

# Glass Ceiling and Glass Escalator - An Ultimate Gender Divide in Urban Vicinity

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** The major objectives of the study is to evaluate, measure, and also recommend solution for solving the problem of glass ceiling and career development of female employees in executive level. **Methods and Analysis:** The primary data were collected through the questionnaire from the women employees in IT companies in Chennai following random sampling method. In order to collect the data for the analysis, 250 questionnaires were distributed to the women employees of various departments in IT sector. From the 250 samples, 220 were responded. The data were analyzed using percentage analysis and ANOVA single factor with the help of SPSS package. **Findings:** The women in the corporate are drained because of the existing corporate cultures and missed prospects to find successful careers. Ultimately, they decide to eschew the organization. The major obstacle to women career development is culture involved inside their work place, and their capacity building nature. Based on age and marital status the women are valued in their job. The government should enhance the awareness of gender inequality and act as a catalyst to promote gender equality to reap the benefits on women and community at large. Employers should also act proactive in their obligation to gender diversity and equity prior to breaking down the barriers of structural, organizational and cultural factors. **Applications/Improvements:** The present study can also be extended in various institutions namely, religion, family, education, politics and in any field where the disparity prevails.

**Keywords:** Corporate Culture, Challenge Aversion, Capacity Building, Glass Ceiling, Work Life Conflict

## 1. Introduction

Women employees will be flexible, empathetic, collaborative in a team and serve with social sensitivity. At present, women have started thinking about social values and ethics due to the increase in the level of education. With the advent of the incremental role in the self-perception, women are slowly participating and progressing in the managerial ranks in their organizations. But in reality, they do not find any bed of roses and they still realize an invisible barrier in their career path. The women in the corporate are drained because of the existing corporate cultures and missed prospects to find successful careers. Ultimately, they decide to eschew the organization.

A glass ceiling first initiated in 1980s and developed as a concept by Morrison in 1987 is an indiscernible impediment causing the suppression of women in their

career development. It is an unvoiced barrier which results in less proportion of women in top-level management. The main barriers may emerge from society, government, internal environment and structural policies. A higher level of self-confidence, persistence, emotional quotient and timely advice of the mentors will make a woman to succeed in her carrier. As per the Global Gender Gap Report 2015 issued by World Economic Forum, India ranks 108 out of 145 countries in the world with a overall score of 0.664 (0 = inequality and 1 = equality). The labour force participation gap index is 0.35, wage equality for similar work gap index is 0.51 and estimated earned income (PPPUS\$) gap index is 0.25 though literacy gap index is 0.75. This predominately shows the existence of gender inequality in India<sup>1</sup>, the former deputy governor of Reserve Bank of India has revealed the inability of women to associate themselves in work place like men is the main

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barrier for career advancement. She also added that the informal association and communication will help to share knowledge and fabricate relationships and these are male-dominated<sup>2</sup>. The glass ceiling is still prevalent in corporate sector by mentioning the data for glass ceiling in education sector (67%), in health sector (71%), in media and entertainment (60%) and in manufacturing sector (63%) from findings of a survey conducted by his team inspired by the book "Lady you're not a man-The adventures of a woman"<sup>3</sup>. Gender discrimination is apparent in the creation of network relationships. Women will always find it difficult to reach and express their interests to the male counterparts when compared to men. He also adds that women are perceived to have less support in workplace than their male counterparts which hinders the accessing of information and assistance<sup>4</sup>. Both men and women are aggressive towards the women who succeed in male dominated occupations and it is not so in case of successful men in female dominated occupations. In a way, it results in an advantage to men<sup>5</sup>.

European Labour Force Survey and March Current Population Survey for the United States reveal the concentration of employment in 20 OECD countries. As per its report women employees overwhelm men in education, nursing, secretaries, key-board operating clerks, domestic helpers and personal care<sup>6</sup>. Most of the IT companies have taken efforts to have more women employees in their nominal roles but not in its managerial roles. National Association of Software Services Company (NASSCOM)-Mencher Report 2009 has shown that the proportion of female employees has increased upto entry and manager level where there is no supervisory role and existence of mentoring and coaching of less experienced staff. But there is lack of representation at director level and top level where the positions are named as heads of programmes, divisions, executive team, senior vice presidents and vice presidents. Ganesh Natarajan CEO, Zensar Technologies and Chairman NASSCOM, has said that gender discrimination has made a discernable glass ceiling in Indian IT industry. He has further stated that out of 23% of women IT employees in India, only 3% of them are occupying senior management positions<sup>7</sup>. Computing jobs will be more than double by the year 2020 to 1.4 million as per Code.org and these companies face a massive problem of shortage of qualified tech employees by the drop out of women employees. Of late, Google (17% female), Pinterest (21% female), Facebook (15% female), Apple (20% female) and other giant tech companies

