# EFFECT OF GLASS CEILING ON WOMEN CAREER ADVANCEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*During the last decade, the presence of women in the work space is drastically increasing. But only a few of them comes in leadership position. The objective of this paper is to review the studies to understand the concept of glass ceiling which is the by-product of gender bias. The study also investigates the barriers of glass ceiling that effect on the career advancement of women. Exploratory research design is used to study the effect of glass ceiling on the career advancement of women. Data for the study is collected from secondary source through systematic review of literature. The study find that glass ceiling still exist globally. Psychological factors, individual factors, societal factors, organizational factors and governmental factors are the barriers that hinder the career advancement of women employees. The findings of the study help in formulating new policies and programs for the career development of women.*

*KEYWORDS: Glass Ceiling, Barriers, Women Employees*

## INTRODUCTION

By the dawn of twenty first century enormous changes has witnessed in the status of Indian women. In the past decade the women concentrate and put their all efforts on domestic work and child bearing and child rearing (Williams & Cooper, 2004). Today women established their own identity in all the spheres of life. The social system prevailing in the country now promises an equal opportunity for men and women. With the advancement of women in higher education, successful women entrepreneurs and women working outside the home have resulted in the presence of women in different employment sectors. The mindsets of millennial women have changed drastically.

Nowadays the entry is easier for women in a male dominated working world. Even though the number of women employees in the work force is increasing, but women's access to top position is still limited (Stelter, 2002). As per World Economic Forum (2020) Global Gender Gap Report gender gap tend to increasing with seniority level. Globally, only 36 percent of senior private sector managers and public sector managers constitute women, while the representation of women as leader in business or corporate boards is even limited. Only 18.2 percent of firms are globally led by women. Even in emerging economies like India and China representation of women in senior level is only 13.8 percent and 9.7 percent respectively.Women constitutes a significant portion in the work force of India, but hardly present in the top level management. As compared to men challenges for women employees still exist in work place. Due to certain invisible barriers they can't reach higher position at their work.

One of the emerging concept of human resource management is glass ceiling, a concept that focus on under representation of women in organizations. The term is first used by American work force to explain the barriers of women in American corporates in 1986 by Carol Hymowitz and Timothy D. Schellhradt is popularized through famous Wall Street Journal.

However the term was used prior to that by Gay Bryant in 1984 in a book "The Working Women Report". The U.S Department of Labour in 1991 declared that women and minorities facing glass ceiling in their career. The term glass is an invisible one and the ceiling represent the top level. Thus, the term glass ceiling denotes the invisible barriers that thwarts individual from advancing upper level in their organization. This type of gender bias keeps women employee to stick on the floor level. Glass ceiling prevents large number of women from securing prestigious and dream jobs in their career.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The gender gap in authority reflect the existence of glass ceiling which means that women have less authority than men (Baxter &Wright, 2000).Glass ceiling is a symbolic hurdle to career progression not a formal or visible barrier (Barreto et al., 2009). Job ladder, personal policies, inactive employment regulations and gender inequality are the forces that lead to glass ceiling effect. Glass ceiling does exist as another version of gender inequality (Cotter, 2001). While moving to top position women are denied because they give much importance to their family. This resulted in deficiency in their work (Tennant &Tennant, 2008). The lack of awareness of women about the unseen obstacles and difficulties in the work place make their way to top management stagnant (Virakul, 2010).

The lack of upward movement of women in job is either because of individual or personal centered or situational or nature of work environment (Riger & Galligan, 1980). Along with this organizational culture, organizational networking and organizational practices have significant impact on the career growth of women employee (Jauhar &Lau, 2018). Organizational structure and organizational practices and beliefs and traditions influences the employee development (Bombuwela & De Alwis, 2013). Societal factors considered as a major barrier in career advancement of women. Women's perception about themselves and management's perception

about women in top management effect the career development of women (Nilufer &Priyadarshini, 2018).

Psychological barrier, societal barrier, organizational barrier etc. against which women are struggling to reach top position in their career (MaskellPretz &Hopkins, 1997). Most of the working women fight with family imposed barriers. They give up their career life and senior position in the organization for meeting family demands (Sarika, 2015). Itty et al. (2019) observed glass ceiling as an institutional barrier which prevent women from career advancement opportunities available to them. Thus, glass ceiling effect economic development.Social, organizational and personal biases had impact on women's career progression (Nath, 2000).Individual, organizational and cultural factors have play a significant role on career development of women employees (Rathore, 2017).

