



A Study on “Glass Ceiling: Women and Barriers to HR Leadership”

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ABSTRACT:

Regarding the glass ceiling, women frequently encounter several obstacles on their path to achieving leadership roles in all fields, not just HR. Work-life balance issues, lack of representation, restricted access to networking and mentoring opportunities, and gender bias are a few prevalent ones. Women may find it more difficult to succeed and move up the corporate ladder because of these issues. Using a suitable sample strategy, the research's primary goal is to concentrate on middle- and upper-level management among all female HR professionals. The primary goals are to examine the causes of the glass ceiling, research the difficulties faced by HR women leaders in this regard, and to determine how HR Women Leaders may overcome the obstacles they face.

Keywords: Glass Ceiling , Discrimination , Women leaders, HR Woen professionals, middle-level management , upper-level management.

INTRODUCTION:

The term “glass ceiling” is a metaphor for the barriers preventing women and other marginalized people from reaching higher levels of professional success. (Reiners, 2023)

Although traditionally and predominantly associated with women, the term “glass ceiling” also applies to individuals from other historically marginalised groups who frequently encounter obstacles at the hands of organisations due to entrenched cultural prejudices. Certainly, advancements have been achieved in the realm of employment throughout the last few decades. But it is evident that women continue to encounter the glass ceiling in the present day. In 2022, the earnings of women constituted a mere 83% of those of males, whereas the representation of women as CEOs at Fortune 500 companies was less than 9%. In 1978, writer and consultant Marilyn Loden coined the term “glass ceiling” during a panel discussion concerning women in the workplace. Loden expounded upon the cultural obstacles that impede the advancement of women from middle-management positions to executive or higher leadership roles. During the mid-1980s, additional references to the term emerged in the form of an Adweek profile of Gay Bryant in 1984, The Working Woman Report in 1984, and a Wall Street Journal article in 1986. In the decades following the term's inception, women have made significant strides in the labour force. From 1990 to 2022, the number of employed women in the United States increased from less than 54 million to 74 million.

Additionally, women comprise over 50% of college-educated labour force in the United States.

Concurrently, women are frequently encouraged to pursue employment that exposes them to economic crisis risk; during the most recent recession, for instance, more than one million women left the labour force. At the global level, 86 countries impose employment restrictions on women, while 95 countries fail to ensure equal pay (and gender-based pay disparities persist even in nations that guarantee equal pay, such as the United States). As more women enter the workforce, it becomes increasingly difficult for businesses to disregard the lingering presence of the glass ceiling.

Gender prejudice is the inclination of some individuals to favour one gender over the other. This bias has a significantly greater adverse impact on women than males in the workplace. 42% of women, compared to 22% of men, reported experiencing gender-based discrimination in the workplace, according to a 2017 Pew Research study. The situation is even more bleak when considering women of colour, as 51% of them report encountering bigotry and discrimination. Women's treatment is significantly influenced by how they are perceived. According to the Women in the Workplace study by Lean In, female executives are twice as likely to be mistaken for entry-level employees as their male counterparts. These prejudices hinder the advancement and success of women in positions of authority. Intelligent individuals worldwide are on the lookout for opportunities that provide career advancement and means to maintain a comfortable standard of living in the year 2023. This sentiment is prevalent among individuals of all ages and genders. After years of resistance against patriarchy, women have attained a position of prominence in the business world. But does it truly appear as rosy? Both men and women are obligated to work in order to offset the escalating expenses and maintain a healthful way of life. Despite existing legislation aimed at ensuring the safety and security of women in the workplace, women continue to encounter numerous obstacles in this regard. Although a considerable number of women encounter diminished repercussions. Exceptions exist for this rule among women.

As International Women's Day approaches, we should reflect on the obstacles that women have encountered thus far in the workplace. Sexual harassment, wage disparity, pregnancy discrimination, imposter syndrome, lack of equal opportunities, difficulty bridging career gaps and reentering the workforce, ignorance and insensitivity, and being asked biased and inappropriate interview questions are a few of the obstacles women face. The present state of women's empowerment is predicated on the ideas and endeavours of our nation's founding ancestors; as a result, the Constitution of India contains numerous social, economic, and political provisions pertaining to women's empowerment. Indian women are progressively gaining ground in the realms of science and technology, politics, athletics, education, the arts and culture, and various service sectors. However, due to the pervasive patriarchal mindset in Indian society, women continue to endure deprivation, humiliation, victimisation, torture, and exploitation. Despite having been at liberty for seven decades, women continue to face inequities in the social, political, economic, and educational spheres. The Lok Sabha comprises a total of 542 members, of which 78 are female. Similarly, the Rajya Sabha has 224 members, of which 24 are female. There are a total of 102 women serving in parliament.

