



UNHARNESSED WOMEN LEADERSHIP: ASSESSING GLASS CEILING EFFECT AT WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT :

The term "glass ceiling" was popularized in the 1980s. Traditionally, society believed women were meant to carry household activities and bringing up the children. The modern era women want to go out and become independent in all facets but the society mostly doesn't welcome them with a red carpet. A working woman in the organizations gets stuck in one position due to social, cultural and organizational barriers and thus resulting in job stagnation, which she had never supposed. The Glass ceiling is an ulterior, inconspicuous phenomenon which is subtle but damaging form of discrimination that prevents women to hold top position in an organization. There are barriers like psychological barriers, societal barriers and organizational barriers against which women have to struggle to make their existence stronger and reach up to the senior level of management. The present study aims at analysing the current situation of glass ceiling in managerial roles nationally and internationally.



KEYWORDS : Glass Ceiling, Leadership, Women empowerment, Managerial Feminine.

INTRODUCTION

The world has gone through a paradigm change in most of the spheres of social equities and equalities. The perceptiveness has moved from being a conservative audience to assertive participants owning the breakthrough in gender inequalities as well. However, the success of such un-biasness is always a topic of debate for social researchers. Though we live in 21st century but women are still seeing fighting for their rights. The working women are no exception to this debated issue and they struggle to survive in a work environment where gender discrimination persists. Every year on 8th March, International Women's Day is celebrated with intent to promote equality and development of women as one of the many thrust areas. Several workshops, lectures and seminars; nationally and internally, are held on women issues and their progression. Traditionally, society believed women were meant to carry household activities and bringing up the children. The modern era women want to go out and become independent in all facets but the society mostly doesn't welcome them with a red carpet. A working woman in the organizations gets stuck in one position due to social, cultural and organizational barriers and thus resulting in job stagnation, which she had never supposed. Despite the present data shows more participation of women in top position than previous years, women still have to face intangible impediments in climbing up the corporate ladder due to unseen barriers called the glass ceiling (Ryan and Haslam, 2005).

Women at workplace have to accept the labyrinth of obstacles for her career progression (Eagly and Carly, 2007; Maskell Pretz and Hopkins, 1997). Glass ceiling effect examines the issues related to

gender differentiation and prejudices that affect the career advancement of women at workplace. The Glass ceiling is an ulterior, inconspicuous phenomenon which is subtle but damaging form of discrimination that prevents women to hold top position in an organization. There are barriers like psychological barriers, societal barriers and organizational barriers against which women have to struggle to make their existence stronger and reach up to the senior level of management. Since, their childhood, women have to follow some norms which are deeply rooted in the society. Ignoring these social norms is not easy and also influences organizational culture to large extent. Many a times women accept these norms and consequently lose their confidence in themselves. These barriers are called psychological barriers which play a significant role in influencing growth of women at workplace. Societal barriers are the key responsibilities which are attributed to women such as taking care of home affair and children. Organizational barriers include factors related to organizational policies, structure, culture, environment and management which hinder the growth of woman at workplace.

The term "glass ceiling" was popularized in the 1980s. The term was used in a 1984 in *The Working Woman Report*, by Gay Bryant. Later, it was used in a 1986 *Wall Street Journal* article on barriers to women in high corporate positions. The U.S. Department of Labor defined glass ceiling as "Those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational as that prevents qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions" (Department of Labor, 1991).

The ILO's Global Employment Trends (2003) reported that women continue to have lower labour market participation rates, higher unemployment rates and significant pay differences compared to men. Women represent over 40 per cent of the global labour force, approximately 70 per cent of women in developed countries and 60 per cent in developing countries. Men are in the majority among managers, top executives, and higher levels of professional workers while women are still concentrated in the lower categories of managerial positions.

Contrary to these facts and figures, some studies have shown that women themselves are responsible for such barrier in their career. Women sometimes work below their level of competence or tend to stick to one position so as to maintain balance and a stress-free life. According to Rai and Srivastava (2008) corporate has argued time and again that that no glass ceiling exists. As per them "women were paid lower salaries since they leave the jobs midway, work for lesser time and join low-risk jobs". Further they argue that at present organizations operate around the globe and there are immense opportunities for carrier development. It is just myth and self-created issue which catches attention of society. 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. Atwater et al (2004) argued that managerial roles can be feminine or masculine in Nature (Figure 1). Women are most likely to be seen as 'effective' when they engage in roles that are consistent with those that are expected from them.

