







Analysis of Glass Ceiling Factors Thwarting Professional Development of Women: A Case Study of Private and Public Institutions of Multan District

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| <p>Keywords: Glass Ceiling Factors, Gender Stereotyping, Wage Gap</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">ABSTRACT</p> <p><i>The research article presents a quantitative study and analysis of the various glass ceiling factors which hinder the personal and professional development of women in the public and private sector organizations of district Multan. The respondents were selected through a purposive sampling technique and the hypothesis was confirmed by the use of tabulation analysis. The hypotheses of the study were positively tested through the tabulation table. The findings of the study suggest that social mobility, nepotism, sexism, male dominance, gender stereotyping, wage gap, marital status, and age of women are major contributing glass ceiling factors keeping women from realizing their professional potential. These glass ceiling factors prevail in both public and private institutions with multifaceted manifestations. The research findings further suggest that with increasing economic pressures on household income in Pakistan these factors affect the professional performances of women despite higher economic engagement rates of women in economic spheres. Reviewing policing making on national and local levels can aid in breaking these glass ceiling factors.</i></p> |
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1 Introduction

The term glass ceiling was coined by Marilyn Loden for referring to the unseen barriers which constrain the professional progress of women (Loden, 1987). The term glass ceiling is a metaphor in feminist literature to refer to the socio-cultural factors that keep women away from achieving high aims and professional positions in society. The developed world has traditionally been the cradle of feminist ideas (Louis, 1971). However, feminist ideas of Western origin have historically held close relevance with the social repression and oppression of women in developing countries (Cohen, 2006). The phenomenon of the glass ceiling is relevant and prevalent in developing countries also and at quite a higher rate as compared with the developed world (Cohen, 2006). Glass ceiling concept describes those situations that contain professional women from progressing in the organizational hierarchy. Glass ceiling is an umbrella term which refers to unseen hurdles for competent female employees to accede in their career (Mattis, 2004). Although the glass ceiling effect prevails in all the countries of the world, the situation is challenging for women in the developing country like Pakistan.

The term glass ceiling is more than an academic term which translates the problems and difficulties faced by women during their professional endeavours. While men progress and prosper professionally owing to their skills and intellect, women are kept from the professional progress of their gender (DeLisi, 2021). A few women manage to identify and break the glass ceiling, but many women continue their professional endeavours under the glass ceiling (Sharif, 2015). However, many women in developing countries continue to struggle with the effects of the glass ceiling without realisation (Shoaib et al., 2010). Although women face the issue of the glass ceiling all over the world, the character and nature of the issues and barriers vary in developed and developing countries. Women in developing countries are contained by the traditional barriers that hinder their professional progress. From general gender stigmas and stereotypes to sexual violence at workplaces, many social and cultural factors hinder the professional progress of women (Shoaib et al., 2010). Socio-economic pressures in developing countries are pushing many middle-class and working-class families to let their women work and earn a living (Muhammad et al., 2021). Many qualified women are kept away from working as professionals owing to family pressures (Mohsin & Syed, 2020). This is the dilemma of women in developing countries particularly in Pakistan. Gender discrimination, pay gaps, gender stereotypes and traditional values that keep women from professional progress are the major focus of the present work. Pakistan ranks 153 in the gender inequality index globally (Shankar Mishra & Joe, 2021). There is less number of women promoted to higher positions in developing countries.

The material and cultural development in the developed world has contributed to the emancipation of women from quite a few social barriers. However, it cannot be said that women of the developed world enjoy the same professional privileges as their male colleagues (Maheshwari, 2021). Women in developed countries have achieved quite a lot but continue to struggle with some glass ceilings even today. The wage gap, workplace harassment and gender stereotypes continue to be a glass ceiling for women in developed countries. However, they have achieved many social and political rights like women-oriented laws, undermined the role of religion in the life of women and the right to work education and work. The achievements of the developed countries are the fruition of the lifelong struggles of feminist leaders and the feminist dissent that has contributed to the achievement of women's rights in the developed countries (Sharma & Mishra, 2019). The overall economic development has also provided the material basis for providing basic rights to women such as education and employment (Sposato & Rumens, 2021).

