



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Management**

**LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY SNAPS THE GLASS CEILING (A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WOMEN EMPLOYEES ON IT SECTOR IN CHENNAI CITY)**

**KEY WORDS:** Glass Ceiling, Leadership Competency, Barriers, Hammering.

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**ABSTRACT**

Glass Ceiling is “an intangible barrier within a hierarchy that prevents women or minorities from obtaining upper-level positions.” this is an “invisible but impassable barrier between women and the executive suite, preventing them from reaching the highest levels of the business world regardless of their skills and merits,” Only limited studies have been carried out so far about Glass Ceiling in India. Those studies though have tried to comprehend the reasons behind it, yet they do not examine the factors that snaps the glass ceiling. Hence the study was piloted with the aim of obtaining the following objective. That is to find out the importance of **Leadership Competency** to crack the glass ceiling.. At the same time, hypothesis is framed to find out whether there is a significant effect of leadership competency 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 75 women employees of various corporate sectors in Chennai city. For presenting and analyzing the data both explanatory and inferential statistics were used. The finding of the study discloses the importance of leadership competency and how it is influenced to hammer the glass ceiling. 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.

**GLASS CEILING AND LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY: AN OVERVIEW**

A number of corporate Indian women have achieved top position and honored both at home and across the world. But despite all this, women employees are haunted by problems like discrimination, sexual harassment, indifference and inattentiveness. The barriers they face have likely been there for a long time. The past practices, prejudices, stereotypes and old ideas are often long established at the top of many organizations

**David Cotter**<sup>1</sup> identified the term four distinct characteristics that comprise the term Glass Ceiling as a gender or racial difference that is

- Not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee
- Greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome.
- Characterized by the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels.
- Increasing over the course of a career.

Leadership competencies are leadership skills and behaviors that contribute to superior performance. By using a competency-based approach to leadership, organizations can better identify and develop their next generation of leader. A focus on leadership competencies and skill development promotes better leadership. Women Managers, aspiring women managers, and top-level women executives are all concerned with developing the competencies they need to become more effective leaders. It is the ability to lead from the front with a passion and with a conviction of a great vision, despite many successive setbacks. It is also taking a sense of responsibility, setting as a role model with qualities like courage, commitment and conviction. Leadership is also a way of calling 'we' not 'I' because no leader is successful as an individual. **(MS Rao, 2008)**<sup>2</sup>

The following figure clearly depicts the important variables of leadership competencies.



**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES**

Men have higher chances of getting opportunities for growth than women. In most instances women have to lobby seriously to be considered for job opportunities where they can perform equally well. Though most top managers are aware of the career growth shortcomings faced by women, few organizations have taken up the challenge to initiate a system that could break barriers and ensure both men and women have equal opportunities **(Desseler, 2003)**<sup>3</sup>.

**Groves (2005)**<sup>4</sup> investigated 108 senior leaders and 325 of their direct followers were examined to uncover the relationships between the genders of the leader, their social and emotional skills, and magnetic leadership. Female leaders scored higher on social and emotional skills, and follower ratings of magnetic leadership. In addition, social and emotional skills mediated the relationship between leader gender and magnetic leadership

**Mathur et.al. (2006)**<sup>5</sup> Proposed that the glass ceiling is real which many consider a myth. It is encouraged by the organizational culture & policies moreover women's own inadequacies. A culture that supports women's top positions in decentralized organizations, will help in breaking down the glass ceiling, although women's own efforts to grow, develop and empower themselves through academic and career advancement is also required.

Leadership is concerned with inspiring followers to give their maximum performance towards the attainment of common objectives of an organization. Leadership is the continuous and

dynamic process of influencing the behavior of subordinates. Leaders must identify strategic goals, align people, set direction and motivate the people towards attaining the desired targets. Presently, leaders are increasingly under pressure to produce better result. They have to take several initiatives to keep up enthusiasm levels of followers and help them to build healthy trust based relationship. (Gupta, 2007)<sup>6</sup>.

Academic education must also play a role in promoting leadership gender diversity in creating tomorrow's leaders. Educational leadership programs frequently embrace predominant leadership theories that fail to help students step beyond a narrow structural model and equip them to address issues of social justice, diversity, and gender. If we are to see significant changes within the next generation of leadership, 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.(Merdia Johns,2013)<sup>7</sup>.