Understanding the Glass Ceiling

The metaphorical term "glass ceiling" refers to the imperceptible obstacle that women and other marginalised communities encounter in their pursuit of elevated levels of professional achievement. These obstacles do not constitute formal corporate policies; instead, they are tacit prejudices ingrained in organisational structures that impede the advancement of specific individuals to senior management roles, irrespective of their qualifications. According to Kagan (2022),

The term "glass ceiling" was initially introduced by Marilyn Loden during her panel discussion at the 1978 Women's Exposition in New York. As a substitute for the sole female executive at her employer, Loden was extended an invitation to deliver a presentation on the notion that the obstacles impeding women's career progression were their own fault. Conversely, she addressed the glass ceiling, a pervasive yet neglected barrier that has historically hindered women from attaining positions of authority.

The Glass Ceiling Commission was established by the U.S. Department of Labour in 1991 in response to mounting apprehension regarding the obstacles that impede the progress of women and minorities. Its responsibility was to identify existing barriers and policies that corporations have implemented or could implement in order to increase diversity at the executive and managerial levels.

The commission determined that minority and qualified female candidates were denied the chance to compete for or obtain positions of authority. Additionally, it was discovered that employers and employees frequently held negative stereotypes regarding women and minorities.

Hillary Clinton stated on multiple occasions during her 2008 and 2016 presidential campaigns that she intended to break through the "highest, hardest glass ceiling" and become the first female president of the United States. On January 20, 2021, Vice President Kamala Harris broke through the second-highest glass ceiling in United States history by assuming the historic title of the first female, first Black, and first South Asian Vice President. In addition to being the first Black woman to be elected district attorney of San Francisco, she was the first woman and the first Black and South Asian attorney general of California.

Definition of Glass Ceiling:

The term "glass ceiling" is a metaphor for the barriers preventing women and other marginalized people from reaching higher levels of professional success.

OR

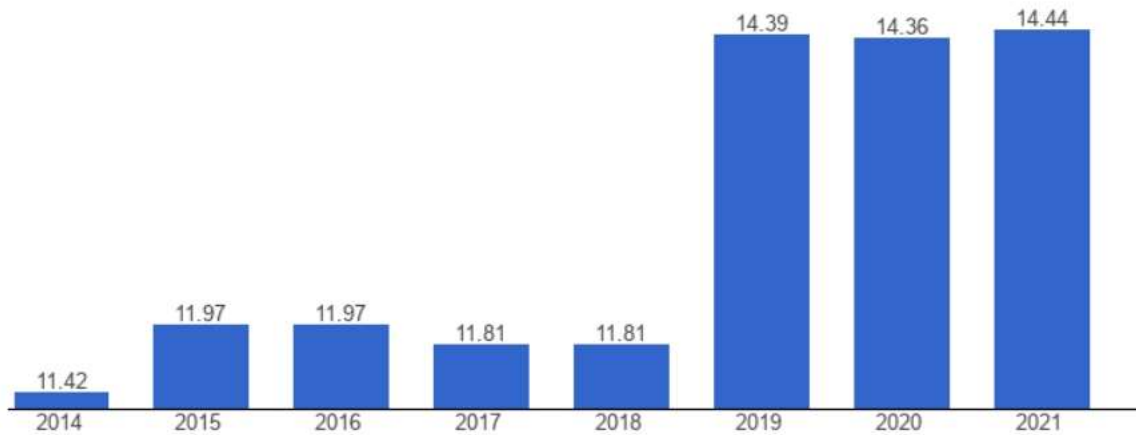
The term glass ceiling refers to a metaphorical invisible barrier that prevents certain individuals from being promoted to managerial- and executive-level positions within an organization.

OR

"The glass ceiling isn't so much a thing. It's a phenomenon that people have noticed where women seem to have an easier time entering into organizations at lower levels, but as they advance to higher levels, their numbers dwindle," By Rosalind M Chow

(Glass Ceiling | AwesomeFinTech Blog, 2022)

- **Few** One of the consequences of the glass ceiling is earning a lower salary than equal-sex coworkers performing the same duties.
- Not receiving promotions or other significant career prospects.
- Regularly encountering microaggressions.
- Experiencing feelings of isolation.
- Being regarded with incompetence.
- Having an application rejected for employment.



