



Glass Ceiling in India: A Reality for Women?

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Abstract

The glass ceiling effect is the omnipresent resistance to the contributions of women and minorities to excel in their work and reach the high positions of the company where they are working. Marilyn Loden was the first person who coined the phenomenon, and it became extremely relevant in the 1980s. However, still now in the 21st century, it is prevailing in our work culture. In the 1980s, "glass ceiling" was often used synonymously to another phrase called the "mommy track." During those times, it was very unfortunate yet common for women of the childbearing age group to be called the less motivated individuals when compared to the male employees of a company. The assumption was that women of this age took extensive leaves for their health and were less dedicated towards their work due to their maternal responsibilities. But later on, this mommy track issue became obsolete after the introduction of laws that enabled pregnant women and couples to take time off from their work to take care of their children. But somehow, our society still fights issues like the glass ceiling effect silently.

1. Introduction

The glass ceiling is a metaphor that refers to the boundaries or barriers which are invisible but generally has been applied on people such as women and minorities leading to the reduction in career advancement opportunities. The phrase 'glass ceiling' was mentioned by Marilyn Loden (an American writer, management consultant and diversity advocate) for the first time at a women's exposition held during the year in 1978. According to the world Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, 63% of men are in leadership roles and only 37% of communications women are in leadership roles. The concept of glass ceiling was later popularised in 1986 by 'Wall Street Journal' article discussing about the corporate hierarchy system and the invisible barriers preventing women from advancing in their career paths. Glass ceiling still exist across various industries for different groups of people. Men still occupy most of executive positions incorporations and other positions in power. Even after paying attention to all of these barriers they are still present in the workforce. The phenomena of glass ceiling reflect the 'Verticals Segregation' process generally done against women within companies. The US Department of Labour has launched the glass ceiling commission in 1991 in reciprocation to the growing concern over the boundaries preventing women and the other minorities from advancing their careers. It was found by the commission that qualified women and minorities were being denied the opportunity to complete for the decision making or executive positions. It has been seen and noticed that the perceptions made by employers or employees are often having stereotypes or superficial and illogical beliefs that held women and other minorities in the negative light or uneligible criterion.

2. Reasons for Prevalence of Glass Ceiling

A Racial or gender gap that grows wider over a career and one of the main reason for this in India is the societal pressure on women. The prevalence of the gender disparity and unequal pays are entirely opposed and this has also remained a major gender bias in career advancement for the women in large organization. In addition to gender roles women are often stereotyped for household works and issues such as male dominance, child care, pregnancy, lack of family - friendly workplace policies, sexual harassment, attitudinal and organizational prejudices etc. are some reasons which ceases women from breaking down the glass ceiling. But it's not just how women are treated but it's also how they are viewed by their peers and leaders. Women and minorities are deprived of good, exclusive guidance & mentorship and because of that they don't get ample opportunities to create better connection with high authorities to demonstrate their diligence.

"In today's time, where talent is equally dispersed among men and women, an economy that does not fully tapped into the superintendence skills offered by women is necessarily ineffectual". So now this is an important question that we all should address, especially in today's time when so much modernisation is happening around us. Does glass ceiling still exist in millennials?