In this journey of leadership, women with intelligence, experience, interpersonal skills and business awareness have succeeded in empowering others and capturing hearts. Women with ability and competencies and who has a good support system from the organization where she works, her family and her spouse can definitely be a good leader. There is a need to also expand the role of successful women to be mentors to other aspiring women in the organization. (Dr.SrideviSamineni, Krishna Reddy, 2013)<sup>8</sup>.

In the latest survey into the salary of leading corporate executives, Procurement Leaders has uncovered evidence that women are still struggling to fill leadership roles.In this study, they surveyed over 1,300 professionals within the corporate purchasing function. The scope covered a wide range of industry sectors and geographies (mostly from North America and Western Europe). This is the fifth year of the research. In each iteration, they have found a similar picture and clear evidence of a 'glass ceiling' within large, multinational

companies.The glass ceiling describes the restraints that inhibit women rising to the rope levels, without their being active discrimination by employers.In 2017, only a tenth of the most senior roles was filled by women, And 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 prediction of salaries to a high level of confidence (Jonathan 2017)<sup>9</sup>.

**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 leadership competency that help to break the glass ceiling. Hence the paper aimed to analyse the association of leadersip competency and Glass Ceiling.It also proved the importance of leadership competency to hammer the glass ceiling.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objective of the study is to analyze the importance of Leadership competency which help to hammer the Glass Ceiling in corporate sector.

**HYPOTHESIS**

**H0-** There is a no relationship between the Leadership competency and the glass ceiling among women employees in corporate sector.

**H1-** There is a relationship between the Leadership competency 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.

**SAMPLE DESIGN**

Since corporate women employees are infinite in numbers and primary data are collected from the various IT sectors in Chennai city, it is difficult to adopt census method. Hence the researcher has selected convenient sampling method.

**SAMPLE SIZE**

The sample size for the study is 75 which include both middle and junior level women employees in corporate sectors.

**QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

Questionnaire consist of five demographic questions and 20 questions under leadership competency. The questions used for the questionnaire are as follows: Closed ended questions, Five point Likert's scale and Ranking.

**LIMITATIONS 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 IT sector of Chennai City.
- The respondents were restricted to 75 women employees of IT sector

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**Table 1 Showing the Age of the respondents**

	Age	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Up to 25 years	11	14.7
	26 to 30 years	21	28.0
	31 to 35 years	30	40.0
	36 to 40 years	10	13.3
	Above 40 years	3	4.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Computed)

**Interpretation**

The above table shows that the sample group has 14.7% of employees who are up to 25 years old, 28.0% of the women employees' age is from 26 to 30 years, 40.0% from 31 to 35 years and 13.3% and only 4.0% are from 36 to 40 years and above 40 years respectively. This shows that more respondents fell between 31 to 35years.

**Table 2 Showing the Qualification of the respondents**

Qualification	Frequency	Percent
<b>Professional</b>	24	32.0
<b>PG</b>	32	42.7
<b>UG</b>	19	25.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: Computed)

**Interpretation**

From the above table it can be seen that 32% of the respondents have professional degree, 42.7% of respondents have P.G Degree and only 25.3% have U.G degree. The analysis shows that middle and senior management required at least P.G degree as their qualification.

**Table 3 Showing the Cadre of the respondents**

Cadre	Frequency	Percent
<b>Senior Management</b>	34	45.3

Middle Management	33	44.0
Junior Management	8	10.7
Total	75	100.0

(Source: Computed)

**Interpretation**

The above table highlights that the sample group has 45.3% of the respondents are under senior cadre, 44.0% and 10.7% are under middle and junior cadre respectively. It indicates majority of the respondents are in senior management.

Using descriptive analysis to the mean score of the statements concerning women employees towards Leadership Competency.

