FACTORS DETERMINING THE PRESENCE OF GLASS CEILING AND INFLUENCING WOMEN CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to examine the existence of glass ceiling in different industries and service sectors in Bangladesh. This study also attempts to identify the contributing factors which create the glass ceiling effects and women career advancement in an organization. The analysis of this study indicates five factors responsible for glass ceiling effects which eventually restricts women career opportunity and progression at a certain stage. The identified factors are: management perception, work environment, work life conflict, sexual harassment and organizational policy. From analyzing the data it can be inferred that respondents agreed to some extent about the existence of glass ceiling in their respective organization. According to the respondent's opinion management perception and work environment are most significant factors for creating glass ceiling where as organizational policy and work life conflict are the second most significant factors. On the other hand respondent disagree about sexual harassment as a contributing factor for creating glass ceiling effect in the organization. Whereas pleasant appearance, attitude towards organization, career focused and family support influences career advancement of women in an organization. Implication and areas for future research have also been considered.

Key words: Glass ceiling, Career advancement, Women, Management Perception, Career Focused

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years women participation in the workforce has significantly increased in Bangladesh. But it is commonly believed that women have less career advancement opportunities than do men. Some of the reasons of this problem for women in their career are clearly connected to the idea of a glass ceiling. "Glass Ceiling" refers to invisible barriers that impede the career advancement of women. It also refers to situations where the advancement of a qualified person within the hierarchy of an organization is halted at a particular level because of some form of discrimination, most commonly sexism or racism. This situation is referred to as a "ceiling" as there is a limitation blocking upward advancement, and "glass" (transparent) because the limitation is not immediately apparent and is normally an unwritten and unofficial policy. The disparity between male and female representation in public and private sector is wide in most of the third world countries. Women have little or unequal access to employment. An insignificant number of women occupy by key decision making position. (United Nations, 1989, p.13; UNDP 1995, p. 40). Women have been unable to exert power over economic structure in their societies as they are virtually absent from or are poorly represented in economic decision making (FWCW 1995, Para 152). Social or economic policies wholly or partially directed towards women remain inadequate in resolving

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problems as they often reflect male perceptions and orientations, thereby contributing to inequalities between the two genders. The International Labor Organization (ILO) clarifies that the promotion of women's participation in economic activity, including the management and decision making levels, is not simply a question of equity, but also one of necessity for viable and sustainable national development (United Nations 1989, p. 242). It is generally argued that in the developing world, like Bangladesh, where almost half the population is women, the need for involving more women in the development process can make them more empowered and hence increase the chances for development. Research indicates that better education and training facilities for women create grater access in development process. In Bangladesh, the stereotype perception results in differing attitude in both genders regarding women's participation in different industries and service sectors of the economy, women are portrayed as weak, unassuming, passive, feminine, submissive, and dependent. In the work place, discriminatory attitudes include women are less capable physically, mentally, and emotionally in certain challenges; they are temperamental and lack motivation, they do well in traditional roles as school teachers, health and welfare officers rather than in administrative and managerial positions; their efficiency and commitment last for only a limited time. They have health problems and are sickness-prone and therefore frequently remain absent. Pregnancies interrupt their regular work and their careers are disrupted by family interest (Zafarullah, 2000). But over the past few years it has been observed that women participation in both public and private employment sector in Bangladesh has noticeably improved. Although women participation in workforce has increased but, a very few number of managerial positions are being filled by women. The basic purpose of this article is to examine the Glass Ceiling effects in different industries and service sectors in Bangladesh. The study also attempts to identify some factors which influence women to advance their career path. A survey of women provides evidence relating to glass ceiling effects and possible factors which effect their career growth.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term Glass ceiling has been first identified by Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt in an article, published on the March 24th edition of the "Wall Street Journal" in 1986. This article reveals the invisible barriers that impede the career advancement of women in the American workforce. The term glass ceiling was coined prior to the 1984 article by two women at Hewlett-Packard in 1979, Katherine Lawrence and Marianne Schreiber, to describe how while on the surface, there seemed to be a clear path of promotion, but in actuality women seemed to hit a point where they seemed unable to progress beyond. However, Gay Bryant used the term prior to that, in one of his article published in *Adweek*, March 1984. A Glass ceiling is a specific type of gender or racial inequality that can be distinguished from other types of inequality (David A. Cotter et al (2001). In their study, they have identified four criteria that create glass ceiling. The first criterion was - A Glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial differences that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employees. Second criterion was - A Glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or a racial difference that is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome. Third criterion was -A Glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels. And the last criterion was - A Glass ceiling inequality represents inequality that increases over the course of a career. In the same research they concluded; they found evidence of a glass ceiling for women, but racial inequalities among men do not follow a similar pattern. 'Glass ceiling' appeared to be a distinctively gender phenomenon. The concept of a glass ceiling is an oft-used metaphor for the relative disadvantages regarding women's career opportunities, alluding to the growing difficulties for women when moving up the career ladder (eg Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia and Vanneman, 2001; Charles and Grusky, 1995: 68). It sounds as though there is a definite stop for women at a certain level in the hierarchy, but this should, of course, be interpreted in a less harsh way (Baxter and Wright, 2000; Britton and Williams, 2000). There are several reasons for difficulties in career opportunities for women have been identified. First, Men in Managerial positions prefer people with cultural preferences similar to their own, or that managers have a preference for appointing people similar in this respect to others already employed in the organization (Kanter, 1977). This

