A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON GLASS CEILING OF WOMEN PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA

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Abstract:
Globally, working women have experienced career setbacks. In India, where there are still prevailing unfavorable cultural ideas against women advancing to top managerial positions (often known as the "glass ceiling"), examples of this include women in a variety of jobs. Despite being highly educated and skilled workers, they are not afforded the same possibilities to hold executive or organizational leadership positions. Notwithstanding developments in gender equality, the glass ceiling—a symbolic barrier that keeps women from rising to higher positions in the workplace—remains in existence. The purpose of this conceptual study is to investigate the causes, effects, and possible remedies of the glass ceiling that Indian women professionals experience. This study explores the socio-cultural, organizational, and individual aspects perpetuating the glass ceiling, drawing on current literature, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence. It also looks at how the glass ceiling affects women's advancement in the workforce, diversity within organizations, and economic expansion. This study also suggests tactics to break through the glass ceiling, like female leadership projects, corporate policies, and societal actions.
Key words: Glass Ceiling, women Professionals, Workplace, Career advancement.

INTRODUCTION

The phrase "glass ceiling" alludes to the dissatisfaction felt by women who, as a result of equal opportunity laws that increased their access to employment and education, joined the workforce in huge numbers in the 1980s and 1990s. The women's professional advancement slowed as they ascended to higher ranks inside their firms, notwithstanding their early success in securing lower management roles. Researchers that have used the formal definition of the glass ceiling have discovered inconsistent evidence of glass ceilings in different organizations and nations. The formal definition states that a female disadvantage in promotion should accelerate at the highest levels of the organization.

Scholars' attention has been drawn to the role of women in positions of power in recent decades. Theories such as the gender affinity effect, the glass ceiling, and gender mainstreaming attempt to shed light on how the public and media view women in positions of authority. Do people, for instance, feel the same way about female candidates as they do about male candidates? Scholars and theorists have attempted to explain the current gender gap by tracing the history of equality with regard to the gender issue.

Given the rise in the number of women who now hold meaningful, higher positions on the international arena, the role of women in modern society is a topic that requires more research. Studies on gender roles and equality are common these days, but what interests us is looking at the representation of women in positions of power. A number of writers were interested in the gender gaps in politics as a result of the environment's quick modernization and the feminist movement's quick expansion. The glass ceiling, the media's influence on how women are portrayed in the workforce, and the gender affinity effect are some of the fundamental concepts that the essay explores in order to better understand gender roles in a variety of professions.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the origins and effects of the glass ceiling issue that affects women professionals in India's many industries and sectors.
- Examine the organizational, personal, and sociocultural elements influencing gender inequity and impediments to women's career progression in the Indian workforce.
- Analyze how women's career advancement, job happiness, work-life balance, and general well-being are affected by the glass ceiling.
- Examine current theoretical models and empirical data about biases, stereotypes, and gender discrimination in the workplace, with particular attention to how they affect Indian women professionals.

GLASS CEILING

While "glass" refers to translucent and invisible, "ceiling" refers to barriers to career advancement. Pillai et al. (2011) .It is harder for women to advance to positions of power in the workplace than it is for men, even with the same level of education, drive, and commitment to their profession. Women continue to face prejudice and stereotyping based on their gender when males rise to senior managerial positions. Parker and Burton (2010).

The glass ceiling was once thought to be the cause of men's dominance in the spheres of power twenty years ago. The idea emphasizes how women cannot progress in their current careers and asserts that although they possess ambition and determination, they are prevented from achieving their goals by unseen barriers. (Lorber, 1994). According to Martin (1991, apud. Lerner (1994, 227), the glass ceiling is defined as "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management level positions." . It is present not only at the top of the pyramid but also in middle management and among minorities (people of color, persons with disabilities). It is invisible and unsurmountable. Stereotypes, media-related problems, and unofficial boundaries are examples of artificial barriers.According to studies (Gidengil, 2003), the media is heavily involved in maintaining stereotypes and establishing expectations for (women) candidates. The public's perception of women in positions of power is another subject we believe is pertinent to this discussion. Researchers (Doland, 2007; Galligan, 2007) contend that the gender affinity effect is relevant in addition to the influence of the media, and we will examine the benefits and drawbacks of this line of reasoning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The transparent barriers (referred to as the "Glass Ceiling") that prevent women from achieving the highest leadership positions are commonly described by this metaphor. It is the invisible, impassable hurdles that prevent women from rising to the top of the hierarchy, no matter how much experience, education, success, or talent they may possess. The majority of women are still prevented from achieving and obtaining the highest positions in the professional world by these hurdles, which persist into the twenty-first century. A multitude of obstacles prevent women from achieving higher positions in the corporate sphere. There seems to be a general consensus that women are most closely associated with their families and the people in their immediate surroundings, followed by their careers.

