

## **Role of Social Factors In Glass Ceiling: An Empirical Analysis Of Public Universities In Punjab**

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### **Abstract**

Glass Ceiling is an invisible barrier affecting the promotion of women to higher echelons in a profession, especially women and other minorities in an organisation. Glass ceiling is any act in which individuals are dealt differently simply on the basis of their gender, rather than on the basis of their knowledge, skills or capabilities. It denies opportunities, privileges, or rewards to a person (or a group) because of gender. The current study is an effort to examine the role of social factors in strengthening the principles of glass ceiling. Social factors are the factors that affect people and various groups impacting one another through faith, customs, stereotypes, culture, social class, reference groups, focus groups etc. These factors include the various general factors at the level of human society concerned with social structure and other factors such as family work balance, organisation policy, perception of management and social processes that have an effect on the individual. The study intends to explore the various social factors that restrain women from reaching the upper ladders of academic profile. As per the requirement of the study, well-structured questionnaire was drafted. The four Public Universities from the state of Punjab constituted the sample unit namely: Punjabi University, Guru Nanak Dev University, I.K Gujral Punjab Technical University and Punjab Agricultural University. The sample size of 279 for the proposed study comprised of Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors which was selected by using Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Technique. Multiple Linear Regression models were developed by the researcher to study the reasons that prevent women from reaching the upper echelons of the academic profile.

**Keywords:** Glass Ceiling, University, Women Career, Barrier, Social Factors, females, gender discrimination

### **1. Introduction**

In the present era, as females worldwide have improved access to educational opportunities, the role of women in the organizations is also changing considerably resulting into more females entering in the workplace than ever before. But most of the higher management positions in almost all nations are held by males. Female workforce tends to lean in lower management positions and have less say than men. And at the same time, majority of positions are still held by women in traditionally so called female functional areas of companies such as human resources, receptionist, communications and finance, (Staff Of Catalyst, 1993). The citizens of India are given equal rights irrespective of their gender but the scenario seems to be opposite where women achieve less than a man under the same parameters. It is observed that the difference is not only spotted in career

opportunities but also seen in gender pay gap when women move into higher managerial roles. The inequality in compensation remains a continuing indicator of discrimination between males and females in the field of work. Women are well qualified and better trained in the labour force than ever, and are actively working in upper managerial roles. Yet despite these contributions, their portrayal at top positions in business still falls behind that of men (ILO). Women have made advancement in terms of leadership equality with men in the workplace. Despite this, the organisations still reflect the major impact of gender discrimination and remaining of women in lower organisational designations. (Omran, Alizadeh, & Esmaeeli, 2015). It is not only difficult for women to climb upper ladders of top positions in the organisations but also the hindrances that women face as compared to men become greater as they achieve golden chance of acquiring higher managerial role (Baxter & Wright, 2000). It is surprising to read the statistics that only five of India's 46 central universities have women vice-chancellors—heads of the institutions. It is more astonishing to hear that even some of India's most liberal universities, such as the 47-year-old Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), have never had a woman Vice-Chancellor (Madhok, 2016). In 1991, The Glass Ceiling Commission was established and the U.S. Department of Labor defined "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions" as Glass Ceiling. This situation is defined as "ceiling" because there are hurdles in the upward progression and "glass" (apparent) because the restriction is invisible and is a workplace climate that is not formerly put down (Kee, 2006). The Glass Ceiling is the analogy for the unseen barrier that holds women and people of color from progressing on the corporate ladder to top executive positions in an organization. The commission concluded that "Equally qualified and similarly situated citizens are being denied equal access to advancement on the basis of gender, race or ethnicity. At the highest level of corporation, the promise of reward for preparation and pursuit of excellence is not equally available to all the members of all groups" (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The International Labor Organization (ILO) elucidated that the enhancement of women's participation in economic activity, including the top management and decision making levels, is not only a matter of equity, but also one of the requirements for viable and sustainable national development (United Nations, 1989). Glass ceiling is not just the idea that is just confined to single women; rather it applies to women as a whole group who are put aside from promotion in their professional lives because of being females (Kephart & Schumacher, 2005). Maume declared that glass ceiling is a distinctive form of gender and racial discrimination against women and that this prejudice is more acute at later stages of career development than at labour entry (Maume, 2004).

