

Overview on Glass Ceiling

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Abstract: *Over the past years, there has been a steady increase in the participation of women in the labor market, reflecting a shifting societal mindset and prompting the implementation of legal measures and policies to ensure equal opportunities for women. These initiatives, such as flexible schedules, parental leave, and gender quotas in public organizations, aim to foster a balance between family and work life. Despite these efforts, women remain notably underrepresented in decision-making roles across various sectors.*

Keywords: Glass Ceiling.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, there has been a steady increase in the participation of women in the labor market, reflecting a shifting societal mindset and prompting the implementation of legal measures and policies to ensure equal opportunities for women. These initiatives, such as flexible schedules, parental leave, and gender quotas in public organizations, aim to foster a balance between family and work life. Despite these efforts, women remain notably underrepresented in decision-making roles across various sectors.

In Belgium, for instance, though the Council of Ministers introduced gender quotas for company boards in 2011, requiring one-third to be female by 2013, the numbers reveal a persistent gender gap. In 2018, women occupied only 16% of executive committee positions in large Belgian companies, an improvement from a decade earlier but still considerably lower than their overall employment rate and share among university graduates

This underrepresentation is often described as the "glass ceiling" phenomenon, a vertical discrimination against women in companies, extensively studied across management, human resources, finance, and psychology fields. However, despite the attention, theoretical models exploring the "glass ceiling" and its implications remain limited.

1.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE RESERCH

Building upon the work of Elacqua et al. (2009), who highlighted the importance of interpersonal and situational factors in understanding the emergence of the glass ceiling, this study aims to enhance their model by incorporating organizational culture as an additional antecedent to differential treatment. Specifically, we explore whether beliefs and stereotypes embedded in organizational culture regarding gender roles impact women managers' perceptions of differential treatment and, subsequently, their perception of the glass ceiling

While Elacqua et al. focused on the causes of the glass ceiling, our study extends the understanding of this phenomenon by investigating its consequences on women managers' organizational attitudes and well-being. We delve into the effects on work-family interface, examining perceptions of work-to-family conflict (WFC) in association with the proposed model. This adds a novel dimension to the existing literature, as no previous study has explored this aspect in conjunction with Elacqua et al.'s model.

Through this research, we aim to contribute to the existing knowledge on the glass ceiling, addressing gaps in the literature and providing insights into both its antecedents and potential consequences for well-being in the workplace.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Glass Ceiling: The glass ceiling denotes a barrier that prevents qualified individuals, particularly women, from advancing within an organization due to discrimination, often rooted in sexism or racism. While challenging to define objectively, it represents persistent barriers supported by conscious and unconscious practices, hindering qualified women's access to top management positions. This phenomenon is unique in its focus on discrimination against women in management roles, manifesting in subtle but impactful ways.

The Antecedent of the Glass Ceiling: The Model of Elacqua et al. (2009): Elacqua et al.'s model explores the interpersonal and situational factors influencing the perception of a glass ceiling. Interpersonal factors encompass mentoring, informal networks, and relationships with decision-makers, while situational factors involve objective criteria and the number of women managers positioned for advancement. These factors contribute to the perception of differential treatment, which, in turn, is linked to the glass ceiling perception.

Organizational Culture in Relation to Gender: Elacqua et al. suggest that the organizational gender culture, encompassing beliefs and stereotypes about social roles for male and female managers, may influence the perception of differential treatment and the emergence of the glass ceiling. This includes a "male-oriented" culture and beliefs about the incompatibility of roles as mother, wife, and manager.

In our extended model, we hypothesize that perceptions of interpersonal issues, situational issues, and organizational gender culture will influence perceptions of differential treatment, thereby affecting the perception of a glass ceiling

Consequences of the Glass Ceiling: While there is ample research on the glass ceiling, few studies have explored its effects on workers. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the consequences of the glass ceiling on organizational attitudes and well-being. We examine the relationship between the glass ceiling and work-family interface, particularly the perception of work-to-family conflict (WFC), as well as its implications for job strain, intention to quit, job engagement, and job satisfaction.