kind of homosociality implies that men have a tendency to prefer men for self-reflection, relaxation and social support, the intention being to confirm their own identity and cultural norms (Lipman-Blumen, 1976; Maume, 1999). Another type of explanation is based on the prevalence of sexist attitudes, eg that men are better suited to leadership positions than are women (Kanter,1977; Reskin and Hartmann, (eds) 1986). Such attitudes could be used by men in strategies to secure power, authority and other privileges (Acker, 1990), employers avoid promoting women because women as a group are absent from work more often than men, due to child bearing and childcare responsibilities (where women are assumed to have larger responsibilities than men) (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 1998: 27). Despite a well-developed child care system there seems to be a conflict between work and family which cause practical problems especially for women with small children (Ginn *et al.*, 1996). As a consequence women's aspirations could be lowered and their career prospects obstructed. All the above mentioned reason clearly connected to the idea of Glass ceiling existence in an organization. This could be a consequence of a strong male homosociality, where women as a group are strongly held back from continued upward mobility at a certain level of the occupational hierarchy (Erik and Marita; 2006). UNDP (1993, p. 91) survey also identified six perceptions of disparate treatment to women in the administrative cadre of the BCS (Bangladesh Civil service). These were: (a) negative attitudes towards women by male colleagues: (b) doubts of superior officers about the capabilities (for work) of women officers: (c) superiority complexes of male colleagues: (d) tendency of men to treat women in a gender-biased fashion: (e) comments that men were more efficient than women: and (f) non-cooperation of male colleagues. Thus, the existence of Glass ceiling in an organization has received considerable attention in recent years. However, research on "Glass ceiling" in Bangladesh is very limited and unexplored. Previous research work in Bangladesh (Zafaruallah; 2000 and UNDP; 1993) on 'Glass ceiling' was focused only the public sectors. This led us to conduct the study to identify the factors which are creating glass ceiling effects in different private organizations and service sectors in Bangladesh.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows-
- To examine the presence of glass ceiling in different Private industries and service sectors in Bangladesh.
- To identify the factors which are responsible for creating glass ceiling effect.
- To evaluate the factors which influence women towards career advancement.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Sources of data

Both primary and secondary data have been used for the purpose of this study. Secondary data were collected from available publications, research studies, journals, articles, and websites for exploring past research works on Glass Ceiling. To collect primary data questionnaire was designed to achieve the objectives of the study. The population of our study comprised of female employees in different industries and service sectors in Bangladesh.

B. Sampling and Data Collection

The sample of the study covers the employees from bank, telecom, insurance, pharmaceuticals, media, NGO, textile and university which are situated in Dhaka city. By keeping in mind that data collection on this issue will be difficult, sample size was selected at the most convenient basis. The reason for choosing Dhaka only, as all the above mentioned sectors head office is located here. The respondents were selected by a random sampling procedure. List of the female employees were collected from the human resource department of the selected organizations. There were totally 130 questionnaire distributed and 100 filled in valid questionnaires were received back and used for the study. The response rate of the questionnaire survey was 76.9 percent. Self administer questionnaire were used for collecting primary data.

C. Questionnaire design and pre-testing

A structured, closed-ended questionnaire using 7-point likert scale with end points ranging from "strongly agree (7) to strongly disagree (1)" on the factors of glass ceiling was developed to achieve

the objectives of the study. The respondents were also asked to indicate their age, Position (entry level, lower-mid, upper-mid, higher level and highest level), Tenure of the job experience, educational background and their average monthly income. Initially a draft questionnaire, was prepared based on secondary research such as considering results form different published articles on relevant topic, electronic sources and extensive brainstorming. It was pre-tested on a small sample of 15 randomly selected respondents and necessary correction was made before the questionnaire being finalized. The collected data were tabulated on the computer and the final analysis was performed with SPSS 11.5 version.

