



GLASS CEILING AND ITS IMPACT ON CORPORATE SECTOR IN CHENNAI CITY

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ABSTRACT

"Glass ceiling" is a metaphor for the hard-to-see informal barriers that keep women from getting promotions, pay raises and further opportunities. The "glass ceiling" metaphor has also been used to describe the restrictions and barriers experienced by minority racial groups. Only few studies have been carried out so far about Glass Ceiling in India. Those studies though have tried to understand the reasons behind it yet they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the organizational barriers that hinder their growth. Hence the study was conducted with the aim of obtaining the following objectives. That is to find out the presence of glass ceiling and its impact in corporate sector. At the same time, hypothesis is framed to find out whether there is a significant effect of organizational barrier and Glass Ceiling. Merely this study has been completed with an empirical survey which was systematically conducted using a self-structured questionnaire and the sample consisted of 100 women employees of various corporate sectors in Chennai city. For presenting and analyzing the data both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The finding of the study reveals that irrespective of cadre to which respondents belongs, emphasizing strongly the existence of Glass Ceiling and the organizational barriers prevent them to rise the corporate ladder. By taking all these facts into consideration better suggestions have been made in this study. Finally, the most valuable recommendations for further studies and limitations have been outlined.

KEYWORDS : Glass Ceiling, Organizational Barriers, corporate ladder, Mentor

GLASS CEILING: AN OVERVIEW

The United States Federal *Glass Ceiling* Commission defines the *glass ceiling* as "the unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements. "It is *glass* because it's not usually a visible barrier, and a woman may not be aware of its existence until she "knockouts" the barrier. In other words, it's not an explicit practice of discriminating against women, though specific policies, practices, and attitudes may exist that produce this barrier without intention to discriminate (Jones Johnson, 2017)¹.

The term was used in the year 1984 in The *Working Woman Report*, by Gay Bryant. Later the term was popularized and used in *Wall Street Journal* article on barriers to women in high corporate positions in the year 1986. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that the first use of the term was in 1984, in *Achweek*: "Women have reached a certain point I call it the glass ceiling. They're in the top of middle management and they're stopping and getting stuck."

It is an open truth that working women have to face problems just by virtue of them being women. The age-old belief of male superiority over women creates several hurdles for women at their place of work. Though 40% of women are in workforce today, only 11% of fortune 1000 company board rooms have women and 25% of fortune 1000 companies have no woman on their boards (Payal Chanania, 2012)². Gender stereotypes and perception of women at work place affect the position of women managers. (Khandelwai, 2002)³. Only 9% of women aspired to become CEOs, when compared to the next level 43% of them who wanted to join senior management cadre (American Multinational Survey, 2002)⁴.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The conservative feminist organization, Independent Women's Forum, opinions that in 1973, 11% of corporate boards had one or more women members, and that in 1998, 72% of corporate boards had one or more women members. On the other hand, the Glass Ceiling Commission (created by Congress in 1991 as a 20-member bipartisan commission) in 1995 looked at Fortune 1000 and Fortune 500 companies, and found that only 5% of the senior management positions were held by women.

Zafarullah (2000)⁵ mentioned in his article that women are revealed as weak, unassertive, passive, feminine, and dependent. In the work place, discriminatory attitudes include women are physically, mentally and emotionally less capable in certain challenges; they are

unpredictable and lack motivation. They have health problems, sickness-prone and therefore frequently remain absent, pregnancies interrupt their regular work and their career is disrupted by family interest.

Male chauvinism in our country is more deeply entrenched than many people realize. Gender sensitivity and sexual harassment concerns both men and women. Women generally bear the brunt of male chauvinism as well as sexual harassment. Some women just tolerate it as they find it difficult or embarrassing to speak out, those who do speak out may not get the support and in turn are further victimized or ostracized at work. Issues such as gender bias, gender sensitivity and sexual harassment concern both men and women in working towards a nation that is committed to rights. Sexual harassment stands out as the key contemporary site of gender struggles over gender norms, sexuality, power and gender equality, as well as legal and organizational norms (Zippel, 2002)⁶.

The organizations should set up mentoring and coaching programs. The mentors provide a sincere and honest feedback to the mentee as and when required, which helps them to overcome the hurdles. Hema Hattangady, Vice Chairman and CEO, Schneider Electric Konzerv India says "Once you have a mentor who backs you, you have the confidence to move forward." Her mentor Mr. T. Thomas, the former chairman of HLL India, was instrumental in her success. (SHRM, 2009) Kalpana Morparia, former joint Managing Director of ICICI bank, and currently CEO of JP Morgan gives the credit of her transformation from a corporate lawyer to a corporate leader to her mentor K.V.Kamath, the Infosys chairman. (Business Today, September 2011)⁷

Merida L. Johns (2013)⁸ opined that breaking the glass ceiling is complex and requires action on several fronts. Federal and State governments, employers, academic institutions and women themselves are essential players in cracking down the barriers which holding women back. He strongly suggested that educational institutions must create and implement leadership development programs that include issues concerning gender diversity and transformational leadership in order to change preconceived ideas, bias, and assumptions about women's leadership abilities.

