually up to 20 hours per week, making it difficult to gain full-time experience or be considered for

higher positions.” (participant I)

These legal and bureaucratic hurdles not only limit practical experience but also impact the perceptions of employers, who may be reluctant to invest in temporary staff for leadership pipelines (Gleeson & Griffith, 2021).

4.3.1.2 Socio-cultural Barriers

Four dominant codes within this sub-theme were identified. Participants frequently described facing a glass ceiling, Racial Discrimination, Social role Stereotyping, and Difficulties in Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities. These experiences reflect socio-cultural barriers, which are shaped by prevailing societal attitudes and cultural norms that influence how individuals, particularly women from minority backgrounds, are viewed and treated in the workplace. Such barriers may not always be obvious but can significantly affect career progression and inclusion. This understanding aligns with Brites Da Silva et al. (2021a), who noted that socio-cultural barriers stem from deep-rooted social and cultural perceptions that subtly or explicitly shape professional interactions and opportunities.

The glass ceiling effect, referring to invisible barriers that prevent individuals, especially women and minorities, from advancing to higher-level positions (Taparia & Lenka, 2022), was one of the most consistent codes in participants’ narratives.

Despite qualifications and competence, many felt their advancement was hindered by invisible barriers. As participant C shared:

“Despite strong qualifications and skills, advancing to higher roles has sometimes felt limited by unseen barriers.” (participant C)

Participant D echoed this sentiment by identifying the intersection of race and language as key factors:

“Leadership roles in hospitality are often dominated by locals or other people whose mother language is English ... it can be challenging for non-native speakers or migrants to advance, regardless of their experience or skills.” (participant D)

Participant B further reinforced this by stating:

“I believe that race and skin colour are still significant barriers when it comes to career advancement.” (participant B)

Such perceptions suggest that glass ceilings are upheld not by formal policies but through informal cultural norms and implicit biases that shape workplace behaviour (Sharma & Kaur, 2019). Racial discrimination, often overlapping with gender bias, was frequently mentioned by participants, who reported being treated differently based on their ethnicity. This intersection of race and gender compounds the barriers Asian women face in advancing within New Zealand’s hospitality industry.

According to Williamson and Rasmussen (2022), Asian respondents made up (7%) of the national sample population in the New Zealand hospitality industry. While this represents a minority compared to the European majority (62%), experiences of Asian women in the workplace suggest that their challenges stem not just from under-representation, but from systemic marginalisation. Participant J captured this intersectional challenge by stating:

“I think Asian women may experience workplace discrimination based on both gender and ethnicity.” (participant J)

Being both Asian and female places individuals at a structural disadvantage in accessing leadership roles, even with comparable qualifications and experience. Racial and gender biases often lead to the persistent marginalisation of Asian women, making them invisible and undervalued in the workplace. These subtle yet systemic forms of discrimination shape workplace norms and leadership pathways in ways that

reinforce majority dominance and sustain inequality.

Social role stereotyping adds another layer of complexity. As participant B observed:

“Asian women often face subtle stereotypes. ... They might be seen as less assertive or not suited for leadership roles.” (participant B)

While positive traits such as reliability and compassion are acknowledged, they are often framed in ways that align with supportive, rather than strategic or authoritative, roles. Participant B continued:

“Asian women are frequently seen as hardworking, reliable, and compassionate ... but they’re often not viewed as natural leaders.”
(participant B)

These ingrained perceptions restrict professional identity formation and reduce the likelihood of being considered for managerial or executive roles (Patwardhan et al., 2016).

According to Williamson and Rasmussen (2022), (60%) of respondents identified as female in the New Zealand hospitality industry, significantly outnumbering males (37%). This gender distribution contextualizes the prominence of work–life balance challenges in the narratives. As participant J observed:

“In some Asian cultures, there may be societal pressures on women to fulfil traditional positions at home, which could affect their work–life balance.”
(participant J)

These cultural norms often result in women bearing a disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities, even when engaged in demanding professional roles. In the hospitality industry, which is known for long hours, irregular shifts, and high customer-facing demands, this imbalance becomes especially burdensome (Saito et al.,

2025). The dual pressures of meeting cultural expectations at home and professional expectations at work can severely constrain women's capacity for career advancement, contributing to a cycle where leadership roles remain inaccessible or unsustainable (Patwardhan et al., 2017).

4.3.1.3 Organisational Barriers

Organisational barriers emerged as the most immediate obstacles experienced by participants. Five codes were identified in this sub-theme. These barriers stemmed from internal workplace dynamics and included an Absence of Targeted Mentorship, Exclusion from Leadership Opportunities, Lack of Clear Promotion Pathways, Unequal Access to Development Resources, and Difficulty Integrating into Workplace Culture.

The absence of targeted mentorship emerged as a key challenge. Participants expressed frustration over the lack of structured mentoring initiatives that addressed their unique cultural and professional contexts. Participant A stated:

“There are no specific programmes or mentoring initiatives that target career development for Asian women.” (participant A)

Participant I added:

“There are only a few mentor opportunities in schools that specifically help international students ... but not in the workplace.” (participant I)

This gap results in missed opportunities for skill enhancement, networking, and professional guidance, all of which are crucial for career advancement (Dahiya et al., 2024b).

