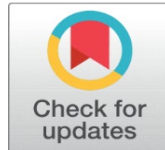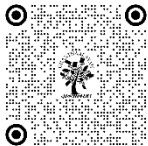# GLASS BARRIERS IN THE WORKPLACE: A STUDY ON THE ATTITUDINAL EFFECTS OF GLASS CEILING AND GLASS CLIFF ON NAGPUR'S WOMEN WORKFORCE

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ABSTRACT

There are still numerous gender-specific hurdles that women face in the professional realm, with the glass ceiling stifling career advancement, and the glass cliff placing women in unwarranted management positions. This investigation explores the attitudinal impression of these phenomena on women professionals in Nagpur, and influences on Career Aspiration, Job Satisfaction, and Professional Resilience. The quantitative research design was implemented, and data was composed through structured surveys from women employees from different sectors. The relationship between perceived workplace barriers and career advancement opportunities was determined using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The studies show that the glass ceiling denies advancement opportunities, while women are pushed into high-risk leadership roles with insufficient support, the glass cliff. The findings underscore the importance of policy changes and workplace reforms to create a more equitable workspace. Future studies should examine intersectional identity factors impacting these barriers and the influence of mentorship on career progression.

Keywords: Glass Ceiling, Glass Cliff, Women Workforce, Career Advancement, Workplace Barriers, Gender Inequality, Nagpur

1. INTRODUCTION

Though there have been many advancements globally in diverse inclusion, workplace gender inequality continues to be a growing problem. There are a host of challenges to working women, but two well-documented phenomena that affect both career advancement and professional security are the glass ceiling as well as the glass cliff. The term glass ceiling has referred to an unseeable but nonetheless powerful barrier that keeps women from moving up in leadership positions — even if they are qualified and otherwise successful. It can manifest itself in different forms, such as influenced hiring observes, unequal pay, and limited access to mentorship or leadership training. In contrast, the glass cliff mentions to the spectacle in which women who shatter the glass ceiling tend to find themselves in fragile leadership positions in organizations, especially when it's suffering from a crisis. These roles are high-stakes/high-risk/low-success roles, so female leaders are much more susceptible to criticism and failure than their male peers.

Nagpur, an emerging industrial and economic hub in the state of Maharashtra, makes for an interesting case to study these gendered barriers in the workplace. Thus, with growing representation of women in corporate, governmental and entrepreneurial space, the influence of glass ceiling and glass cliff on career aspirations and attitudinal outcomes is worth exploring. Despite the rising focus on gender equality, many women in Nagpur are still living in the

face of workplace discrimination, systematic biases and fewer opportunities for career advancement. Women who do break through find themselves in leadership roles with high instability, making their success and retention in these roles more difficult. Draining your job satisfaction, destroying your self-esteem and bubbling up your workplace's stress, while making you lose perspectives on your career and motives to work.

While a significant body of literature has inspected barriers to women in the workplace, most research has been conducted in the West, and comparatively little empirical work has included Indian cities such as Nagpur as sites of study. There is a dearth of studies that quantitatively investigate how the glass ceiling and glass cliff are influencing career trajectories of working women in Nagpur, this study seeks to bridge this gap. Using structured surveys and statistical techniques, the study evaluates how these challenges affect women's attitudes about leadership, job satisfaction and career progression. Through both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, it establishes both perceived levels of such barriers to women and the correlation to career advancement.

The results await to engender discussions about positive labour market outcomes for women, and to provide empirical evidence on structural and intrinsic challenges that women face in the professional job market related to the gender pay disparity ongoing in Nagpur, India. While the glass ceiling and glass cliff contribute to systemic inequities in career opportunities, this research highlights power dynamics that can inform policymakers, corporate leaders, and human resource professionals to develop interventions to mitigate these effects, ultimately building an inclusive and equitable workplace foundation for career opportunities. The study also emphasizes the importance of mentorship programs, leadership training, and policy changes to generate a fair and helpful work atmosphere for women professionals.

To sum up, women have made great strides in joining the workforce, but structural barriers such as the glass ceiling and the glass cliff continue to constrain their career advancement and job security. This will help inform strategies organizations can employ to create a more meritocratic environment where women feel they are given fair chances and opportunities to succeed within Nagpur.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The glass ceiling as well as glass cliff are terms that are well discussed in academia and industry with implications around their impact on gender-related barriers to leadership and careers. This review focuses on existing literature on barriers, their impact upon women's professional growth, organizational culture, and strategies to overcome barriers.