The structural, prejudicial and discriminatory snags that create multifaceted maze which prevent the career growth of women employees (Schwanke, 2013). The hurdles to career development of women employees happens in three dimensions viz. management perception, career progression and work environment (Radhakrishnan, 2019). Personal attributes and perceived glass ceiling has influence on the organizational commitment of women employees (Onuoha &Idemudia, 2018). Women's career progression is highly impacted by low self-esteem, gender inequality and family work life conflict. The factor Impacting least on women's career progress is cultural stereotyping against women (Perumal &Dastane, 2018). Results revealed that situational factors including gender discrimination, lack of respect from male colleagues and dual role played by women and social role such as family responsibility and relocation thwarts career progress of women (Kiaye &Singh, 2013). While formal and informal gender discrimination, make light of women's skill, problems related to cross gender network and lack of support stand as the major challenges in the career path of women leaders (Abdalla, 2014).

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Even though women constitute significant portion of work force but their presence in the top hierarchy is negligible regardless of their qualification. Thus, it is clear that glass ceiling exist in this twenty first century (Gupta,2018). Hence it is necessary to understand the concept of glass ceiling. The scope of this article is two-fold. Firstly, this paper examines the concept of glass ceiling through review and secondly, the

article drawing attention on the barriers of glass ceiling. This paper will give overall picture of effect of glass ceiling on women career advancement.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study followed exploratory research design with the objective of enhancing knowledge on the concept of glass ceiling and its barriers. This research paper is conceptualized and followed synthesized data collection from secondary sources. An extensive review on existing literature has been done from various secondary sources like books, journals, reports etc. Systematic search methodology helped to identify various articles related to glass ceiling.

## MEANING AND DEFINITIONS OF GLASS CEILING

According to Webster's learner's dictionary, Glass Ceiling is "an unfair system or set of attitudes that prevents some people from getting the most powerful jobs".

According to American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Glass Ceiling is "an unacknowledged discriminatory barrier that prevents women and minorities from rising to the positions of power or responsibility, as within a corporation".

According to Business Dictionary, Glass Ceiling as the "invisible but the real barrier through which the next stage or level of advancement can be seen, but cannot be reached by a section of qualified and deserving employees. Such barriers exist due to implicit prejudice on the basis of age, ethnicity, political or religious affiliation or sex. Although generally illegal, such practices prevalent in most countries".

According to Federal Glass Ceiling Commission USA, Glass Ceiling refers to "artificial barrier to the advancement of women and minorities. These barriers reflect discrimination between those who prosper and those who left behind".

According to Morrison and Glinow the Glass Ceiling "is not simply a barrier for an individual, based on the person's inability to handle a higher level job. Rather, the glass ceiling applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women".

It was revealed that women employees are most effected by glass ceiling. The concept of glass ceiling defined under different dimension is given below.
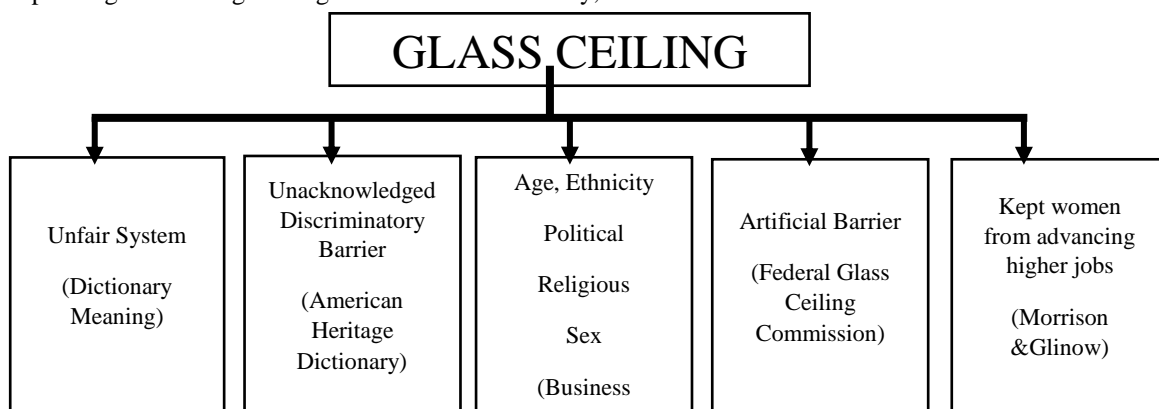


**Figure 1: Dimensions of Glass Ceiling**          **Source: Collated**

The study found that different invisible barriers that create glass ceiling effect in the organizations. The detailed study of extant literature confirms that there are invisible barriers women employees face while reaching the top position in organization. Women employees are apt for higher positions in work place but their chance of career advancement is blocked by certain invisible barriers. While defining the concept of glass ceiling, many researchers explained it as the invisible barriers in work place that prevent individuals from advancing higher level jobs in their career irrespective of their qualification (McCarthy &Burns, 2013; Barreto et al., 2009).