D. Data Analysis

Simple statistical techniques like frequency distribution along with percentage were obtained to check for data entry errors (e.g. unrecognized or missing codes) and to obtain descriptive statistics mean and standard deviation were also obtained from the frequency analysis. To identify the crucial factors which contribute to glass ceiling factor

analysis was used, as it explains the correlations among a set of variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of sphericity were also used to measure the sampling adequacy.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The measures of glass ceiling effects were factor analyzed. Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis. High value (.580 > 0.5) indicates factor analysis is appropriate.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.580
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	862.517
	df	120
	Sig.	.000

Factor analysis of 14 items of glass ceiling is done to check the grouping of responses into the hypothesized quality attributes.

Table 2: Factor analysis for Glass ceiling effect

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Male employees feels discomfort with having female managers/ superiors	.886	.282	.022	.066	-.108
Management's tendency is not to assign women to challenging/high visibility projects.	-.810	-.089	-.449	-.187	-.028
Male domination of senior positions	.707	.247	-.137	-.105	.366
Male employee's networks and their grip on powerful/influential positions	.684	-.093	.168	.408	.000
In my organization, competitiveness/assertiveness in women is viewed as a negative trait	.520	-.194	-.362	-.077	.336
Sufficient opportunities exist in my organization for women to advance into senior management positions.	-.130	-.878	-.053	.126	.042
Networking by my colleagues in my organization limit women's opportunities for promotions to senior positions.	.029	.750	.063	.267	.269
In my company, the number of women penetrating the hierarchy and achieving senior positions is steadily rising.	-.387	-.581	.005	-.310	-.157
Management lack genuine commitment to equality of genders and advancement of women.	-.062	.549	-.053	.379	.480
While working at my current workplace, I have taken a huge amount of time off for child bearing, child raising, parental care, or similar family responsibilities.	.058	.227	.815	-.293	.103
Staying long hour than the regular office time is highly appreciated by my family members.	.088	-.181	.775	.336	-.009
I faced sexual harassment (Oral, gesture, unwanted e-mails etc.) in my workplace.	.139	.187	-.022	.820	.006
Organizational perception is that women may eventually leave (Maternity leave) the workplace to raise the family.	.074	.143	.019	-.032	.879
Performance appraisal and incentive systems favor men.	.162	.167	.272	.515	.558

Factor	Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.285	30.604	30.604
2	1.999	14.278	44.882
3	1.666	11.897	56.779
4	1.286	9.186	65.965
5	1.112	7.944	73.909

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

It is apparent from the factor analysis given in Table –2, five (5) major factors have been identified which influence glass ceiling effects in an organization. These five (5) factors explain 73.909% of the cumulative variation. Table –3 shows the items, which are included in each factor.

Table 3: Grouping of Items in each factor

Factor 1 Management Perception	Male employees feels discomfort with having female managers/ superiors Management's tendency is not to assign women to challenging/high visibility projects. Male domination of senior positions Male employee's networks and their grip on powerful/influential positions In my organization, competitiveness/assertiveness in women is viewed as a negative trait
Factor 2 Work environment	Sufficient opportunities exist in my organization for women to advance into senior management positions. Networking by my colleagues in my organization limit women's opportunities for promotions to senior positions In my company, the number of women penetrating the hierarchy and achieving senior positions is steadily rising. Management lack genuine commitment to equality of genders and advancement of women.
Factor 3 Work-life conflict	While working at my current workplace, I have taken a huge amount of time off for child bearing, child raising, parental care, or similar family responsibilities. Staying long hour than the regular office time is highly appreciated by my family members.

Factor 4 Sexual harassment	I faced sexual harassment (Oral, gesture, unwanted e-mails etc.) in my workplace.
Factor 5 Organizational Policy	Organizational perception is that women may eventually leave (Maternity leave) the workplace to raise the family. Performance appraisal and incentive systems favor men.

The descriptive statistics in Table –4 includes the mean values of identified factors of glass ceiling. From analyzing the data it can be inferred that respondents are some what agreed about the existence of glass ceiling in their respective organization. According to the respondents opinion management perception and work environment are most significant factors for creating glass ceiling in an organization. Organizational policy and work life conflict are the second most significant factors. On the other hand respondent disagree about "sexual harassment" as a contributing factor for creating glass ceiling effect in the organization.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Existence of Glass ceiling	4.61	1.808
Management Perception	4.5560	1.00567
Work environment	4.5350	.67515
Work- life conflict	3.1300	1.56447
Sexual harassment	1.8400	1.42645
Organizational Policy	3.5450	1.59402

Career Advancement:

The measures of career advancement were factor analyzed. Kaiser-Meyer-Okin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was used to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis. High value (.587 > 0.5) indicates factor analysis is appropriate.