Exclusion from Leadership Opportunities was also a recurring code. Participants perceived that international and Asian women were systematically overlooked for

managerial roles. Participant I observed:

“Like international workers, especially women, are not always considered first for leadership positions.” (participant I)

Echoing this, participant B noted:

“The expectation seems to be that they should take on roles focused on service rather than leadership, even though many are more than capable of stepping into managerial positions.” (participant B)

These perspectives suggest that systemic bias within organisational cultures continues to undervalue the leadership potential of Asian women (Dinakaran, 2018).

The lack of clear promotion pathways further aggravates this issue. Participants described opaque advancement structures where progression depended more on informal networks or insider access than merit. Participant G stated:

“Many companies do not have clear career development pathways.”
(participant G)

Participant K remarked:

“Employers tend to recruit people with connections ... it doesn't really matter if that candidate is capable or competent.” (participant K)

This fosters an environment of uncertainty and discouragement, disincentivizing ambition and eroding professional morale (Darroca et al., 2024).

Unequal access to development resources was another key concern. Participant E explained:

“This might be due to simply not being given the same opportunities for development.” (participant E)

Whether due to unconscious bias or institutional neglect, such inequities in access to training and growth opportunities significantly impede career advancement for marginalized groups (Patwardhan et al., 2015).

Lastly, participants noted considerable difficulty integrating into workplace culture, particularly when the organizational environment was informally egalitarian, which presented a stark contrast to the hierarchical structures familiar to many Asian workers. Participant A found:

“challenging to get used to the informal and very egalitarian work culture.”

(participant A)

Others highlighted specific discomforts, such as being expected to address managers by their first names or navigate direct feedback protocols, as participant I noted:

“In New Zealand, feedback is usually given directly and employees are expected to speak up, so I was not very comfortable with it at first.”

(participant I)

Such cultural dissonance may result in both social and professional detachment, hindering individuals' ability to effectively integrate into workplace dynamics. Over time, these misalignments can contribute to an increased sense of alienation and adversely affect employee engagement and retention outcomes (Sutono et al., 2024).

4.3.1.4 Personal Barriers

The sub-theme Personal Barriers includes two codes: Insufficient Local Work Experience and Limited English Proficiency. While these challenges are rooted in personal circumstances, they are significantly shaped by broader systemic and cultural dynamics.

The lack of local work experience was seen as a considerable hurdle by several

participants. As participant A described:

“A key barrier is the limited recognition of my international experience.”
(participant A)

Despite possessing substantial expertise from their countries of origin, many participants felt their skills were undervalued or outright ignored, suggesting a provincialism within hiring practices that prioritises local familiarity over global competence (Al-Asfour et al., 2017).

Limited English proficiency emerged as yet another challenge. Participant B shared:

“Language is one of the biggest barriers for Asians in the hospitality industry.” (participant B)

The nuances of communicating in the workplace were elaborated by participant B:

“The pace of conversation, the specific vocabulary used in the workplace, and even understanding different accents were all things I had to adjust to.”
(participant B)

These difficulties often excluded participants from informal social networks and decision-making processes, both of which are critical to professional visibility and growth (Brites Da Silva et al., 2021a).

4.3.2 Current Strategies for Career Development

The theme of Current Strategies for Career Development delineates the multifaceted approaches adopted by Asian women in New Zealand’s hospitality industry to overcome obstacles to their professional advancement. These strategies arise from a dynamic interplay of institutional support and individual initiative, categorized under two sub-themes: Organizational Strategies and Personal Strategies. The codes within these sub-themes—General Mentorship Programmes, Peer-based Reliance, Skill

Enhancement, Professional Networking Efforts, and Adaptation to Work Environment Norms illustrate how participants navigate structural, socio-cultural, organizational, and personal barriers.

4.3.2.1 Organizational Strategies

The sub-theme of Organizational Strategies encompasses institutional mechanisms designed to foster employee growth, comprising two codes: General Mentorship Programmes and Peer-based Reliance. These strategies leverage company resources and workplace relationships to support career trajectories, though their broad application may not fully address the specific needs of Asian women (Hamzah et al., 2022).

The code General Mentorship Programmes highlights the provision of company-sponsored resources aimed at supporting career development. As Participant B explained:

“The company provides general resources and programmes aimed at helping all employees grow and develop.” (participant B)

These initiatives offer a structured framework for accessing training, guidance, and professional development opportunities, forming a foundational platform for skill enhancement and career planning (Dahiya et al., 2024a).

According to Williamson and Rasmussen (2022), only (19%) of respondents in the New Zealand hospitality industry indicated they had been offered training in their past or current roles, while a substantial majority (81%) reported having no such opportunities. This stark imbalance underscores the generic and limited nature of existing mentorship programmes, constraining their ability to address the unique barriers faced by Asian women, such as the previously noted absence of targeted mentorship (Widiastini et al., 2019).

According to Williamson and Rasmussen (2022), (35%) of employers, managers, and supervisors in the New Zealand hospitality industry expressed an intention to leave the hospitality sector within the next 12 months, with an additional (46%) being unsure. This high level of uncertainty and turnover risk signals a broader issue of dissatisfaction and lack of long-term engagement within the sector, which could be mitigated through more personalised, culturally responsive training and mentorship strategies. Although general programmes signal an organisational commitment to inclusivity, the evident gap between availability and accessibility highlights an urgent need for tailored interventions designed specifically to support marginalised groups in navigating career progression within the hospitality industry (Patwardhan et al., 2015).

