



WOMEN AND GLASS CEILING IN ACADEMIA: A STUDY IN PAKISTANI CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

All over the world women have been and are always downgraded and relegated everywhere, whether it's a developed or developing country, their social status is marginalized by society. Seeing the low representation of women at the top managerial level, this paper aims to analyze the existence and level of 'glass ceiling' about women in Pakistani academia. The study tries to explore the answer to such questions like; why are women marginalized in leading position? What are the obstacles faced by women to the level of advancement in academia? Is it merely due to culturally and socially constructed prescribed roles or is one of the forms of gender discrimination? To find the answers to these questions, the method has been designed to collect data through secondary resources for analyzing the representation of females at higher levels in universities. The study reveals that apart from socially constructed gender discrimination, chauvinism is not the sole reason behind hindering the women from reaching the higher level in hierarchy, instead, it is 'self-imposed glass ceiling' by women as well, as they sacrifice their career because of their family preferences and other circumstances which are not conducive for them to continue their job, and hence the opinion generalized about them that they are not suitable for the jobs specially at the level of advancement due to higher responsibilities and more

timings, therefore they are depreciated and cause ‘glass ceiling’ because of these facts. On the other hand male are given preference because they are breadwinners and best suited to be hired and given promotions to the level of advancement.

Keywords: Glass Ceiling, obstacles, academia, level of advancement, socially constructed, marginalized, chauvinism

INTRODUCTION

Around the world working women are facing challenges and obstacles which hinder them from growing in their professional life to managerial level. In this regard, Pakistan is not an exception however, being one of the most chauvinistic societies Pakistani working women have to face more challenges in the form of “glass ceiling”. Glass ceiling is hidden obstacle, which constraints minority to the level of advancement, but generally the phrase is used for the women, to rise above in their profession by restricting them to higher positions in hierarchy. It is the hidden barrier to headway after certain echelon, being used as a metaphor, means, through which the higher level can be seen so far, through their vintage point, but to reach there one has to shatter that ceiling which is invisible and seems impossible due to discrimination or restrictions.

The phrase “Glass Ceiling” was first used by Marilyn Loden (1978) in a conference in New York City in which she presented the issues regarding women at top managerial level. BBC had chosen her as one of 100 “influential and inspirational women around

the world”. The term was first printed in a book “*The Working Women Report: Succeeding in Business in the 80s*” by Gay Byrant (1984). And was popularized by “*The Wall Street Journal*” (1986) in which Carol Hymowitz and Timothy D. Schellhardt wrote a special report with the title “*Glass Ceiling*”. The U.S. Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1991) defines glass ceiling as the barriers which are artificial and are a result of the bias of attitude and organizational processes “that prevent(s) qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions.” (Report on the Glass Ceiling Initiative. U.S. Department of Labor 1991). Morrison and colleagues (1991) contends that glass ceiling is an invisible obstacle that restricts women to achieve certain higher level just because of being women irrespective of their qualification and other capabilities. Seeing women in higher level is rare all over the world. As we go higher in hierarchy the number of females becomes lesser and lesser. In the 500 Fortune Companies, 24 companies do not have any

female in their board and only 4.2% of female could get the post of CEO. This fact shows that women are being marginalized and relegated in all societies.

According to the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) when the women managers were asked during a survey about the major obstacles in their career, most of them held responsible the number of things like; chauvinistic attitude of male, discrimination against female, slow advancement and low salary for women. While only 3% said that the responsibilities of family becomes the hurdle to advancement. According to the same survey 80% of the women who are at the executive level were of the opinion that they were disadvantaged because of being a female in the profession world. 25% reported that they had been relegated to the upper level of hierarchy by male discriminatory attitudes. And 70% of the women believed that in spite of having equal capabilities they were paid less than men.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Different Researches and studies view and define obstacles for women to the level of advancement differently. Some consider it as a form of gender discrimination and patriarchy while some view it as socially constructed and culturally prescribed gender roles. Almost all the societies in the world

are gender based, where the gender roles have been in practice as determined by society. And society defines that what men are supposed to do, and what social roles are expected from women. A General Counsel for a sales and marketing in San Francisco, Olga Mack (2016) in her article '*The Glass Ceiling*' depicts that women at top level in corporations are very uncommon. Once she was called for a business meeting where the room was full of professionals' men and in the sea of men being the only female was generally perceived as a guest or with someone else.