### **An Overview of Glass Ceiling In Public Universities**

Higher education is regarded as the essential support of human resource progression as it provides not only the necessary skills for every occupation but also the training required for all professions. It is of utmost importance in a country's socio-economic development (Department of Higher Education). The higher education has a very notable role in the comprehensive development of any community. The incidents of many countries in the last decades have concluded that only capital resources are not just enough for country's overall development but also the quality of people plays a dominant role in the nations accelerated development (Lakshmanasamy, 2004). The most urgent issue faced by the higher education system in India is the existence of biasness in access to higher education. The prevailing inequalities in access to higher education often lead to socio-economic disparity which, as a result, highlights differences in access to education. Therefore, it is the continuing cyclic chain of Inequalities: inequalities in access to higher education leads to injustice in access to labour market information, which as an outcome leads to inequalities in employment and therefore, resulting in inequalities in earnings contributing to socioeconomic inequalities. Consequently, the socio-economic inequalities again are translated into the education sector, resulting in inequalities in education. Inequalities in access to education exhibits loss in individual and social welfare. When the above trend continues in comparison to the gender ratio of professors and lecturers, it is dispersed across academia as a whole. As a result, women remain highly under-represented in top academic profiles and positions of power, and this gender gap broadens with seniority (Sen, 2017). The various stereotypes regarding women's expertise, skill and capability in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) fields, is far from put to rest.

### **2. Research Methodology**

This study is based on exploratory leads to descriptive research design. The study was conducted in higher education sector as it is one of the vital sectors for growth of an economy. Here, in the study, a special reference has been made to public universities in the state of Punjab namely Punjabi University, Patiala, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, IK Gujral Punjab Technical University, Kapurthala to determine the barriers to gender discrimination. The sample size for the proposed study comprises of Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors from selected public universities in the state of Punjab. Each unit of sample was selected by using Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Technique. The sample size of 279 is based on total teaching population comprising of 212 Professors, 83

Associate Professors and 615 Assistant Professors. As per the requirement of the study, primary data was collected for the study and for this purpose a suitable well-structured questionnaire was drafted. The study will also take into account secondary data i.e. journals, newspapers, articles, books, etc.

**3. Analysis of Study**

Women have two overriding concerns in their life, one is their career and others are family responsibilities. This objective will explore the impact of various social factors in strengthening the glass ceiling in public universities of Punjab. For the same, firstly the impact of social factors on glass ceiling was studied.

The seven social factors that are supposed to have prominent impact on career of women are taken under study. These seven factors are tabulated in Table 1 –

**Table-1: Social Factors Taken Under Study**

Sr. No.	Social Factors
1	Impact of stereotypes relating to women capabilities and management style affects their career advancement
2	Preconceived notions about gender specific jobs result in occupational segregation
3	Patriarchal nature of society holds major barrier to women in attaining important designations
4	Women are married during peak of their career
5	Women lack experience and capability for advancement
6	Family biasness while granting higher education to women
7	Existence of social restrictions on activities and participation of women

The above factors were studied as to how they strengthen the phenomenon of Glass Ceiling and hinder women career progression.

In order to quantify the phenomenon of Glass Ceiling ten factors were considered as depicted in Table -2:

**Table -2: Glass Ceiling Factors Taken Under Study**

Sr. No.	Glass Ceiling Factors
1	Gender biasness in the initial hiring
2	Equal career development opportunities
3	Workplace is committed to anti-discrimination practices
4	Gender pay gap exists between males and females even when they have same qualifications
5	Women entering the hierarchy and attaining senior positions is gradually rising
6	Gender becomes important career wise esp. above a certain level of hierarchy
7	Promotions to Higher Level are Determined on the basis of Merit alone
8	Women are stimulated to apply for support roles rather than top executive positions
9	Women are not given decision making powers
10	Women are pressurized to perform better than their male counterpart to get promotion

The Five Pointer Likert Scale is used to record the responses where 1 stand for strong agreement and 5 stands for strong disagreement. The responses of the sample were taken by developing questionnaire for both glass ceiling factors and social factors. The descriptive statistics were drawn to summarize the data and inferential statistics were drawn to arrive at conclusion. MLR (Multiple Linear Regression) models were developed by taking summated score card of glass ceiling factors as dependent variables and various social factors individually as independent components. MLR (Multiple Linear Regression) models have been

developed taking males and female perception individually. Seven social predictors were taken under present study to develop relationship with improvement in Glass Ceiling components.