informed the male female ratio in the employment in IT sectors as 4 to 1<sup>8</sup>. This is because of aggressive male culture with a sense of isolation and unclear career path<sup>9</sup>. Women in academics and corporate get promoted in organizational hierarchy below the level of barrier laid down for her makes women to be in disadvantageous position compared to men in same organisation. The above mentioned literature survey shows an existence of glass ceiling among women employees in different situations<sup>10</sup>. Hence, the present study has been undertaken to analyse the effect of glass ceiling among women employees in IT companies situated in Chennai.

In spite of the prologue of gender prejudice and identical pay legislation, the greater part of women are concerted in less pay, lower grade, and gender distinguished employment<sup>11</sup>. Women were perceived less suitably than men as prospective inhabitant of guidance task<sup>12</sup>. There is significant substantiation that women face a glass ceiling or obstacle to development into the managerial ranks of institutions<sup>13</sup>. Compensation and work attitudes found to be similar among organisations. Differentiations were found with women having less authority, receiving less stock options, and having lower worldwide mobility than men. Obstacles faced by women at the highest executive levels are more than lower level<sup>14</sup>. Gender unfairness is an imperceptible hurdle thus, glass ceiling restrict women from infringing into the top management levels in corporations<sup>15</sup>. Gender-based inequity in promotions is present all hierarchy levels but it is severe at higher levels<sup>16</sup>. Gender bias is the major obstruction for Pakistani women from holding prestigious high positions in the corporate and they are debarred from the taking managerial decisions<sup>17</sup>. The government rules and regulations are desecrated and there exists a gender inequality in the work place<sup>18</sup>. Women tacitly agree to these inequity and glass ceiling and as a result become less determined<sup>19</sup>. The factors determining glass ceiling like individual factors, organizational factors, cultural factors has corollary effect on women professional growth<sup>20</sup>.

The major objectives of the study is to evaluate, measure, and also recommend solution for overcoming the problem of glass ceiling and women career development of executive level female employees.

## 2. Methodology

This study of descriptive research design is conducted around IT sectors situated at Chennai which are included

in NASSCOM@ Chennai member directory. The primary data were collected by administering a questionnaire among the women employees in IT companies following simple random sampling method. In order to collect the data for the analysis, 250 questionnaires were distributed to the women employees of various departments in IT sector. From the 250 samples, 220 were responded. The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.926 which is excellent and the internal consistency is considered good. The data were analyzed using percentage analysis and ANOVA single factor with the help of SPSS package.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Michelle Ryan and Alex Haslam have developed Glass Cliff concept (an extension of glass ceiling concept) where individual women leaders are placed in command positions in adverse conditions and likely to make them fully responsible for the high degree of failure and criticism. Women are made to act as scapegoat and

undermine and generalize that they are not successful leaders in work places resulting in a cultural belief that men are good leaders in the first instance. In<sup>21</sup> introduced the concept of glass escalator, which ensures hidden advantages that men experience in female-dominated occupations like education, nursing, social work and computer oriented<sup>22</sup>. According to Forbes magazine, men in women-dominated professions excel much better than men in men-dominated professions with a higher promotion rate, higher pay and places. Thus, glass ceiling is associated with glass escalator with the interruptions in their career path such as maternity leave and taking care of elderly people<sup>23</sup>.

The primary data were collected from the investors through questionnaire and the same were analysed using the statistical tools like One-Way ANOVA which were interpreted in the following paragraphs.