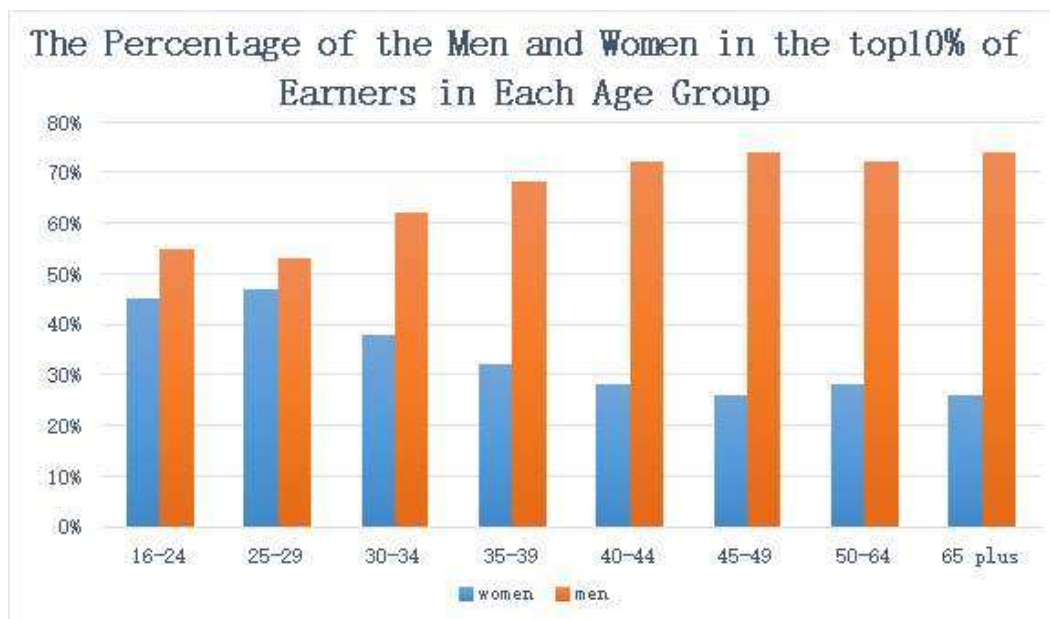
Perhaps, anticipation of a glass ceiling are off because they (millennials) have faith that they will achieve what they crave about but the forces like Socio-cultural, legal, psychological and organizational factors that affect a women's rise to the higher position of an organization are for the most part, universal. We can see that the situation for most of the women around us is improved but for some true equality has not yet been achieved because of certain reason like intersectional discrimination, exclusion from informal network, unnoticed efforts, motherhood as a barrier, management perception and ageism etc.

Getting women into leadership role is a trending topic, some of the most used hashtags on internet are #leanin, #womeninstem, #pressforprogress and a lot more but yet talent has been kept aside on the table when women are not placed in leadership position, and the economy suffers.

3. Impact on Organizations

Women are better educated and more active in the labor force than ever, and are increasingly working in managerial roles. Yet despite these gains, the importance of women's contribution to the economy is regularly undervalued. Organization is competing in an increasing global environment which calls for greater adaptability and a superior combination of technical and survival skills. The challenges that women face when climbing the corporate ladder equip them with the skills to cope with uncertainty and to adapt. Glass ceiling has been a very emerging issue from the past couple of decades in both private and public sector organizations. Employee's especially female employees are artificially restricted to be promoted to the higher levels of the organizations hierarchy. This thing effects the commitment level of the employees on the work place also decrease their satisfaction level during working.

A company can have a diverse workforce that possesses a good amount of female employees as well. But somehow, in the upper ranks, there are not enough women or minorities represented. Based on the data the percentage of man and women in the top 10% of earners in each age group in India has been shown in figure 1.1.



It has been seen that a women, in her prime time or at the peak of her career is about 40 to 50 percent working in organization but then sudden bounds to drop her career to meet social obligations and responsibilities. The major reason for this in India is that women and minorities typically earn on average only about 70 to 80 percent of a man's wages, while working the same hours every day and give the same amount of efforts as any male employee, yet not getting enough pays and opportunities compared to their male employees.

The question "what prevents women from reaching the highest position" has become a great concern for us.

Studies show that gender differences in promotion and pays rates to senior position exist worldwide. Women make up to 40% of the average company's workforce. Focusing on gender differences in leadership, women remain underrepresented at the top of the corporation as they may face a lot of barriers in their career progression when working with men. We see more women in the C-suits of certain industries such as publishing, education, entertainment, healthcare, banking, etc. Self-selection could be an important reason for this gap but yet there are many types of discrimination in the workplace based upon gender and other minority-factors can be seen in any of the following forms:-

- Discriminatory compensation where different wages for the same or comparable work,
- Absence of workplace policies that accommodates the needs such as physically challenged individuals, single parents, etc. and
- A lack of family-friendly work environment where unfriendly, often hostile, work environment which is characterized by exclusion of members who are targets of discrimination from informal network.

However, more and more women have entered the workplace and the number of working women has been continuously increasing. Having an increased representation of women in top positions sends a positive signal to the rest of the organization and augurs well for the treatment of other women.