The code Peer-based Reliance emphasises the cultivation of workplace relationships to enhance professional visibility and learning, as participant A stated:

“I actively look for feedback and build relationships with colleagues and supervisors to create visibility.” (participant A)

Similarly, participant H noted:

“I also learn from experienced coworkers and seek feedback to enhance my performance.” (participant H)

Within the organizational context, this strategy leverages the workplace environment to foster informal networks that facilitate career development. By seeking feedback and building connections, participants counteract organizational barriers such as exclusion from leadership opportunities and difficulties integrating into workplace culture. Peer-based reliance also mitigates socio-cultural barriers, including racial discrimination and social role stereotyping, by creating a supportive network that bolsters confidence and engagement (Preko & Anyigba, 2022).

4.3.2.2 Personal Strategies

The sub-theme Personal Strategies refers to individual-driven efforts to overcome career barriers, encompassing three codes: Skill Enhancement, Professional Networking Efforts, and Adaptation to Work Environment Norms. These strategies reflect the agency of Asian women in proactively addressing challenges through self-development and cultural alignment.

The code Skill Enhancement captures participants' commitment to self-investment through education, training, and skill development, as participant A shared:

"I enrolled in a Master of International Hospitality Management to strengthen my qualifications." (participant A)

Participant L emphasized a similar commitment:

"I have focused on self-investment through continuous learning and professional training, obtaining certifications to enhance my skills and support my career path." (participant L)

Additionally, improving communication skills was a critical focus, with Participant B stating:

"When it comes to overcoming challenges related to work culture, one strategy I've used is consistently practicing my English communication skills." (participant B)

And participant I added:

"I have tried to actively work on improving my communication skills and confidence in the workplace." (participant I)

These efforts directly address personal barriers such as limited English proficiency

and the lack of recognition for international experience. By acquiring advanced qualifications and refining communication abilities, participants position themselves as competitive candidates for higher roles, challenging the glass ceiling and socio-cultural biases that impede advancement. This proactive approach aligns with the literature underscoring the importance of continuous learning for career mobility (Patwardhan et al., 2016).

The code Professional Networking Efforts reflects individual initiatives, as participant E explained:

“Another strategy was trying to build relationships at work—connecting with my co-workers/teammates helped me feel more comfortable and confident.”

(participant E)

Networking fosters a sense of belonging and facilitates access to informal support systems, which are critical for career advancement. This strategy helps participants overcome organisational barriers, including the lack of clear promotion pathways and unequal access to development resources. By fostering professional relationships, Asian women can enhance their visibility within the workplace, thereby challenging systemic barriers to leadership and addressing the difficulties associated with accessing informal networks typically dominated by well-established or culturally dominant groups.

Networking also supports integration into New Zealand’s egalitarian work culture, reducing cultural dissonance and fostering professional engagement (Preko & Anyigba, 2022).

The code Adaptation to Work Environment Norms encapsulates participants’ efforts to align with the cultural norms of their workplaces. Participant J noted:

“So of course I needed to learn a lot and tried my best to adapt to the work culture.” (participant J)

Similarly, participant L stated:

“We need to learn to work together and understand each other’s backgrounds.” (participant L)

These efforts address the organisational barriers arising from the difficulty of integrating into an egalitarian workplace culture and the discomfort associated with direct feedback protocols. Adaptation is particularly significant in the hospitality industry, where collaboration and customer-facing interactions are paramount (Dutta, 2024). By embracing cultural differences and promoting mutual understanding, participants enhance their ability to work effectively in diverse teams, mitigating feelings of alienation and strengthening their professional standing. This strategy is crucial for overcoming socio-cultural barriers, such as social role stereotyping, which often positions Asian women as less assertive (Sutono et al., 2024).

4.3.3 Future Initiatives for Career Development

The theme of Future Initiatives for Career Development outlines a series of proposed strategies designed to advance the professional trajectories of Asian women in New Zealand’s hospitality industry. These strategies embody a forward-looking perspective, grounded in participants’ lived experiences and informed by a broader understanding of structural and organisational dynamics. They reflect a dual model of responsibility, encompassing both the imperative for systemic institutional transformation and the active agency of individuals in navigating career challenges. The initiatives have been categorised under three sub-themes: Structural Initiatives, Organisational Initiatives, and Personal Initiatives.

4.3.3.1 Structural Initiatives

Structural Initiatives encompass the broader systemic and policy-level transformations necessary for building equitable environments. A significant area of concern for many participants was the undervaluation of international experience. The code Recognition

of Overseas Experience captures the sentiment that career progression is often hindered by local-centric hiring practices. Participant A emphasized the importance of

“Recognising overseas experience more fairly.” (participant A)

This highlights the need for immigration and employment policies to formally acknowledge global professional experience, especially in an industry as internationally dynamic as hospitality. Institutions and employers could implement qualification equivalency assessments, encourage inclusive hiring practices, and invest in onboarding programmes that integrate international professionals effectively. By doing so, the sector would not only broaden its talent pool but also cultivate a diverse leadership reflective of its global clientele (Dahiya et al., 2024b).

