

Glass ceiling effect' in professional institutions in Indian context

¹ Ravi Kumar Sharma, ² Shailendra Kumar Chaturvedi

¹ Research Scholar, Dr. APJ Abul kalam Technical University (AKTU), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

² Prof. Director, Jhunjhunwala Business School, Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

The modern society is characterized as highly democratic, humanistic and advanced. At the same time, the arguments regarding the equality of people with regard to social class, gender, race etc still persists. In such a situation, the position of females in society, (especially in organizations) is the most contradictive, since on one hand a lot is talked about female equality, rights and equal position and on the other hand, there is a totally different view offered by the society with regard to the position of females. It is often emphasized that with the ex – president of the country as a female, with the president of opposition party as female and with the CEOs of prominent Indian MNCs as females, India has been tremendously successful in breaking the glass ceiling, however in reality; India has to go a long way in realizing the dreams of gender equality.

Over the past few decades, females have made their presence felt on the management positions of different organizations; the credit for this of course goes to the changes in the socio – economic scenario of the society, owing to globalization and liberalization of economies. But this change is not wholesome and holistic since there are still too many barriers that exist and are faced by females while climbing to the top of the organizational hierarchy. Evidences suggest that they confront an invisible barrier preventing their rise in the organizational hierarchy. The metaphor used to implicate this situation has been called as 'The Glass Ceiling effect'

One of the most profound changes that have occurred with respect to the educational leadership is the presence of females at the decision making level. There was a time when the females were considered as 'not fit' and were rated secondary so far as decision making in the higher/professional educational institutes is considered, but those times are fading fast, though a lot needs to be achieved still. The glass ceiling refers to an invisible but impermeable barrier that limits the career advancement of women. During the last two decades, women have made progress but real progress has been slow with only modest increases shown at top levels.

The present study is an attempt to investigate the presence of glass ceiling in the engineering/management institutes of India and what are the real factors behind this glass ceiling to exist because it is not about only employing the women workforce, it is about giving them an opportunity to lead, it is about promoting them to the top where they can put into use their natural ability to coordinate. This is what the current study focuses upon.

Keywords: Glass ceiling, barriers, advanced, CEO, MNC

1. Introduction

In today's modern era of globalization women have made massive progress, but they still lack representation at the senior management level in all sectors. They persistently face barriers to their advancement due to hostile work environments, gender biasness, and numerous other barriers. Invariably, a lot of conflict, counter attack and struggle are to be faced with the social change and to achieve relative gender balance in the organizations, significant change in talent management and leadership management practices is required. Gender diversity cannot be promoted in isolation by the businesses. It has to be a joint effort of governments, local communities, customers, employees, and other stakeholders to gain the support and knowledge organizations need to promote gender equality, erase gender stereotyping, and sustains long term change.

The main objective of the present study was to cogitate whether there exist Glass ceiling in Indian professional education sector. In majority of statements as given by respondents from all types of colleges, from all qualifications and from both sexes affirmed that there exist, difference in terms of employment. Salary in government and self-

financing colleges are at par in both sexes but in self-financing institutes, discrimination prevails. Glass ceiling does exist which erects the barriers refraining women reaching top positions. The reasons may be many, intentional and unintentional. Intentionally they are made to struggle more, compete more even when they have same qualifications.

They are hired for the entry level positions and underrepresented in administrative works. The reasons for not assigning any administrative tasks to them may actually be to reduce their burden or giving them more time for their family. But this prevents them from learning these tasks. One must be properly groomed for the top positions and it was observed that women employees lack tremendously in getting mentors. We can't deny the reasons on the part of women too. It was also found that women tacitly agreed to this discrimination and glass ceiling and in turn become less ambitious. Societal norms in society like India make women always a secondary earner. Except few cases having a career is not must for them, as against their male counterparts. Hence they also develop a casual approach regarding their career. Though the government is doing a lot for the up

liftmen for the women, but like majority of cases in India, here too implementation of these policies needs vigilance.

