

Women Glass Ceiling: Barriers and strategies

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Abstract--*The main focus of the article is to review the barriers of glass ceiling in relation to women at all levels in corporate sector that hinder the overall progression of women toward the higher ladder in their career development and explore the strategies to overcome these barriers. Various strategies needs to be framed in the fields where she is still unrepresented. Affirmative actions and policies like quotas and reservations have been introduced. And these policies have certain opposition from the side of men. Initial study also indicates that women at higher educational levels are less likely to support the strategies that help to shatter this glass ceiling. The study found that there are multiple possible explanations for gender based discriminations.*

Keywords--*Glass Ceiling, Gender discrimination, Barriers, Feminine*

I INTRODUCTION

The 'glass ceiling' is term that signals a number of barriers that impede qualified individuals from advancing higher in their organizations especially affecting women and minorities. The prefix glass is used because it is not usually a visible barrier and a one may not be aware of its existence until he 'hits' the barrier.

The term glass ceiling was earlier coined by two women Katherine Lawrence and Marianne Schreiber, at HP in an article to identify how while on the surface there appear to be a clear way of promotion, in actuality women seemed to be unable to progress. However upon becoming CEO and chairperson of the board of HP, Carly Fiorina announced that there was no glass ceiling. The Term Glass ceiling was popularised in the 1980 and first used in a 1984 book titled The Working Woman Report by Gay Bryant. Later it was used in a 1986 Wall Street Journal Article on Barriers to Woman In High Corporate Positions to mention to invisible barriers that impede the career encouragement of women in the American workforce by Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt. Oxford English Dictionary also quotes that the term was first used in 1984. The term was also used by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1991 in result to a study of Nine Fortune 500 companies.

II OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

- (1) To analysis the positions of Women in Corporate World.
- (2) To gain understanding about gender discrimination based on the principle of glass ceiling through existing research.

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- (3) To identify the obstacles and barriers responsible for under- representation of women in top managerial positions.
- (4) To identify gap and weakness in the existing literature related to woman glass ceiling and to construct a foundation on which future research related to the topic may be based.

III METHODOLOGY

Present study was carried out with the objective of improve knowledge about the existence of glass ceiling and its causes particularly in relation to Indian Corporate Sector with special reference to women workforce. Till now we have spent far too much time addressing the symptoms rather than the root reason and drivers of gender inequality. The primary objective was to collect the resource data about the topic so as to further assist better understanding about the causes of under-representation of women in higher positions.. The research work is preliminary in nature and the paper is conceptualized and is based on the secondary data collected from various sources like books, journals, newspapers and internet.

Statistical Survey in Favour of Gender Discrimination Existence:

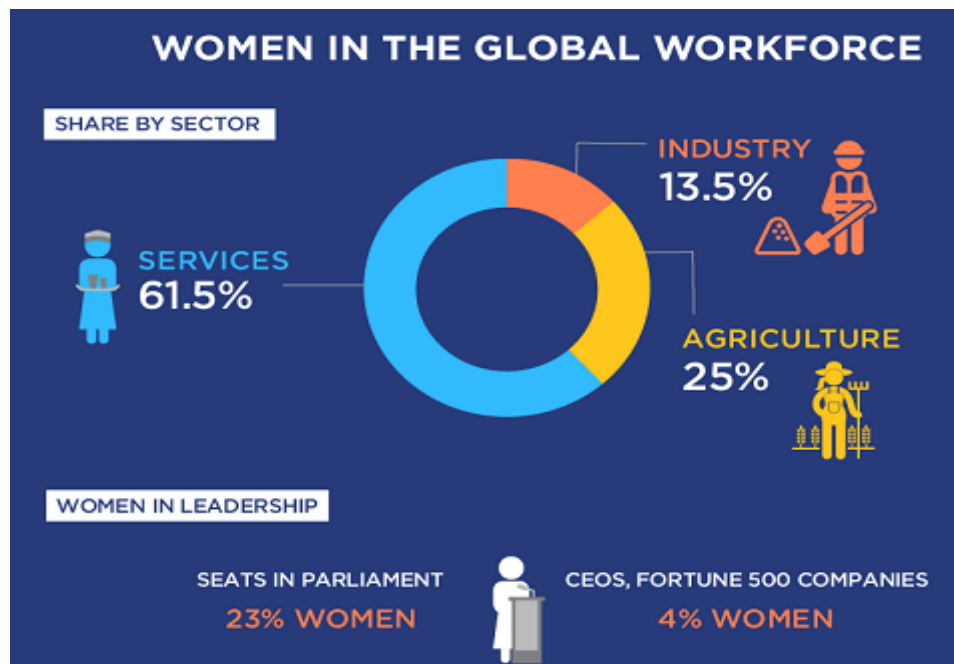


Figure 1: Women in the global workforce.