4. Combatting the Glass Ceiling

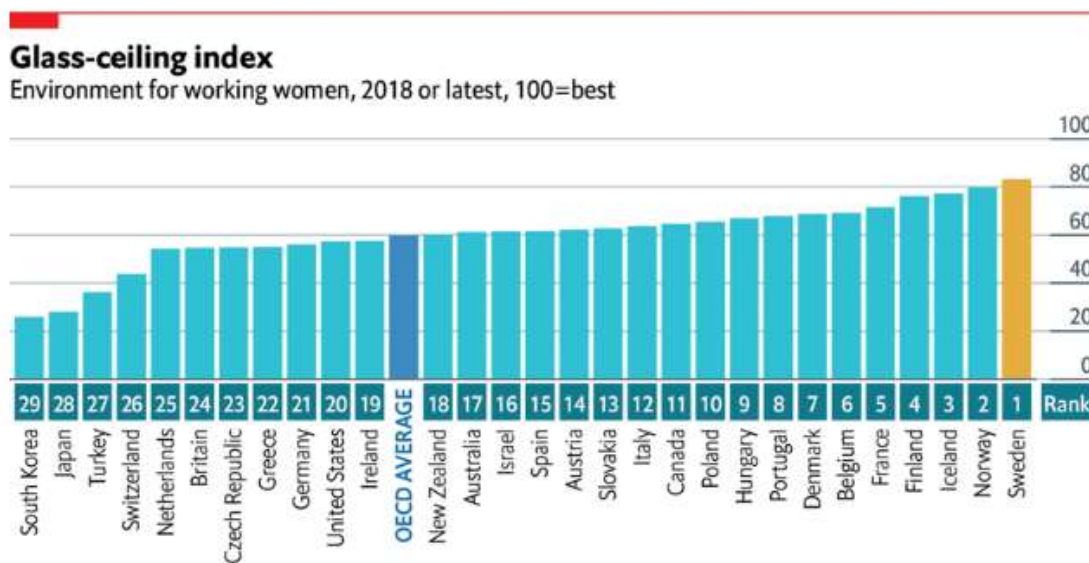
In today's time women are capable of enduring any challenge. Women face many challenges in their life right from birth. They are taught to sacrifice their dreams and aspirations for the sake of their family. Actually women are no less than a man it's essentially the dominating society which hinder the growth of female in any sector. Companies should take the following measures to combat the ceiling:

- Educate and train employees about anti discrimination laws: arrange training programs to raise awareness against discrimination. If the company will offer equal opportunities to every employee goodwill of the firm will increase that will benefit the firm in long run.
- Women should be fairly compensated for their efforts and hard work: Despite similar tasks and working hours, the pay of women continues to be lower in industry. This situation is prevailing in every industry. If companies can pay women less, why don't they hire only women? Blind screening should be encouraged:
- In blind screening personnel information of the candidate is not shown they are judged only on the basis of their skills. This helps to avoid gender biased decisions. Blind screening has increased selection of female employees by 40%.
- Encourage feedbacks: Employees should feel free to share their opinion about the prevailing conditions in a workforce so that they can open up about their experiences and share any untoward experience that have happen to them or to someone they know. This will help in resolving problems in an effective way.
- Moral and ethical work environment: People working in an organization should be educated enough to differentiate between right and wrong. Work environment should be comfortable for each and every employee working in the organization.
- Equal job opportunities: Organizations avoid recruiting female employees to save money on administrative cost and they also think that a man can dedicate more working hours than a woman. But this should not be the case.. The study of UNGC, has found that raising women's participation in the labour force to the same level as men, can boost India's GDP by 27%. Despite of all the hardships women have proved themselves in every field.

5. Global Prevalence

It has become conventional wisdom over the past few decades that raising the position of women is one of the most important levers for global development. When women have access to education and the capacity to earn and manage income, infant mortality declines, child health and nutrition improve, agricultural productivity rises, population growth slows, economies flourish, and poverty cycles are broken.

But the difficulties are still enormously difficult. Women are prevented from contributing fully to society in the Middle East, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, due to large and persistent gender gaps in access to education, health care, technology, and income, as well as a lack of fundamental rights and widespread violence against women. The majority of the world's poorest two billion people continue to experience persistent gender discrimination, which contributes to the gap between them and everyone else who live on this planet.