Women have proved their stunning presence in almost every industry and in huge numbers. They are strong, smart, technically competent and emotionally valiant in comparison to their male counterparts. As such they are rightly called as the new age corporate women. But

despite achieving such huge laurels, women still face many obstacles in their work place. Gender bias and sexual harassment are not just what we are talking about but there are few more issues that are big hurdles for women to grow high up in the corporate scene in their day to day life are men versus women Issues, gender Bias work life imbalance, Maternity leaves, Lack of role models Power play, ego clashes, Restroom gossips: security etc., (Krishna Reddy, 2016)⁹.

According to her study, The impact of gender is hard to pin down decisively. But after years of biting their tongues, believing their ranks would swell if they simply worked hard, many senior women in business are concluding that the barriers are more deeply rooted and persistent than they wanted to believe, according to interviews with nearly two dozen chief executives, would-be chief executives, headhunters, business school deans and human resources professionals. and they concluded that Women are often seen as dependable, less often as visionary. Women tend to be less comfortable with self-promotion and more likely to be criticized when they do grab the spotlight. Men remain threatened by assertive women. Most women are not socialized to be unapologetically competitive. Some women get discouraged and drop out along the way. And many are disproportionately penalized for stumbles. (Susan Chira, 2017)¹⁰

In 2017, only a tenth of the most senior roles was filled by women, our study finds. At the entry-level, the division of gender is more evenly distributed, as females account for 45% of buyers. This scarcity of women at the highest level understates the earning potential of the gender and pulls down average earnings when compared to men. In last year's study, they found that women were being paid less than men in each of the five levels that they investigated. The most senior position (the chief procurement officer) to the most junior (buyer) saw women systematically facing lower wages than their male counterparts. In 2017, this effect is weaker, with female CPOs out-earning men in the same role. Yet, the difficulty in comparison is apparent through the statistical problem of low sample size. Simply put, there are too few women at the highest position to make a prophecy of salaries to a high level of confidence (Jonathan Webb, 2017)¹¹.

Eddy S. Ng and Greg J. Se, 2017¹², they examined the macro-level organisational determinants of women in management. Specifically, we examined organisational characteristics and strategies, including firm levels of internationalisation, firm foreign ownership, chief executive officer gender and the active recruitment of women, as predictors of an organisation's level of representation of women in management. Results from a survey of 278 firms indicated that the presence of a female chief executive officer and an organisation's active recruitment of women are positively associated with a firm's percentage of women in management while firm internationalisation and firm foreign ownership are negatively associated with the representation of women in management. Overall, these findings suggest that although firms exercise discretion with respect to hiring and promoting women, they are also constrained by the external environment and organisational characteristics. For example, firms with higher levels of firm internationalisation and that are foreign-owned may limit their efforts and investment in the advancement of women into management.

RESEARCH GAP

It is observed that few studies have been carried out so far about Glass Ceiling in India. Those studies though have tried to understand the reasons behind it yet they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the organizational barriers that hinder their growth. Hence the paper aimed to analyse the present working condition and organisational barriers that obstruct women employees to climb their corporate ladder.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

The objective of the study is to analyze the presence of glass ceiling and the relationship between the organizational barrier and Glass Ceiling, which prevent the progression of women employees in corporate sectors.

HYPOTHESIS

H0- There is a no relationship between the organizational barriers and the glass ceiling among women employees in corporate sector.

H1- There is a relationship between the organizational barriers and the glass ceiling among women employees in corporate sector.

METHODOLOGY

The study is designed as a descriptive and analytical one. Considerable data are available both from primary and secondary sources. The study is carried out with the help of sample survey. Hypothesis are formulated and tested on the basis of research objectives. The suggestions of the study have emerged from the sample survey as well as from the secondary data.

SAMPLING

Since corporate women employees are infinite in numbers and primary data are collected from the various corporate sectors in Chennai city, it is difficult to adopt census method. Hence the researcher has selected convenient sampling method. The sample size for the study is 100 which include both middle and junior level women employees in corporate sectors.

QUESTIONNAIRE MODULE

Questionnaire consist of five demographic questions and 10 questions under the barriers of Glass Ceiling. The questions used for the questionnaire are as follows: Closed ended questions and five point Likert's scale.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- The Study was restricted to a limited time frame and could not be done exhaustively for paucity of the same.
- The Study covered only the corporate sector of Chennai City.
- The respondents were restricted to 100 women employees of corporate sector

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The factor analysis reduces a large number of variables into a smaller set of variables (also referred to as factors) and, it establishes underlying dimensions between measured variables and latent constructs, thereby allowing the formation and thirdly it provides construct validity evidence of self-reporting scales. (Thompson)¹³.

KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (V) is a measure of sampling adequacy that is recommended to check the case to variable ratio for the analysis being conducted For Factor Analysis to be recommended suitable, the significance in the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity must be less than 0.05.