Source: A study by UN Women: Remove the barriers www.unwomen.org

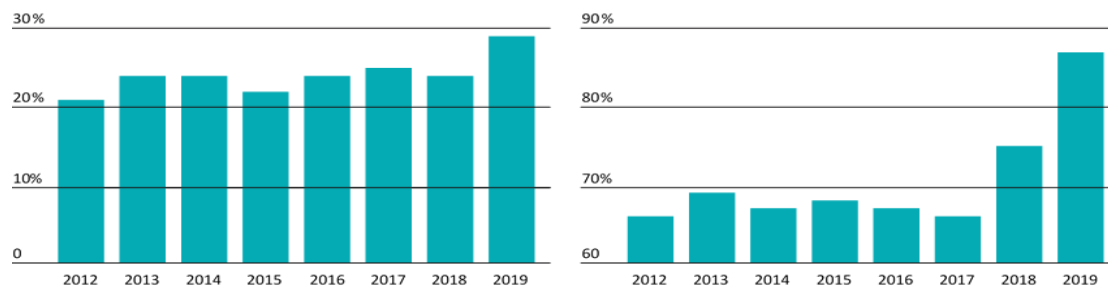
Global Finding: Globally Proportion of women in senior level roles is 29 percent



Figure 2: Global women in leadership in 2019.

Source: A study by UN Women: Remove the barriers www.unwomen.org

Graph 1: Proportion of women in seniormanagement **Graph 2:** Businesses employing at least one woman in senior management



Source: Grand Thornton’s Women in Business report 2019

An Indian Scenario

One in Three companies in India prefer hiring Men: World Economic Forum Study: (Published in Indian Express October 06,2018) :A World Economic Forum study has found that companies in India experiencing the highest growth prefer hiring men . the study also found that while one in three firms gave priority to hiring men. One in ten companies said they preferred to hire women. The country’s female workforce participation -at only 27 percent stands- 23 percent points lower than the global average. Incidentally, the recent all India survey on higher education shows that more women now go to the college than man and there are as many women as there are men in undergraduate science programmes. The survey also recovered that currently a third of the companies had no female employees. 70 percent have less than 10 percent female employees and only 2.4 percent have half or more females employees. According to the study 75 percent of freelancers are male and men with 10 to 20 years work experience are paid 30 percent more than their female counterparts.

Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs (MIWE) 2018, showed the findings of its second edition. India ranks 52 in Mastercard women entrepreneurs index among 57 countries studied for. The latest ranking for India remains unchanged from the previous year. The MIWE focusses on female entrepreneurs' ability to capitalise on opportunities granted through various supporting conditions within their local environments. India's low ranking in the index suggest that the underlying conditions for women business ownership/entrepreneurship in the country are less favorable as compared to the countries with high index score.

According to the report, the Indian women business owners, leaders or professionals exhibit less inclination towards business ownership due to cultural bias. They are also less likely to grow their business, whether locally or overseas, and are more prone than other regions to discontinue their businesses due to unprofitability or lack of finance.

Below is India's performance on three components used for developing the index.

India ranks 52 with respect to Women's Advancement Outcomes, i.e., degree of bias against women as workforce participants, political and business leaders, as well as the financial strength and entrepreneurial inclination of women, far behind the United States at 8 and China at 27.

India ranks 55 in terms of Knowledge Assets & Financial Access for women entrepreneurs. On the other hand, China (10), and the United States of America (16) provide much higher degree of access to basic financial services, advanced knowledge assets to women, and better support the small and medium enterprises

India ranks 47 when it comes to Supporting Entrepreneurial Conditions, not far behind China (41). However, the United States (11) scores insignificantly over the two when it comes to overall perceptions on the ease of conducting business locally, quality of local governance, women's perception of safety levels and cultural perception of women's household financial influence.

Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) Indian Women Network (IWN), in association with EY released CII IWN - EY 'The Future is HERE' Report on Gender Diversity (2018). CII IWN - EY Survey in this report uncover that 16% respondents reported having no women on the Board and 47% reported that there are no more than 5% women in senior management roles. 16% answering in our survey reported having no women on the board and 47% reported that there are no more than 5% women in senior management roles.

The pyramid below depicts the average strength of women in the organisations that were surveyed across sectors.

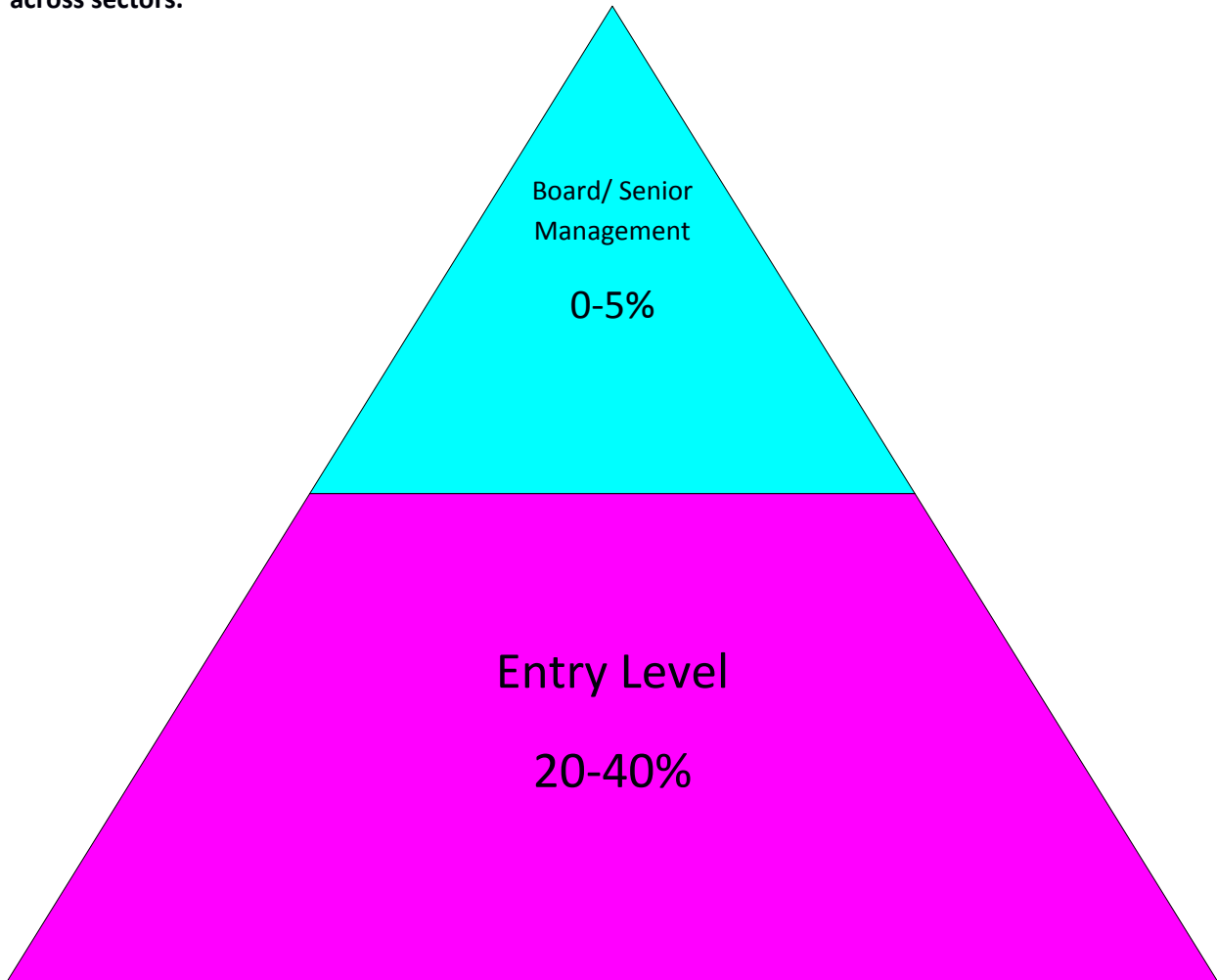


Figure 3: The pyramid

These organizations have only fulfilled the statutory requirement of One women member on the board. While there have seen a substantial rise in the number of women who have graduated, there are not enough women making it to higher management roles in the workplace. So, where are these women?