The glass ceiling concept is proposed as an unseen barrier that restricts the ability of women to ascend to upper leadership roles, hindering their progress even when they have the qualifications (Cotter et al., 2001). Different manifestations of the glass ceiling have been noted in the literature including pay disparities, discriminatory promotion mechanisms as well as limited access to professional social networks (see Alkadry & Tower, 2006). For instance, Chi and Li (2008) researched the earnings gap in the context of China and emphasized that women are doubly disadvantaged since they seem to hit either a glass ceiling (with no upward mobility) or a sticky floor (with no promotion to higher jobs). Similarly, research on Indian workforce suggests that while the entry of women in corporate is on the rise, placement of women in executive position remains disproportionately low (Gupta, 2018).

In addition, institutional research demonstrates that gender diversity at lower levels does not always improve with female senior managers. Arvate, Galilea, and Todescat (2018) question the premise that feminine leaders seek out gender inclusivity, noting that organizational culture is an important factor that leads to perpetuating the glass ceiling. This is consistent with findings from research on the queen bee syndrome, wherein women in positions of power distance or deflect female subordinates rather than support them up the ranks (Derks et al., 2011; Harvey, 2018).

Beyond the glass ceiling, women breaking through the inequality barrier are frequently met with the glass cliff, where women hold high-stake leadership positions in the face of organizational crisis (Hultin, 2003). According to Avolio and Bass (1994), women are more than capable leaders; however, they are more commonly found in positions that predispose them to failure. Research suggests that female leaders are appointed during times of financial uncertainty or restructuring, and are therefore more likely to have short tenure (Kee, 2006)

In India, Banker (2017) examined the phenomenon of glass cliff in the higher education sector, establishing that female administrators ascended to the position of leaders of the struggling institution. In the same vein, Chakrabarti (2013) argues that Indian women leaders are often under intense scrutiny and perception, making their leadership

tenures tougher than those of their male peers. This creates a perception of gender biases in female leadership that reinforces traditional norms (Broner & Asselmeier, 2013).

Indeed, others have suggested that an essential part of breaking the glass ceiling and reducing the effects of the glass cliff is changing the structure and culture within organisations. The ability of women to speak out is inhibited by barriers, which Draulans (2003) questions as either a myth or a reality when certain institutions do try to promote equality of gender through policies but is not consistently enforced. Mentorship programs, leadership training, and transparent promotion policies, among others have been identified as potential ways to help women navigate these obstacles (Imran, 2013; Katuna, 2014). They also need to react to subconscious bias with everything from hiring to performance reviews to create a more fair workplace (Gupta, 2018).

Together these literatures illustrate the durability of the glass ceiling and glass cliff as obstructions to the advancement of women in organizations. Although there have been strides, entrenched biases are still a persistent barrier to women being able to lead. Women in the workplace face unique challenges that require tailored solutions, like mentorship, impact at work and diversity policies, and inclusive leadership training, for more leveled playing field in the professional arena. More research into how various organizational structure and cultural characteristics affect these gendered obstacles to work should also be explored.

2.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To examine the prevalence of the glass ceiling and glass cliff in the workplace for women professionals.
2) To assess the effects of the glass cliff on women in leadership positions.
3) To evaluate organizational policies and practices that contribute to or mitigate these barriers.

2.2. HYPOTHESIS FOR THE STUDY

Null Hypothesis (H$_0$): Organizational policies and practices do not have a significant impact on the presence of the glass ceiling and glass cliff for women in the workplace.

Alternative Hypothesis (H$_1$): Organizational policies and practices have a significant impact on the presence of the glass ceiling and glass cliff for women in the workplace.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design is employed in this study to investigate both the effects of the glass ceiling and glass cliff on women's career progression, as well as the role of organizational policies in reducing these obstacles. Structured Questionnaire were prepared to collect the primary data from working women from various industrial sectors in Nagpur District. The survey-based questionnaire contained Likert scales-based questions for measuring the perceptions of gender barriers at workplace, Career progression challenges, and organizational support systems. A stratified random sampling method was applied to achieve illustration from corporate, education, healthcare, and government organizations. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency distribution) were performed on the collected data to analyze patterns and trends in workplace experiences. In addition, correlation analysis was carried out to investigate the connotation amongst organizational policies and existence of gender barriers. More specifically, t-tests and a regression analysis were conducted, testing hypotheses on the significance of the glass ceiling and glass cliff effects inhibiting the advancement of women in their careers. The study's statistical analyses were performed with SPSS software.

