



Is glass ceiling breached: A study of corporate hospitals in Northern India

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Abstract

Despite of continuous political efforts, legislative reforms and after passing 50 years of second wave of feminist social and political movement, the representation of women in upper rungs of career ladder of organisation is not noticeable enough. This paper examines the presence of glass ceiling and the factors contributing towards it in the private health care sector in northern India. The study is based on primary data collected from 131 female doctors working in leading private hospitals in northern India. It has been seen that there is an increase in the number of women at higher levels but, still glass ceiling is very common. The lack of representation of women at top level, top management's commitment towards them and some personal factors are the major reasons for glass ceiling.

Keywords: glass ceiling, feminist, queen bee syndrom

Introduction

The term Glass Ceiling was first coined in 1984 and is arguably one of the most evocative metaphors to emerge from the 20th century. However, women have made great advancements in terms of leadership equality with men in the workplace. But, they are still under represented in the top positions of the organisations. Despite of continuous political efforts, legislative reforms and after passing of 50 years of second wave of feminist social and political movement, the evidence of women's advancement is unclear. Glass ceiling includes the women in higher education, labour-force participation, pay, child-care cost, maternity and paternity rights, business school applications and representation in senior jobs.

The United States of Federal Glass Ceiling Commission defines the glass ceiling as "*the unseen, yet unbreachable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications and achievements*"

Glass ceiling is a metaphor used to describe an invisible barrier that keeps a given demographic from rising beyond a certain level in the hierarchy. These invisible barriers can be described as the extra circumstances that women undergo, usually when they were trying to advance within their careers and often within their lives outside their work spaces. The glass ceiling is a very prevalent phenomenon in the corporate world in India also. Some of the women like:- Indra Nooyi, Simone Tata and Kiran Mazumdar Shaw have breached these barriers, but the numbers are very less. One of the main reasons behind this in India is the societal pressure on women besides this there are socio-cultural, legal, personal and organisational forces which affects a woman's rise to upper echelons. However, the sense of familial duty and support can help women to get back on track after a hiatus.

This paper examines the presence of glass ceiling in private corporate hospitals and causes of glass ceiling along with the measures which can be helpful to eradicate glass ceiling from organisations. The healthcare industry has become one of the India's largest sectors both in terms of revenue and employment. It is growing at a tremendous pace owing to its strengthening coverage, services and increasing expenditure both by public as well as private players. In India, many corporate level hospitals have emerged in last few decades because of continuous growth in hospital industry. These corporate hospitals in India are increasingly attracting foreign patients and hence boosting the country's image as a hub of medical tourism. The number of corporate multispecialty and super specialty hospital chains like:- Apollo Hospitals, Fortis, Max Hospitals, Columbia Asia, Medanta, Artemis Hospitals etc. were established during the last decade in the country.

Literature Review

McDowell J.M., Singell L.D., *et al.* (1999) ^[6] examined whether gender differences in labour market attitudes can account for the observed confinement of women to lower paying rungs of the job ladder. The results show the presence of glass ceiling in an occupation where men and women have similar labour market attachments and in circumstances where there are ample controls for contemporaneous gender differences in productivity. However, the apparent improvement in promotion opportunities of female economists is indicating that glass ceiling is cracking among the economists.

Nath Deepika (2000) ^[9] examined the impact of social, organisational and personal biases over the progression of professional women in India. The results of the study indicate that family support and encouragement was critical to their success. The study suggested the organisations tend to be

women friendly from a cultural perspective. The research also showed that women had succeeded in their careers because of their ability to harness their strengths, their individual drive and desire to grow.

Christine B.W. & Francois C.W. (2008) ^[2] assessed the relevance of glass ceiling effect, due to which the gender wage gap accelerates in the upper tail of wage distribution, at the firm level. It was found that gender wage gap is quite low i.e. 8 per cent when controlling for age, experience, qualification and location. The result indicates that gender gap is mainly due to difference in other characteristics in the lower part of the distribution, while there was more discrimination in the upper part. Finally, it was concluded that women face a lower probability of reaching higher hierarchical positions within the firm.