1.1 Glass Ceiling – an introduction

The phrase “glass ceiling” refers to an invisible barrier that prevents someone from achieving further success. It is most often heard in the context of women who cannot advance to the highest levels of power in the workplace. The glass ceiling is a way of describing whatever keeps women from achieving power and success equal to that of men. The metaphor comments on an employee’s rise up the ranks of a hierarchical organization. Workers climb higher as they get promotions, pay raises, and other opportunities. In theory, nothing prevents women from rising as high as men. After the Women’s Liberation Movement and Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s, many people feel that discrimination is all in the past. However, in practice, there are still barriers. A ceiling made of glass would be see-through. A woman can clearly see those above her who are more powerful. Instead of being able to achieve the same success, she is stopped by invisible forces that prevent her from rising further.

1.2 The Invisible Forces

Although the Women’s Liberation Movement opened many doors, some women remain frustrated that they are the ones required to make sacrifices in order to balance family life with a career. Why, feminists ask, are men assumed to be able to have both family and career?

Even as more women entered the workforce during the 1960s and 1970s, feminists noted that traditionally male jobs were slow to open to women. Other practical glass ceiling matters include unequal pay rates and the idea that women lose out on involvement in an organization if they take maternity leave. Again, there is a contrast with men, who may or may not take time off for the birth of a child, and do not need to physically recover from the birth of their children.

It is unknown who first used the term glass ceiling. A widely read *Wall Street Journal* story in 1986 popularized the term. The story looked at barriers confronting women at high levels of corporate power. Glass ceiling was used even earlier by Gay Bryant in the 1984 book *The Working Woman Report*, which examined the status of women in the work place.

1.3 A Hard Barrier to Shatter

In the 1960s, overt sexism in the workplace was commonplace and frequently accepted. There were separate classified ads listings for men’s jobs and women’s jobs. Feminists recall letters of recommendation that commented on their looks. Although such behaviors seem long gone, a frustrating thing about the glass ceiling is that it is not overt. Instead of being a tangible barrier, which might be easier to identify, sexism in the glass ceiling workplace persists in more subtle ways.

1.4 Reasons for existence of ‘Glass ceiling’

One would like to imagine that the glass ceiling effect is something that is easily reversible by women as long as they know the proper ways to fight it. Unfortunately, the glass ceiling is embedded within our society through a variety of barriers that can both indirectly and directly affect a female’s ability to obtain management positions across the country. It is no secret that the glass ceiling is an issue faced by women

all over the world, likely for many of the same reasons. Below are some of the barriers a woman face as outlined by the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and many more barriers can be included.

- 1) Societal Barriers (may be outside of the direct control of a business)
- 2) Internal Structural Barriers (direct control by business)
- 3) Governmental Barriers

The course I am taking on gender issues in management has caused me think a lot about what types of barriers women face when working within the corporate world. Below is a list of barriers that I have come up with based on various discussions with females in the corporate world and from my experiences throughout the course. Please feel free to send me an email if you would like to add to the list through personal experience.

- Lack of family oriented programs within the workplace
- Negative assumptions of one’s abilities and or commitment within their organization
- Lack of support from female coworkers when a management position is achieved
- Lack of support from upper management to address and eliminate gender issues from company culture

2. Review of Literature

The word ‘Glass Ceiling’ was first used in the Wall street journal’s special report on females working in the corporate sector. The term was used by Hymowitz and Schelhardt (1986) ^[14], they asserted that access to top for females was blocked by certain prejudices. Powell *et al.* (1995) opined that there is a single transparent invisible layer that a female faces, while on progression through the organizational hierarchy, however, in practice there have been found to be multiple layers that exist on the different levels of the organization.

The Indian literature about the women in Management is limited but a number of studies spanning from 2002 to 2008 have a thread of commonality pointing out the stifling gender stereotypes that act as one of the main barriers in Women’s growth in management. A study on Gender Stereotypes stated that stereotypes and the perception of women at workplace negatively affect the position of women managers. “This study suggests that Indian male managers are viewed, stereotypically, as working in the areas of sales, marketing and production; being good leaders, decision makers and bosses; and handling challenging assignments. On the other hand, Indian women are viewed as working in PR, HR and administrative positions at low to junior levels, and in fields such as fashion and beauty.” (Rai, 2010) ^[26] Another study by (Budhwar, 2005) ^[2] of senior women in public and private sector firms found that they were receptive of differential treatment when compared with men, reinforcing the stereotype of their being inferior and thus being offered less challenging roles and not being part of important organizational issues. A research by (Bartol 2003) ^[3] states that “Women in senior management are numerous, but most are behind in pay, passed over for pro motions, and drop out of work for various reasons”.