We hypothesize that the perception of a glass ceiling will increase the perception of WFC, subsequently impacting job strain and intention to quit negatively, while decreasing job engagement and job satisfaction.

Through this comprehensive examination, our study aims to contribute valuable insights to the understanding of the glass ceiling phenomenon and its broader implications.

III. BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

The term "breaking the glass ceiling" refers to overcoming the barriers and limitations that prevent certain groups, particularly women, from reaching top-level positions and leadership roles within organizations. The metaphorical "glass ceiling" symbolizes the invisible and often discriminatory obstacles that hinder the upward career advancement of individuals, especially women, and minorities.

Here are a few key concepts and examples related to breaking the glass ceiling:

Gender Equality and Leadership Roles:

Concept: Breaking the glass ceiling is closely tied to the broader concept of achieving gender equality in the workplace, especially in leadership and executive positions.

Example: A company appointing a female CEO for the first time, thereby breaking the traditional male-dominated leadership structure

Equal Opportunities and Advancement

Concept: It involves creating a workplace culture that provides equal opportunities for career advancement, regardless of gender or other characteristics

Example: Implementing policies that ensure fair promotion processes and addressing biases in performance evaluations

Diversity and Inclusion:

Concept: Breaking the glass ceiling emphasizes the importance of diversity and inclusion, recognizing that a diverse leadership team contributes to better decision-making and innovation.

Example: Establishing diversity and inclusion programs to actively recruit, retain, and promote individuals from underrepresented groups.

Role Models and Mentoring:

Concept: Having visible role models and mentors can inspire and support individuals in their career journeys, helping them break through barriers

Example: Establishing mentorship programs to connect aspiring leaders with experienced executives who can provide guidance and support.

Educational and Training Initiatives:

Concept: Addressing the glass ceiling involves promoting education and training opportunities that empower individuals to develop the skills needed for leadership roles

Example: Offering leadership development programs or workshops that focus on building the skills necessary for executive positions

Organizational Policies and Quotas:

Concept: Some organizations implement policies and quotas to ensure a certain level of gender diversity in leadership positions.

Example: Introducing a policy that mandates a minimum percentage of women in executive roles or on the board of directors.

Recognition of Unconscious Bias:

Concept: Unconscious biases can contribute to the glass ceiling effect, and addressing these biases is crucial for creating a more equitable workplace

Example: Providing training for employees and leaders to recognize and eliminate unconscious biases in hiring, promotion, and decision-making processes.

Cultural Shifts:

Concept: Breaking the glass ceiling requires a cultural shift within organizations that values diversity, inclusion, and meritocracy.

Example: Fostering a culture where achievements and promotions are based on skills, experience, and performance rather than gender or other demographic factors.

Government and Legislative Initiatives:

Concept: Governments may enact legislation to promote gender equality in the workplace and break down barriers to advancement.

Example: Implementing laws that require companies to report on gender pay gaps or have a certain percentage of women in leadership roles.

Breaking the glass ceiling is an ongoing process that involves a combination of cultural, organizational, and individual changes to create more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

IV. BEYOND THE CONCEPT

Beyond the concept of the "glass ceiling," there are additional challenges and concepts related to workplace equality, diversity, and inclusion. Here are some key ideas and areas of focus that go beyond the glass ceiling

1. Glass Cliff:

Concept: The "glass cliff" refers to situations where women or minorities are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions during times of crisis or when the chance of failure is high

Example: Appointing a female CEO to lead a company that is facing financial challenges, which may result in a difficult situation for the leader.

2. Intersectionality:

Concept: Intersectionality recognizes that individuals may face multiple forms of discrimination or disadvantage based on factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status

Example: Addressing the unique challenges faced by women of color in the workplace, acknowledging that their experiences may differ from those of white women or men of color

3. Work-Life Balance:

Concept: Achieving balance between work and personal life is a critical aspect of workplace equality, especially for women who may face expectations related to caregiving and family responsibilities.