Bombuwela P.M. & Chamaru De A.A. (2013) ^[1] discussed the problem of the effect of glass ceiling on women career development with regard to female executive level employees who are working in private sector organisations in Sri Lanka. The study reveals that the glass ceiling and women career development have a moderate negative relationship. The paper concluded that there are significant effects of glass ceiling on women career development at executive level in private sector organisations.

Guvener F., Kaplan G., *et al.* (2014) ^[3] analysed the changes in gender structure at the top of the earnings distribution in the United States over the last 30 years. The researchers found that the share of females among the top 1 per cent has increased steadily but the fraction of females in top 0.1 per cent has barely increased during the last decade. The analysis of lifetime top earners revealed that the timing of the emergence of the top earnings gender gap is consistent with the hypothesis that career interruptions may be an important consideration.

Mishra Abhishek (2014) ^[7] explained the phenomenon of glass ceiling as an instrument of gender discrimination, various expressions of gender discrimination and its impact on female working force. The study found that loss of productivity was the major impact of glass ceiling and it may also results in losing of morale and motivation among women employees. On a whole, study recommended that support of top management, training programmes, career guidance and a gender sensitive approach by organisation and society are essential to break the glass ceiling.

Nandy S., Bhaskar A., *et al.* (2014) ^[8] studied the glass ceiling effect or gender diversity issue in organisations along with cultural biases, gender stereotypes and how women can be encouraged and promoted at respectful and managerial positions. The study found that organisations treat women where they have interests on women but cannot rely on their efficiency, so they are still facing barriers in career advancement, gender stereotyping and other threats. The study recommended for collective efforts of government and private organisations to diminish the practice of gender stereotyping and glass ceiling.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of study:

1. To study glass ceiling in private health care sector in northern India.

2. To study the demographic factors effecting the perception of female employees regarding glass ceiling.
3. To determine which factor out of personal, psychological, societal, organisational, equity, etc. impact glass ceiling the most.
4. To suggest the measures which are helpful to eradicate the glass ceiling from an organisation.

Research methodology

The present study focuses to explore the presence of glass ceiling in the large private hospitals in northern India. The present study is based on primary data, which has been collected directly from the female doctors and other higher level administrators using a close ended questionnaire. The female doctors of larger private hospitals i.e. Medanta, Appolo, Fortis, Columbia Asia and Max Hospitals from northern India were selected as respondents of questionnaire on the convenience bases. For the purpose of study 150 questionnaires were distributed among the female doctors of these hospitals, out of which 131 were received properly filled and considered in the study. The region covered was in Delhi, Gurgaon, Chandigarh and top cities of Punjab.

The questionnaire has been framed with the help of experts, which was been divided into three parts:

- The first parts deals with the demographic profile of the respondents i.e. age, qualification, job position etc.
- The second has statements regarding the presence of glass ceiling in the organisation and the factors which contribute towards glass ceiling.
- The last part includes the questions whether glass ceiling can be removed from the organisation and the ways which can contribute in removing glass ceiling from organisation.

The responses of each statement or questions were recorded using 5 point likert scale. To ensure the reliability of the statements the Cronbach's Alpha has been calculated from each statement and the statements having Cronbach' Alpha greater than 0.6 were included in the questionnaire.

Analysis

The responses recorded on 5 point likert scale were analysed by assigning weights i.e. 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree and calculating weighted mean for each parameter. About all the parameters/factors related to glass ceiling based on available literature were taken into consideration which includes, psychological/personal factors, society related factors, organisational factors, equity, gender discrimination, self-discrimination, harassment and queen bee syndrome.

The Shapiro-Wilk test's critical value is very less i.e. near to 0.000 for almost all the variables, which implies that data is not normally distributed. Therefore, the non-parametric tests were used to know the effect of demographic profile over the opinion of respondents. The Kruskal Wallis H test is used to know the difference across more than two categories i.e. Age, Qualification and Job position. The Mann-Whitney U test is implemented to know the difference for two categories i.e. Marital Status.