Indian Women in Parliament (Statistical Data)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. The role of leadership in human resource management: perspectives and evidence from Asia Pacific

Publisher's name: Shuming Zhao

Published online: 29 Jun 2020

The intricate interplay between the diverse components of human resource management (e.g., high commitment, high involvement, international HRM), and the qualities of leadership (e.g., authentic, ethical, transformative, leader-member exchange, and global leadership), as well as the impact they have on a range of outcomes at the organisational, team, and individual levels, may encompass a multitude of relationships. To mention a few: HRM practices may indirectly influence outcomes via leadership, or leadership may indirectly influence outcomes via HRM practices. For instance, it has been observed that transformational CEOs are inclined to implement human resource management practices that enhance human capital and skill-based HRM practices that improve organisational outcomes (Zhu, Chew, and Spangler Citation2005; Lopez-Cabrales, Bornay-Barrachina, and Diaz-Fernandez Citation2017). Similarly, HRM practices that enhance transformational leadership at the organisational level may have an effect on transformational leadership at the team level, which subsequently affects team creativity (Han et al. Ci An illustration of how charismatic leadership by the CEO could enhance the positive correlation between high-commitment human resources practices and organisational performance is as follows (McClean and Collins Citation2019). Additionally, the impact of leadership on outcomes could be mitigated, or HRM practices could diminish the influence of leadership on outcomes. The correlation between leadership skills and HRM practices (e.g., cross-cultural performance assessment) was identified as a crucial area for future research in a study focusing on expatriates of multinational corporations (Dowling, Festing, and Engle Citation2017). In order to further both theory and practice, it is crucial and imperative to examine the intricate relationships between human resource management (HRM) and leadership, as well as the impact these relationships have on organisational outcomes across various contexts. In summary, leadership and HRM practices are both multi-level concepts. Human resource management (HRM) practices can be defined and evaluated at various levels, such as the organisation, department, team, and individual, both domestically and internationally (Nishii and Wright Citation2007). Conversely, the applicability of leadership theory extends to the responsibilities of various types of leaders—including but not limited to boards of directors, CEOs, HR managers, lower-to-middle managers (LTMMs), and CEOs (Steffensen et al. Citation2019). In the existing literature, however, it is unclear how HRM practices interact with leadership at each of these distinct levels (organisational, unit, team, and individual) and in various contexts. Thus, we believe that promising research areas include integrating leadership and HRM at multiple levels and/or in various contexts in order to demonstrate the full impact of leadership on HRM (or vice versa).

2. Gender Gap in Leadership: Barriers and Challenges for Women

Published: 23rd Aug 2021

The subject matter of this research paper is the leadership of women, both domestically and internationally. The paper discusses the gender disparity in leadership, the differences in leadership styles between the sexes, the obstacles and challenges women face in their pursuit of top leadership positions, and suggests avenues for future research in this area. "The phenomenon of leaders embracing feminism represents a noteworthy advancement in our comprehension and management of worldwide, political, economic, and societal frameworks" (Adler, 1997). Despite a more than twofold increase in the number of women holding leadership positions in business organisations since the 1970s, women continue to be underrepresented in managerial roles on a global scale. The gender leadership disparity is enormous, and absent significant policy and cultural shifts within the organisations where women are employed, women will not be significantly more represented in leadership positions.

3. The Benefit of More Women in Leadership Roles – Women of HR

Publisher's name: Tyagi, S. (2016)

Women constitute 50% of the global population of working age. In corporate circles, however, the persistent underrepresentation of women in positions of authority has sparked a discussion regarding the viability of implementing a gender quota to promote gender equality in such positions. However, why is there such a frenzy surrounding gender equality? For starters, reports indicate that increased representation of women in leadership positions results in enhanced organisational performance. In addition, historically, organisations led by women have performed better than their competitors in times of financial crisis, including the most recent one. This article explains in detail why women in leadership positions would be more effective in particular circumstances and how to encourage the same in your workplace.

According to a Pew Research Centre study on women and leadership, there are few differences between men and women in critical leadership qualities such as intellect and the capacity to innovate. In fact, many women are more compassionate and organised than men, according to the study. Notwithstanding these facts, the presence of women in boardroom deliberations and at the highest echelons of management is extremely restricted. The narrative is consistent throughout all continents, including Asia, Europe, and the United States. In 2014, a comprehensive survey conducted by 20-first, a global gender consulting firm headquartered in the United Kingdom, revealed that women occupied a mere 11% of the 3,000 executive committee positions across the 300 companies that were surveyed.