Example: Implementing flexible work policies and parental leave options to support employees in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

4. Microaggressions and Everyday Bias:

Concept: Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional, discriminatory comments or behaviors that contribute to a hostile or unwelcoming work environment

Example: Addressing instances where individuals may experience microaggressions based on their gender, race, or other characteristics.

5. Pay Equity:

Concept: Pay equity involves ensuring that individuals are paid fairly for their work, regardless of gender, race, or other factors

Example: Conducting regular pay equity audits to identify and rectify any gender or race-based pay gaps within an organization.

6. Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):

Concept: ERGs are employee-led groups formed around common dimensions of diversity, providing a supportive community and advocating for inclusivity

Example: Establishing ERGs for women, LGBTQ+ employees, or other affinity groups to foster a sense of belonging and address specific needs

7. Accessibility and Accommodation:

Concept: Ensuring that workplaces are physically and technologically accessible to individuals with disabilities is a crucial aspect of diversity and inclusion

Example: Implementing accessible facilities, technology, and policies to accommodate employees with diverse needs.

8. Ally ship and Advocacy:

Concept: Ally ship involves individuals from majority groups actively supporting and advocating for the rights and advancement of those from marginalized groups

Example: Encouraging leaders and employees to be allies by promoting inclusive practices, speaking out against discrimination, and supporting underrepresented colleagues

9. Global Perspectives:

Concept: Recognizing and addressing workplace inequality on a global scale, understanding that challenges and solutions may vary across different regions and cultures

Example: Implementing global diversity and inclusion initiatives that consider the unique contexts of various regions.

Addressing these broader concepts goes hand in hand with breaking the glass ceiling, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable workplace for everyone. Organizations that embrace a comprehensive approach to diversity and inclusion are better positioned to attract and retain a diverse talent pool, foster innovation, and create a positive and supportive work environment.

V. EXAMPLES OF WOMEN IN POWERFUL POSITIONS BEYOND GLASS CEILING

While the concept of the glass ceiling traditionally refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women from reaching top leadership positions, there are indeed many examples of women who have broken through these barriers and attained powerful positions. Here are some notable examples of women in powerful positions beyond the glass ceiling

Angela Merkel

Position: Chancellor of Germany.

Achievement: Angela Merkel served as the Chancellor of Germany for 16 years, from 2005 to 2021, making her one of the most powerful political leaders in the world. She was the first woman to hold the office in Germany.

Kamala Harris:

Position: Vice President of the United States.

Achievement: Kamala Harris made history by becoming the first female vice president of the United States, as well as the highest-ranking female official in U.S. history

Christine Lagarde:

Position: Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Achievement: Christine Lagarde served as the Managing Director of the IMF, where she played a key role in global economic governance. She is currently the President of the European Central Bank.

Ursula von der Leyen:

Position: President of the European Commission.

Achievement: Ursula von der Leyen is the first woman to hold the position of President of the European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union.

Jacinda Ardern:

Position: Prime Minister of New Zealand

Achievement: Jacinda Ardern has been the Prime Minister of New Zealand since 2017. She is known for her leadership, especially during challenging times such as the Christchurch mosque shootings and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mary Barra:

Position: CEO of General Motors

Achievement: Mary Barra is the CEO of General Motors, making her one of the most powerful women in the automotive industry. She was the first woman to lead a major global automaker.

Ginni Rometty:

Position: Former CEO of IBM.

Achievement: Ginni Rometty served as the CEO of IBM, leading the company through a period of significant transformation in the tech industry.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala:

Position: Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Achievement: Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala made history as the first woman and the first African to be appointed as the Director-General of the WTO.

These women have not only broken through the glass ceiling but have also demonstrated exceptional leadership and resilience in their respective fields. Their achievements contribute to changing perceptions about women in powerful roles and inspire future generations of female leaders.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women breaking the glass ceiling in today's world represent a triumph over historical gender-based barriers. Their achievements contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society, fostering a future where individuals are valued for their skills and contributions rather than their gender. While progress has been made, there is still work to be done to create environments where women can thrive and contribute fully to leadership roles across all sectors.