Various theories such as gender role theory, role congruity theory, hegemonic masculinity, theories of gender inequalities, theories of feminism and social constructionism explain the low representation of women at the level of advancement. Jill Mathews (1984) views gender order as not necessarily based on patriarchy but a pattern or order maintained by social women and men and power relation between them. R.W.Connell (1995) in defining '*hegemonic masculinity*' emphasizes the status of women as subordinated, and men as a dominant social being. Eagly and Karau (2002) in their articulation of role and congruity theory propose that there is a perception of incongruity between leadership

and feminine gender role and that women are less favorable for leadership as leadership is a masculine characteristic. According to the theory of social construction of gender in feminism, the gender roles are created by the culture and society, which are been prescribed, so men and women have to play their roles accordingly. (Marecek, Crawford and Popp)

Judith Lorber (1994) in her book "Night to his Day: The Social Construction of Gender", claims that gender roles ruminatively disrupt our expectations as how both the genders are supposed to play their roles, for the gender roles have been changed today. The status of both is stratified in a way that man is ranked above the woman and creates differences and discrimination. Both the genders are different but should be treated equally. The actions of men are considered as highly valuable as compared to women.

Laufer (2003) highlights the self-imposed glass ceiling by suggesting that being family caregivers, women have to look after children and elderly. And due to that to spend less time at workplace and more at home, women themselves are reluctant to the level of advancement. He further argues that women can mostly be seen in the field of teaching and nursing. These professions are mostly suited to them in respect of timings.

Albee and Perry (1998) believe the adage that for the home women are best suited while for the workplace men. Ferree and Williams (1990, 2000) supports the idea that males and females are different with different abilities, needs and values. Barnett and Rivers (2004) argue that the belief that both the sexes are different through all aspects is mischievous.

Glass Ceiling commission report (1991) argues that some studies showed that women are less likely to relocate and hence this halts their advancement to executive level and held one of the causes of low salary. Pochic (2005) supports this by saying that women cannot easily make their spouse to mobility due to her career as she is supposed to be the follower of her husband so, women rejects such opportunities for not being travel and relocate, and hence not being offered to the level of advancement due to this reason. Cotter and Colleagues (2001) argue that the glass ceiling is because of increased racial differences in men, and gender inequalities in female. Belgihiti and Kartochian (2008) describes that not only women faces the barriers to reach to the executive level but the men also come up with some impediments; however the problems faced by women are doubled as compared to men.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method has been used for data collection, through secondary resources to analyze the representation of female at top level in universities. The sample was drawn from the academia.

A random selection of 5 well reputed universities was made from the city Karachi, irrespective of being private, public, women, or combine, to analyze the situation regarding female faculty. (The universities selected for the data collection are; University of Karachi, Jinnah University for Women, Bahria University, Muhammad Ali Jinnah University(MAJU), Federal Urdu University of Science and technology (FUUST).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data obtained by secondary resources depicts the existence and situation of glass ceiling on the base of gender in academia. Though women around the world are marginalized in all sphere of life but teaching is considered as the most family friendly occupation for women in Pakistan so the female indulgent in this field is higher as compared to other fields. In spite of this fact, women are being obstructed here too, to the level of advancement, as shown in the table 1.

The table 1 shows the low representation of female almost in all the universities which

are taken as a sample, except the Jinnah University for women where the female percentage is higher but if we keenly observe their designation, we will notice that the large proportion of females are accumulated at the lower rung, while the male is at leading position even in the university which is for women. On the other hand, in MAJU all the leading positions are carrying by males with no females at all. The table clearly depicts that as we go higher to the top level in academia the number of women become lesser and lesser, and the women seeing as a Vice-chancellor or registrar is merely a dream. Even for the women to the position of Dean and directorate is very rare. The one can hardly see any women at the top level, because of the certain social and cultural barriers.

Several studies and researches have been conducted regarding this issue and the results depicts that there are multiple causes but overall the reason behind all such causes is discriminatory behavior due to male domination, power, and leadership.

Practicing Hegemonic power

Pakistan is one of the male dominating societies, where men practice and enjoy their power on women in all social sphere of life. Moreover, woman is victim of power as R.W. Connell (1995) describes in her theory

of 'Hegemonic Masculinity'. Women are discriminated by men in most academia in Pakistan as considered by being submissive and weak.

Attribution of men as a leader

Leadership quality is generally concerned with the man as he is considered as powerful, strong and authoritarian and more knowledgeable than women. As the 'role congruity theory' attributed leadership as a male characteristic this perception is deeply prevailed in our chauvinistic society, which doesn't allow women to come to the level of advancement and to achieve success.

Reluctance of women to have top positions

Evidences revealed the fact that sometimes, there is self-imposed glass ceiling by women themselves. The one of the hindrance which restricts women to go to the top level is their family preferences, as highlighted by Laufer (2003). Because women give priority to their family and can easily sacrifice by leaving job in the middle of the career. This compulsive womanly attitude towards profession is hazardous for any organization especially at top management level, as it affects the proficiency of that organization. Relocation during the job especially for the promotion is also a matter of obstruction for women as they are less likely to relocate, obviously

because of the family as said by Pochic (2005).