According to above table, 69% of the respondents are in the age group of 25-35 years, 26% of them are in the range of 30-35years, and the remaining are more than

**Table 1.** Socio-economic profile of the respondents

Age ( in years )	No. of respondents	Percentage to total	Monthly income (Rs in '000)	No. of respondents	Percentage to total
25-30	151	68.6	10-20	5	2.3
30-35	57	25.9	20-30	47	21.4
35-40	4	1.8	30-40	106	48.2
> 40	8	3.6	> 40	62	28.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Educational qualification	No. of respondents	Percentage to total	Hailing Place	No. of respondents	Percentage to total
UG	146	66.4	Rural	64	29.1
PG	74	33.6	Urban	156	70.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Marital status	No. of respondents	Percentage to total	No.of Children	No. of respondents	Percentage to total
Married	116	52.7	None	132	60.0
Unmarried	80	36.4	One	48	21.8
Widow/ Divorce	24	11.0	Two	40	18.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Experience in present position (years)	No. of respondents	Percentage to total	Experience in previous position (years)	No. of respondents	Percentage to total
1-3	73	33.2	Nil	30	13.6
3-4	72	32.7	1-3	135	61.4
more than 4	75	34.1	More than 3	55	25.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source- Primary data

35 years. Based on educational qualification, 66% of the respondents are graduates, 34% are post-graduates. Out of the women respondents, 29% hail from rural areas and 71% from urban areas. 60% of the respondents do not possess any child and the rest are having children to take care. Based on the income level, 2% of the employees are in the level of Rs. 10,000-20,000, 21% of the respondents are in between the category of Rs. 20,000-30,000. 48% of employees are earning between Rs. 30,000-40,000 and the rest of the employees are earning above Rs. 40,000. 53% of the women employees are married and 36% are unmarried and the rest of them are divorced and widowed. 33.2% of the women employees are having the experience of 1-3 years in their present position and 32.7% are having the experience of 3-4 years, 34.1% of them are having experience of more than 4 years. According to the experience of the women employees in the previous position, 61.4% of the employees having experience of 1-3 years and 25% are having more than 3 years of experience. 13.6% of them are fresher to the present job (Table 1).

The questionnaire under the study included sub-dimensions on corporate cultural factors, challenge aversion factors, self-related factors, work life conflict-time factors, work life conflict-strain factors and capacity building factors which were carefully studied and analysed as follows:

Corporate cultural factors include the experience of women employees in the work place by way of male domination, inequality in nature of job, remuneration and promotion in job. They also feel in-hospitality and discouraging corporate cultures impedes their career progress. They also perceive lack of support from senior employees and experience lack of encouragement and training opportunities. They also feel that they are not assigned highly challenging and visibility project. They terribly feel that they are harassed in the work place by their male counterparts.

Challenge aversion factors refer to the challenges faced by them in the work. They feel that they not sufficiently competitive. They lack enthusiasm to challenge assignments given. They feel that they are lagging in ambition when compared with men. They feel a lack of social support from their colleagues. They feel inferior when compared with men regarding skill set. They also accept that they do not possess practical knowledge relating to job and have difficulty in spending time in job due to the responsibilities at home. They have difficulty in expressing the opinion at ease in work place and unable to project themselves in the fore front in job due to their introverted nature.

Self-related factors include the factors influencing personal traits. They experience job stress because of increase in age and they are unhappy with the way things are happening around them in work place. They feel a sense of disrespect by senior and junior subordinates and dissatisfied with present job environment. They also feel that the present job is unrelated to their academic potential and not recognised for their capabilities. They perceive to be powerless because they belong to the weaker section. They feel their contribution is frequently under estimated and hence they are withdrawn. They experience guilt feelings when it comes to their inability to rear and parent their children.

Work life conflict- time factors include the time required to balance their work life and family life. The women employees feel that their work keeps them away from their family and they are unable to use their valuable time with their family. Though the women employees try to spend their valuable time with their family, they always have in their mind that it hinders their work life. They have also opined that they are unable to concentrate wholeheartedly in the job due to the family obligations as women. They also expressed that they could not find their personal space in life. They also feel socially aloof as they could not attend the social gatherings due to the long hours of work. They also sense a feeling of disconnectedness to work and to family. They also feel that their devotion to work keeps them away from home. They also perceive the dual responsibilities impinge on their health status.

Work life conflict-strain factor means the factors causing the strain in the work life balance. They often feel stressed due to family responsibilities and also with job responsibilities. They feel that their work pressure makes them as an unpleasant person among their family members. They carry over their tension of work place and hence show their anger on family members. They feel that their tension and anxiety from their family life usually decline their ability to do the job. They also feel psychologically exhausted due to work that it restricts their devotion to their family. They do not enjoy their work at office as well as at home and frequently complain of psychosomatic illness. Ultimately, they do not maintain cordial relationship with their significant people.