It is propounded in the relevant literature that the under representation of women in various organizations is attributed

to different constraints. These include the type of employing sector, vertical segregation, gender and corporate strategy (Sabbarwal, 2013). Though in India it is justified that with Nation's first ex – first citizen as a female, the glass ceiling has been successfully broken, but the reality is that India ranks 113th out of 157 countries in terms of Gender development. (Gender development index report, UNO 2011) Eggins (1997) ^[9, 10] in her book 'Women as leaders and managers in higher education' wrote that women who serve as leaders of academic institutions confront all the issues that women working in a large and complex business organization face.

Mathur *et al.* (2006) ^[19] indicated that glass ceiling, considered as a myth by many does exist in real and is nurtured by organization's culture, politics and strategies besides women's own inadequacies. Only the most decentralized organization, characterized by a culture that supports females at the top positions will help in breaking down the glass ceiling, along with women's own efforts to grow, develop and empower themselves through academic and career development.

For Indian education sector, researches have done by (Sharma, Sharma and Kaushik 2011) ^[1] throws much light on the glass ceiling existing in the Indian education sector. The location of study was Haryana and western U.P. covering more than hundred degree colleges. The study found that glass ceiling does exist and makes a profound impact on the promotion and development of females in their teaching career. It was found that females though having the same qualification as males have to compete more. They also reached to the conclusion that females are over represented only at the bottom level. They are generally not able to reach to the top because of various reasons. (Morrison and Von Glinow 1990), Women and minorities face a "glass ceiling" that limits their advancement toward top management in organizations throughout U.S. society. This article reviews the extant literature and discusses why this is so, using theoretical constructs from psychology and other social sciences that cover both individual and systemic factors. These practices effectively create a "hidden" system of discrimination (Morrison and Von Glinow 1990; Riger and Galligan 1980), often called a "glass ceiling." These include the "concrete ceiling" (Ogilvie and Jones 1996) ^[22], "sticky floor" (Padavic and Reskin 2002) ^[24] and "glass door" (Cohen *et al.* 1998) ^[5].

(Burke and Vinnicombe, 2005) ^[4] In the mid-1980s, the phrase "glass ceiling" was coined and has since become an established part of our vocabulary. The glass ceiling refers to an invisible but impermeable barrier that limits the career advancement of women. During the last two decades, women have made progress: there are now more women in senior-level executive jobs, more women in "clout jobs", more women CEOs, and more women on corporate boards of directors. But real progress has been slow with only modest increases shown at these levels.

3. Conclusion

Though the study does not aim to make sweeping conclusions in favour of a particular working segment or against a particular working segment, yet it is clear after conducting the study that an invisible 'Glass Ceiling' exists in a strong way in the higher/professional educational institutes. It can

therefore be concluded that we still have to go a long way before the principle of 'equality' is truly practiced in these institutes. The conclusions of the study can be applied to other areas as well.

The study makes the following conclusions about the 'Glass Ceiling':

- Strong existence of glass ceiling at various levels of the higher/professional educational institutes.
- Not enough chances being offered to females for growth, development, promotion and to move up the organizational hierarchy.
- Restricting females only to teaching positions due to perception errors of stereotyping.
- Inequalities in payment for male and female employees, male employees earning more than females for similar profile and same qualification.
- Virtual non-existence of independent decision making for females in professional educational institutes.
- Over representation in the lower level of organizational hierarchy of professional institutions whereas under representation of females in the top order.
- Societal Factors, Internal Structural Factors, Governmental Factors are the main factors behind the glass ceiling effect in professional/higher education sector.
- It is difficult for the female employees to overcome this glass ceiling without the active role of the management.