Hiring women at top level is Risk- taking for the organization

Companies or organizations spend a lot of money on their employees for the trainings, workshops and refreshing courses, in case of female, there are more chances to quit job, as compare to male, results in loss of money and time, so to hire woman and to promote for the top managerial and administrative level can be of no use as compare to man. It's not a matter of their competency, intelligence, qualification and skills but their inconsistency, uncertainty at workplace in case of marriage, childbirth, and in-laws pressure to leave job. Keeping this in mind the management rarely promotes women to higher positions. The questions arises then why do they are hired but cannot be reached to top level in hierarchy, the answer is that the management often hire women because they work hardly and at low salary due to being submissive and subordinated nature, which is socially constructed.

Stereotyping towards women

Traditionally and culturally, it is been assumed that women are for domestics, she is not supposed to perform jobs outside home, she is to taking care of home and rearing children (3cs Cook, Child Rearing, Cleaning)

(Henslin, 2003). Considered as weak, submissive, sensitive, inferior, capricious, while men are considered as strong, powerful, superior, and dominant and having such capabilities and power which women do not possess. These are true to higher extent. Regardless of these, there are a lot of stereotype thinking, which we can call social construct women can't lead, they can't take decision, and are less than men in such capabilities and power. Basically this stereotype thinking impede women to rise above and show their talent, competency, and

capabilities. As also discussed in '*Gender Role theory*' that men are for outside work to earn and women are for the home to taking care of home and children.

Men as a breadwinner

Another reason to give preference to male on women is that man is a breadwinner and most applicable to be hired and best suited for promotions to the higher post, ignoring the fact that women may be the sole breadwinner being a single mother, or as a widow.

Table 1: Gender based representation, according to Designation at Upper level positions in Universities

DESIGNATION	UNIVERSITIES										TOTAL		
	Bahria University		FUUST		Jinnah women University		MAJU		UoK		Male	Female	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Vice Chancellor			1		1					1		3	
Registrar			1			1	1			1		3	1
Rector/President	1						1					2	
Director/Directorate	5	1	2				4			5	1	16	2
Deputy director /Assistant Director	1	2										1	2
Dean/Associate Dean				1	2	2	4			8	1	14	4
HOD/Coordinator	3	2	1		1	23	5					10	25
Chairperson/Chairman			4	2						30	22	34	58
TOTAL	10	5	9	3	4	26	15	0	45	24	83	58	

CONCLUSION

In the light of literature, and the findings, the study reveals that there is existence of glass ceiling in academia. The board of directors and general bodies in academia are all almost consists on male, who likes to vote for male offcourse. Though there are certain barriers which cause this happen in our male dominating society, but apart from hegemonic masculinity and gender stereotyping which is socially constructed, there is existence of self-imposed glass ceiling by women themselves. Which hinder them to do excel in their life but unfortunately this self-imposed glass ceiling is also due to the patriarchy system which enforces pressure on them. But there is a need to ponder on the question that whether the women are ready to shatter their self-made glass ceiling? Whether the society gives pace to women to lead and do excel. Whether the society stops stereotyping for being women and promote gender equality?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are based on the findings developed by the recent study.

We have to rethink about the social roles, and discriminatory behavior towards women though gender discrimination has always been discussed in this concern and will have been as it is the direct reason which causes

such other reasons of 'glass ceiling' indirectly. And we have to develop our ideas and thought regarding leadership and male domination in society if we have to provide equal chance to women to lead, and for this 'small win' strategy should be used.

According to the recent census report 49% of our country's population is women, almost half of the country's population, therefore; this half of the population cannot be ignored in any sphere of life especially in terms of education and economy if we have to make progress women's role should be appreciated everywhere and they should be empowered by making such laws and policies which enable them to become powerful, strong and confident.

More rights and protection should be given to them to do excel in any field regardless of their ethnicity or being women. Conducive environment should be provided to them.

All types of prejudices, gender stereotyping and discrimination should be avoided at all levels. If women are powerful, strong and upgraded at home, they will be at workplace too.

Enforcement of laws and implementation of policies should strictly be followed which are already in existence. Media can also play a pivotal role in promoting and enhancing women empowerment in society. And this

step is very significant to develop new thought or mindset and to change the masses' attitude towards working women.

Equality should be promoted by giving equal status to women as male especially if it comes about salary. And women should be appointed at top level of advancement on the basis of competency, irrespective of their gender as being female.

Moreover the women themselves have to realize their rights and duties and importance to break the self-creating glass ceiling.

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