Methodology:

The methodology employed for the study is purposive sampling. The research design of the study is descriptive research and case study in order to identify the challenges of the women leaders. The sample of the study includes 10 interviews of women leaders in HR field. The tool for the data collection is interview schedule.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS:

The Following are the barriers researcher found during the discussions with the Professional HR Women Leaders :

Rumination :

Rumination is when you get stuck in a cycle of negative thoughts. While engaging with the discussions with the hr professionals the researcher came across many responses in which the women professionals encounter obstacles associated with rumination, a cognitive tendency characterised by excessive reflection on negative experiences or self-doubt. In the following situations, women may be confronted with this issue: Imposter syndrome is a common psychological condition among women, characterised by the belief that their achievements are undeserved or that their competence falls short of what others consider them to be. This self-doubt may impede their confidence and career advancement by causing them to ruminate.

Insufficient Support:

Women professionals encounter a dearth of validation or support from peers or superiors, factors that can worsen the emotions of seclusion and self-doubt. In the absence of a conducive work environment, rumination may intensify. It may further complicate the path for women to success in their careers and surmount obstacles. Companies must place a high priority on fostering a supportive environment in which all employees feel appreciated and motivated. Organisations can leverage mentorship initiatives, foster professional growth prospects, and cultivate an inclusive work environment to combat the problem of inadequate assistance and empower women to achieve success.

Work-life equilibrium:

An additional barrier that women encounter is the challenge of managing their personal and professional responsibilities. As a result of the pressure to excel in both domains, an individual may doubt whether their performance is satisfactory or whether they are meeting expectations. Support from the family and corporate colleagues plays an important part in the women professionals' life in balancing. According to the respondents women do balances their both lives parallelly rather of the stereotypical thinking that they prioritise only on personal life. It is crucial to provide support systems and resolve these obstacles to assist women in overcoming rumination. Promoting transparent and honest communication, cultivating inclusive professional environments, and offering mentorship prospects are all viable strategies that can aid in mitigating the adverse effects of rumination within the industry.

Discrimination:

Gender bias refers to the unfair treatment or prejudice against individuals based on their gender. In the context of leadership, gender bias can manifest in various ways. For example, it can involve the belief that men are naturally better leaders or that women are too emotional or nurturing to be effective leaders. The main challenges into discrimination are the following that were mentioned by the respondents to the researcher. These biases can lead to unequal opportunities, lower expectations, and stereotypes that hinder women's advancement in leadership roles. It's important to challenge and overcome these biases to create a more equal and inclusive society.

Industry Selection:

The industry selection during career choices can have a significant impact on women employees. Certain industries such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, finance, and traditionally male-dominated fields, tend to have fewer women representation and can perpetuate gender

disparities. This can be due to various factors, including societal stereotypes, lack of role models, and biased hiring practices. There are many such fields that construction, architecture, civil, petroleum, manufacturing, automotive and many such fields. It is crucial to encourage and support women in pursuing careers in any industry they are passionate about work towards creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

Travelling:

Traveling can be a barrier for women leaders in the corporate world due to several reasons discussed during the conversation with the respondents. Firstly, there may be safety concerns, especially when traveling alone or to unfamiliar locations. Secondly, the demands of travel, such as long hours and time away from family, can create additional challenges for women who may have caregiving responsibilities. Lastly, the lack of necessary support systems and resources for women travelers, such as gender-sensitive accommodations and policies, can further hinder their ability to travel confidently and effectively. These barriers can limit opportunities for women leaders to expand their networks, gain exposure, and advance in their careers. It's important to address these challenges and create inclusive environments that support women in their leadership journeys.

Gender biasness:

Gender bias is a significant issue that affects women in leadership positions. It refers to the unfair treatment or assumptions made based on gender, which can hinder women's progress and opportunities in the corporate world. Gender bias can manifest in various ways, such as unequal pay, limited access to promotions, and stereotypes that undermine women's capabilities. It's crucial to raise awareness, challenge these biases, and create inclusive environments where everyone has equal opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Communication Gap:

Women do face a communication gap in the corporate world. This gap can stem from various factors, including gender biases and stereotypes that affect how women's ideas and contributions are perceived and valued. It can also be influenced by differences in communication styles and expectations. It's important to address this gap by promoting inclusive communication practices, encouraging diverse voices to be heard, and providing training and support to help women navigate and overcome these challenges. Together, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable corporate environment.

