



## Corporate Glass Ceiling: An Impact on Indian Women Employees

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### ABSTRACT

Unfortunately, today women are still trying to prove themselves equal to men. Women are often overlooked in many industries just due to the fact of being a woman. There are many negative assumptions regarding women. Some examples are: women cannot do a job meant for a man, women cannot work late hours due to children, women are too soft and don't represent a strong leader in a top level position. It's hard to even think that in the 21st century the glass ceiling is continuing to block women from entering and advancing in managerial and supervisory roles.

This paper aims at focusing on glass ceiling effect or gender diversity issue in organizations along with cultural biases, gender stereotypes and the approaches that all organizations should take to encourage and promote eligible women in respectful and managerial positions. For the decades, it has been seen that the presence of women in senior managerial positions is very low in spite of having good scholastics, plethora of knowledge, quality and efficiency and this happens only due to the barriers like mental blockage or prejudices and glass ceiling phenomenon. Organizations publish their balance sheets to disclose their financial health and to motivate shareholders as per financial considerations but the invisible balance sheets of human resources are unbalanced from the long past as per gender is concerned and are discouraging our society and women. The findings reveal that the Glass Ceiling and Women Career Development have a moderate negative relationship, and also show that Individual Factors, Organizational Factors and Cultural Factors have a significant effect on Women Career Development whereas Family Factor has effects on the Glass Ceiling.

**Keywords**-- Glass-ceiling, managerial positions, barriers, talent, diversity, India

exception. As per the research report published by Accenture, women think that gender barrier is playing a determinant role in pulling in their achievements at the work place.

The word "Glass ceiling" refers to an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that restrains qualified women or minorities from obtaining higher level positions at their work place.

Society have consciously maintained the tradition: "a woman's place is at home"(Jacob,1999; Moore,1995). Most of the women still believe that their duties are only restricted to household works and looking after their children. To speak the truth, our society is compelling women not to think beyond that. But with the introduction and advancement of education and changing mindset of 'generation-Y' have compelled women to think differently maintaining social values and ethics. Besides, globalization and changes in economic and social condition act as positive catalyst for changing of the role and selfperception (Stedham & Yamamura,2004). Some studies illustrate that during the last two decades there has been an increase in the proportion of women at entry and middle-level management positions, resulting largely from the activities of the women's movement, policies of the political system, and corporate equal opportunity initiatives. However according to Meyerson & Fletcher (2000) women at the highest levels of business are still rare. They comprise only 10% of senior managers in Fortune 500 companies; less than 4% of the uppermost ranks of CEO, president, executive vice president, and COO; and less than 3% of top corporate earners.

Not only that there is strong evidence of the under-representation of women in leadership positions in many countries all over the world such as Australia (China), France, South .These factors, however, have had limited impact at the level of corporate governance, where women have only a token presence Although attitude towards the women's role as homemakers is changing to being career people, only some women have made their approach to gradually climb up the management and leadership ladders. Nowadays, women are trying to participate in the public domain and progressing towards managerial ranks or higher level of management of their participating organization. But the

### I. INTRODUCTION

We simultaneously utter "Half the sky thou art woman" and celebrate International Women's Day(IWD) not only for the role of women in society but to draw the attention of gender issues or gender discrimination which is all pervading and continuously affecting our modern society. Standing in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, women are still fighting for their rights in every aspect of life and the women employees too are not the

career path does not welcome women with red carpet. In spite of these positive changes, women still have to face intangible barriers in climbing up the corporate ladder. Along with “glass ceiling”, women, in the leadership position, may have to face the metaphors like “glass elevators” and “glass cliffs” which refer to greater scrutiny and criticism (Ryan and Haslam, 2005). Eagly and Carly (2007) have suggested another metaphor of the “labyrinth” which suggests that a woman accepts many obstacles for her career progression. Despite of all these obstacles, women are trying to put strong foothold in corporate in India but the percentage of women in senior management position in India is roughly 3%-6%. Which is still very low? This compelling situation literature has pointed out as Glass Ceiling. It's put on show that there are innumerable barriers, women are facing when they trying to climb the corporate ladder. Evidences suggest that they face an invisible barrier preventing their rise in leadership positions. The metaphor used to implicate this situation is called GC Subsequent metaphors such as glass elevators and glass cliffs refer to the greater scrutiny and criticism that women may have to face when in leadership roles