Various effects of the glass ceiling prevail in Pakistani society. It takes a lot for Pakistani women to build their careers. Pakistan is a society where a woman is praised more for bearing a male child rather than achieving professional goals (Mohsin & Syed, 2020). The trend of doctor brides to daily reported cases of workplace harassment keep women from achieving their professional goals (Mohsin & Syed, 2020). As a result of the glass ceiling, women as a gender are subjected to patriarchal relations and social structures. Women compromise their professional achievements and hence remain a victim of the patriarchal structure of society. Each case of gender discrimination and the glass ceiling contributes to the overall deterioration of the condition of women in Pakistan. The present paper attempts to identify the common glass ceiling stretchers in Pakistan. It discusses the socio-cultural forces that extend the glass ceiling upward. The second major aim of the study is to critically assess the impacts of the glass ceiling on the life of Pakistani women.

2 Literature Review

Contemporary literature concerning the role of glass ceiling factors majorly addresses the impacts of various glass ceiling factors that thwart the professional progress of women across the public and private sectors of Pakistan. Eclectic research methods and analytical lenses are employed by contemporary scholars for the analysis of the glass ceiling effects on Pakistani women.

Waqar and colleagues analyzed the glass ceiling impacts on female faculty members as they struggle to reach higher organizational positions (Waqar et al., 2019). The researchers collected data using a purposive sampling technique from two varsities of Pakistan in two phases of data collection. The official records were collected to analyze the Human resource management policies that can potentially generate a glass ceiling impact on the progress of female faculty members. In the second phase of data analysis, the researchers analyzed data related to the implication and manifestation practices of the organizational policies to analyze the underlying glass ceiling factors. Data were subjected to regression analysis to test the hypothesis. The results indicated that discriminatory laws and paucity of facilities for female faculty members such as transportation, childcare centers, inflexible timing and limited social support engender an imbalance of workability potential of female faculty members as compared with their male faculty members (Waqar et al., 2019).

Another research by Numann construed the glass ceiling factors and their impacts on female surgeons at tertiary care hospitals (Numann, 2020). The study mainly focused on the cultural barriers which act as a glass ceiling for the career enhancement of female surgeons in Pakistan. The data were collected using a cross-sectional survey among full-time faculty and trainees of a private clinic. The survey results accentuated that 79.1 per cent of female surgeons reported the prevalence of cultural barriers which impede women from pursuing or switching to pursue a surgical career. The results further indicated that 40.6 per cent of respondents were deterred by their friends and family from opting surgical career. Similarly, the research also depicted that most of the female surgeons were responsible for domestic chores as well such as laundry, cooking, child rearing etc. Lastly, about 71.4 female respondents posited that child-rearing was a major hindrance to their professional career advancement. The study concluded that cultural barriers thwart females from pursuing a surgical career in Pakistan (Numann, 2020).

Another study by Nasser conducted phenomenological research to analyze diverse gender definitions which impede the professional development of women (Naseer et al., 2020). The study collected data from the target population of female staff members purveying in the private sector of Punjab. The research data was collected through a survey method employing a

multistage sample comprising 300 females from three major districts of Punjab namely Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Sargodha. The data collected were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics for analyzing the relationship among different variables through SPSS. The results indicated that the majority of women experienced a glass ceiling throughout their career development paths such as limited chances of promotion to higher positions and gender stereotyping practices at workplaces. 60 percent of women reported that they stemmed from higher education positions based on gender stereotypical opinions of labelling women as empathetic and therefore inappropriate for leadership positions (Naseer et al., 2020). Naseer developed the theoretical framework of glass chains to metaphorically refer to the credence in familial systems and faith among the educated professional British Pakistani Muslim women who keep themselves from futuristic achievements (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). These women tend to balance their ambitions with faith and family. The study employed a qualitative approach within the theoretical framework of Michael Foucault regarding self-oriented moral codes which tie individuals with varied obligations; serving as a guide to set priorities. The research highlights the underlying contradictions between religious and familial codes of conduct and their implications for working women. The research involved purposive sampling of 37 British Pakistani Women (Arifeen & Gatrell, 2020). The study indicated that glass chains consisting of familial and religious expectations held these women from career advancement opportunities.