Financial Barriers:

The researcher understands that financial barriers can be a significant challenge for women in the corporate world. Women may face obstacles such as unequal pay, limited access to funding or investment opportunities, and financial responsibilities that can impact their career progression. It's important to advocate for equal pay and financial support for women, as well as provide resources and programs that help address these barriers. By addressing financial barriers, we can create a more equitable and inclusive workplace for everyone.

Work Comparison:

Women often have to work harder and prove themselves more than their male counterparts to receive the same recognition and opportunities. This can be attributed to gender biases and stereotypes that can affect how women's contributions are perceived and valued. It's important to challenge these biases and advocate for equal recognition and opportunities for women in the workplace. Together, we can work towards breaking down these barriers and achieving true equality.

Gender Biasness:

As a researcher, studying the impact of gender bias on women in the workplace is crucial. It's essential to examine how stereotypes and biases affect women's career progression, opportunities, and overall experiences in different industries. By conducting research, we gathered data and insights to raise awareness about these issues, propose evidence-based solutions, and advocate for change. Understanding the barriers women face and the consequences of industry selection can help inform strategies to promote gender equality and create more inclusive work environments.

Pay Gap:

The gender pay gap is a significant issue that affects women in the workplace. It refers to the disparity in earnings between men and women, with women typically earning less than their male counterparts for performing the same work. This gap can be influenced by various factors, including gender biases, occupational segregation, and lack of transparency in salary negotiations. It's important to address the pay gap by advocating for equal pay for equal work, promoting transparency in salary practices, and implementing policies that ensure fair compensation for all employees, regardless of gender. Together, we can work towards closing the gender pay gap and achieving greater financial equity.

Opportunity Barriers:

Opportunity barriers are a significant challenge that women face in the corporate world. Women often encounter obstacles such as limited access to leadership positions, biased hiring practices, and lack of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities. These barriers can hinder their professional growth and advancement. It's crucial to address these barriers by advocating for equal opportunities, promoting diversity and inclusion in decision-making roles, and implementing policies that support women's career progression. Together, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace where everyone has equal access to opportunities for success.

Double Standards:

Double standards are a real issue that women face in the corporate world. Women often have to navigate through different expectations and standards compared to their male counterparts. For example, assertiveness in men may be seen as leadership qualities, while the same behavior in women is sometimes labeled as being "bossy" or "aggressive." Additionally, women may face scrutiny regarding their appearance or personal choices, which can distract from their professional abilities. It's important to challenge these double standards and promote a more inclusive and equal work environment where everyone is evaluated based on their skills, qualifications, and contributions, regardless of gender. Together, we can work towards breaking down these barriers and achieving true equality.

Promotion Opportunities:

Women often face challenges when it comes to promotion opportunities in the corporate world. It's unfortunate that gender biases and stereotypes can hinder their advancement. However, it's important to continue advocating for equal opportunities and fair evaluation criteria. Organizations can play a vital role by implementing policies that promote diversity and inclusion, providing mentorship and leadership development programs, and ensuring transparency in the promotion process. Together, we can work towards creating a more equitable and supportive environment where women have equal chances to thrive and succeed in their careers.

Limited Access to Mentorship and Networking:

The researcher totally gets where you're coming from! It's unfortunate that women often face limited access to mentorship and networking opportunities in the corporate world. Building strong relationships and having mentors can make a huge difference in career growth. It's important for organizations to create inclusive mentorship programs and networking events that provide equal opportunities for everyone. In the meantime, don't hesitate to seek out mentors and networking opportunities on your own. You have a lot to offer, and with the right support, you can overcome these challenges and achieve your professional goals. Keep pushing forward!

Lack of Representation:

Lack of representation is a significant issue that women face in many industries, including the corporate world. It's important for women to have equal representation in leadership positions and decision-making roles. By having diverse perspectives at the table, organizations can benefit from a wider range of ideas and experiences. It's crucial for companies to actively work towards creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace, where women have equal opportunities to contribute and succeed. Together, we can strive for greater representation and create positive change.

Conclusion:

Women professionals frequently encounter barriers such as rumination, insufficient support, and challenges in achieving work-life balance, discrimination, industry selection, travelling, work comparison, gender biasness, communication gap, financial barriers, opportunity barriers, stereotyping, pay gap, double standards, promotion opportunities, limited access to mentorship and networking and lack of representation. These obstacles can have a detrimental impact on their self-confidence and hinder their career advancement. To address these issues, organizations should prioritize creating a nurturing and inclusive work environment, implementing mentorship programs, and fostering a culture that supports work-life equilibrium. By doing so, we can empower women professionals, promote their success, and cultivate a more diverse and thriving workforce.

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