Table 5: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.587
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	578.056
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Factor analysis of 14 items of career advancement is done to check the grouping of responses into the hypothesized quality attributes.

Table 6: Factor analysis for Glass ceiling effect

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Being a single woman (rather than married)	.930	.159	-.076	.008
Being physically attractive (being good looking)	.847	.266	.046	-.186
Spending time (e.g., socializing) in the workplace with superiors and influential individuals	.773	-.479	.052	.094
Being a younger woman (rather than an older woman)	.668	-.113	.420	.418
Having a cooperative and non-threatening style toward others.	-.134	.842	-.048	-.007
Expressing interest in high stake, challenging, and visible assignments	.118	.839	.103	-.092
Higher education and membership in professional organizations	.112	.709	.395	-.008
Willingness to take business risks	-.034	.182	.780	-.308
Having a proven record of accomplishments	.112	.494	.709	-.124
Being entrepreneurial and taking initiatives	-.154	-.007	.703	.241
Having the right connections (top management/ decision makers / advisors etc.)	.385	-.080	.690	.183
Specialized training and variety of work experiences	.153	.569	.662	-.208
Having a supportive husband or family members	.222	.087	.098	.869
Balancing work-home demands more effectively	.314	.298	.193	-.712

Factor	Eigenvalues	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.456	31.831	31.831
2	2.988	21.344	53.175
3	1.867	13.334	66.509
4	1.333	9.521	76.030

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. a Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

It is clear from the factor analysis given in Table – 6, four (4) major factors have been identified which influence career advancement of women in an organization. These factors explain 76.030% of the cumulative variation. Table –7 shows the items, which are included in each factor.

Table 7: Grouping of Items in each factor

Factor 1	pleasant appearance	Being a single woman (rather than married) Being physically attractive (being good looking) Spending time (e.g., socializing) in the workplace with superiors and influential individuals Being a younger woman (rather than an older woman)
Factor 2	Attitude towards organization	Having a cooperative and non-threatening style toward others. Expressing interest in high stake, challenging, and visible assignments Higher education and membership in professional organizations
Factor 3	Career focused	Willingness to take business risks Having a proven record of accomplishments Being entrepreneurial and taking initiatives Having the right connections (top management/ decision makers / advisors etc.) Specialized training and variety of work experiences
Factor 4	Family support	Having a supportive husband or family members Balancing work-home demands more effectively

The descriptive statistics in Table – 8 includes the mean values of identified factors of career advancement. From analyzing the data it can be inferred that respondents agreed on willingness to take business risks, having a proven record of accomplishments, being entrepreneurial and taking initiatives, having the right connections (top management /decision makers /advisors etc.) and specialized training and variety of work experiences are the most important variables in

their career advancement. Whereas, majority believes attitude towards organization and family support are the second most important factors for their career growth. On the other hand respondents somewhat agreed that the pleasant appearance also help to advance their career.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
pleasant appearance	4.6025	1.77813
Attitude towards organization	5.7733	1.29566
Career focused	6.1920	.77949
Family support	5.6900	.69187

V. CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to examine the current glass ceiling scenario and factors contributing career advancement of women in different industries and service sectors in Bangladesh. It is hoped that research information provided by the current study will prove useful to policy makers in different organizations. Although extensive studies have been done on women employees in different professions but very little research has been conducted to investigate the glass ceiling effects in Bangladesh. This area still is an unexplored area in the field of management studies in Bangladesh. This research has identified some factors which are responsible for creating glass ceiling effects. It also revealed some factors which help women to advance their career growth. The findings of this research would serve as a basis for further studies of glass ceiling scenario in different public and private organizations in Bangladesh. Research can also be done to investigate the potential influence of selected individual-level variables like seniority, academic rank, race, religion and organizational-level variables such as size, public versus private status, different geographic region, and overall satisfaction level. The findings of the study can also be applied for developing women empowerment in different organizations. This research can facilitate the organizations to redesign their overall policies, structure and work environment. The study has only concentrated on the prominent companies from different sectors which are situated in Dhaka city. Therefore, further research can be administered on this issue by taking under consideration all the sectors in Bangladesh. In addition, a comparison study on the presence of glass ceiling effect can also be done between public and private organizations.

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