Analysis and interpretation

For the purpose of study the weighted mean were computed to measure the presence of glass ceiling and factors contributing towards glass ceiling. Further, p-value are shown in the tables

to know the effect of age, qualification, job position and marital status over the various statements. The mean and test's p-values were shown in the following tables:

Table 1

Statements	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I feel glass ceiling exists in my organisation.	3.18	0.036*	0.006*	0.023*	0.009*
Number of women penetrating the hierarchy and achieving senior positions is steadily rising.	3.77	0.081	0.247	0.109	0.080
Do you believe that your career with this organisation will be bright being a women.	3.59	0.092	0.088	0.002*	0.181
Do you feel women employees are consulted by senior management frequently.	3.35	0.036*	.000*	0.208	0.682

In the table 1, shows mean value for all the statements is above 3 i.e. towards agree point on scale, which implies the respondents feel existence of glass ceiling in organisation. On the other hand, respondents agreed that number of women at senior positions is increasing, women are consulted by senior management and their career with the organisation is bright. The test result shows that there is significant difference in the

opinions of respondents especially in categories like age, qualification, job position as well as marital status. The difference in mean between various categories of age and qualification for the statement that women employees are consulted by senior management is significant at 5% level of significance.

Table 2: Psychological/Personal Factors

Psychological/Personal Factors	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I feel uncomfortable to work with male employees.	2.14	0.018*	0.432	0.229	0.013*
I would rather remain in the same position as I can't put in more time/ efforts.	2.14	0.351	0.128	0.429	0.590
I feel sometimes, I get emotional.	3.6	0.088	0.076	0.136	0.000*
I think women employees spend less time to learn new skills and techniques.	2.04	0.547	0.210	0.855	0.208
I think women are less ambitious and self-confident.	1.81	0.262	0.082	0.887	0.462
I don't prefer to be in the shoes of a senior management.	2.79	0.020*	0.429	0.408	0.782
I don't prefer to be transferred after getting promotion.	2.78	0.338	0.000*	0.681	0.115
I feel lack of enthusiasm and competitiveness in women.	2.18	0.011*	0.082	0.146	0.018*

In the table 2, the mean for all the psychological and personal factors is below 2 i.e. towards disagree, except for emotional factor (3.6). This shows that most women feel that they get emotional easily. The Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney test result indicate that, there is significant difference at 5% level

of significance across different categories of age and marital status in the responses for the factors that they uncomfortable to work with male employees and lack of enthusiasm and competitiveness in women.

Table 3: Society Related Factors

Society Related Factors	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I feel existence of masculine/patriarchal corporate culture.	3.25	0.191	0.680	0.000*	0.000*
I think there is lack of opportunity for advancement in the career.	2.82	0.011*	0.003*	0.513	0.158
I feel lack of support by family members during tough times in career.	2.26	0.510	0.002*	0.827	0.139
I have family constraints in socializing with males during outstation assignments, etc.	2.46	0.023*	0.795	0.030*	0.016*
I think males have a perception that women are not willing to make sacrifices required to get and remain at senior positions.	3.32	0.087	0.214	0.738	0.638

Table 3, indicates that majority of respondents feels the existence of masculine/patriarchal corporate culture and males have the perceptions towards female co-workers that they are not willing to make sacrifices required to get senior positions. However, they find equal opportunity & family support as male co-workers. The test results reveal that there exist significant differences across the categories of job position

and marital status in the opinion regarding existence of masculine/patriarchal corporate culture at 1% level of significance. The opinion across categories of age and qualification is significantly different for the lack of opportunity for advancement in the career. There is significant difference in the opinion of respondents from different categories of age, job position and marital status regarding

socializing with males during outstation assignments, etc.