4.3.3.2 Organisational Initiatives

Organisational initiatives involve actionable strategies that hospitality institutions can adopt to foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment (Sutono et al., 2024). The three dominant codes within this sub-theme are: Inclusive Cultural Policies, Leadership Training, and Customized Mentorship. These initiatives focus on creating equitable pathways, dismantling unconscious biases, and enhancing visibility and empowerment for Asian women.

Inclusive cultural policies aim to cultivate awareness and inclusivity across all levels of the workforce. Participants advocated for training programmes that help mitigate bias and promote intercultural understanding. Participant B shared:

“Offering cultural competency training for all employees can help reduce unconscious bias and create a more inclusive workplace, where Asian women and other minority groups feel valued and supported.” (participant B)

Participant J emphasized the need for safe spaces:

“It’s important to provide a safe space for open discussions about challenges related to ethnicity, gender, and career growth.” (participant J)

Participant L proposed strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) frameworks:

“To improve career development for Asian women in New Zealand’s hospitality industry, organisations should strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.” (participant L)

Such policies not only elevate under-represented voices but also create a culture of accountability. By embedding cultural responsiveness into recruitment, performance evaluation, and promotion frameworks, organisations can systematically dismantle exclusionary practices and foster a workplace culture of belonging (Sutono et al., 2024).

Leadership training initiatives provide Asian women with the skills, confidence, and representation necessary to aspire toward and succeed in senior roles. As participant B stressed:

“Offering leadership opportunities would go a long way in inspiring others and proving that advancement is possible.” (participant B)

Similarly, Participant D emphasised the role of representation and targeted upskilling:

“More representation of Asian women in leadership roles can inspire others to aim higher. Additionally, language and leadership training tailored to migrant workers could help break career barriers.” (participant D)

This underscores the importance of developing leadership pipelines that intentionally include minority women. Organisations can host leadership workshops, pair emerging leaders with executive sponsors, and track representation metrics to ensure continued progress (Sharma, 2018).

Customised mentorship refers to developmentally focused relationships tailored specifically to the cultural and career contexts of Asian women. Participant B asserted that

“Providing mentorship programmes specifically for Asian women could help them navigate the challenges they face in the industry and offer guidance on how to advance in their careers.” (participant B)

Participant E also suggested the following:

“I think mentorship programmes would be really helpful—especially ones that pair experienced professionals with younger workers from diverse backgrounds.” (participant E)

Tailored mentorship programmes can bridge the gap between potential and opportunity, providing mentees with access to professional wisdom, strategic navigation advice, and culturally resonant support systems. These programmes are especially beneficial in environments where informal networks dominate career progression dynamics (Patwardhan et al., 2015).

4.3.3.3 Personal Initiatives

Personal initiatives reflect the proactive strategies employed by individuals to confront and overcome systemic and interpersonal challenges. While institutional

reform is crucial, personal agency remains a powerful tool for resilience and growth (Lakhera et al., 2021). Two key codes emerged in this sub-theme: Learning Local Work Norms and Strategic Network Building.

The code Learning Local Work Norms captures efforts to adapt, as participant A explained:

“I’ve taken initiative in learning Kiwi workplace culture and improving my communication.” (participant A)

This reflects a commitment to cultural fluency and interpersonal alignment. Adaptation strategies include embracing egalitarian communication styles, understanding team-based responsibilities, and engaging in self-directed English language development. Such efforts enhance integration, reduce misunderstandings, and demonstrate initiative—qualities that are often recognized and rewarded in professional environments (Sutono et al., 2024).

Strategic network building was viewed as critical for both support and visibility. Participant A noted:

“It would be helpful to create professional networks and forums where Asian women can share experiences and support each other.” (participant A)

Participant H envisioned the following possibilities:

“Creating a more supportive network for Asian women in hospitality would be a great step. This could include workshops, networking events, or even online communities where people can share experiences and advice.”
(participant H)

Networks offer emotional support, mentorship opportunities, and access to informal career guidance. They help overcome exclusion from insider networks and foster a collective resilience that is both empowering and strategic. When institutional structures lag, these self-created ecosystems often become crucial lifelines for professional development and community engagement (Preko & Anyigba, 2022).

4.4 Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the complex landscape of career development for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry. Quantitative data revealed that most participants encountered career barriers, with many specifically identifying challenges unique to Asian women.

Qualitative insights further illuminated how visa restrictions, limited recognition of overseas experience, and informal hiring practices contributed to structural exclusion. Socio-cultural challenges, including racial discrimination, social role stereotyping, and work-life imbalance, were shown to undermine confidence and restrict advancement. Organisational barriers such as the absence of targeted mentorship, unclear promotion pathways and a lack of cultural responsiveness further constrained professional growth. In response, participants adopted personal strategies including skill development, peer networking, and cultural adaptation.

Importantly, participants proposed clear future initiatives to improve career outcomes for Asian women. These included formal recognition of international experience, inclusive cultural policies, leadership training, and tailored mentorship programmes. On an individual level, participants emphasised learning local work norms and building supportive professional networks to increase visibility and resilience.