In this study, the researcher has applied Factor Analysis to test the relationship between the organizational barriers and glass ceiling in corporate world.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's test of Sphericity

Factors	KMO Value	Result	Bartlett's test of Sphericity (V)	Significance	Result	Interpretation
Organizational Barrier	0.823	Highly acceptable	0.000	Significant	H0 Rejected	There is a relationship between Organizational barriers and Glass ceiling

Source: Computed

Interpretation

From the test result, it is found that the KMO value is 0.823, which is very closer to 1, indicating greater suitability. If the KMO index is high/ closer to 1 / equal to 1, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) can act efficiently; if the KMO value is closer to/ equal to 0, the PCA is not relevant. In all cases examining the factors that deter a career progression the calculated significance value is 0.000, which is less than reference value of 0.05. Hence the null hypotheses are rejected and alternative hypotheses are accepted. This indicates that the factors namely act as strong barriers creating glass ceiling.

Table 2: Showing Rotation sum of squared loading

Factors	% Variance	Cumulative variance
Organizational barriers		
Factor 1-OB 1	60.342	
Factor 2-OB 2	29.771	89.113

Source: Computed

Interpretation

From the extraction sum of square loading in table no., it is learnt that the factor OB 1 accounted for a variance of 60.342% and the factor OB 2 accounted for a variance of 29.77%. The two components extracted account for a total cumulative variance of 89.11% of the sample.

Table 3: Showing Rotated Component Matrix

Organizational Barrier			
Questions	C-1	C-2	Factors emerged
Lack of mentoring and training	.837		Cockeyed HR policy Factor
Absence of women in decision making process	.825		
Lukewarm participation from management	.815		
Male hierarchies are more likely to promote men.	.809		
Limited decision making power	.787		
Women receive fewer opportunities for development	.751		
Pay differentials between men and women	.738		
Q30standards are higher for women		.882	Biased women employees factor
A woman must perform better than a man to be promoted		.783	

Source: Computed

Interpretation

The idea of rotation is to reduce the number of factors on which under investigation has high loading. Rotation makes to interpretation and comprehension easier. From Table-3 it is seen that organizational barrier is divided into 2 factors, OB 1 is comprised of the following variables - lack of mentoring and management training, absence of women in decision making process, lukewarm participation from the management, promotion of men for managerial position and pay difference. These factors are rightly grouped together and called as "Cockeyed HR policy factor" and OB 2 consists of factors, which are high standards for women, and women should perform better than men to promote that may be called as "Biased women employees' factor". The above table highlights that Lack of mentoring and training and Absence of women in decision making processes are the major barriers for their progression.

Association between the organizational barriers and Cadre and Qualification

The following table showing the relationship between organizational barrier with respect to cadre and qualification by using Anova.

Table 4

	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-value	Significance	Result
Cadre					
Senior Management	34.6089	9.25324	1.072	0.343	Insignificant
Middle management	33.5253	9.67318			
Junior management	32.6429	10.23581			
Qualification					
Professional	33.6934	9.87090	2.184	0.114	Insignificant
PG	33.1551	9.64268			
UG	35.4576	8.86426			

Source: Computed

Interpretation

The comprehensive table reveals that there is no significant relationship between the cadre (0.343) of the women respondents, their qualification 0.114) and experience (0.641) with the organizational barrier. In all these cases the calculated values exceeds the table value there by accepting the null hypothesis and rejecting the alternative hypothesis. It may be concluded from the analysis that irrespective of the cadre to which the respondents belong, their qualification and cadre, women employees are facing barriers such as higher standards set for women, lack of decision making power, and lacks genuine

commitment to gender equality etc., to reach the next level. In other words their cadre and qualification do not support them to climb the ladder and reach managerial positions,

SUGGESTIONS

- Companies should orient their recruitment policies to ensure equal representation of male and females at the entry level.
- The employment of women and their evaluation in the organization should be based on the merit rather than gender disparity.
- Companies should be transparent about policies relating to employment, training and promotion.
- The Human Resource Department should ensure that qualified and suitable employees progress in an organization on a common platform.
- Promotion should always be linked to employee performance.
- Companies should reassure its women employees to participate in programs that would enhance their personality for development.

CONCLUSION

The study has attempted to examine the presence of Glass Ceiling and its impact on corporate sector in Chennai City. The finding of the study ascertained that irrespective of the cadre and qualification women employees in the corporate sector agreed that Glass Ceiling is existing in the corporate sector and there is close association between Glass Ceiling and Organizational Barriers. It concludes that organization need to take some initiatives for the growth of women such as systematic career guidance, planning programs, and training, rotate women across functions, offer them visible roles etc.,

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The area of study is expansive which offers ample scope for future studies like

- A study can be undertaken in public sectors and Government companies.
- Research can be conducted to find the influential factors to break the Glass Ceiling.
- To study the impact of Societal barriers and Work Life Conflict among women employees in corporate sector.

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