## II. BARRIERS: CAN IT BE TOUCHED AND FELT?

Barriers may be tangible or intangible, actual or as imagined by the recipient (Maskell-Pretz and Hopkins, 1997). Prejudices, glass ceiling effect or gender diversity are such barriers which are unseen and yet cast spell a lot on working woman so that organizations having intention to retain them ultimately are in vain. Glass ceiling effect is instigated by the issues of gender differentiation and gender stereotyping which affect women continuously. There are some barriers e.g. *psychological barriers*, *societal-related barriers*, *organizational barriers* against which women are still fighting to strengthen their presence in the higher level of management of organizations.

### 2.1 Psychological barriers

From the very childhood days, women are bound to abide by some so called social rules which are deeply enrooted in their mind and they cannot even ignore the influence of those rules in their matured age. In some cases they accept these rules as the rules of thumb and flow their lives as it goes. This kind of mindset gradually

Demotivate them and they loss their confidence and enthusiasm. And also there is class of women who try to overcome these rules and reshape their mind as career oriented. This class of women are actually psychologically potential to cope up with any situation either in war fronts or in organizations. But to ignore these rules and prejudices is not so easy as it works against the society or rather societal rules. It has been found in psychological studies that certain personality traits like emotional, social, soft heartedness, warmth found in women who are not suitable for managerial roles. They are also risk averse. Whereas, in this era of

globalization and increased competition, organizations demand aggressiveness, competitiveness and risk taking ability to develop and sustain. And the society driven psychology which is playing the whole game of gender discrimination have a great impact on organization.

### 2.2 Societal-related barriers

Indian society has not been able to break the shackles of old tradition of “woman at home” concept. Women are always in dilemma to make progress in their career. This problem creates a heavy impact basically on married women. Marriage is social institution and once a woman is married, it is their prime responsibility to take care of her husbands, in laws and child. It has been seen that male members are the main bread earners of their families and women, either married or not, do their domestic or household works including elder care and if married, neonatal and child care. As women have long been considered as household or domestic workers so ‘education for women’ got the least or no priority in the society. Now, the mentality of the society has been changed with the change of time and economy of the country. In this era of globalization, no country can progress having the ‘half human resources’. In spite of changing situation, women employees still have to face problems as they have to play dual roles like an employee of an organization and household worker. Due to the improvement of thought and need for financial security, husband also wants a working wife. Nowadays many organizations have started Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA) for women by the means of job sharing, flexi-time, telecommunicating etc. to give them relaxation. But according to Anker (1977), women cannot concentrate at their workplace as they bring their domestic responsibilities and children with them at their workplace and prefer flexible work time for convenience. So women are compelled to take a career break or flexible working hours to look after their young children (Schwartz, 1989) and these are the barriers in acquiring managerial positions in their organizations. Whereas, male employees can focus solely on their assigned work as they have stay-at-home wives who are taking dual responsibilities as of office and home and children. Our society expects a woman to be a “good mother”. But there is a dilemma with dual roles: “If they do access FWAs, they are seen as good mothers, but not good workers. If they do not use FWAs, they face being viewed as good workers, but lousy mothers” (Beard *et al.*, 2010). Besides, women have to relocate with the relocation of their husbands due to job switch and thus women have to sacrifice their prospecting jobs to honour this kind of social norm.

### 2.3 Organizational barriers

Having the stereotyped and preconceived notion, male employees cannot accept women for their upward mobility in the organization and try to create barriers in any form. Women are excluded from informal organizational network and get no help from their colleagues in decision making process. Thus by restraining women from strategic decision making process male counterparts try to heckle intentionally and creates a barrier for promotion. So women are less

popular in strategic decision maker role. Due to male imposed pressure women are also stressed throughout the day and indirectly it affects their performances and then it would be easy to find excuse to restrain them from promotion. This kind of thing sometimes causes losing of enthusiasm and it also affects their personal lives. It has been seen that a woman, in her prime time in organization or at the peak of her career, suddenly bounds to drop her career to meet social obligations and responsibilities and never think of returning back due to the unwelcoming situation of the organization.