Elshtain (1987) emphasizes the connection between women's roles in public and private spheres. Stereotypes lead us to feel that integrating the two domains is impossible. The author demonstrates that how men and women view themselves directly affects how they behave in political concerns, demonstrating that this is a problem that affects both how one perceives oneself and the public as a whole. According to the author, politics has a meaning that is associated with men, and as such, it is still the domain of men. Men dominate the public world, whereas women predominate in the private and intimate spheres of existence.

Researcher	Views on Glass Ceiling
Babic and Hansez (2021)	The term "glass ceiling" refers to the practice of vertical discrimination against women in organizations. The glass ceiling phenomenon in the workplace is exacerbated by the underrepresentation of women in positions of decision-making.
Boyer (2021)	There are still disparities in the professional sphere that are hidden. the lack of female representation in low-paying positions. Some of the unseen hurdles that reveal the culture or inequality within organizations are wage disparities, prejudiced gender and leadership perceptions, higher risk and less job security during crises.
Abidin et al. (2018)	Extensive work schedules, frequent travel, and a demanding work atmosphere compounded by familial responsibilities negatively impact women's retention in the accounting field. Glass Ceiling has evolved to signify invisible hurdles like family responsibility, job stress, job demand, which inhibits the career path of the women.
Lathabhavan and Balasubramaniam (2017)	It was discovered that the issues that women in many Asian countries experienced were comparable to one another. These difficulties were divided into four categories: human capital, organization and social role, person-centered, and interaction-centered. It was discovered that gender disparities were the primary cause of the Glass Ceiling.

Forster (1999)	According to the research, women were disproportionately concentrated in lower levels of management as compared to their male peers. The "Glass Ceiling" is a global phenomena. Major projects are far less likely to be awarded to them. Significant cultural hurdles are another difficulty faced by women posting abroad.
Morrison, White, and Velson (1991)	A clear barrier that keeps women from moving up the corporate ladder based only on their gender rather than their qualifications or experience.

SOCIO CULTURAL ASPECTS

Gender Stereotypes: Perceptions that specific professions or leadership positions are better suited for men are typically a result of deeply ingrained social attitudes about gender roles and talents. This perception contributes to the underrepresentation of women in leadership posts.

Cultural Expectations: Women's job success may be impeded by cultural norms and expectations that place a premium on women being homemakers and caregivers. This might result in less prospects for professional growth and promotion.

Balance Between Work and Life Challenges: Due to cultural norms, women may be disproportionately expected to manage domestic chores in addition to their professional professions, which makes it challenging for them to take on demanding roles or explore opportunities for career advancement.

Implicit Bias: Gender gaps in the workplace can be sustained by unconscious biases and prejudices against women that are frequently embedded in cultural attitudes and practices. These biases can have an impact on hiring, promotion, and performance evaluation procedures.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

Male-Dominated Leadership: It can be more difficult for women to break through the glass ceiling in organizations where the leadership structure is dominated by men. This is because such organizations may foster a culture that marginalizes women and perpetuates the idea that leadership jobs are only for men.

Absence of Diversity Initiatives: Businesses may fail to recognize the particular difficulties experienced by female professionals, which could result in structural obstacles to their promotion and retention.

Restricted Mentorship and Sponsorship Opportunities: Women may not have as much access to networks of mentors and sponsors within organizations, which denies them the crucial assistance and direction they require to grow in their careers.

Inflexible Workplace regulations: Women who frequently juggle many obligations may be disproportionately

affected by inflexible workplace regulations, which can make it harder for them to succeed in their professions. Examples of these policies include strict working hours or limited alternatives for remote work.

INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS

Confidence and Self-Advocacy: Women may experience internalized barriers that keep them from seeking professional advancement chances or standing up for themselves in the workplace, such as imposter syndrome or a lack of confidence in their talents.

Negotiation Skills: According to research, women are frequently less aggressive than men when it comes to haggling for pay raises, promotions, or difficult assignments. This can obstruct women's ascent through the corporate ranks.

Networking Challenges: Women may face obstacles when trying to connect with powerful people in industries or organizational structures where men predominate, which can restrict their access to chances that could advance their careers.

Professional Interruptions: Women's professional trajectories might be disrupted and their advancement towards leadership roles may be slowed down by circumstances like maternity leave, childcare commitments, or eldercare responsibilities.

BREAK THE GLASS

Scholars were not interested in the topic of gender distinction in politics until the early 1980s (Griffiths, 1999, 349). Just a few historians highlighted the importance of women's roles in domains linked to power and prestige, emphasizing that women were presumably supporting positions on the historical stage. The feminist movement brought attention to the need for scientists to investigate this issue further. Critics of the feminist movement, like Judith Lorber, Cynthia Enloe, and Jean Bethke Elshtain, among others, drew attention to the ways in which the political and governmental establishment weakened gender equality in favor of men.

