

Cracking the Glass Ceiling: Great Strides in Climbing the Organisational Hierarchy

Kengatharan N.

Department of Human Resource Management, University of Jaffna
nkenga@gmail.com

Introduction

The metaphor of the glass ceiling describes barriers that women face in climbing the top of the career ladder (Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink & Haslam 2014). Albeit the term was emerged three decades ago, the prevailing nature of the glass ceiling is the big conundrum owing to the advanced legislation on gender egalitarian and the highest educational qualification of the women and the minorities. Notwithstanding, such prevalent nature of the advanced legislation on gender egalitarian is not mostly common across many developing countries and countries with collectivist cultural traditions. Recent research studies lent credence to surviving the traditional gender role ideology in nations with collectivist cultures (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Consequently, this study was designed to focus on whether the metaphor of the glass ceiling is a matter that preventing women in advancing into the higher level position of organisations particularly in a collectivist cultural nation, Sri Lanka.

Literature Review

The metaphor 'glass ceiling' was widely used in academic publication and media (Baxter & Wright 2000). Initially, the glass ceiling was used to delineate gender inequality in upper management (Barreto, Ryan & Schmitt 2009). It is "a transparent barrier that kept women from rising above a certain level in corporationsapplies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women" (Morrison et al. 1987, p.13). Nowadays, equality is more prevalent across many developed worlds: for instance, it is clearly articulated in the European Union Commission Report (2010) as "Equality is one of five values on which the Union is founded..... The Union is bound to strive for equality between women and men in all its activities" (p.10). Nonetheless, nations with collectivist cultural traditions extol the engendered of traditional gender role ideology belief where men are the breadwinners and women are the homemakers (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). In the contemporary globalised world, women seem to be cracking the glass ceiling: they are well educated, they go to work, look after their children and they can operate independently. Consequently, the role of the women deems to changing from the past decades, resulting in a more egalitarian gender ideology implying that men and women are actively participating in both work and family roles (Minnotte, Minnotte & Pedersen 2013). These contradicting inconsistent research findings raised a research question "do women experience effect of the glass ceiling?"

Methodology

As this research is aimed at seeking new insights into a particular phenomenon, qualitative-value laden interpretivist approach was adopted. Informants were female teachers working in Jaffna district. Altogether twenty (20) informants were selected using a convenient sampling technique. Although data in qualitative nature

can be garnered through focus group interviews, in depth interview and semi structured interviews, this research used semi –structured interviews owing to the nature of inquiry. The semi-structured questions melded with open ended and closed ended questions. The onerous duty of the researcher was to control and guide the interview rather deviating it from the phenomenon being studied. Since Interviewees share their thoughts and feelings about the subject being inquired, which are private and personal matters to them, anonymity and confidentiality were assured and avoided to asking personal details that supposed to expose person’s identity. Interviews were held between November 2015 to December 2015 and each interview lasted about 30 to 60 minutes. In analysing data, deductive coding with both manifest and latent nature was employed with the aid of Nvivo 10. Of the topic materials have been coded and off the topic materials (called dross) have not been coded. Dependability and validity were also confirmed.

Results and Discussions

Informants consisted of the variegated nature in terms of their age, educational qualification and experience. The majority of the teachers interviewed did not agree to the existence of the glass ceiling effect in advancing their career. They expressed their opinion that if they passed the exam, they would have been promoted to the top level. In support, one of the informants articulated “*I failed SLES exam twice so I can’t blame anyone stopping my advancement*”. Notwithstanding around 36% of informants informed that they have not been promoted owing to being as women. One of the key informants elucidated her experience about glass ceiling effect; the extracted verbatim quote is as: “*...I’ve got through the written exam, but I reckon I’ve been ruled out cos I am a woman*”. The overriding important aspect is that the informants do not realise the artificial barrier in advancing their careers as they have not moved up the next level. Moreover, the informants expressed their opinion that the majority of the higher level positions in education was held by men than that of female counterparts. Elaborately, what was the sheer fact is that there is a limiting case that even women are able to get promoted to middle level positions; beyond this level, they are stopped.

Conclusion and Recommendations

With higher educational attainment of women and resultant overrepresentation in employment, women are cracking the glass ceiling to a certain notable extent; nonetheless, this study lends support to the existence of the glass ceiling effect in advancing career aspiration of women. Therefore, the apex of the management or government should pay magnificent attention to the glass ceiling effect and needs for redesigning best policy to equalise men and women in all aspects. For instance, women’s representation in the parliament of Sri Lanka was less than six percentages, which is the lowest representation in the South Asian Region, leading to rank Sri Lanka 128th out of 140 countries (Kamburugamuwa 2015). Future research is required to uncover what remains unknown about the glass ceiling effect across the variegated government and public sector organisations.

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