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term glass ceiling signifies a range of barriers mug by women and by minorities as they try to find the improvement at their employment status. A lot of studies established the assumption of glass ceiling and pointed out that women experienced a numeral barrier at some stage in their pronouncement of their career pathway (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). There are also some hidden barriers, which sustained to put a stop a woman to moving up on a higher position in organizations (Adair, 1999; Baxter & Wright, 2000; Lyness & Thompson, 2000). Women countenance greater barriers and they need unusual tactics to thrive than do men. According to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission there are three classes of barriers for women in top level management. The foremost barriers are Societal Barriers portray the available good quantity of erudite women for particular positions. The next class of barriers is Internal Structural Barriers. These barriers include corporate climates. Women employees, holding important designation, have to be cautious by their performance as they are supposed to represent womankind. In some cases, women leader may take help from their mentors but, as usual, is not successful as male leaders due to gender issues. Mentoring to women have certain constraints which include the less availability of mentors to help women employees and if available, the relationship between the male mentor and female manager becomes the prime concern to themselves as they become worry about how people will interpret their relationship. In the societal Barrier there are also pipeline barriers which comprise a confrontation to training and mentoring associates for future promotions.

The third class of barriers is portrayed as Government Barriers. In the societal Barrier there are also pipeline barriers which comprise a confrontation to training and mentoring associates for future promotions. The third class of barriers is portrayed as Government Barriers. These barriers take in a lack of keep an eye on the law enforcement on behalf of the government, failing in data gathering for vivid scrutiny, and argument and insufficient reporting on the existence of a glass ceiling. On the other hand, Effective leadership rewards brazenness, fierceness and sovereignty, which are usually documented as "masculine" personality. Women are projected to be cheerful, reliant and nurturing characteristics. Researchers have noted that people who

are a successful manager behaves like a masculine characteristics (Burton & Parker, 2010; Frey, James, & Eitzen, 1991). Women who perform in a positive, antagonistic, self-governing mode are seen as performing outside of societal norms (Burton & Parker, 2010). Men who communicate with their subordinates as tough leaders in their organizations are often seen as being "direct," but women who acquire the same communication style with her subordinates are seen as "punitive" propose that moderation this dilemma of role congruity needs feminine leaders to be enormously educated, while encouraging others that they are compliant to prospects of suitable feminine behaviour.

Table 1 shows some of the individuality in general endorsed to women and men in leadership positions. Note that the masculine personality are sighted as the most optimistic and successful features of leadership.

**Table 1: Managerial Characteristics, Based on Gender (Atwater et al., 2004).**

Managerial Feminine	Subroles	Managerial Masculine	Subroles
Developing and mentoring		Problem Solving	
Recognizing and rewarding		Disciplining	
Communicating and informing		Delegating	
Motivating and inspiring		Strategic decision making	
Planning and organizing		Allocating resources	
Supporting		Punishing	

"For example, women are more likely to take an informal, as opposed to an official leadership role in organizations, and use terms such as 'facilitator' or 'organizer,' instead of 'leader'" (Northouse, 2012, p. 357). Effective leadership is not distinguished by gender, but by a hermaphrodite fusion of personality including brainpower, inventiveness, and the capability to win over (Northouse, 2012).

#### ***Glass- Ceiling is a myth and self created issue***

According to Rai and Srivastava (2008) corporate argues that no glass ceiling exists. As per them "women were paid lower salaries since they left the jobs midway, worked for lesser time and joined low-risk jobs. Further they argue that at present organizations operate in globally, a number of opportunities for carrier development. It is just myth and self created issue. Their first argument is that women can hold higher positions based on their competencies, through hard work and aspirations. Their second argument is family responsibilities come into the middle of the carrier development.

#### ***Problem Statement***

Gender differences in promotion within the economics profession have long been a concern of the researches. Since women appear to be under re-presented in senior positions, suggesting they may face a "GC" (Blank, 1996). Though women also be or work as the men worker they may face lot of barriers in their career

development. This study is based on female executive level employees, working in private sector organizations in India. Accordingly this study examines the following research questions.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

##### 4.1 General Objective

To find out the effect of GC on WCD of executive level female employees who are working in private sector organizations in India

##### 4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate the relationship of GC and WCD of executive level female employees.
2. To measure the effect of GC on WCD of executive level female employees.
3. To recommend solutions for overcoming GC on WCD of executive level female employees.