## BARRIERS OF GLASS CEILING

The review of literature showed that the women at work place experiencing different types of glass ceiling barriers that effect their career development. Psychological factors, social factors, individual factors, organizational factors and governmental factors were barriers that most of the women employees experienced in their organizations. MaskellPretz and Hopkins (1997) found that psychological factors, societal factors and organizational factors hinder way to reach top level in the management. The major barriers of glass ceiling that women have to face in their career is described below.

**Figure 2: Barriers Glass Ceiling**
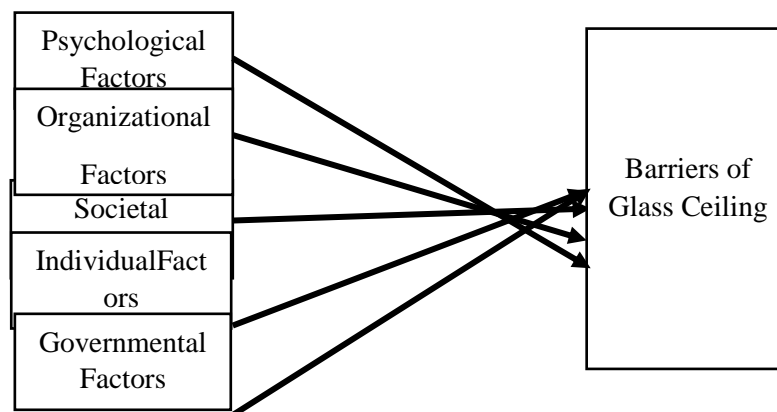


**Source: Collated**

## PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

The attitudes and emotions of women also influence their way to upward mobility. The career aspirations of an individual is influenced by their psychological factors.

## ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

Organizational barriers are barriers that women employees face within the organization when they reach top level. Organizational culture, organizational policies, organizational processes, organizational networking and organizational practice create barriers to women employees in the organization.

## SOCIETAL FACTORS

The conventional practices are still exist in Indian society. The working women lack proper support system to accomplish their responsibilities. The society itself give some responsibilities to women like child bearing and rearing. These all prevent women employees from achieving managerial positions in the organization.

## INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Women employees do not have much time to take care of their children and their education nor spend time to relaxation, entertainment and social life. For maintaining a proper balance between work and life women employees struggles physically, intellectually and emotionally. Lack of self-esteem, self-confidence, role efficacy and lack of motivation is considered as the major individual barriers. These individual problems during their work reflect in their career development.

## GOVERNMENTAL FACTORS

The under representation of women in top management is partially due to lack of adequate monitoring and enforcement of law from the part of government. There is no proper system of checking data of women's representation in managerial position. Issues relating to glass ceiling is not properly reported to the authorities.

## RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATION

The present study is a conceptual one focusing only on the effect of glass ceiling on women career advancement. This is a review based paper collecting data only from secondary sources. The study provides a well understanding about barriers faced by women in work place. This will help in tracing out the type of support system needed by women in work place to improve their managerial aptitude.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The study brings out scholarly contribution made by extant literature pertaining to glass ceiling and its barriers that effect women's career advancement. Studies shows that there is an increase in the number of women in work force. However, there is still an under representation of women in managerial jobs globally. On the basis of this, the researcher analysis the reason for the under representation of women in their work place. The review showed that glass ceiling is a metaphor that represent invisible barriers encountered by women employees in work place. Psychological factors, individual factors, societal factors, organizational factors and governmental factors are the barriers that hinder the

career advancement of women employees. According to the findings, for increasing the presence of women in managerial jobs they need more societal conveniences and mentoring. Furthermore, it necessary that authorities provide more supportive resources for female employees to be able to effectively manage themselves and also to cultivate managerial skills in them.

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