

Shattering of Glass Ceiling among Women in Indian Banking - Financial Sector

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1. Introduction

Today, economies are characterized by the increasing importance of services, wherein financial services have gained greater significance due to the ease of flow of funds across countries. One of the key factors responsible for the recent growth in the Indian economy is the emergence of a considerable number of women entrepreneurs. The Indian banking sector plays a prominent role by providing financial assistance to these women entrepreneurs. The expanding role of women entrepreneurs compelled the Indian banking sector to employ more women, who are also considered more efficient than male employees. The financial sector is no doubt perceived as a competitive sector. Given the expansion of services, the presence of excellent human resources, and the interaction of the sector with society, the story of the banking sector cannot be complete unless we consider the issue of women employees. This paper attempts to highlight the glass ceiling issue in the Indian banking sector. The issue of women's lack of larger representation in the top management leadership of public and private organizations has come to be known as the glass ceiling in recent times. Over time, several studies have revealed this glass ceiling effect in corporations as well as in organizations, which are visible in the lower representation of women at top levels in these organizations. Discussions on the causes commonly revolve around the issues of sex bias in the workplace, reluctance of women to compete for top leadership positions, women's difficulty in balancing family and work life, and women's lack of education or experience. This paper attempts to focus on the status of Indian women employees at the branch and regional levels of the banking sector and also the glass ceiling faced by women employees in banks. The paper also tries to suggest steps that can be taken to break this glass ceiling in the banking sector of India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY The main objectives of the study is:

i) To study the perception of the female bankers of the selected commercial banks towards glass ceiling

1.UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF GLASS CEILING:The concept of the "glass ceiling" was first widely introduced as the "sticky floor," but it was popularized in a writing, "Corporate women are stuck in the middle of the business world, in imminent danger of cracking their heads on the glass ceiling. This invisible barrier delays, shelves, or denies careers regardless of qualifications or achievements." Since then, scholars and researchers have long explored the questions and dimensions behind these assertions. As pointed out 15 years before the term 'glass ceiling' was coined, the

obstacles to equal employment opportunity for women could be described as a 'ceiling,' but it is a 'glass ceiling' because these obstacles are more subtle and less visible than rock solid.

A good example of what the concept describes: "It is rough with invisible and impenetrable barriers that prevent large numbers of women and minorities from reaching the upper rungs of business leadership and ownership. These barriers have created a nagging equity problem. True believers fear that their organizations are squandering precious human resources. Firms are denied important abilities to make the most of the diversity of opinions and, thus, the best range of business decisions. All business people can ill afford to overlook the implications of these 'ceiling' issues."

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND :ORIGINS OF GLASS CEILING CONCEPT

- *1960s: Women's Liberation Movement*
- *1970s: Feminist Movement*
- *1986: Morrison and Von Glinow Study*
- *1991: Federal Glass Ceiling Commission Report*

The issue of the glass ceiling first emerged in the late 1970s in America. The term was widely referenced in the mid-1980s. In the same years, some writers also started to use the term, which aims to criticize American society. Over time, the importance of the glass ceiling concept has been better understood and studied. The issue has been raised in many sectors such as government, industry, and non-governmental organizations, as the full participation of women has become a demand and a necessity through the years, highlighting discrimination based on race and gender.

Due to selection, sex discrimination, and not being preferred by owners for administrative roles in business, which limit the future rise of women, the term "glass ceiling" has been identified. Therefore, the concept of the glass ceiling simply explains the discriminatory policies against women. These behaviors not only limit career opportunities for women but also affect economic development. The glass ceiling limits growth in the economic system by decreasing the progress of human capital developed in women. Women can contribute to supporting economic growth through their participation in the labor force and management, rather than remaining in lower-level or informal areas. It is believed that the glass ceiling affects the number of female labor force participants and their positions at the same time.

3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF GLASS CEILING IN THE BANKING SECTOR

The term "glass ceiling" refers to artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into senior management positions. In other words, it describes the experience of women in the workplace who, despite their qualifications and achievements, are being restricted to certain levels of promotion. In the context of employment and occupation, women are constantly confronted by a complex web of barriers that restrict their role and experiences. A woman with the same education cannot occupy the same level, employment, or privilege as her male counterpart in the fields of business, management, finance, politics, and social services. The economic growth of any country is highly dependent on women's involvement in business, management, finance, and education. Women are considered the "engine" that raises half of heaven.