Together, these findings point to the need for both systemic reform and individual empowerment. Advancing the careers of Asian women in the hospitality industry will

require coordinated efforts that promote inclusive practices, support diverse talent, and foster environments where all individuals can thrive.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary and synthesis of the research findings, framed by the study's aim, questions, theoretical foundations. It reflects on the key themes identified through the data, discusses their theoretical and practical implications, and outlines the study's limitations and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Synthesis of Findings

This study explores the career development experiences of Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry. It seeks to identify the barriers they encounter, examine the strategies they employ to navigate these barriers, and explore the future support necessary to facilitate their ongoing career progression and professional advancement. The research is guided by the following questions:

What barriers do Asian women encounter in their career development in New Zealand's hospitality industry?

What strategies have been adopted to support career development for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry?

The study is grounded in Social Role Theory and the Glass Ceiling Theory. The research identified the multiple and intersecting challenges that Asian women face in advancing their hospitality careers in New Zealand. Structural challenges such as a limited job market and visa restrictions hinder access to senior roles. Socio-cultural issues, including racial discrimination, gender role stereotyping, the glass ceiling effect, and difficulties balancing work and life, contribute to marginalisation. Organisational obstacles are also significant, including the absence of targeted mentorship, exclusion from leadership opportunities, unclear promotion pathways,

unequal access to development resources, and challenges in integrating into workplace culture. On a personal level, limited English proficiency and a lack of local work experience further affect career progression.

To respond to these obstacles, participants reported employing a combination of organisational and personal strategies. At the organisational level, women benefited from mentorship programmes and support from peers. On a personal level, individuals actively worked on skill enhancement, built professional networks, and adapted to local workplace expectations to increase their competitiveness and effectiveness.

Looking forward, participants proposed initiatives at the structural, organisational, and personal levels. Structurally, they emphasised the need for official recognition of overseas work experience. Organizationally, inclusive cultural policies, leadership training, and customised mentorship opportunities were identified as key solutions. Personally, continued adaptation to local work norms and strategic network building were seen as crucial to improving visibility and long-term success.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

This study adds to the theoretical understanding by demonstrating how Social Role Theory and Glass Ceiling Theory, when applied together, provide a more nuanced explanation of the career paths of Asian women in multicultural labour markets such as New Zealand's hospitality industry. Social Role Theory (Eagly et al., 2020) explains how deeply rooted gender norms often limit women to service-oriented positions and reinforce stereotypes that disqualify them from leadership roles. Glass Ceiling Theory (Taparia & Lenka, 2022) further reveals how invisible institutional and cultural barriers hinder upward mobility, particularly for women from ethnic minority groups.

This research adds to theory by extending the application of both frameworks to an under-explored demographic, Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry, highlighting how gender and ethnicity intersect in specific organisational and cultural contexts. The findings reveal that career barriers are not merely cumulative but compounded through overlapping social and structural forces. While existing literature has largely examined these theories in isolation or within Western-majority contexts, this study shows their combined explanatory power in a multicultural setting, especially in service-driven industries (Calinaud et al., 2021; Fapohunda, 2018; Kumara, 2018).

Moreover, the study outlines how institutional, cultural, and personal dynamics interact to shape the professional experiences of minority women. It emphasises that personal strategies alone are insufficient without organisational and policy-level interventions, thereby challenging overly individualistic interpretations of career success (Vondracek et al., 2019).

5.4 Practical Implications

This study provides insights into how hospitality organizations can better support the career development of Asian women in multicultural settings like New Zealand. While existing literature emphasizes the need for transparent and equitable HR practices (Gehrels & Suleri, 2016), this research extends those foundations by highlighting the specific, intersectional challenges faced by Asian women, including language barriers, cultural expectations, and unequal access to development resources. The findings underscore the importance of clear promotion pathways, professional networking efforts, and policies that are not only inclusive in intention but effective in practice.

The study also demonstrates that generic diversity initiatives are insufficient. It advocates for targeted mentorship and leadership development programmes that are responsive to both cultural and gender-specific needs (Dashper, 2020). Participants

reported that tailored support, such as culturally aware mentorship and workplace integration efforts, significantly enhanced their confidence, skill-building, and professional growth. These findings provide practical validation for designing initiatives that are rooted in the lived experiences of minority women in service-based industries, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.

Moreover, the study calls for organisations to move beyond symbolic diversity statements and actively foster inclusive workplace cultures that cultivate a sense of belonging. Leveraging the unique strengths of Asian women (multilingual capabilities, cross-cultural adaptability, and dedication to service excellence) not only advances equity but also drives innovation and organisational performance (Austin, 2024). By centring real voices and experiences, this study bridges the gap between policy and practice, offering actionable guidance for organizations aiming to create more equitable and effective career development environments.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

While the study offers insights, it is not without limitations. The sample primarily consisted of 12 Asian women aged between 18 and 30 in entry-level positions. Therefore, the findings may not fully reflect the challenges or experiences of those in mid-career or leadership roles.

The study also relied largely on participant narratives, which, while meaningful, may include subjective bias. Although industry reports helped validate the interview data, future studies would benefit from including a wider range of perspectives, such as those of employers, HR professionals, or policymakers.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Study

Further research should include participants from a broader range of age groups, job levels, and ethnic backgrounds to build a more holistic understanding of career

development among Asian women in hospitality. Longitudinal studies could explore how career trajectories evolve over time and whether specific interventions have a lasting impact.

Comparative studies with other minority groups could also reveal how various intersectional identities influence professional outcomes. Additionally, evaluating the real-world outcomes of current diversity and inclusion programmes could offer practical insights for improving future policies and practices for the New Zealand hospitality industry.