#### V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Today most of the people give a considerable attention to GC concept in competitive environment. Most of the researches doing and have done lots of researches about different topics or problems in relevant to women career. Researcher seemed that there is a gap in the empirical knowledge available, in Indian perspective about the GC. Therefore identifying the impact of GC on women workers is very important to decision makers in identifying key workplace issues in order to develop strategies to address and improve the policies for preventing such things. Furthermore findings of this study would be a better guideline for those who are managers; to identify managerial woman's problems, the ways to shatter those barriers, students; as a referential material for their studies, policy makers; making and improving policies in organizations with regard to GC and WCD findings in this research, and other relevant organization and especially for the all women workers, identifying things which hinder their career and way to shatter them. Also this study would be important to Indian economy: Through shattering the GC Indian economy will be beneficial with more participation of working women in their work environment. Also it will help to rise up their earning as well. Research will reveal way for that as it discovers the effect of GC and also describe recommendations for overcoming the effects. And also it is important for future researches and future job holders as it provide more knowledge on GC that affect women career. As the job holders they will be informed about the ways for securing their jobs or shattering GC. Ultimately it helps to climb up their career. In the case of male job holders they will able to identify problems that faced by their counterparts.

#### VI. METHODOLOGY

##### 6.1 Conceptual Framework

The main idea emphasized by this conceptual framework is, GC influences the WCD. GC may affect as the independent variable. WCD is the dependent variable. There for women career life is depending on several independent variables. Cultural Factors (CF), Individual Factors (IF), Organizational Factors (OF) and Family Factors (FF) considered as independent variable in this framework. CF (beliefs and stereotype), IF (lack of confidence, personal trait sand inability to sell themselves), OF (organizational policy, management style) and FF (childcare, house work) In addition to the above mention factors there can be several intervening variables and moderating variables, such as age, legal factors, norms, environmental factors exist in this study. However they are not considered in the research to avoid unnecessary complexities. For an example, if WCD is influenced by these mentioned variables (moderating and intervening); in consequence WCD may vary indirectly or directly. Thus researcher couldn't precisely measure, effect of GC, because of these other influences, therefore researcher assume here, moderating and Intervening variables as fixed constraint and not affect for WCD. The model using in the study is as follows:

$$WCD = f(GC)$$

$$WCD = f(C, F, I, O)$$

Where:

WCD= Woman Career Development

C = Cultural factors

F = Family factors

I = Individual factors

O = Organizational factors

##### 6.2 Variables of the study

###### 6.2.1 Independent Variable

The measurement of GC is based on the four dimensions and these dimensions are IF, FF, OF, and CF. Individual **Factors** - This criterion reflects the extents to which individual barriers that coming from themselves influence the outcome.

**6.2.1(a) Family Factors** - This criterion is the extent to which relation causes affect to the performance of employee.

**6.2.1(b) Organizational Factors** - This reflects the extent to which the employees see the organization as being responsible for lack performance of employee or the extent to which organizational barriers that coming from organizational structure and practices influence the employee development.

**6.2.1(c) Cultural Factors** - This refers to the extent to which the beliefs, traditions, influence the employee development.

###### 6.2.2 Dependent Variable

Career Focused The measurement of WCD is based on the three components of WCD Proposed by Afza and Newaz (2008). Those are Career Focused, Family Support and Attitudes towards Organization. Career Focused (CF) refers, employee interested in advancing or achieving their career. People with high career focused attempt to develop their profession.

Family Support (FS)- Family support reflects, the support given by family members to continue success of person's profession. Person who has good or high

family support achieve a situation of balancing work-family life and develop their profession. Attitudes towards Organization (AtO) - Attitude towards Organization refers the opinions of employee as regards working organization. People with positive attitudes concerning the organization worked stay with origination and develop their career within it.