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

MANAGERIAL SUBROLES FEMININE	MANAGERIAL ROLE MASCULINE
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

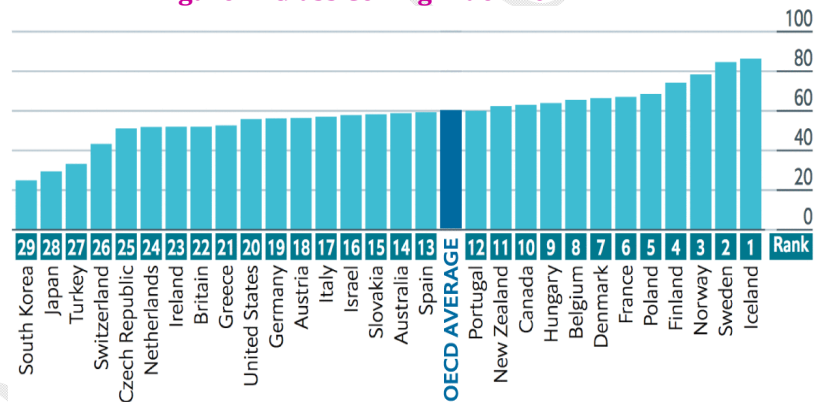
Thus, evaluating both the sides of the argument given, it becomes all the more important to get insights of actual contemporary scenario of career advancement of women and examining the existence of Glass Ceiling at workplace.

GLOBAL SCENARIO:

According to a report by World Economic Forum (2016) out of 144 countries, United States has attained first rank in women’s educational achievement. Hence, it is expected that the country should also have held the top ranking in the participation, development and advancement of women. However, its ranks in women’s economic participation are 26th and 73rd in women’s political empowerment. It is surprising to mention that with this current rate, women will not be able to reach leadership roles at par with men even till 2085 in United States (Judith Warner, 2014). There are merely 6.6 percent women of United States working as full time employees in male dominated professions. If we notice the current scenario in technical industry of US there are 57 percent women holding bachelor’s degree but only 38 percent are occupying of non-technical positions. Out of these women there are mere 20 percent are possessing leadership positions.

Figure 2 represent the ranking of various countries on the basis of glass ceiling index which indicates how good organizations are performing when it comes to ensuring equality for working women. This ranking included 109 nations for the study. The index was calculated on the basis of performance of countries on nine indicators namely higher educational gap, wage gap, labour-force participation, share of women managers at senior positions, women in the company’s board, childcare cost, paid leaves for maternity, share of graduate management admission test (GMAT) candidates and participation of women in numbers in parliament. It is surprising to mention that none of the country has achieved gender equality. As it is evident from the data, Finland is at number one and hence is referred as the best country for working women. The second rank is of Sweden followed by Norway. Developed countries like US also stand below OECD average.

Figure 2: Glass Ceiling Index 2017



Source: www.economist.com

Sexual harassment is another reason which lay down women back (McLaughlin, 2017). As per a report, in US Market the instance of sex segregation is highest (Caryl Rivers and Rosalind C. Barnett, 2012). There are only 6.6 percent women in United states who are working in occupation which are primarily dominated by male (Ariane Hegewisch and Emma Williams-Baron, 2018). The other major hurdle for growth of women at workplace are those women who negotiate for their promotion are labelled as bossy and aggressive (McKinsey, 2018). There is a dip in the percentage of women occupying senior positions in UK. Only 4 percent of the companies from fortune 500 list are headed by female leaders. However, position is better in Eastern European countries and ASEAN with 35% and 34% women leaders respectively. However Individually, Russia is the country which has got highest 45% women at senior roles followed by Philippines 39%, Lithuania, Estonia and Thailand (Refer to Figure 3). Two Worst countries for women at senior position are Japan, with just 7% senior roles held by women, and Germany 15%. G7 is attributed as worst region for women growth as there is no woman in senior

management. Looking at the holistic picture at global level there are just 24 percent of women occupied senior positions (Medland,2016).