5.7 Final Statement

Asian women are integral to the success of New Zealand's hospitality industry, yet their career development remains shaped by a complex intersection of structural, cultural, organisational, and personal factors. This study has revealed that, in the New Zealand context, challenges such as a limited job market, gender stereotyping, and unequal access to leadership development persistently hinder progress. However, it also highlights that these barriers are not insurmountable.

Through both individual resilience and strategically designed institutional reforms, particularly those tailored to the realities of New Zealand's multicultural workforce, there is significant potential to foster more equitable and inclusive career pathways. Supporting the advancement of Asian women is not only a matter of social justice but also a strategic imperative for ensuring the long-term sustainability, innovation, and global competitiveness of New Zealand's hospitality industry.

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Appendix

Appendix A: List of Publication

| Author (s) | Year | Publication | Source |
|--|------|--|---|
| Agmapisarn, C | 2016 | Becoming Professional Female Chefs in Thailand: A Case Study of Chef Bo, Bo. lan Restaurant, Bangkok | Social Science Asia |
| Al-Asfour, A., Tlaiss, H. A., Khan, S. A., & Rajasekar, J | 2017 | Saudi Women's Work Challenges and Barriers to Career Advancement | Career Development International |
| Ali, S. R. O., Zakaria, Z., Zahari, A. S. M., Said, N. S. M., & Salleh, S. M | 2015 | The Effect of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Experience of Employees in the Hospitality Industry in Terengganu, Malaysia | Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences |
| Alismail, S | 2016 | Female Employment in Hotels in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates: Barriers, Enablers, and Experiences of Work | Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham |
| Al-Ismail, S., Carmichael, F., & Duberley, J. | 2019 | Female Employment in Hotels in Saudi Arabia and UAE | Gender in Management: An International Journal |
| Brites Da Silva, H. B., Yukongdi, V., Ribeiro, F., & Barreto, E | 2021 | Barriers to Career Advancement in the Hotel Industry in Timor-Leste: Study of Gender Stereotyping, Old Boys' Network, and Gender Differences | Timor Leste Journal of Business and Management, |
| Brites Da Silva, H., Yukongdi, V., Kusakabe, K., & Abi, M. T | 2020 | Personality traits affect the career advancement of female managers in the hotel industry of Timor-Leste | Understanding Timor-Leste: 2019 TLISA Research Conference |
| Brites Da Silva, H., Yukongdi, V., Kusakabe, K., & Zimmermann, W | 2021 | Career Advancement in the Hotel Industry in Timor-Leste: Study of Individual, Organizational, and Gender Differences | SAGE Open |

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| Bryan, C | 2017 | Service Work as Reproductive Labour: A Feminist Political Economy of Filipino Migrant Hotel Workers in Rural Manitoba | Global currents in gender and feminisms: Canadian and international perspectives |
| Chun, L., Jingjing, Y., & Li, C | 2024 | Barriers that Impede Mid-Level Female Leaders' Advancement to Senior Management Positions: Evidence from China's Tourism and Hospitality Sector | Tourism Management Perspectives |
| Dahiya, K., Chauhan, S. K., & Aggarwal, N | 2024 | To Study The Impact Of Industrial Training Exposure On Career Perception Of Female Students In Hotel Industry: With Reference To Haryana And Chandigarh Tricity Hotels | Migration Letters |
| Dahiya, K., Chauhan, S. K., & Aggarwal, N. | 2024 | Identifying Issues and Challenges of Undergraduate Female Students During Industrial Training Exposure: With Reference to Haryana and Chandigarh Tricity Hotels | Migration Letters |
| Darroca, J. F., Formarejo, T. B., Leizl, S., & Corbo, M. C. T | 2024 | Filipino Hospitality Industry Gender Disparities: Hiring Practices, Salary Levels, and Promotional Opportunities | International Conference on Gender Research |
| Deng, W | 2017 | Factors Affecting Women's Career Advancement in Guangzhou's 5-Star Hotels | Master's thesis, Auckland University of Technology |
| Dinakaran, U | 2018 | Barriers to Career Advancement of Women Chefs Leading to Their Poor Visibility in Hotel Industry: A Study with Special Reference to Bengaluru | Asian Journal of Managerial Science |
| Dinakaran, U | 2015 | Factors Leading to the Early Exit of Women Chefs and Their Limited Presence in the Hotel Industry of Bengaluru | RESEARCH REVIEW International Journal of Multidisciplinary |
| Dinakaran, U | 2018 | Motivational Factors Leading to the Limited Presence of Women Chefs in the Hotel Industry of Bengaluru | International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities |
| Dwivedi, R. K., | 2016 | Challenges for Women in Indian | International Journal of |