4. References

1. Anita Sharma, Sushma Sharma, Neeraj Kaushik, 'an exploratory study on glass ceiling in Indian education sector, international journal of multidisciplinary research, 2011.
2. Budhwar, Pawan S, Debi S. Saini, Jyotsna Bhatnagar. Women in management in the new economic environment: The case of India." Asia Pacific business review. 2005; 11(2):179-193.
3. Bartol, Kathryn M, David C. Martin, Julie A. Kromkowski. Leadership and the glass ceiling: Gender and ethnic group influences on leader behaviors at middle and executive managerial levels. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies. 2003; 9(3):8-19.
4. Burke, Ronald, Susan Vinnicombe. Advancing women's careers. Career Development International. 2005; 10(3):165-167.
5. Cohen, Lisa E, Joseph P. Broschak, Heather A. Haveman. And then there were more? The effect of organizational sex composition on the hiring and promotion of managers. American Sociological Review. 1998; 1:711-727.
6. Cox Jr, Taylor, and Carol Smolinski. Managing diversity and glass ceiling initiatives as national economic imperatives, 1994.
7. DeAngelis, Catherine D, Michael E. Johns. Promotion of women in academic medicine: shatter the ceilings, polish the floors. JAMA. 1995; 273(13):1056-1057.
8. DiMaggio, Paul J, Walter W. Powell. The new institutionalism in organisational analysis. The new institutionalism in organizational analysis, 1991.
9. Eggins Heathers. Women as leaders and managers in higher education - Taylor & Francis Group, 1997.

10. Eggins, Heather. Women as leaders and managers in higher education. Open Univ Pr, 1997.
11. Frankforter, Steven A. The progression of women beyond the glass ceiling. Journal of Social Behavior and Personality. 1996; 11(5):121.
12. Gender development index report - UNO – 2011.
13. Garland, Susan. Throwing stones at the glass ceiling. Business Week. 1991, 19.
14. Hymowitz, Schelhardt. The Glass Ceiling? - journal, Society for human resource management, 1986.
15. Hymowitz, Carol, Timothy D. Schellhardt. The glass ceiling: Why women can't seem to break the invisible barrier that blocks them from the top jobs. The Wall Street Journal. 1986, 24:1.
16. Lyness, Karen S, Madeline E. Heilman. When fit is fundamental: performance evaluations and promotions of upper-level female and male managers. Journal of Applied Psychology. 2006; 91(4):777.
17. Morrison, Ann M, Randall P. White, and Ellen Van Velsor. and the Center for Creative Leadership. Breaking the Glass Ceiling, 1987.
18. Mathur *et al.* gender in management - an international journal, 1985.
19. Mathur-Helm, Babita. Women and the glass ceiling in South African banks: an illusion or reality? Women in Management Review. 2006; 21(4):311-326.
20. McLeod F. Glass ceiling still firmly in place. The Australian. 2008, 27.
21. Morrison AM, von Glinow MA. Women and minorities in management. American Psychological Association, 1990; 45(2):200.
22. Ogilvie D, Jones K. African American women executives' communications strategies: Using the power of the word to break through concrete ceilings. In 18th Annual National Black MBA Association, Inc. National Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana D. 1996; 482:460-82.
23. Powell, Gary N, Anthony Butterfield. Investigating the glass ceiling phenomenon: An empirical study of actual promotions to top management. Academy of Management Journal. 1994; 37(1):68-86.
24. Padavic, Irene, Barbara F. Reskin. Women and men at work. Pine Forge Press, 2002.
25. Riger, Stephanie, Pat Galligan. Women in management: An exploration of competing paradigms. American Psychologist. 1980; 35(10):902.
26. Rai, Usha Kiran, Monica Srivastava. Women Executives and the glass ceiling: Myths and Mysteries From Razia Sultana to Hillary Clinton." BHU Management Review. 2010; 1:79-83.
27. Rai UK, Srivastava M. Women Executives and the glass ceiling: Myths and Mysteries from Razia Sultana to Hillary Clinton. BHU Management Review. 2008; 1(2):79.
28. Sabharwal, Meghna. From glass ceiling to glass cliff: Women in senior executive service. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: mut030, 2013.
29. Schneer, Joy A, Frieda Reitman. Managerial life without a wife: Family structure and managerial career success. Journal of Business Ethics. 2002; 37(1):25-38.
30. Sharma A, Sharma SUSHAMA, Kaushik N. An exploratory study of glass ceiling in Indian education sector. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 2011, 1(8).
31. Scandura, Terri A. Breaking the glass ceiling in the 1990s. US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1992.
32. Weyer, Birgit. Twenty years later: explaining the persistence of the glass ceiling for women leaders. Women in Management Review. 2007; 22(6):482-496.
33. Wilson. From glass ceiling to glass cliff – women in senior executive sector, 2002.