Figure 3: Senior Roles Held by women (Top ten Countries)

Country	Percent of Senior roles held by Women
Russia	45
Philippines	39
Lithuania	39
Estonia	37
Thailand	37
Indonesia	36
Latvia	35
Poland	34
China(Mainland)	30
Italy	29

Source:<https://www.forbes.com>

INDIAN SCENARIO:

If we examine Indian Scenario there is a gigantic gender gap in India in terms of women labour force participation rate. India has been ranked 11th from the bottom for the participation of women in labour force. India is among the countries having lowest number of women (16%) at senior position worldwide following Japan and Germany (Medland, 2016). India is known for its diversity at workplace with employees from different religion, customs, race, education and languages etc. But, if we look at the role of situation of women it is almost same in each state. Indian companies seriously lack women in senior management roles. There are very few names Indira Nooyi, Kiran Majumdar Shah, Arundhati Battacharya, Naina Lal Kidwai, etc. which people often mention to argue that women in India are holding top positions. However, these women just represent 16 percent of the women in India.

India is ranked third lowest in having women leadership positions (Medland, 2016). In India Women Managers, despite being highly educated often remain in lower management positions with little access to challenging assignments and power (Jain & Mukherji, 2010). Despite the fact that female literacy and education enrolment rates are mounting today, India still has lower levels of women participation, and ranks 127th on the gender inequality index and 108th on the global gender gap index. According to the ILO, in 2011-12, while 62.8 percent of women were employed in the agriculture sector, only 20 percent were employed in industry and 17 percent in the services sectors. India is ranked 120th among 131 nations in women workforce participation. Thus, the gender gap in leadership in India is austere and there are just three out of every 100 Indian women are at CEOs position.

To ensure participation of women in leadership position Indian corporate have a provision to appoint one women director in the board but more women should be there to make voice of women stronger in the decision making process. According to a report by Credit Suisse, which analyzed 2,400 companies worldwide in 2015, found that up to 11.2 percent females were made board members in Indian firms, double the 5.5 percent in 2010. The global average in 2015 was 14.7%, with Norway (46.7%) and France (34%) topping the list (Credit Suisse, 2016). While India has done well compared with China and South Korea, it still lags behind other Asian countries such as Thailand and Malaysia. Another very big reason why Indian women don't grow in their profession is whenever there is a decisive situation of looking after the family and children women are the one who needs to sacrifice their career because they are always considered as caregivers.

CONCLUSION:

There are various cases where women are denied promotion even if they are better than their male counterparts and can outperform them. Glass ceiling must be shattered because we have to bring justice to women as an employee who possess the knowledge, capability and experience. It is unjust to stand on their way of success. It has been proved time and again that organizations with women at senior level positions have excelled better. The very first way to smash glass ceiling is to accept and understand that it really exists in the organizations. Promotion and advancement should never be gender biased, and to boost the female employees, companies must have zero tolerance policy for harassment and biasness. Another way is to apprise the women in the organization about their leadership skills, abilities and knowledge, who incidentally are not aware of their leadership qualities. So, mentoring and coaching should be given to such women possessing leadership virtues by the organizations. Women can also help themselves by becoming more confident which will help them to overcome stereotypes which hold them back.

The concept "Women, the incarnation of motherhood" must not be changed but be reformed with changing time and situation. Women's are entering to managerial level but the percentage is not so huge. In this list there are just 24 women which make 5 percent of the total. Organizations are appointing women in starting of their career at entry level but they are not trusting women potential and efficiency when it comes to top level management positions. Glass ceiling is not a myth or hypothesis but is a fact that women are still facing problem to break this glass. However, thanks to several outstanding women, the glass has developed several cracks; the future appears brighter but there is a long way to go.

It is a challenge, but it is not impossible: women can break the glass and soar to the top. Not only organizations have to support and show trust on women's but women themselves have to trust their capabilities. It is inspiring that more women in the *Fortune* 1000 are married and have children, so it is becoming increasingly more acceptable for women to balance family life and a career – and less likely that they will be turned down for a promotion simply because they have, or will one day have, children. However, in such a situation we cannot ignore the role of family members who can play a significant role to support and motivate working women to excel in their profession environment.

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