Lack of gender equality in different fields is considered to be a significant problem; for example, in the finance and banking sector, which is one of the catalysts for economic growth. Despite comprising 50% of the population, women's presence in the banking sector isn't at an acceptable level compared to men. The banking and finance industry is a sophisticated technical sector. Overcoming the glass ceiling and creating an equal society is a critical issue that encourages society to reach new ideas and provide proper representation of women in banking. To overcome gender disparities in the banking sector, the glass ceiling must be dismantled. Women must have the same chance at success in this sector as men. The solution to the absence of women in senior leadership roles within the banking and finance industry rests in the industry's own hands. Those who deny women the opportunity to grow and achieve in the field of finance and banking do not only hurt women, but also hinder the progress of the whole economy in the present and future.

3. DEFINITION OF GLASS CEILING

'Glass ceiling' denotes a variety of barriers, all of which are formidable. Some of these barriers are full-blown discrimination, while others are mere criticisms or misunderstandings. Like all barriers, however, they are insidious because they are indirect, subtle, and institutional. People are often unaware of their existence; or if they are aware, they take their existence for granted. What really makes the glass ceiling so distinctive is the fact that this invisible barrier cannot be easily surmounted by any one individual, no matter what the individual's talents, education, or experience.

The term 'glass ceiling' serves as a metaphor for invisible barriers that obstruct the advancement of women and people of color to the top levels of their organizations and professions. The metaphor suggests that interest on the part of the organization concerning their successful career development makes these groups largely a 'protected' class when lower in the organization, like rammers in a greenhouse. However, at the top levels, a barrier is encountered that is as unbreakable and invisible as a ceiling of glass. This organization's willingness to protect the protected class ends as soon as the protected class aspires to an upper-echelon position. The result is that although everybody can look up at what is above the barrier, a professional from a protected class cannot break through the position, no matter how much he or she knows or how much others raise the barrier so that those rammers not belonging to the protected class, who represent no threat, can continue to rise.



4. CURRENT STATUS OF GENDER DIVERSITY IN INDIAN BANKING

It is well established that a work environment that is diverse and inclusive is beneficial for all. Therefore, gender diversity is an important parameter to measure the well-being of an organization. The service sector, which is the dominant contributor to the Indian Gross Domestic Product, has experienced significant improvement in gender diversity over the last two decades. This has especially been the case in banking and financial services. The nationalization of banks in 1969 and the paradigm shifts in the society however, has worked to improve the position of women in the banking sector. Though the artificial barriers impose abstinence on the development and promotion of women, there have been instances of the buoyancy of women cracking the glass ceiling and paving a way for executive position. A cursory look at the list of chairpersons and chief executive officers of banks would confirm this. As we go down the management ladder, gender representation is visibly higher. However, the impact at the ground level is unknown. This paper attempts to address this ignorance and understand the ground realities related to gender diversity in Indian banks. Factors such as the age of a bank, its location, and the local background of the bank's head appear to be significant influencers of gender diversity.

Mentorship Misconception



In the male-dominated banking world, there is a lack of appropriate mentorship which leads to many misconceptions and hurdles for women in climbing the corporate ladder.



Mending the Mentorship

Women are still fighting the long-held perception that they are the "weaker gender", especially when it comes to handling aggressive and high-risk banking functions.

Layered Bias in a C-suite Role

5.FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE GLASS CEILING IN INDIAN BANKS

Work-Life Impediments

Long hours
and demands
of the job
family responsibilities
and work-life balance



Banking Executive Insight

Gender Pay Gap

In banks, there is a significant gender pay gap that reflects lack of equality and biases in the industry



Equitable Resource Allocation

- Ensuring the same budget allocation for men and women team members
- Transparency in Compensation and Benefits



