

## GLASS CEILING AND GENDER JUSTICE: A STUDY

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### Introduction

Before we go in the discussion of glass ceiling and gender justice, it would be pertinent if we make some analysis of the two concepts: 'Glass Ceiling' and 'Gender Justice'.

### 1.0 Glass Ceiling

So far as glass ceiling is concerned, it is not exactly known as to who coined the term but it was widely used during the mid-1980s. The term was first popularized in the 80s in order to describe the major challenges that the women face at the time when their careers comes under stagnation mostly at the middle-management roles and prevent them from achieving higher leadership or executive roles. The first person said to use the term Glass ceiling was Marilyn Loden during a 1978 speech. At a later period, the concept was seen in an article in the Wall Street Journal in March 1986. The term was used in the article's title: "The Glass Ceiling: Why Women Can't Seem to Break The Invisible Barrier. The glass ceiling is a symbol for the invisible and synthetic barriers blocking women from advancing up the corporate ladder to management and executive positions. In short, it is artificial impediments and invisible barriers that works against women's access to the top decision-making and managerial positions in an organization, may it be public or private or any other domain. To be precise, a glass ceiling is a specific type of gender or racial inequality that can be distinguished from other types of inequality. (

Cotter et al, 2010). Since the term "glass ceiling" was coined, the women have made great progress in terms of leadership equality with men in the workplace. Despite this, women are still under-represented in the upper echelons of organizations. (Barreto, Ryan, and Schmitt, 2009).

It has again rightly been said that the women have made considerable progress in entering the managerial ranks of enterprises in recent years, but not at the highest level. (Powell and Butterfield (1994).

The United States Federal Glass Ceiling Commission defines the glass ceiling as "the unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements." David Cotter and colleagues defined four distinctive characteristics that must be met to conclude that a glass ceiling exists. A glass ceiling inequality represents:

1. "A gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee."
2. "A gender or racial difference that is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome."
3. "A gender or racial inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels."
4. "A gender or racial inequality that increases over the course of a career."

The metaphor was first coined by feminists in reference to barriers in the careers of high-achieving women. In the US, the concept is sometimes extended to refer to the barriers that stands as a stumbling block and hinders women. These "Invisible Barriers" function as metaphors to describe the extra circumstances that women undergo, usually when trying to advance within areas of their careers and often while trying to advance within their lives outside their work spaces. It may be stated further that "A glass ceiling" represents a barrier that prohibits women from advancing toward the top of a hierarchical corporation. The women who can move in the higher ladder are prevented and obstructed from receiving promotion, especially to the executive rankings, within their corporation. In the last twenty years, the women who have become more involved and pertinent in industries and organizations, have rarely been in the executive ranks. Women in most corporations encompass below five percent of board of directors and corporate officer positions.

The Women who entered in the domain of work in large numbers during the late 1970s and early 1980s found themselves unable to advance beyond a certain level of management. It is believed as one of the major reasons for inequality against the women in the society. Let us clarify the term, 'Glass ceiling' effect. As already noted, it refers to the invisible barrier that obstructs women to rise to a higher position in spite of having merits on the basis of

education and ability. It is unfortunate that the glass ceiling is much effective even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Again, many of us are unaware of the proper steps, which are necessary to be taken to counter this subtle form of discrimination. Much attempt has been taken to counter this menace but so far, no guaranteed strategy or mechanism could be found which can help an individual to break through the glass ceiling. In fact, we live in such a society where gender roles develop in such a way that leads to gender inequality. It starts from the family level. It is seen that the parents usually reflect a differential attitude towards the male child. It is a matter of reality that the male child always gets prominence in the family circle. On the other hand, the female child grows up in a discriminatory environment since their birth. The glass ceiling, that invisible barrier to advancement that women face at the top levels of the workplace, remains as intractable as ever and is a drag on the economy. It is necessary to mention in this connection that some new researches carried out by the University of Chicago has found that there are definitely plenty of evidences that the gender as a factor has stood on the way and prevented many talented women from achieving their full potential at work. Apart from that there are many other factors beyond gender discrimination which pull the women back in their workplace.