Table 4: Organisational Factors

Organisational Factors	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I feel that organisational structure is in favour of male employees.	2.89	0.182	0.119	0.361	0.281
I think there is lack of representation of women at the top level.	3.16	0.075	0.597	0.860	0.017*
Women employees are less exposed to activities like strategic decision making, planning, budgeting etc., compared to male employees.	3.19	0.121	0.456	0.152	0.623
Women in particular, have less access to top organizational information.	2.94	0.028*	0.065	0.371	0.204
I feel there is lack of support and co-operation from co-workers for women.	2.92	0.170	0.338	0.315	0.580
I think there is higher expectations of performance and efforts from women as compared to males while promotion.	3.09	0.778	0.003*	0.113	0.533
There is lack of top management commitment to females.	3.16	0.011*	0.004*	0.646	0.593

Table 4, shows that there is lack of representation of women at top level and women are less exposed to higher level activities as compared to male employees. Most of the women feel that there is higher expectation of performance and efforts from them and lack of top management's commitment towards them as compared to males. Further, the test results show that there exists significant difference in the responses of respondents

across different categories of age and qualification for the lack of top management commitment to females. There is significant difference in the opinion of respondents with respect to qualification as there are higher expectations of performance and efforts from women as compared to males while promotion.

Table 5: Factors related Equity

Equity	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I think that pay inequality exists between male and female employees (who work at same designation).	2.71	0.005*	0.093	0.033*	0.000*
I think there is unequal employment and promotional opportunities for female candidates when compared to male candidates.	2.94	0.006*	0.596	0.046*	0.000*
I feel lack of support and co-operation from top management for women.	3.11	0.062	0.497	0.029*	0.055

It is observed from the table 5, most of the women respondents feel lack of support and co-operation from top management as mean in more than 3. However, they relatively disagree with the existence of pay inequality and unequal employment and promotion opportunities as compared to male. However, the test results indicate that the opinion

regarding existence of pay inequality and unequal employment and promotion opportunities between male and female employees is significantly different across categories of age, job position and marital status at 1% level of significance.

Table 6: Factor related to Gender Discrimination

Gender Discrimination	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
My organisation encourages gender equality.	3.51	0.003*	0.000*	0.002*	0.183
There is gender discrimination while assigning high-visibility assignments by superior.	2.84	0.264	0.000*	0.751	0.975
I feel uncomfortable with the top management behaviour and attitude towards me (being a woman).	2.62	0.003*	0.238	0.092	0.117

Table 6, reveals that respondents are agree that their organisation encourages gender equality. Further, women disagree regarding existence of gender discrimination while assigning assignments and negative behaviour and attitude of top management. There is significant difference in the opinion

of respondents across different categories of age, qualification and job position at 1% level of significance. Further, across categories of qualification there is significant difference regarding gender discrimination while assigning high-visibility assignments by superior.

Table 7: Factors related to Self-Discrimination

Self-Discrimination	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I am not able to work overtime if required to complete assignments and get promoted in the organisation.	2.19	0.244	0.002*	0.686	0.284
I think i am not as capable as males to reach higher career level in an organisation.	1.96	0.850	0.013*	0.882	0.945

Table 7 shows that female employees have the opinion that

they are as capable as males to reach at higher level and are

able to work overtime also if required to complete assignment and get promoted. This implies that there is no sense of self-discrimination among female employees and it can contribute in removing glass ceiling. The test results reveal that opinion of respondents from different categories of qualification is

significantly different at 5% level of significance in both scenarios i.e. i) that they are not able to work overtime and ii) they are not as capable as males to reach higher career level in an organisation.

Table 8: Factors related to Twin Responsibility

Twin Responsibility	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I feel I have to sacrifice my promotions etc. due to my family needs.	2.54	0.022*	0.561	0.427	0.047*
I choose fewer challenging jobs because of young children/ aged parents.	2.59	0.049*	0.235	0.262	0.022*
I get stressed easily as I have to balance my role between work and family.	2.49	0.404	0.152	0.030*	0.683
I will leave my job after I have children.	1.97	0.140	0.010*	0.047*	0.664
I will leave my job if my husband gets transferred.	2.53	0.081	0.200	0.096	0.602

In the table 8, mean values 2.59 and 2.54 indicate that there is some effect of young children and aged parents over the female employees in choosing challenging jobs and accepted promotions. However, majority of females do not think, that they will leave their job after they have children. The test results show that response of respondents across different categories of age and marital status is significantly different at

5% level of significance for the statements that "I feel I have to sacrifice promotions and choose fewer challenging jobs because of young children, aged parents and family needs". The respondents from different categories of qualification and job position have significant difference in opinion regarding whether they will leave their job after having children.