**TABLE 4 SHOWS THE MEAN SCORE OF VARIABLES**

Statements	Mean Score
Prioritization of work and completion of work with stipulated time	3.52
Effective communication	3.85
Draws others into enthusiastic engagements	3.43
Recognize the need for changes	3.41
Authority and responsibility are delegated confidently	3.40
Managing with available resource and best utilization of man power	3.40
Being highly organized to take rapid decisions	3.60
Give timely and constructive feedback	3.35
Brings out the best in people	
Having good networking skill and encourage team building	3.74
Create group synergy toward a shared goal	3.33
Defending and representing staff and rendering help in case of crisis	3.33
Fostering involvement and creativity	3.62

(Source: Computed)

**Interpretation**

Women Employees of IT companies have expressed their satisfaction towards Leadership competencies, as effective communication (mean score: 3.85), followed by having good networking skill and encourage team building (mean score: 3.74); Fostering involvement and creativity (mean score: 3.62) and being highly organized to take rapid decisions. (mean score: 3.60) as depicted by the above table.

**Hypothesis**

**H0-** There is a no significant relationship between Leadership competency and hammering the glass ceiling.

**H1-** There is a significant relationship between Leadership competency and hammering the glass ceiling.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used to test for 'goodness of fit' between a sample distribution and another distribution, which often is the Normal (bell-shaped) distribution. The test compares the set of scores in the sample to a normally distribute set of scores with the same mean and standard deviation. In a SPSS output, if the value in the Sig. column is less than 0.05 then data cannot be considered as normally distributed.

**Table 5 Showing K-S test**

One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Test								
		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
<b>Normal Parameters</b>	Mean	2.06	2.76	3.60	3.27	2.91	3.65	3.79
	Std. Deviations	1.44	1.52	1.75	1.77	1.85	1.98	2.18
		3	1	4	5	3	6	9
<b>Most Extreme Differences</b>	Absolute	.267	.199	.122	.154	.221	.157	.153
	Positive	.267	.199	.122	.154	.221	.157	.153
	Negative	-.231	-.124	-.102	-.098	-.152	-.126	-.131

Kolmogorov Smirnov Z		5.54	4.13	2.53	3.20	4.59	3.24	3.18
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Ranking by means score		7	6	3	4	5	2	1
Test distribution is Normal								

(Source: Computed)

**Where F1 – Management and Influence; F2 communication skill; F3 – Motivation and support F4 – Ethics; F5 – Decision and Contribution; F6 – Emotional Intelligence; F7 – Responsibility and Mentor**

**Interpretation**

The K-S test is carried out and found that the calculated value of 0.00, which is less than the table value of 0.05. This implies that the null hypothesis to be rejected and alternate hypothesis to be accepted. It shows that there is a relationship between Leadership Competency and hammering the glass ceiling The variables are ranked on the basis of mean score, Responsibility and Mentor having high mean value of 3.79 and ranked as 1, Emotional Intelligence 3.65 and ranked as 2, Motivation and support 3.60 and ranked as 3rd, Ethics 3.27 and ranked as 4th, Decision and contribution 2.91 and ranked as 5th, Communication Skill 2.76 and ranked as 6<sup>th</sup> and Management and Influence 2.06 and ranked as 7th. Hence it concludes that Responsibility, Mentor and emotional intelligence played vital role to hammer the glass ceiling.

**SUGGESTIONS**

- Women have to build their own networks and take determined steps to develop contacts with people in the same industry.
- Women should inculcate the art and need of adapting to circumstances and refrain from the fear of unknown.
- The Leadership Quotient among successful women executives lies in building the returns for themselves and those with them, which is certainly worth the struggle.
- They should remind themselves that fostering human connections and bonding with their management are essential for their overall success.
- They should attempt to build strong communicative skills, with an open mind to adapt to changes.

**CONCLUSION**

The study has attempted to examine the importance of Leadership competency to hammer the glass ceiling. The finding of the study ascertained that irrespective of the cadre and qualification of women employees in the corporate sector agreed that there is close association between the Glass Ceiling and Leadership Competencies. It concludes that women employees should adopt and develop leadership skills such as effective communication, having good networking skill and encourage team building, fostering involvement and creativity, being highly organized to take rapid decisions etc., the study also highlighted that emotional intelligence, mentoring and responsibility is also plays vital role to hammer the glass ceiling.

**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 analyze the influential factors such as emotional intelligence and quality of work life to break the Glass Ceiling.
- To study the impact of Work Life Conflict and Work environment among women employees in corporate sector.

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