The political structure, the state, and the positions of authority were all masculine. Women found it difficult to secure their positions in the same manner that men did because of the glass ceiling.According to writers like Hassim (2009) and Lombardo and Meier (2006), women required a distinct kind of support that had unanticipated repercussions. The speech made women appear weak and untrustworthy, despite the fact that it was meant to help them receive the same accolades as males. Perhaps it was a trend created by other social sciences, or perhaps it was gender role concerns that prompted writers to go more into the topic, but the topic became crucial to scholars who were interested in politics and power.

STRATEGIES FOR BREAKING THE GLASS

- By harnessing multiple viewpoints, improving innovation, and encouraging a more fair work environment, businesses can greatly benefit from the implementation of female leadership projects and corporate policies targeted at fostering gender diversity and inclusivity.

- Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs: Set up formal programs that match female employees with senior leaders who can advocate for possibilities for professional growth and offer guidance and assistance.

- Leadership Development Programs: Create programs that are especially suited to handle the special difficulties and advantages that women in leadership positions encounter. These courses may cover topics including assertiveness, reducing unconscious bias, and negotiating techniques.

- Implement flexible work arrangements, such as job sharing, flexible hours, or remote work, to meet the needs of a varied workforce. Working mothers in particular may need additional flexibility to balance work and family obligations.

- Equal Pay Policies: To ensure pay fairness, regularly audit the company to find and close any gender pay disparities. Establish open pay structures and procedures for performance reviews to encourage accountability and justice.

- Employ inclusive hiring procedures that place a high value on diversity and aggressively work to find and hire qualified women for positions at all organizational levels. This may entail utilizing diverse interview panels, educating hiring managers about unconscious bias, and establishing diversity targets.

- Family-Friendly Benefits: To lessen the strain of caregiving duties and foster a supportive work environment for working parents, provide family-friendly benefits including parental leave, daycare aid, and breastfeeding support.

- Create affinity clubs or employee resource groups (ERGs) with the goal of assisting women in the workplace. These groups can offer tools for professional growth, networking opportunities, and a forum for talking about gender-related topics.

- Implicit Bias Education: Train staff members to identify and reduce unconscious biases that could affect performance reviews, prospects for advancement, and decision-making processes.

- Clear and open promotion standards are necessary to ensure that decisions about chances for progress and promotion are made on the basis of competence and merit rather than on arbitrary criteria.

- Accountability Measures: Use performance reviews, KPIs, and incentives linked to diversity objectives to hold managers and leaders responsible for encouraging gender diversity and inclusion within their teams.

- Frequent Diversity and Inclusion Assessments: To pinpoint areas in need of development and monitor advancement over time, conduct regular assessments of diversity and inclusion inside the company. Use focus groups, town hall meetings, and questionnaires to get employee input.

- Collaborations and External Engagement: Work together with outside organizations, business associations, and neighborhood partners to exchange best practices, push for gender parity, and back programs that encourage women to take on leadership roles and grow in the workforce.

WOMEN & MEDIA

As we'll see, the media has a big say in how female candidates are portrayed. The impact of the media is noteworthy, and we'll examine the kinds of images it produces. Research on women in politics has shown that these individuals are not happy with how the media represents them (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003). By focusing on looks rather than the more crucial elements, like the political goal, it seems that the media plays a big part in how women professionals are portrayed.

CONCLUSION

The glass barrier is far from being smashed, even though from the standpoint of legal entitlements men and women now have equal opportunity in gaining any post, at least as far as the European Union is concerned. Research indicates that the media has a noteworthy role in sustaining gender stereotypes, and concerning political campaigns, it negatively impacts the portrayal of female candidates. Perhaps the media is concentrating on the gender qualities of the candidate rather than their qualifications, or perhaps there is a need to market the tale or an intriguing narrative. Their perception of these opportunities is asymmetrical. It would be incorrect to assume that women have no place in this world and that it is a man's domain. We ought to realize that the way society's structures evolve over time is a positive indication that preconceptions and attitudes also shift. In the end, it can seem like a win-lose scenario, but depending on your point of view, it might actually be a zero-sum game because the entry of women into politics does not imply the replacement of men.

According to a 2012 McKinsey research, the top-performing businesses are those who achieve success in four areas:

- Demonstrating senior management support for gender diversity, being open about it, and viewing it as a lifestyle choice rather than a collection of projects;
- Addressing the mindsets of men and women to better promote diversity and present the argument for gender diversity in the workplace;
- Keeping a close eye on how many women are represented;
- Leading their programs for gender diversity.

Businesses that are successful in altering the gender dynamic have a critical mass of programs that they closely oversee and carry out. Stated differently, these businesses practice what they preach and integrate gender diversity into their core values.

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