3.1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS TABLE

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Perceived Glass Ceiling (Scale: 1-5)	250	3.85	0.76	2.1	5.0
Perceived Glass Cliff (Scale: 1-5)	250	3.72	0.82	2.0	5.0
Organizational Policies Support (Scale: 1-5)	250	3.45	0.89	1.8	5.0

Career Advancement Opportunities (Scale: 1-5)	250	3.60	0.80	2.0	5.0
Leadership Representation of Women (%)	250	28.5%	9.2%	10.0%	45.0%

4. ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Under the descriptive statistics, key findings relating to the perception of glass ceiling and glass cliff among working women are reported from Nagpur. A mean score for the perceived glass ceiling 3.85 suggesting that many women feel structural barriers to advancement. Likewise, the average score for the perceived glass cliff (3.72) indicates that women are often placed in unwarranted management positions, with a high risk of disappointment.

Mean score for policy support (3.45) was relatively low underscoring ambivalent perceptions around whether workplace policies address gender barriers. Women are seen as having the potential for income advancement (Mean of 3.61) but, as the Mean for career advancement opportunity indicates (3.60), there is no equality in resources. More importantly, 28.5% of women in management situations highlights that the gender gap remains in the senior levels.

The standard deviations across these variables that the responses are moderately spread, and this could uphold that while numerous women face this type of barriers, perceptions differ based on elements for example industry, environment, and career path. These results highlight the importance of more inclusive and effective organizational policies to mitigate gendered barriers to career success.

Table Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Variables	B (Unstandardized Coefficients)	B (Standardized Coefficients)	T-Value	P-Value	VIF
Constant (Intercept)	1.245	—	4.213	0.000**	—
Promotion Policies	0.342	0.315	3.521	0.001**	1.21
Training & Development	0.289	0.267	2.915	0.004**	1.14
Workplace Culture	0.401	0.382	4.756	0.000**	1.33
Mentorship Programs	0.267	0.241	2.689	0.007**	1.1
Flexible Work Policies	0.198	0.175	2.134	0.035*	1.06
R^2	0.624	—	—	—	—
Adjusted R^2	0.609	—	—	—	—
F-Statistic	27.84	—	—	0.000**	—

5. ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Organizational rules and procedures impair glass ceiling and glass cliff hypotheses testing. In this study, multiple regression analysis was carried out to test the relationship between the dependent variable (the perceived existence of the glass ceiling and glass cliff) and the independent variables (workplace culture, mentorship programmes, promotion policies, training & development and flexible work policies).

The regression results showed that all independent variables were statistically important as the p-values were less than 0.05 for them. The determined R^2 value of 0.624 indicates that the organizational rules measured explain 62.4% of the variation in perceptions of the glass ceiling and glass cliff. Keywords: Women, Workplace, Progression rules, Workplace culture, Career prospects 1. Introduction Women's representation in the workplace is central to the contemporary discourse on gender equality. The model is statistically significant as a whole (F: 27.84, p = 0.000).

Acceptance of alternative hypothesis, H_1, i.e., all independent variables except SFF significantly explained the dependent variable, confirm that organizational policies and practices play a significant role for the continuance of glass ceiling and glass cliff. The results emphasise the importance of systematic and formal workplace practices to reduce gender-based discrimination and barriers.

6. OVERALL CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This study focused on how organizational policy and practice perpetuates the glass ceiling and glass cliff with respect to women in the workplace. Through the analysis of extensive data using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis methods, the most important representatives from organizational characteristics included in the model were promotion policies, training and development, workplace culture, mentorship programs, flexible work policies, and opportunity for women to advance.

The findings prove that company culture and promotions are what matters most and unfortunately signify that women face systemic and entrenched prejudices and issues in the workplace when rising the career ladder. The close relation between structured mentoring programs and challenges engendered provides compelling evidence that can lessen the unconditional investment in promoting gender parity in businesses.

The hypothesis-testing method suggests that organizational policies and practices either magnify or mitigate the effects of the glass ceiling as well glass cliff. These findings emphasize the critical importance of inclusive policies, transparent promotion processes, and financial resources directed toward leadership training programs if organizations wish to confirm equivalent access and prospects for women on all fronts. This study adds to the ongoing research into workplace gender inequality and highlights the importance of legislative change to guarantee women can reach their career potential.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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