Another study by Baqai and Mehreen elucidated women's contribution towards inclusive growth and sustainability by employing inductive methodology (Baqai & Mehreen, 2020). The data was conducted from 100+ females having a higher education degree and working across various professions (Baqai & Mehreen, 2020). The research data was derived from interviews and surveys construed in the theoretical framework of Economic feminism. The research concluded that Pakistani women are most involved in the informal economic sector as a glass ceiling, pink ceiling, gender stereotypes and discouragement from friends and family impede women's representation in sustainable and growing economic sectors of the country. Furthermore, the lack of acknowledgement of women in Pakistan's economy stemming from economic gender imparity is leading towards the underrepresentation of women in economic spheres (Baqai & Mehreen, 2020). The major glass ceiling factor thwarting the economic visibility of women in sustainable economic growth include marital responsibilities, social bonds, mobility constraints, dissuading social circles and meager decision-making authority for women.

A similar study construed the major glass ceiling factors affecting the professional development of Pakistani women with a case study focused on female teachers (Dahal et al., 2022). The study was based on interviews and surveys conducted from a sample of 142 respondents employing a purposive sampling technique. The data were subjected to regression analysis which accentuated that both organizational environment and socio-cultural factors produce glass ceiling effects for female teachers in Pakistan. The study further indicated that socio-cultural practices such as gender norms and gender roles impede the professional dedication of women. On the other hand, the organizational structural policies also hinder the professional progress of female teachers which discriminate on both gender and employment status of women in educational institutions (Dahal et al., 2022).

Where the majority of research accentuates the themes of glass ceiling factors, a quantitative study by Masood and colleagues researched the subjective manifestations of glass ceiling beliefs among women in professional settings (Masood et al., 2021). The research mainly analysed the impacts of glass ceiling beliefs on occupational self-efficiency. The data was mainly collected through online surveys from women working across the private and public sectors of

the country. The outcomes of regression analysis depicted a positive and moderating relation between occupational self-efficiency on glass-ceiling responses such as optimism or pessimism, further affecting the turnover intentions of women professionals. The study concluded that the glass-ceiling beliefs of women impact career decision-making and preferences at workplaces through generations of varying self-efficacy levels.

2.1 Hypotheses

H1: There is an association between the gendered Stereotypes prevailing in offices and gender-specified job positions in organizations.

H2: There is an association between gender discrimination at organizations for deserving a promotion.

H3: There is an association between marital status and promotions of female employees for male bosses' biased selection.

H4: There is an association between the age limit of women for promotion in the private sector.

3 Research Methodology

The current research is based on the quantitative approach in which the researchers conducted the interviews to collect information from the respondents by using the tool of a semi-structured questionnaire. The population of the present study was the working women of District Multan. A purposive sampling technique was chosen to draw the sample from the population. The researchers conducted interviews with a sample of 175 female respondents employed in different working sectors in district Multan.

4 Results

Out of 175 female respondents, 44 were unmarried and 88 were married. Whereas 23 were separated and 20 respondents were engaged. The age group of respondents were from 20-60 years. Our 75 respondents belonged to the 20-30 age group while 71 respondents were between the age group of 36-45. The researchers also interviewed 29 experienced and senior professional women who were employed in banks and private institutes and their age group was between 45-60 years. Researchers selected beneficiaries from private companies including 45 employees from the banking sector, 55 from other industries (Fast cables, Sultan Ghee Mill, insurance companies, Southern Punjab Embroidery Industries), 45 respondents from the NGO sector and 30 from pharmaceutical companies.

Do you think that gendered Stereotypes are prevailing in offices? There is gender-specified job positions in organizations.

Table 1
Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for gender specified job positions

| | A | SD | Total |
|-------|----|-----|-------|
| No | 8 | 101 | 109 |
| Yes | 6 | 60 | 66 |
| Total | 14 | 161 | 175 |

$\chi^2 = .105, df=1, p=0.5$

The cross-tabulation table describes the prevalence of gendered stereotypes in offices and gender-specified job positions in organizations. The p-value defines that there is a relationship between two characteristics. There is an association between gendered stereotypes in offices and gender-specified job positions in organizations.

Table 2

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for gender discrimination in organization

| Have you faced gender Discrimination at your organization? | Do you think that you deserve a promotion? | | Total |
|--|--|-----|-------|
| | Yes | No | |
| No | 67 | 84 | 151 |
| Yes | 6 | 18 | 24 |
| Total | 73 | 102 | 175 |

$\chi^2 = 3.196, df = 1, p = 0.05$

The cross-tabulation table describes the independence among gender discrimination at organizations for deserved promotion. The p-value defines that there is a relationship between two characteristics. There is an association between gender discrimination in organizations and deserving promotion.