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| Pandey, M., & Vashisht, A | | Hotel Industry: With Special Reference to Unorganized Hotels | Research in Economics and Social Sciences |
| Elangkovan Narayanan, E. N | 2017 | Women in Management: Breaking Barriers on Female Career Advancement in the Hospitality Industry | TEAM Journal of Hospitality and Tourism |
| Hamzah, S. R. A., Musa, S. N. S., & Mohamad, N | 2022 | The Mediating Effect of Self-Efficacy on Career Aspiration and Organizational Support with Subjective Career Success Among Malaysian Women Managers During the Covid-19 Pandemic | Frontiers in Sociology |
| Hosoda, M., Toyosaki, H., Hayakawa, M., & Suzuki, K | 2021 | Gender Diversity Management and Employees' Turnover: A Case Study in the Japanese Hotel Industry | Corporate social responsibility and gender equality in Japan: Historical and current perspectives |
| Hussain, S., Soni, G., Harkison, T., & DeMicco, F | 2024 | Workplace Experiences and Career Advancement Prospects for Women in the Hotel Industry in India | Turyzm/Tourism |
| Khan, R. S., & Sultana, S | 2017 | Breaking the Gender Barrier: Success Stories of Active Participation of Women in Hospitality Industry in Bangladesh | European Journal of Social Sciences |
| Kumari, K. T. | 2021 | Antecedents of Work and Family Balance: Insights of Indian Women Employees in Hotel Industry | International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Systems |
| Kumari, N., Sharma, R., & Singh, K | 2023 | The Impact of Family and Caregiving Responsibilities on Women's Career Advancement in the Hotel Industry of Uttar Pradesh | Rabindra Bharati University Journal of Economics |
| Lakhera, H., Uniyal, M. C., & Aggarwal, N | 2021 | Organizational Challenges Towards Female Job Satisfaction in Indian Hotel Industry | Vidyabharati International Interdisciplinary Research Journal |
| Lakhera, H., Uniyal, M., Aggrawal, N., & Lakhera, A | 2020 | The Role of Selected Human Resource Policies on Job Satisfaction of Female | International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology |

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| | | Employees in the Indian Hotel Industry | |
| Ling Suan, C., & Mohd Nasurdin, A. | 2016 | Supervisor support and work engagement of hotel employees in Malaysia: Is it different for men and women? | Gender in Management: An International Journal |
| Marasigan, L. K. D., Bolompo, A. M., Bicol, C., John, R., Honorico, B. F., Obtina, D. J. C., & Noelah Mae, D. B | 2021 | Gender Equality Among Hotel Employees in Batangas: Basis for Continuous Improvement | Sustainable Development |
| Mathew, A. M | 2018 | Career Management Issues in Hospitality Sector: A Study among Women Employees in Star Hotels and Resorts in Thiruvananthapuram | International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Engineering Research (IJETER) |
| Mazlan, N. A. B. H. | 2024 | An Exploration of the Career Experiences of Female Chefs in Malaysia: A Narrative Approach | Doctoral dissertation, The University of Sunderland) |
| Murni, N. G. N. S., Ruki, M., & Antara, D. M. S | 2021 | Model of Gender Equality in International Chain Hotels to Support Sustainable Tourism in the Nusa Dua Tourism Area | International Conference on Applied Science and Technology on Social Science |
| Nair, S., & Mathew, J | 2022 | Relationship Between Job Stress, Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction: A Study Based on Women Managers in 4 and 5-Star Hotels in India | Business Perspectives and Research |
| Ngan, H. F. B., & Litwin, A. | 2022 | Are Female Hospitality Managers Still Unpopular in China? Evidence from Implicit and Explicit Attitude Investigation | Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality & Tourism |
| Ngui, W., Pusiran, A. K., Kele, A. T. A., Shaari, S., & Lian, J. C. K | 2024 | Issues, Challenges, and Future of Female Employees at the Hotel Industry in Sabah: A Post COVID-19 Investigation | Malaysian Journal of Business and Economics |
| Pasaribu, F. A., Ahmad, G. N., & Buchdadi, A. D | 2021 | The Impact of Gender Diversity, CEO Experience, and Financial Leverage on Financial Performance of Companies in the Transport and Hospitality Industry in Indonesia, Thailand, | Accounting & Finance/Oblik i Finansi |

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| | | and Malaysia (2015-2020) | |
| Patwardhan, M. V., Mayya, S., & Joshi, H. G | 2015 | Determinants of Career Progression for Women in the Hospitality Industry: Reflections of Women Managers in Five-Star Hotels in India | African Journal of hospitality, tourism and leisure |
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Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

31/10/2024

Project Title

Career Development for Asian Women in the New Zealand Hospitality Industry

An Invitation

My name is Ningcong (Annie) Gao, and I am a postgraduate researcher at Auckland University of Technology, working toward a qualification in Master of International Hospitality Management. I am conducting a research project on career development for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry. I am inviting you to participate in this study, as your insights and experiences are invaluable for understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Asian women in this field.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and choosing to participate, or not, will have no impact on your professional standing or any relationships within the industry.

I am excited about the possibility of working together to bring visibility to this important topic and would be honoured to hear about your journey and insights. If you would like to learn more about the study, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim is to uncover the unique challenges Asian women face in advancing their career development in New Zealand's hospitality industry. The study plans to engage Asian women working in the industry, inviting them to share their experiences, insights, and perspectives through interviews. This approach will provide valuable data on their career trajectories, barriers encountered, and the support mechanisms that have aided their growth. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of career development strategies for this demographic, ultimately supporting more inclusive development pathways.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

The study includes women over 18 working in various hospitality roles in New Zealand. You're invited to join this study because you are an Asian woman working in New Zealand's hospitality industry, and your experience is valuable for understanding career development in this field.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you would like to participate, please let me know by annie119223@gmail.com. You will need to complete a Consent Form, which I will provide to you directly.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

In this research, you will participate in an interview discussing your experiences and perspectives on career development within New Zealand's hospitality industry. The interview will take about 20-30 minutes and will be conducted at a convenient location of your choice, either in person or via an online platform (e.g., Teams, Zoom). You'll be asked about your career path, the challenges you've encountered, and the factors that have supported or hindered your career progress. Your responses will be used solely for this study's purpose and will remain confidential.