Capacity building factors relates to enhancing the competence of the individual. The women feel that they are being envied and pulled down at work by their male counterparts even though they have been a remarkable achiever. They feel they are deprived of international exposure

being a female and experience structural impediments which prevents me as women from reaching the top. They also feel excluded from informal networks and unaware of early starts of work career. They also failed to fix role models to reach their goal and feel the double standards at work and at home undermine their ability. They feel that they do not have ample time to improve their career related goals and find it difficult to maintain the present status in their job.

The present study highlights the relationship between place of hailing, age, marital status and educational qualification of women employees and factors influencing the glass ceiling effect using ANOVA single factor which is explained in the tables followed.

Null Hypothesis (Ho) – There is no significant influence of place of hailing on glass ceiling effect.

Gender diversity is like assassinating the honest motives of life of human beings and the organization should consider on human resource as a whole and not based on gender<sup>24</sup>. The above table reveals that the women respondents accept that the corporate culture, challenge aversion and work-life conflict-strain factor do not influence the glass ceiling effect. The factors namely, self-related work-life conflict-time and capacity building influences the glass ceiling effect based on the place they hail from. Glass Ceiling phenomenon still subsists in a corporate culture and capacity building factor. Majority of the people consider women have to look after children and household work. Women face difficulty in balancing the career with domestic duties. The demanding job requires plenty of time and competitive expertise workforce should have. The major obstacle to women career development is culture involved inside their work place, and their capacity building nature. As the women don't get big promotions on their work; they stuck with their same positions in hierarchical order of a company (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Relationship between place of hailing and glass ceiling effect – ANOVA single factor

Factor influencing Glass ceiling effect	P value	Result
Corporate culture factor	0.411	Accepted
Challenge aversion factor	0.149	Accepted
Self related factors	0.021	Rejected
Work life conflict –time factor	0.001	Rejected
Work life conflict –strain factor	0.749	Accepted
Capacity building factor	0.002	Rejected
Overall opinion	0.015	Rejected

Source- Primary data (at 5% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis (Ho) – There is no significant influence of age on glass ceiling effect.

Women after completing graduation move up in the ladder within five to seven years and slowly move downwards due to family responsibilities and discrimination. They take up a lower cadre jobs with less prestige. He also adds that employers are having a bias towards employing women in higher positions in which the men will do better<sup>25</sup>. Difference in age norms must be changed, factors such as in-equality to remuneration, inability, disconnectedness from family, dual responsibility, work tension, male counterpart are affecting women career development and women's in ability nature. Perception of male folks should be changed from their earlier age. They should be guided equally by their parents. The above table reveals that the women respondents accept that the challenge aversion, self-related and work-life conflict-strain factor do not influence the glass ceiling effect. The factors namely, corporate culture, work-life conflict-time and capacity building influences the glass ceiling effect based on the age of the respondents. Based on age and marital status the women are valued in their job (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Relationship between age and glass ceiling effect – ANOVA single factor

Factor influencing Glass ceiling effect	P value	Result
Corporate culture factor	0.022	Rejected
Challenge aversion factor	0.305	Accepted
Self related factors	0.184	Accepted
Work life conflict –time factor	0.037	Rejected
Work life conflict –strain factor	0.067	Accepted
Capacity building factor	0.004	Rejected
Overall opinion	0.025	Rejected

Source- Primary data (at 5% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis (Ho) – There is no significant influence of marital status on glass ceiling effect.