Table 9: Factors related to Harassment

Harassment	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
Have you experienced any form of sexual harassment in this organisation.	1.87	0.956	0.242	0.958	0.875
I witnessed sexual harassment at workplace towards a colleague.	1.87	0.393	0.257	0.966	0.498
Women have to deal with threats after having been a victim or witness of sexual harassment at workplace.	3.17	0.022*	0.075	0.540	0.956
If there is a case of harassment, women raise a voice against it.	3.68	0.003*	0.201	0.119	0.796
My organisation has good redressal policy for women harassment.	3.65	0.269	0.010*	0.031*	0.306

Table 9, indicates that women have to deal with threats after having been a victim or witness of sexual harassment, which may be major cause of glass ceiling in organisation. However, most of the women have not experienced or became a witness of some form of sexual harassment in organisation. The test results indicate that, opinion of respondents from different categories of qualification and job position is significantly

different at 5% level of significance. Their organisation has good redressal policy for women harassment. Further, category of age has significant effect over the opinion of respondents regarding the statements that women have to deal with threats after having been a victim or witness of sexual harassment at workplace and women raise a voice against it.

Table 10: Factors related to Queen Bee Syndrome

Queen Bee Syndrome	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
I have to face unsupportive behaviour of women employees while getting promotion.	2.77	0.348	0.850	0.364	0.388
I feel I will face opposition of women employees if I am at a senior level.	2.90	0.101	0.402	0.3.6	0.021*

From the means above (2.77 & 2.90) the respondents neither agree nor disagree regarding queen bee syndrome. The opinion of respondents from different category of marital

status is significantly different at 5% level of significance for the statement that they feel the opposition of women employees at senior level.

Table 11: Factors affecting Glass Ceiling

Factors	Mean
Personal/ Psychological Factors	2.43
Society Related Factors	2.82
Organisational Factors	3.07
Equity	2.92
Gender Discrimination	2.99
Self-Discrimination	2.08
Twin Responsibility	2.43
Harassment	2.85

Queen Bee Syndrome	2.83
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Table 11, shows that among all the factors organisational factors have the greatest impact over glass ceiling followed by gender discrimination in the organisations. On the other hand, self-discrimination and personal/ psychological factors have least impact on glass ceiling.

Table 12: Can glass ceiling be removed from our society

	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	32.8
No	27.5
Can't Say	39.7

Table 12, show that highest percentage of respondents (39.7) has the opinion as "CAN'T SAY" that glass ceiling can be removed from the society and their organisations. Further, 27.5 per cent of respondents have the opinion that glass ceiling cannot be removed from the organisations. While, 32.8% feel it can be removed.

Table 13: Factors which can contribute in removing Glass Ceiling

Statements	Mean	p-value (Age)	p-value (Qualification)	p-value (Job Position)	p-value (Marital Status)
Freedom to share views and ideas freely with my male co-workers.	3.94	0.015*	0.132	0.799	0.790
Providing job rotation/ training facilities to furnish everyone an opportunity to learn new things.	4.02	0.035*	0.432	0.413	0.023*
Giving due recognition for the work a female does.	3.96	0.025*	0.081	0.008*	0.008*
Support from family members during tough times in career.	4.27	0.004*	0.222	0.119	0.002*
Freedom to use initiative in performing any job.	3.97	0.780	0.334	0.224	0.050
By improving relation with staff & Employers.	3.92	0.119	0.199	0.003*	0.006*
Avoid gender discrimination while assigning high level assignments.	4.18	0.116	0.398	0.031	0.001*
By involving women employees in higher level activities like decision making, planning, budgeting etc.	4.06	0.032*	0.390	0.115	0.001*
More commitment of senior management towards female employees.	3.72	0.126	0.534	0.001*	0.046*