According to Women in business: Building a blueprint for action Survey by Grant Thornton (March 2019) Globally Proportion of women in senior level roles is 29 percent. 28 percent of senior roles are held by women in India.

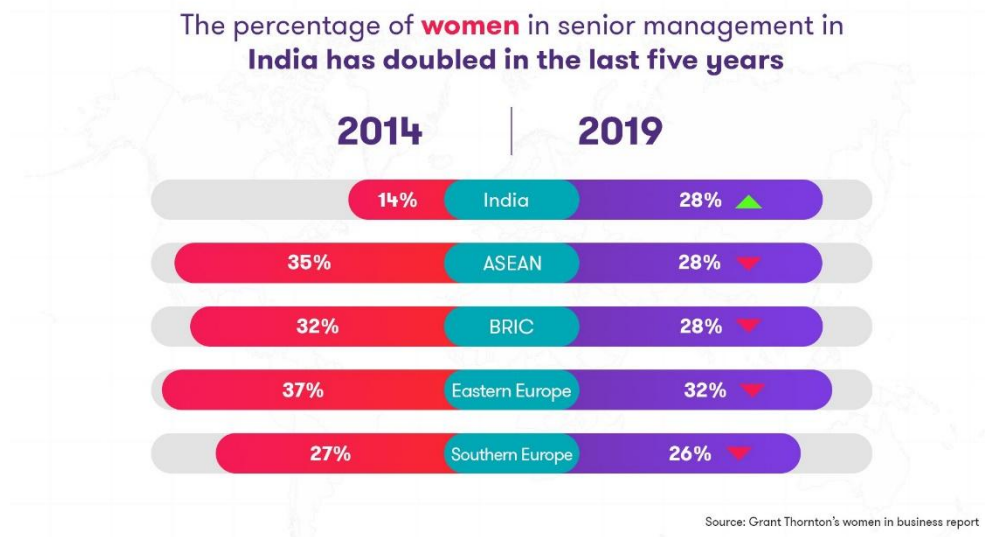


Figure 4: The Percentage of women in senior management in India.

According to Women in Business: New Perspective on risk and reward Survey by Grant Thornton (2017). Out of 5,500 businesses in 36 economies in 2017 surveyed, 41 percent of the Indian businesses have no women in leadership roles.

IV BARRIERS/FACTORS OF GLASS CEILING

The barriers that lead to the glass ceiling phenomenon are:

(1) **Psychological/Individual Barriers:** Certain specific personality characteristics like emotional, social, soft-heartedness, warmth found in women do not fit well for managerial level positions. Women are disinclined or reluctant to risks. In this dynamic state of Globalisation and confronted with firm competition, business houses demand on aggressiveness, competitiveness, rapid decision making and risk taking mentalities to change and sustain. Feminine traits of women as calmness, empathy, tolerance, sensitivity and tender-heartedness make them secluded for severe challenging roles in business.

(2) **Cultural Barriers:** Stereotyped and cultural mind-set of men having traditional observation that family, child rearing and household tasks are the prime accountabilities of women. Women are often expected to sacrifice their professional career for the sake of household chores.

(3) **Societal related barriers:** Women wish flexible work hours for convenience. Late hours working by women is not approved by society. System of society is patriarchal in nature. Male inherits the property of father. Women are

usually not given access to land, capital, and financial resources. Men hold the possession or control of the property. Limited access to resources lag her behind in the race.

(4) Organisational barriers: Because of multi-tasking roles, women remain in state of stress throughout the day and indirectly it devastates their performances. And organisations in which they work, generally eliminate them from strategic planning process. Because of threadbare and conventional perception towards women employees, male dominated business organisations are not ready to accept that women are as productive when it comes to performance. Demand for equal opportunities for promotions and equal pay is never deemed as a fair demand by the employers. Organisations hesitate investing in training and skill development programmes for women employees due to a feeling that it is not worth investing in training for women as it is assumed that after marriage they will leave the organisation.