Male contribute more time to their professional work and female contribute more time to child care and domestic work. She also revealed that most of the men have an opinion that men should govern the financial matters and women should look after the house. This observation has made it evident that gender-role projection could decide the role of women in their professional lives<sup>26</sup>. As

per the preference theory by Blackburn, there are two categories of women, one will nucleus on their profession and another on family. Those who focus on profession will prioritize their career and disregard their family as it a hindrance to their achievements. Those who focus on family believe their significant role in raising their family and place their career as secondary<sup>27</sup>. As per marital status, racial difference is existing in work place such as male domination, nature of job, remuneration, job promotion, harassment in work place, competitiveness, enthusiasm, ambition, social support, skill set, practical knowledge, responsibility, opinion, introverted nature, work environment, weaker zone, dual responsibility, unhappiness in work place, international exposure, are the major factors which acts as a barrier for their advancement in field. The above table reveals that the women respondents accept that the work-life conflict-time and work-life conflict-strain factor do not influence the glass ceiling effect. The factors namely, corporate culture, challenge aversion, self-related and capacity building influences the glass ceiling effect based on the marital status (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Relationship between marital status and glass ceiling effect – ANOVA single factor

Factor influencing Glass ceiling effect	P value	Result
Corporate culture factor	0.020	Rejected
Challenge aversion factor	0.000	Rejected
Self related factors	0.004	Rejected
Work life conflict –time factor	0.542	Accepted
Work life conflict –strain factor	0.179	Accepted
Capacity building factor	0.001	Rejected
Overall opinion	0.001	Rejected

Source- Primary data (at 5% level of significance)

Null Hypothesis (Ho) – There is no significant influence of education on glass ceiling effect.

Disparity in gender cannot be explained by any other factors inclusive of education, experience, skill, motivation and other job related qualities<sup>28</sup>. Women in higher education face a large disparity in salary, promotion and reputation in spite of protective legislative policies<sup>29</sup>. The Table 5 reveals that the women respondents accept that the work-life conflict- time factor and capacity building do

not influence the glass ceiling effect. The factors namely, corporate culture, challenge aversion self-related and work-life conflict-strain influences the glass ceiling effect based on the educational qualification (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Relationship between education and glass ceiling effect – ANOVA single factor

Factor influencing Glass ceiling effect	P value	Result
Corporate culture factor	0.006	Rejected
Challenge aversion factor	0.000	Rejected
Self related factors	0.013	Rejected
Work life conflict –time factor	0.194	Accepted
Work life conflict –strain factor	0.002	Rejected
Capacity building factor	0.833	Accepted
Overall opinion	0.001	Rejected

Source: Primary data (at 5% level of significance)

Glass ceiling in IT companies can be warded off by improving the human resources and its management. Women must empower themselves to raise up to the level of empowering and mentoring their successors to face the corporate world realities by enhancing their skills and tactfully manage conflicts in work environment. They should also be psychologically mentored to balance their family and work life. It is high time that organizations and firms consider the potentials and caliber of women employees by giving them opportunities in par with men who would enable them to face the world with courage and confidence. Respondents were also opinion that flexible scheduling is an important agenda to thought of particularly for the working women in the corporate. Just like as it is in the west as well with few Indian companies, respondents opined that paternity leave be granted to help working women shoulder responsibilities and take equal footing in child care and rearing during the initial crucial days. All these relaxations and concessions would definitely enhance women to run a chance of better work force in the organization.

## 4. Conclusion

Women are considered emotional as their style of leadership is different. Women always have a holistic approach, caring, nurturing, willing to share the power and face challenges. These traits make them to hike in

the corporate heights and make them adaptable in the corporate environment. A woman always nurtures and inspires confidence among her peers and subordinates in her organization especially when they are women. Women also have the capability of inhabiting manifold task in their personal life and thereby acquire interpersonal skills, leadership skills, adaptability and problem solving skills<sup>30</sup>. Ms. Kudva, former CEO of CRISIL and Ms. Davda, former CEO of Tata Starbucks have opined that companies should realize the necessity of assisting women in balancing their personal and professional life and to retain and nurture them as women leaders<sup>31</sup>.

The government should enhance the awareness of gender inequality and act as a catalyst to promote gender equality to reap the benefits on women and community at large. Employers should also act proactive in their obligation to gender diversity and equity prior to breaking down the barriers of structural, organizational and cultural. The employers should lay down voluntary targets for women representation in senior management levels. Flexible work arrangements, work-life balance strategies, mentoring programmes and leadership development programmes are to be established by the management to raise the women in the corporate ladder. Women should also develop their own social capital by nurturing support networks, indentifying mentors in workplace, promoting the communication channels and increase self-confidence. The present study can also be extended in various institutions namely, religion, family, education, politics and in any field where the disparity prevails. Studies of such kind would pave way to creating an awareness and conscientizing the society at large to change their attitudes and be accommodative of women in their community.

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