Based on the glass-ceiling index for 2018. With a score of 84 out of 100, Sweden was rated as the greatest country in the world for women to work. With information on higher education, labor force participation, wages, child care expenses, maternity and paternity rights, business school applications, and representation in senior positions, the glass-ceiling index assesses the environment for working women. The index explains this by saying that Nordic nations are particularly successful at assisting women to complete higher education, find employment, advance in their careers, and benefit from excellent parental-leave policies and flexible work schedules. Despite having a relatively high ranking for women in senior management roles, both the United States and the United Kingdom have fallen short of the OECD norm. For the ninth year in a row, South Korea ranks at the bottom of the ranking, closely followed by Japan and Turkey. This is a result of Asian cultural standards that still pressure women to choose between starting a family and pursuing a profession.

6. Breaking the Glass Ceiling: What Women Can Do

- **Believe that only you can-** No two individuals are same in this world. We all are born with a basket of unique features, which are inside us, our core elements. We just need to search our unique elements and utilize them for our betterment. Studies have shown that men overestimate their abilities and performance and, women often underestimate themselves. One in three women attempt to break the glass ceiling but fewer than half succeed. This is because they doubt their caliber and potential. And its high time now, Ladies stop holding yourself back by believing you need to know more or have more experience. Be of the opinion that you have the power to fight every battle that life brings in front of you. You were born to conquer the world.
- **Avoid toxic and temporary-** You have to distance yourself from people who degrade your abilities, who disguise themselves as your well wishers. In today's world of cut throat competition you will find ample of people who will try to prevent you from achieving success it is very difficult to find genuine and trustworthy individuals. Make wise choices and evaluate right mentors at various stages of career. Make sure your mental health is been taken care of. Don't let anyone convince you that breaking the glass ceiling is impossible as it is not.
- **Find a real partner not the best one-** A survey has shown a woman and a man work full time and have a child the women does twice the amount of housework the man does, and the women does three times the amount of child care the man does. Decide for yourself the right time to get married. Find someone who is mature enough to understand that a house becomes a sweet home by joint efforts of both the parents. Support each other in tough times. Break the culture created by the society which encourages women to stay at home to parent rather than hold executive positions.
- **Take risk or loose opportunities-** What you risk reveals what you value. Nothing great comes without taking risk. Be bold enough to grab every possible opportunity. Develop pessimistic attitude find that ray of hope that will make the overall risk worth it. You will never reach your true potential living life in comfort and routine you have got to take some risks. Even if you loose you will gain experience and you can guide others. You can't run a business without taking risks. You have to choose between living your life like a roller coaster ride or play it safe and lead an ordinary life.
- **Dream big to achieve big-** Girls do not limit your dreams. Your dreams are your future. Follow your dreams religiously, almighty will help you in every possible way to convert them into reality. It takes a lot to bear the pain of a broken dream and believe me it is excruciating to see your dreams shattering. Visualize your dreams every morning and plan your day accordingly. Planning is a significant process. It helps to eliminate confusions and select the best possible methods to take effective measures and achieve our goal with ease. Don't settle for average Achieve beyond your dreams and become inspiration for others. Be proud of who you are. Your journey must give goose bumps to your listeners and they must say she is my idol. You are not meant to lead an ordinary life and end up fulfilling expectations of the society. Pave the way for other women too . Your actions don't just make a difference for you but for every other woman who are caught in the clutches of the glass ceiling. Voice your experiences and help others gain confidence to deal with similar or opposite situation.

7. Conclusion

The glass ceiling still exists across various industries for different groups of people. Men occupy most of the executive positions in corporations and other positions in power. Psychological factors, gender bias, discrimination are some of the reasons that glass ceiling is still very much present in the workforce. But ladies don't consider breaking the glass ceiling as your ultimate goal as you were not born to face all the hardships and make sacrifices just to break the glass ceiling. Value your dreams and destroy every barrier that hinders your growth. Don't feel discouraged in being floured as no one is perfect. You don't need to be perfect in every field. The confidence you wear is more than enough to shatter any invisible barrier. Despite of so many social barriers women have proved themselves better in every field. In fact women are not only equal to men but they are ahead of them. Their multitasking attitude, communication skills, technical skills, tolerance power, fierce attitude has proved their capabilities. Thus the ceiling can be smashed into pieces by raising awareness and educating youth about it. The bar has already been set we just have to raise it.

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