#### 4. Impact of Social Factors on Glass Ceiling

The following hypothesis was framed to know the impact of social factors on glass ceiling factors:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There was no significant impact of social factors on glass ceiling

These seven social factors were taken for the present study to develop an association with advancement in glass ceiling in education sector. There were number of social constraints which still persist in society that prevents the progressive growth for women. In order to arrive at the impact of these seven social factors, descriptive and inferential statistics were developed and MLR model was designed for males and females independently.

**Table-3: Descriptive Analysis Showing Response Regarding Impact of Social Factors on Glass Ceiling**

Respondent	Social Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Female Model	<b>Totals</b>	55.04	8.127	158
	Impact of stereotypes concerning women abilities and management style affects their career advancement	3.49	.949	158
	Preconceived notions about gender specific jobs result in occupational segregation	3.39	.647	158
	Patriarchal nature of society holds major barrier to women in gaining key positions	3.00	.944	158
	Women are married during peak of their career	3.59	.945	158
	Women lack expertise and capability for advancement	3.09	.840	158
	Family biasness while granting higher education to women	2.07	.911	158
	Existence of social restrictions on activities and participation of women	3.66	.787	158
Male model	<b>Totals</b>	55.15	9.004	62
	Impact of stereotypes concerning women abilities and management style affects their career advancement	3.56	.898	62
	Preconceived notions about gender specific jobs result in occupational segregation	3.60	.586	62
	Patriarchal nature of society holds major barrier to women in gaining key positions	3.21	1.010	62
	Women are married during peak of their career	3.71	.894	62
	Women lack expertise and capability for advancement	3.19	.827	62
	Family biasness while granting higher education to women	2.16	.909	62
	Existence of social restrictions on activities and participation of women	3.71	.710	62

(Source: Primary Data)

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Taking averages and standard deviation of social factors, it was observed in the Table-3 that responses of males were near to three which meant neutral or indifferent condition. Among females, the average score card for social factors was between 2.07-3.66 and for males it was between 2.16-3.71 which was higher towards agreement.

The MLR models were developed in the same manner taking glass ceiling as dependent component and social factors as predictors to observe the relationship and its improvement.

As per females, the influence of stereotypes prevailing, patriarchal nature of society and social constraints on activities and participation of women played a negative role as Beta coefficients were -2.850, -3.626 and -3.888 respectively at .001, .000 level of significance.

There was a strong belief for preconceived notions for gender specific job that created occupation segregation in these segments to 4.165 times. Women felt that marriage took place during the prime time of their career at .000 level of significance. There should be an increase in exposure and opportunities to 2.044 times for development of women growth. Family biasness should be reduced to 2.781 times in providing higher education to female child in comparison to male child.

The male respondents felt that stereotypes in society and patriarchal nature of society played a negative role as Beta coefficients were -2.156, -4.169 at 0.140, 0.29 level of significance, respectively.

Preconceived notions on the basis of gender specific jobs and lack of exposure were statistically insignificant at .459, .437 level of significance, respectively. Social constraints needed to be removed to 2.838 times according to male opinion. Women were married during prime time of their career which hindered women career progression by 6.216 times and family biasness (4.278 times) restricted women career progression.

The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> for female MLR model was 0.493 and for males 0.380. According to females, 49.3 % of variation can be caused in glass ceiling by improving these social factors while according to male respondents, 38.0 percent improvement in glass ceiling related to women career progression can be achieved by focusing on these social factors. Both the models were overall statistically significant as p-values were less than 0.05. The null hypothesis was rejected. There was no significant impact of social factors on glass ceiling.

### 5. Conclusion

The study shows that the social factors of women restrain the women career progression by strengthening the glass ceiling factors. In MLR model adjusted R square for female model was 0.493 which meant 49.3 per cent of variation in glass ceiling factors is due to social factors which implies that females feel that 49.3 percent of impact of glass ceiling can be removed by providing solution for these social factors. Males feel that 38 per cent of variation in glass ceiling factors is due to social factors as adjusted R square is 0.380. The above results clearly indicates that the social factors play a dominant role in influencing glass ceiling in the academic institutions, so there is strong impetus to develop policies which can give lesser burden to the females as they have to face multiple tasks in lesser span of time. Flexible timings, work from home programmes, paternity and maternity leaves, nominating at least one senior individual who is responsible for monitoring organisational justice, enlightening all employees about how stereotypes prevailing in the organisation can affect various decisions, sensitisation of male staff etc. can be few steps to bring both gender on equal footing.

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