Table 3

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for marital status affecting promotion of females

| Male bosses do biased selection | Marital status affects the promotion of females | | | Total |
|---------------------------------|---|----|-----|-------|
| | A | N | SD | |
| A | 8 | 6 | 10 | 24 |
| D | 7 | 8 | 10 | 25 |
| SD | 19 | 9 | 98 | 126 |
| Total | 34 | 23 | 118 | 175 |

$\chi^2 = .470, df = 4, p = 0.002$

The cross-tabulation table describes the independence among marital status and the promotions of females by male bosses in biased selection. The p-value defines that there is a relationship between two characteristics. There is an association between marital status effects on the promotions of females and male bosses biased selection.

Table 4

Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for women age and promotion in private sector

| | There is gender-biased promotions in the private sector qualifications when getting promotions | | The age of women matters a lot than qualifications when getting promotions |
|-------|---|-----|---|
| | A | SD | Total |
| SA | 6 | 6 | 12 |
| A | 10 | 8 | 18 |
| N | 8 | 6 | 14 |
| D | 9 | 11 | 20 |
| SD | 11 | 100 | 111 |
| Total | 44 | 131 | 175 |

$$\chi^2 = 3.182, df = 4, p = 0.04$$

The cross-tabulation table describes the independence among the age of women for promotion in the private sector. The p-value defines that there is a relationship between two characteristics. There is an association between the Age of women matters a lot more than qualification while getting promotions and gender-biased promotions in the private sector.

The cross-tabulation of the fourth hypothesis presented in the paper depicts a positive relation or interdependence of gender stereotypes as a glass ceiling factor, furthermore, the existence of gender stereotypes hobbles the progress of women to higher organisational positions. The third hypothesis is also tested as positive as the marital status of women plays acts as a glass ceiling factor during the promotion of female employees in the private sector. The fourth hypothesis regarding the age limit of female employees is also positively tested as a major impedance in the organisational promotions of female employees.

4.1 Discussion

The glass ceiling can be defined as various underlying processes and practices which hinder the professional and personal development of women. According to the research findings, women face problems in their career advancement due to the glass ceiling's impact on women's career progression (Kumra & Vinnicombe, 2008). Working women face different obstacles while making progress. These glass ceiling factors begin at the very process of hiring and continue to affect the professional development of women until they retire. According to research findings, 85 percent of respondents were being hired through a referral system but they favoured through proper channel hiring system. And nepotism is very visible in private sector jobs as 44 percent of respondents believe that there are biased and unfair promotions. But many female workers do not get promotions because their family members do not allow them to stay longer outside of the house or travel to other places which might be required for management positions.

Marrium (respondent) said that higher management wanted to promote her and she refused because she did not get permission from her family to move to another city and women are not allowed to stay long hours at the working place. Women who work in pharmaceutical companies face the challenges of longer working hours. Aisha (respondent) said that they need to visit doctors in the morning timings in hospitals for medicine promotions and then also have to visit them in the evening time at their private clinics. She faces criticism from family and society for being out of the house in the evening time.

In the private sector female hardly get maternity leave with pay. 40 percent of our respondents said that they do not have access to this right. They are forced to quit their jobs or forced to agree on unpaid leave. Higher management of private companies is also reluctant to promote female workers to higher positions because they assume that women are not flexible and women are already in different commitments and have to abide by the decisions of male and older persons of their families. Promotions are also dependent on appraisals. 65 percent of our respondents were not satisfied with their appraisals which is also a hurdle in the way of getting due promotions. Women sometimes accept the submissive role. One female respondent told that "women are not good at management".

The barriers that women face in career advancement are both visible and invisible. 75 percent of women affirmed that they are not involved in the decision-making process which makes unseen glass hurdles sustained and stays in the way of progress for women. Gender discrimination is very prominent in profit-oriented companies where beautiful and young women get priority over men and old age women. The wage gap is prominent in the private sector 44. There is severe job insecurity in the private sector especially in target-oriented companies for example pharmaceutical companies. And pharmaceutical companies earn 70 percent profit from their investments in Pakistan but the employees who are mostly women face job insecurity. Kahkashan Batool, who worked for 18 years for Nabi Qasim (a Pharmaceutical Company), was forced to resign when her promotion was due and she faced a wage gap. The research further found that reference-based or nepotistic hiring is more prevalent in the development sector and pharmaceutical companies, mostly the hiring is usually done through using references.