The above table, has the highest mean for the statement regarding support from the family members during tough times in career, implies it as a most important factor to remove glass ceiling from the society. Further, the responses show that training for everyone to learn new things, avoiding gender discrimination while assigning high level assignments and involving women employees in higher level activities i.e. decision making, planning, budgeting etc. are also effective ways to remove glass ceiling from an organisation. The test results indicate that opinion across age, job position and marital status are significantly different for the factor giving due recognition for the work a female does. Further, opinion of different categories of age and marital status is significantly different at 1% level of significance for the most important factor i.e. support from family members during tough times in career.

Findings

- The phenomenon of glass ceiling is very common in India as male plays a dominant role from centuries. In this study also the respondents agree to the existence of glass ceiling to some extent in the top private hospitals, instead of number of efforts taken for removing it. However, they agreed that number of women at higher positions were increasing but still it's less as compared to men.
- Somewhat personal reasons such as women get emotional easily, and hence they are unable to perform higher level jobs. Further, lack of enthusiasm and competitiveness are also factors responsible for glass ceiling.

- Women have to face wrong perception of male employees that women are not willing to make sacrifices required to get and remain at senior positions. The existence of masculine/patriarchal corporate culture is also an obstacle for women to reach upper positions in hierarchy.
- There is lack of representation of women at the top level in organisation and lack of top management commitment towards females also contribute towards glass ceiling in corporate sector.
- Twin responsibility also contributes towards glass ceiling to some extent as female employees choose fewer challenging jobs because of young children/ aged parents and they get stressed due to double responsibilities.
- Women have to deal with threats after having been a victim or witness of sexual harassment at workplace which stops women to compete with men and achieve higher positions in any organisation.
- The queen bee syndrome also contributes a little towards glass ceiling as female employees feel that they may face opposition of women employees if they will be at a senior level.
- The study determined that organisational factors and gender discrimination have impact glass ceiling the most.
- Most of respondents are not sure whether glass ceiling can be removed from our society and organisation. But, they have an opinion that support from family members during tough times in career and avoiding the gender discrimination while assigning high level assignments in an organisation may contribute most to remove the glass ceiling in any organisation.

- Overall, the age of the respondents has significant impact on their opinion regarding glass ceiling and the factors affecting it. It implies that newcomers or less experienced female employees may be facing more glass ceiling in organisations.

Suggestions

- Women employees should be given higher level activities like strategic decision making, planning, budgeting etc., equal to the male employees in organisation.
- The career counselling programmes must be organised at educational institutions level for guiding females to improve their enthusiasm and competitiveness. On the other hand, there is need to provide value addition knowledge to change the perception of males in the society.
- There must be increased commitment of senior management towards female employees. The proper training programmes must be organised for women and freedom to share views and ideas freely with their male co-workers must be ensured by top management in an organisation.
- There should be support and co-operation from top management for women. The female employees should also work in unity and co-operate with each other.
- At last, it is suggested that women have to be mentally and emotionally strong. They have to change their perception that glass ceiling cannot be removed from their workplace. If the female employees come out more strongly and enthusiastically glass ceiling can be easily removed from the country.

Conclusion

Women have made great advancement in terms of leadership equality with men in the workplace. However, some of the women in corporate sector have breached the barrier of glass ceiling, but the numbers are very less. Instead of number of social and political efforts, the study shows the existence of glass ceiling in the private medical sector. The personal factors like emotional nature of women and lack of enthusiasm and competitiveness have emerged as major barriers. The organisational factors such as lack of representation of women at the top level and top management's non commitment towards females are also contributing towards glass ceiling. It is concluded that, woman have to work with enthusiasm and have to change the perception of male employees towards them. They have to work with unity and co-operate with each other to grow higher in their careers.

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