What are the discomforts and risks?

Emotional Discomfort: Talking about personal career experiences could be sensitive. You can skip any questions you find uncomfortable.

Confidentiality Concerns: While we will protect your privacy, there's a slight risk of your answers being identifiable. All data will be anonymized.

Time Commitment: The interview will take about 20-30 minutes, which may require scheduling adjustments.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

We want to assure you that support will be available if you need it. You may choose to take breaks during the interview or withdraw at any time. Additionally, if you feel the need for emotional support afterwards, you can access counselling services provided by AUT. Your well-being is our priority, and we are here to support you throughout this process.

AUT Student Counselling and Mental Health can offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- Drop into our centre at WB203 City Campus, email counselling@aut.ac.nz or call 921 9292.
- Let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet.

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling at <https://www.aut.ac.nz/student-life/student-support/counselling-and-mental-health>

What are the benefits?

Knowledge Contribution: Your insights will help improve understanding of Asian women's career development in New Zealand's hospitality industry.

Empowerment: Sharing your experiences can foster community and support among Asian women in hospitality.

Personal Reflection: Engaging in this research may help you reflect on your career journey.

Qualification Support: Your participation will assist me in fulfilling the requirements for my research qualification, contributing to academic knowledge in this field.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your privacy will be protected through secure data handling, with access limited to the research team. Identifiable information will be kept separate from research data, and your name will not be used in reports, but instead replaced with a code or pseudonym. Information will only be used for research purposes and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent. The Consent Form will detail how your data will be handled, and you can withdraw your data at any time.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Participating in this research will require approximately 20-30 minutes for an interview. There are no financial costs associated with participation.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have one month to consider this invitation to participate in the research. During this time, you can review the information provided and decide whether you would like to participate. If you have any questions or need further clarification, feel free to reach out.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive feedback on the results of this research. After the study is completed, I will provide you with the dissertation or a one to two-page summary of the findings.

Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Tracy Harkison, tracy.harkison@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 8491.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team in the School of Hospitality and Tourism in AUT.

Researcher Contact Details:

Ningcong (Annie) Gao, annie119223@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Tracy Harkison, tracy.harkison@aut.ac.nz, 09 921 9999 ext 8491

Appendix C: Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: *Career Development for Asian Women in the New Zealand Hospitality Industry*

Project Supervisor: *Tracy Harkison*

Researcher: *Ningcong (Annie) Gao*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 31/10/2024.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date:

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Oral Consent Protocol

For use when interviews are being conducted by videoconference.

Project title: *Career Development for Asian Women in the New Zealand Hospitality Industry*

Project Supervisor: *Tracy Harkison*

Researcher: *Ningcong (Annie) Gao*

The participant joins the videoconference

- Do you agree to my recording your consent to participate?
If they agree, then the record function will be activated and they will be asked the following:
- Have you read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 31/10/2024?
- Do you have any questions about the research?
- Do you understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that the in interview will also be audio-recorded and transcribed?
- Do you understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (your choice) and that you may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.?
- Do you understand that if you withdraw from the study then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used? However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.
- Do you agree to take part in this research?
- Do you wish to receive a summary of the research findings? (please tick one): Yes No
- Do you want me to send you a copy of the audio recording for this consent? Yes No
- Please confirm your name and contact details

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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I will now turn off the recording of the Consent and then start a separate recording for the interview.

Date:

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

- (1) What's your nationality?
- (2) What's your age range (18-30, 30-40, 40-50, or 50+)?
- (3) What positions have you held in New Zealand's hospitality industry?
How long did you work in each of those positions?
What were your specific responsibilities in those positions?
- (4) Do you think there are any barriers that are impacting your career development in New Zealand's hospitality industry?
If yes, please explain?
If not, please explain why not?
- (5) Do you think there are any barriers for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry?
If yes, please explain?
If not, please explain why not?
- (6) Have you faced any challenges in adapting to the work culture in New Zealand?
If yes, can you tell me what they are?
If not, can you tell me why it was easy to adapt?
- (7) Do you feel that there are specific role expectations for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry?
If yes, can you tell me what they are?
If not, can you tell me why not?
- (8) Do you know what the 'Glass Ceiling effect' is?
If yes, have you ever experienced that in your career? And if so how?
If no – it means that there is an invisible barrier preventing advancement to higher positions – do you think you have experienced this? If yes how?
- (9) What strategies have you used to address any challenges you have had in your career development?
- (10) Do you feel there is sufficient support and resources within your organization to help Asian women overcome career development challenges?
If yes, can you tell me what they are?
If not, can you tell me why you think there isn't any?

- (11) What measures do you think could be taken in the future to improve career development for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry?
- (12) Do you have any thoughts you would like to share in how we could improve the career development for Asian women in New Zealand's hospitality industry?