There is no denying the fact on the part of the management, there is a lack from extracting talents from the women. There is a blind belief that men are more equipped and it is necessary that this belief should be shattered in no time. In our society, the talent of the women is not tested in most of the cases and it is left on the table as a result of which the entire economy suffers. But this discrimination is prevalent right from the birth time. Women from birth are looked at as inferior to men. As a society, we label babies by the color of their blanket when they are born. Boys are given blue as girls are given pink blankets. This distinction from the start separates the two genders. As boys grow they are given action figures and are taught to play rough games, and girls are given dolls and taught to play soft. In the practical world, these differences continue to cause a gap between the two genders. Closely connected with glass ceiling, the following terms should also be analyzed.

## **2.0 Bamboo Ceiling**

Along with 'glass ceiling', Jane Hyun coined the phrase "[bamboo ceiling](#)" in the year 2005 in order to describe the barriers Asians and Asian Americans face in achieving upper-level professional success in the United States. As we know, the bamboo is used even on the roads to stop or control the movement of the vehicles; similarly, it acts as a deterrent factor on the way of success of the women and reaching their targets.

## **3.0 Concrete Ceiling**

Closely connected with 'glass ceiling', we find the existence of 'concrete ceiling'. The glass ceiling originally referred to women (in general), and women of colour face an even tougher barrier — a "concrete ceiling." It may be stated that this term was coined in the year of [2016 by Jasmine Babers](#) to describe the significantly tougher hurdle that the women of colour face in reaching elevated success in their respective careers.

## **4.0 Glass Escalator**

The term 'glass escalator' was coined in the year 1992 by Christine L. Williams. The term or the concept "[glass escalator](#)" refers to men who tap into female-dominated fields and accelerate into higher positions. [It has also been suggested](#) that men enter female-dominated industries in an effort to obtain job stability, financial security and better family benefits. In recent times, we find that there is free movement in the domain of men by the women and in the domain of women, the men have started moving.

## **5.0 Ways To Combat The Glass Ceiling**

In view of the obstacles faced particularly by the women, it became essential to find out the ways to combat the glass ceiling menace.

1. It is necessary to have a strong understanding of what the glass ceiling is.
2. What are the different types of barriers that the women and the minorities face?
3. It is also necessary to grasp some high-level ideas as to why and how such barriers exist.
4. A clear understanding of this is the foundation of combating such barriers.

## **6.0 Necessary Steps To Improve The Situation**

It must be accepted that certain steps have already been taken in order to remove the effects of 'glass ceiling' so that the women do not face any problem in their career. However, there is stillroom for an improvement. A number of ways exist for the society to break the glass ceiling.

First, leaders should be appointed on the basis of talent and potential instead of presumptions about their roles and abilities. Under no circumstances, their ability and capability should be undermined.

Second, it is imperative on the part of all organizations to make a proper evaluation in order to avoid all types of bias.

Third, all the successful female leaders should be allowed to transfer their knowledge and experience to other females. They should also be provided with feedback, which is the most important dimension to train them for future leadership positions.

Fourth, professional networking should necessarily be gender-neutral. In this regard, team-building activities need to be as gender-neutral as possible, that is up to the maximum possible level.

Fifth, there should be no group, company, profit or non-profit organization, where harassment and discrimination are tolerated and go unpunished.

Sixth, the employees and coworkers need to be understanding towards those females, who have to devote a significant amount of time to family.