## VII. ANALYSIS

The study is mainly based on the secondary source in form of various research papers, websites and eBooks. On the basis of secondary data the argument in this paper has been developed. The researchers have placed their own observations regarding the same. It has been observed by researcher during their researches that GC has 27.4 % influences on the WCD among the Female Executive level employees working in private sector organization in India. And also it is statistically significant at the 5% significance level or at the 95% confidence level. Hence it can be clearly said that other factors have 72.6 % influences on WCD. It has been reveal that the majority of the respondents exhibited low level of influence of GC. And also four sub variable of GC lie within the range of low level. At the same time, mean value is used to measure the current level of WCD. Findings of the study reveal that the majority of the respondents exhibited satisfactory level of WCD. As well as mean values of the Career Focused, Family Support and Attitudes towards Organization lie within the range of satisfactory level. According to research findings among the GC factors most influenced factor is IF. Hence Female workers must work to avoid the individual barriers such, lack of self confidence, being too emotional when working matters of workers by developing the self confidence and positive thinking as such building can do perception. They must change the perception regarding women workers as posy, emotional, manipulative.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The concept "Women, the incarnation of motherhood" must not be changed but be modified with the time. Till now, women are considered in such a way as if they come from different planets and societies have curiosities on them but have no faith. Like new gadget in the new market, organizations treat women where they have interests on women but cannot rely on their efficiency. So women in an organization are still facing barriers on career advancement, gender stereotyping and other threats from within or out of the organization. There is a hairline difference between female feticide and gender diversity or gender stereotyping because killing the honest motives of life of human being is very much synonymous with the killing of lives. This scenario should be changed and only the modernization of thought process of the management of organizations can change it with the help of positive societal changes. Every organization should prioritize talents over

anything else for the growth of themselves which in turn, helps the society to grow. Every organization should focus on "human resource" rather than "man resource" or "woman resource" separately. Everything should be balanced and nothing can be grown being unbalanced. Some initiatives have been taken for women like women bank, women police station which are directed fully by the women. Our society should carry on this noble Endeavour by encouraging women in every step of their lives keeping a thing in mind that where women are the creators of new life then they can easily maintain lifelines of the organization. Alternatively, Entrepreneurship may be the option for women who are ambitious, careerist and have passion for work and especially who want to prove themselves. On the other hand, society, government and private organizations should take collective efforts to diminish the practice of gender diversity and gender stereotyping for the amelioration of society, organizations and women.

## IX. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research has identified some factors which are responsible for creating GC effects. It also revealed some factors which help women to advance their career growth. Under this, it is expected to point out a set of recommendations enabling to enhance the existing level of WCD. Accordingly, following recommendations are made. According to research findings among the GC factors most influenced factor is IF. Hence Female workers must work to avoid the individual barriers such, lack of self confidence, being too emotional when working matters of workers by developing the self confidence and positive thinking as such building can do perception. They must change the perception regarding women workers as posy, emotional, manipulative. Female workers who identified having difficulties balancing work and family indicated that they had too many work and family responsibilities and sometimes they did not have time to accomplish everything effectively. To them, time management was the biggest challenge. To avoid the Family Barriers organization can help with the female workers by offering day care centers, leave them in the weekends, giving same flexible office hours and home office.

Some can argue that leaving the females in weekends will affect the organization performance but to get the fullest contribution of the creative's, talented organization must give something and expect something from them. Other factor is that our society has been built to bear the family responsibilities to women hence that must be a fair reason to give little bit freedom to them. Most of the employees of the study did not agreed with the fairness of the promotion scheme of the organization. Hence management should handle the employee promotion decisions fairly. It is better to provide same rights and responsibilities to male and female within the organization as such same promotion practices, same salary level according to the experience and knowledge

level, same work responsibilities. Also organization can have awareness program to change the workers perceptions on women leaders since most of the respondent have agreed that male workers are discomfort having them as seniors.

Furthermore majority of the respondents did not agree with the "equal treatment of the management." Therefore management should engage each employee individually and map a clear and concise succession path for each individual. As the respondents exhibited Second influential GC factor is cultural factors. Here most powerful barrier is gender stereotyping. If the work females want to change the attitudes of others regarding traditional myth that women are home makers and they cannot work as males, they must show that they able to do work at maximum level as organization expect. Organization also could help to female workers by examining the organization's informal culture, traditions and norms that may work against women and conducting awareness program to bring to an end of those. Also to enable women who are in employment to advance their careers organization could support the provision of training and other developmental mechanisms that will also effect to change their attitudes regarding organization to a positive side.

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