(5) Governmental/Legal factors: Legal barriers compound gender disparities, which manifest in fewer girls attending schools relative to boys, fewer women working or running business, discriminatory hiring policy and a wide gender wage gap. Problems of getting license, clearances, loans etc. are additional legal barriers. Banks generally avoid financing women as compared to man. Only 67 countries have laws against gender discrimination in hiring practices. In 18 countries husbands can legally prevent their wives from working. Only 114 countries have legislation against sexual harassment at work place.



Figure 5:gender discrimination

Source: A study by UN Women: Remove the barriers www.unwomen.org



Suggestions to Crack the Glass Ceiling:The solution lies in the problem: when we look into the root causes of a problem, indeed we are able to find out solutions also.

(A) **What organisations can do:**

- (1) The first step is to become self-aware of their unconscious bias and how there may affect the decision making. Inspect some of the ways we can begin to recognise our biases around gender and what we can do to correct them.
- (2) Creating alertness amongst all employees that gender based partiality is a strong deterrent that curbs organizational progress.

- (3) It is imported to be aware that gender bias goes both way impacting negatively on both men and women in the workplace. Elimination of organisational norms and customs that work against women.
- (4) Establishment of women's network inside and outside the organisation.
- (5) Encourage powerful mentoring program for women for their proper guidance.
- (6) Reviewing HR policies to make them more conducive to women etc. Companies can give flexible working to give mother more chances of breaking the glass ceiling.
- (7) Encourage open conservative about issues and see where they lead. Discover important facts and suggestions for improvement by asking people about the experiences.
- (8) Analysis recruitment and promotion practices. Those are the - where the glass ceiling is most commonly imposed. Companies should educate male employees on gender barriers and inspire them to help the women colleague's Obstacles.
- (9) Certain initiatives like flexi hours of working, policies of promotion without transfer, safe working environment and special training programme for women are needed urgently to improve the situation of women and improve their participation in the system.
- (10) The research further suggests that organisation should focus on "human resources" "rather than "man-resource" or "woman- resource" distinctly.

(B) What Women Can do:

- (1) According to face book's chief functioning officer shorylsandberg, women themselves can take action to improve their choices of breaking the glass ceiling in her book lein.
- (2) Women can also take greater initiatives to found mentoring systems. Those who have achieved high level management positions should be sensitive to the need to serve as role models for other women and take steps to establish formal mentoring association in their organisations.
- (3) Gender equality debate how to include male voices adding women have to let men talk about this. To break a glass ceiling you first have to know that this is there.
- (4) Learn more about where glass ceiling exist in your business, who they affect and how.

(C) What Government can do:

More governmental schemes to inspire women entrepreneurs to involve in small scale and large scale business ventures. Training in entrepreneurial approaches should start at the high school level through well -designed courses which build confidence through behavioural games. Making provision of micro credit system and enterprise credit system to the women entrepreneurs at local level. Repeated gender sensitization programmes should be held to train financiers to treat women with dignity and respects as persons in this their own right. A women entrepreneur's guidance cell set up to handle the various problems of women entrepreneurs all over the state. State Finance Corporation and financing institutions should permit by statute to extend purely trade related finance to women entrepreneurs. Consider women as specific target group for all developmental part. Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women folk from government part. Adequate training programme on management

skills to be provided to women community. Encourage women's participation in decision making. Skill development to be done in women's polytechnics and industrial training institute. Training on professional competence and leadership skill to be extended to women entrepreneurs.

(D) What Men Can do:

Make sure you always include women in conversation about their own futures. Don't assume a women wouldn't want to travel, move or take on more responsibility because she has young kids. It should be left the women. Let her take the decision. Men in positions to promote and hire staff, should carefully consider if the factors influencing their decisions are the same for male and female candidates. For example is it assumed that a new or soon to be father would not be ready for a new opportunity? Practice active listening with responses.

V CONCLUSION

No doubt women participation has increased across the sector and positions. However the largest increases for women have been in more juniors, untenured and part time positions. Where they often outnumber men. Still women remain under represented at the most senior levels of academic management. Employers favour men not because of gender nor they are prejudiced against women but because they have a perception that men perform better on average at certain tasks. The primary motive of a business is always maximization of profits. Women are perceived as less favourable occupants of higher positions as compared to man because they cannot exhibit the behavioral characteristics such as aggression, autocracy, rigidity, courage and risk-taking that are considered requisite for successful in business. The truth should be accepted that the business hires best performers that bring profit to them and this is not limited to genders.

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