

BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING IN STRATEGIC ROLES**S.K. Gaikwad¹ and P.C. Kalkar²**¹Sinhgad Institute of Management, Pune²Commerce and Management, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune
gaikwad.snehal16@gmail.com,¹pckalkar@gmail.com²**ABSTRACT**

Women make up half of the world's population, and an increasing number of women are starting work each year. However, from recruitment to promotion, women face obstacles throughout the workplace. Despite various discussions and inclusion in organizations, women in leadership roles are still relatively few. They get fewer opportunities than their male counterparts to show their full potential, and they have to work hard and prove themselves over and over again as they work their way up to higher positions. What can women do to break the glass ceiling? There is no easy answer because circumstances vary from woman to woman to workplace. This article reviews some of the possible ways to break the glass ceiling for women to make dent in strategic roles. It also briefly reviews the position in India.

Keywords: Glass ceiling, strategic roles, Gender, Inclusivity

1. Introduction

According to a report by the US Glass Commission, (1993) the term "glass ceiling" came into use in 1986, when 2 Wall Street Journal journalists coined the term to denote an invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing to senior leadership positions in organizations. Since then, the term glass ceiling has also been used in the development of minorities. The Commission was established in the US under the "Glass Ceiling Commission" during the 1991-1996 period which was very active in the field of gender discrimination and minority discrimination. Researchers have found a great deal of interest in the term and almost all of the research results are always based on the glass ceiling.

Women make up half of the world's population, and a growing number of women are starting to work each year. However, from recruiting to gaining promotion, women face obstacles throughout the workplace. Despite diversity discussions and inclusion in organizations, women in leadership roles are still a minority. They get fewer opportunities than their male counterparts to show their full potential, and they have to work hard and prove themselves over and over again as they work their way up to higher positions (Sud and Amanesh, 2019).

A report by Grant Thornton, 'Women in Business: Beyond Policy to Progress', states that although 75% of businesses have had at least one woman in senior management in

2018, compared to 66% in 2017, women still hold only 24% of top roles worldwide (Grant Thornton, 2018). In India, the current percentage of senior positions held by women is only 20%, although it increased slightly from 17% in 2017.

What can women do to break the glass ceiling? There is no easy answer because circumstances vary from woman to woman to workplace. However, Jennifer W. Martineau, co-author of the book 'Kick Some Glass: 10 Ways Women Succeed at Work on Their Own Terms' with Portia R. Mount, believes that women can control their success (Martineau and Mount, 2018). The book empowers women to understand their context, reveal what they really want, find their definition of success, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals to overcome the barriers of glass ceiling.

2. Beyond discussions of diversity and inclusion

Discussions on the importance of diversity and inclusion practices have been widespread in recent years. They sound good, but there's a little action. The reasons are that these processes are usually written solely to meet regulatory practices or, in some cases, are not funded. For example, organizations can focus on participatory recruitment to incorporate high levels of diversity into their HR strategies. They may hire a group of at least 50% women before starting the selection process. Organizations should view a glass ceiling as a formal issue and not as a personal problem or

an individual problem. Organizations should develop strategic plans and procedures for breaking the glass ceiling and creating space for women. If this is not done, then staff-focused training may fail.

Funding programs are another area that deserves attention. There is a popular Harvard Business Review article entitled, 'Women Are Over-Mentored (But Under-sponsored)' which focuses on the need for organized and targeted organizational support programs (Ibarra, 2010). Currently, because more men are in leadership positions than women, and men are more likely to seek support from men, they often end up ignoring women. To overcome this, corporate leaders must use their network and relationship power to help women gain more visibility. Counseling alone is not the same as the promotion of women, but support can be the key to breaking down gender barriers in the workplace.

3. Closing the gap between discussion and action

It is argued that systematic diversity and inclusion processes are often not translated into reality. The reason may be that organizations have to consider the interests of great talent and often find it difficult to please the same sex. The fact is that there are still many men in leadership roles. If organizations are focused on advancing women only, male employees may ask questions. If organizations do not hear what men are saying, they may lose the most skilled workers in their profession. It is a soft dance between informing men and promoting diversity. Organizations need to have open and honest discussions with male employees on this issue, and explain the importance of adding more diversity.

The general view is that the focus should be on identifying common ground rather than on leadership differences so that women have equal opportunities. However, this is open to interpretation. As humans, humans have much in common with one another, and we can often find common ground on which to build. At the same time, disagreements are ignored. Therefore, a better approach would be to use cross-border leadership - a practice established by the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) in the mid-2000s after extensive international

research, including in India, China and Singapore. This practice encourages cohesion within boundaries while increasing diversity. It is important that male and female leaders share their knowledge. Each side needs to listen and reflect on its own experience in order to explore what is normal and what is different. The ultimate goal should be a sustainable organization in terms of diversity and inclusion.

A white paper entitled, 'Queen Bee Syndrome,' co-authored by CCL researcher Sophia Zhao and Maw-Der Foo of the National University of Singapore, states that senior women leaders are opposed to providing employment opportunities for women below them. The common perception is that these women want to conserve energy and strongly believe that other women have to work as hard as they can to reach the top. However, there is another study, 'Does appreciating diversity result in worse standards for the performance of Young Leaders and Women?' which offers a completely different perspective. When women leaders make efforts to increase diversity, it often tarnishes their image, making them appear to be more confident and poorer, especially when compared to their male counterparts.

Organizations need to remove this barrier in order to encourage women leaders to encourage, support and support women under their care.

There is a view that there is a holistic model of successful women and the characteristics they display. However, there is no such model. Successful women leaders simply have different personalities, demographics, cultural values, and ethics. Some believe in co-operative leadership, while others strongly believe in results. If their behavior is true then that approach will work for them. The most important thing for young women is to have more than one role model, to find the success story that goes with them and to aspire to be such a leader.

4. The Indian scenario

Without violating gender barriers in the workplace, Indian women must fight their own way through social and cultural barriers. There is an in-depth belief system that prevents most

female employees from testing their strengths. Glass ceiling barriers remain the same for all women, no matter where they are. Only the level at which the barrier conforms may differ from one country to another. Society cannot be changed in an instant, but once women identify what is truly important to them, they can work with others at home and in the office to devise strategies to overcome the glass ceiling. When their eyes are set on specific career goals, they can make wise decisions and seek help from their families and employers. Even organizations can play a key role in implementing gender-neutral policies. For example, flexible working hours will benefit both men and women.

5. Conclusion

Women should remember a few things when it comes to breaking the glass ceiling.

Plan your route. Understand what you want to do and where you want to go. You need clarity of purpose for your work.

You are not alone. You do not have to fight your battle alone. Look for help, network and take steps to increase your visibility.

"You're not crazy, you're not the only one". Glass ceiling are the real obstacles women face, and once you know them, it gives you the strength and confidence to devise strategies to eliminate them.

Men and women should be equal in all aspects of life, including the workplace. Organizations need to understand that high diversity leads to better decision making and business outcomes. In the same way, women should break the glass ceiling in their minds, maintain self-confidence, and speak openly about their accomplishments in order to be recognized and to pursue what they want fearlessly.

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