### **7.0 Gender Equality**

The concept of gender equality, gender discrimination and women empowerment has become burning topics of discussion in and around the world. In fact, it is one of the major social problems and hence at the hot bowl. (Chakrabarty, 2018). The concept 'Gender Equality' means that it is a state of affairs where the women will be entitled to equal ease of access to resources and opportunities without any differentiation based on gender. Gender would not be a factor of discrimination in the social set up. They would get the opportunity of economic participation and a due share in the decision-making process of the society. To be precise, 'Gender Equality' means equality between men and women in all respects. All human beings, both men and women are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without any limitation to be set by the society. In other words, gender equality takes into account the idea that the aspirations and needs of women and men should be considered, valued and favoured equally without any bias. Under no circumstances, the conferment of responsibilities and opportunities should be based on the idea whether they are born male or female. It also means fairness of treatment for both women and men. The idea of 'Gender Equality' further postulates the idea that they should be considered and treated equally in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities and in all spheres of life. There is no denying the fact that the identity of a nation begins with its citizens, whereas the identity of the citizens begins with their position in the society. A Society can be fully developed when there is a balance of equity between Male and Female because both works as wings of the society. Just like a bird cannot fly depending on its single wing, a society cannot bloom by continuously neglecting one segment of it either male or female. (Chakrabarty and Ghosh, 2018). According to UNICEF, gender equality means that women and men, and girls and boys, enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. Under no circumstances we can deny that women play a crucial role in the socio economic development of a country. But both in the industrially developed and less developed countries, women are burdened with cumulative inequalities as a result of discriminatory socio-economic practices. (Beniwal, 2013). It is therefore high time that the society and polity should take immediate steps to come out from this situation. We live in a situation where men misuse their dominant position to establish control over women and where the voices of women are discouraged. Further, we should come out to take adequate care of the situation when women do not enjoy equal right for education and when the good performance of women is unjustly ignored. We should keep in mind that gender discrimination has far reaching consequence on society. (Pal, Bharati, and Vasulu 2009). Therefore, it is our moral and ethical responsibility to look into this important domain and to make sincere attempt to usher into a system where there is no discrimination between a man and a woman.

It should be remembered that providing to women and girls equal access to education, health care and representation in political and economic decision-making processes would definitely be congenial for development and benefit for the society and humanity. It is pertinent to note that gender equality is a human right. Like men, the women are entitled to live with dignity and with freedom from want and fear. It is significant to note that gender equality is a precondition for advancement, development and an important factor for reducing poverty of women. There is no denying the fact that the empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole family in particular and the community in general. The most important aspect of this is that it contributes a lot for the improvement and prospects for the next generation. In spite of several programmes undertaken on specific country basis and the world, the aspect of women empowerment as a mechanism to reduce poverty, gender equality remains an unfulfilled promise throughout the world. It is known that for more than 30 years, the UNFPA has advocated for women and girls and supporting initiatives that improve women's health and expand their choices in life. But in spite of all these, there has not been much change in the social set up.

It is also necessary to refer to the idea of feminism. It is a belief which refers that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes. It is pertinent to refer to a statement of Hillary Clinton who once said, "women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights. Every human being has rights and gender equality will always be one of those rights. The problem of gender equality or so to say that of gender inequality is a global problem which greatly affects men and women throughout the world. No country has been successful to truly attain gender equality. But there should be sincere attempts to minimize the gender gap as far as possible. It should be our moral duty so that gender equality is considered to be an important moral principle which should be followed by all members of society. As we stand in the society today, the subordination of indigenous and minority women, ethnic cleansing, and the struggle for reproductive rights are some of the most pressing issues facing women worldwide. (Agosin (Ed) 2001). We should all come forward to eradicate these evils from the society.

Now the point that comes into the surface is how the 'glass ceiling' affects gender equality.

It is needless to mention that 'glass ceiling' stands as a barrier on the way of success of the women and it naturally stands on the way of gender equality. It is therefore absolutely essential that the so called 'glass ceiling' must be removed if we want gender equality in the true sense of the term. Otherwise, 'gender equality' would remain like a golden deer, very difficult to catch.

### **8.0 Conclusion**

It is a reality and an accepted fact the Glass Ceiling effect has continued to be practiced by many big organizations in all parts of the world. There are definitely efforts to promote women and minority hiring but it still has a long way to go and allow workers from these groups to be part of the top management. It is sine qua non that there is an utmost need for all the corporations' leaders to have an honest 'will' with a view to combat this practice. It is also necessary that they should be prepared to appreciate the minorities and the women that they are equally capable as compared to the male counterparts.

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