In a gender-biased society, women are considered to remain inside four walls of the house and have to perform domestic work and have nurturing the children (Miller et al., 1996). On the contrary, males are considered the breadwinner and capable of dealing with economic matters and are also considered fit for managerial jobs. So, in this way, women become unfit for managerial jobs and are forced to remain in the same position or even face deterioration (Bihagen & Ohls, 2006).

There are several stereotypes related to women at work. It is a general perception about women that they are lazy, have less management and accounting skills and they make more mistakes than men workers. It is assumed that women are not good managers because they are already burdened with family responsibilities (Aaltio & Mills, 2002).

It is also evident from the literature review that mothers and pregnant women face more job insecurity. Gender discrimination at workplaces discourages women and they show less interest in their jobs 37. Workplace harassment still exists even after the passing of laws for providing security to employees, especially for women 38. So, women keep their distance from male co-workers just to avoid being exploited by them. And if women are non-Muslim, then they have to face more discrimination and more sexual harassment 38. Women at workplaces do not have rest room and even separate washrooms and 80 percent of respondents don't have these facilities. And there is no concept of taking small kids to workplaces because most companies do

not have nursery rooms. In marketing jobs, women remain out for work and they face more problems of finding washrooms and public toilets and they are not safe as well. 67 percent of respondents do not have the facility of separate washrooms. Some employees are forced to leave the organization even if they are experienced and even are in higher management because they do not have a secure place in the organization. A social worker Shumaila Anjum shared her personal experience with a researcher and she said that she spent 25 years with one non-governmental organization and then she was forced to resign from her job.

The working environment matters a lot for female employees. Females need a common room and restroom for break time. Many institutes fail to provide such places for female employees. 85 percent of participants were comfortable with the working environment while 15 percent were uncomfortable with the working environment. But 80 percent of our respondents did not have a facility of rest room at workplaces and 63 percent of respondents did not have separate washrooms. Salma (female medical representative) shared that their working environment is quite uncomfortable. As their job is a marketing job, they always remain in a field area. They feel more problems using public toilets and sitting in public places.

Male dominancy in the workplace, traditional myths appended with the working women, wage discrimination, gender-specified job positions, managers' biases, lack of training (especially for female employees) and inferiority complexes of men are the salient discriminatory factors that are faced by females in private sector organizations of Multan district, Pakistan (Sattar et al., 2013). According to the research findings, 93 percent of participants strongly agree or agree on the notion that there are gender biased promotions in the working places. Whereas 6 percent of respondents disagree with the statement. Undoubtedly, if women realize that their abilities are ignored, they do not want to develop effective interpersonal relations in the workplace. This fact means unethical discrimination against women leads to certain work-related problems that can affect not only their performance but also the overall productivity of the company.

Companies must abide by the polity of equal opportunity rights built they fail to do it. Because they prefer to earn profit and want to get more committed people so they prefer to select male members and unmarried women. In this way, they do not follow equal opportunity for all policies. Traditional values and social norms also restrict female employees to prioritize work over personal life, which shows a sticky floor effect cause a wage gap.

5 Conclusions

The research concludes that women face many hurdles in getting promotions, especially in the private sector. They face gender discrimination, workplace harassment and also face male domination. Glass ceiling exists some are visible and many are invisible. Women workers even can't get rid of visible hurdles because they are not involved in the decision-making process. Culture and religion also give strength to barriers to getting promotions. These barriers have very strong roots women are habitual in bearing these problems and work with these barriers by making complaints. Many become discouraged and cannot stand still in front of the glass ceiling because they have a fear of being excluded and being called deviated. There is a need to do long-term changes through policy-making and implementation.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the analysis and results of the research, a few recommendations are proposed that can aid reducing impacts and manifestations of glass ceiling factors for working women of district Multan. These recommendations propose decisive redesigning of gender policies and their implementations on both institutional and social level to be effective.

It is recommended that the governmental bodies at district level should develop extensive research plans and projects to evaluate the prevalence and impacts of glass ceiling factors impacting professional performance of women in both private and public sectors. Based on the survey results, gender-focused workplace regulations should be formed incorporating policies to eradicate sources and impacts of glass-ceiling factors on workplace.

It is also recommended that legislations for gender inclusive workplaces should be formed with direct involvement of governmental bodies to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of these legislations on ground level. These legislations must address glass-ceiling factors such as, wage gaps, paid maternity leaves, debunking gender stereotypes, sexual harassment and regulating working hours at workplaces.

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