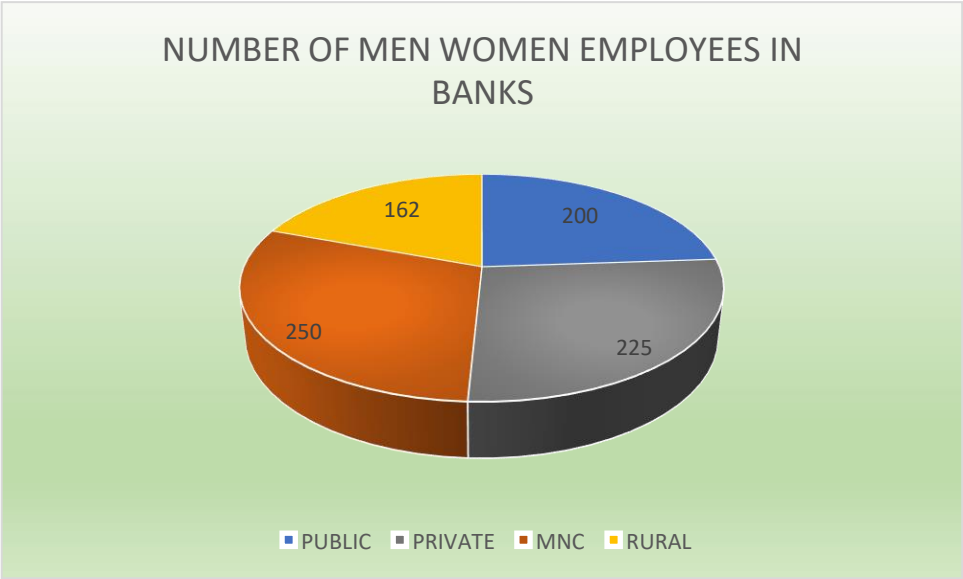
Widening Hire-Career Loop

- Proving Themselves
- Performance Pressure
- Personal and Professional Development
- Progress in a Prejudiced Environment

DATA COLLECTION:

The questionnaire consisting of 43 items was taken, Indian Banks-Private, Public and Rural banks were taken. Hard copy as well as google forms were circulated and after data cleaning 525 surveys were collected. Bank employees were willing to respond so collecting data wasn't difficult.

	DESCRIPTOR	FREQUENCY
AGE GROUP	20-29	125
	29-39	150
	39-49	150
	50 & ABOVE	100
CIVIL STATUS	UNMARRIED	116
	MARRIED	300
	OTHERS	109
EXPERIENCE IN YEARS	UPTO 10	225
	11 TO 20 YEARS	250
	20 & ABOVE	100



MEASURES GLASS CEILING BELIEFS.

Glass ceiling beliefs were measured using the CPS (Smith et al., 2012b). The CPS assesses levels of denial (10 items), resilience (9 items), resignation (11 items), diversity (5 items) and acceptance (7 items) in glass ceiling beliefs. A five-point Likert scale was used with anchors 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

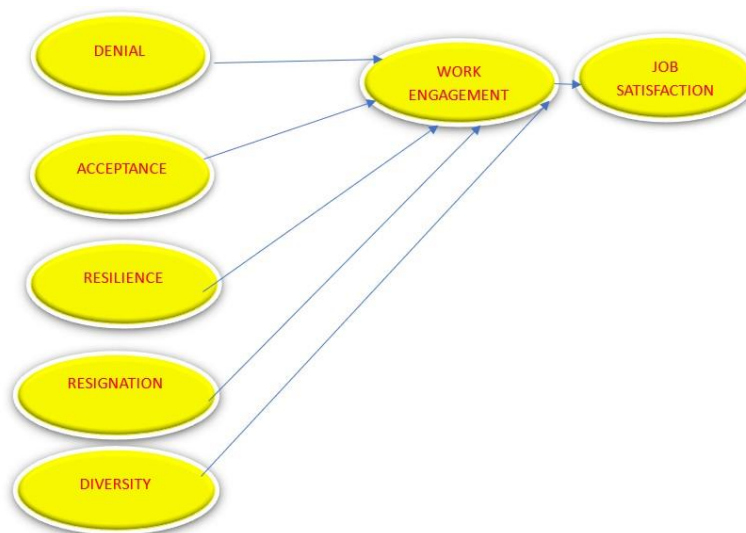


FIGURE 1: MODEL OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT USING STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

Construct and discriminant validity was checked. Reliability exists as Cronbach alpha was more than 0.70 (Nunnally et al., 1967).

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) methods as implemented in AMOS 21.0 (Arbuckle, 2012) were used to test the research model. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed with maximum likelihood estimation to examine the goodness of the model. The models' goodness of fit was evaluated using the criteria: relative chi-square: $(\chi^2/df) < 3$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA): ≤ 0.08 , standardized root mean square residual (SRMR): ≤ 0.06 , normed fit index (NFI) ≥ 0.90 , comparative fit index (CFI) ≥ 0.90 , and Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) ≥ 0.90 (Byrne, 2013; Hooper et al., 2008; Hu and Bentler, 1998). Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and average loadings (AL) were also used to check the reliability and validity of the instruments.

CONCLUSION :

It was found that no significant gender differences exist in the perception of glass ceiling amongst women and men. The optimistic glass ceiling beliefs – denial and resilience, and the pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs- resignation and acceptance – predict opposing or contradictory claims. Hence, optimistic glass ceiling beliefs must be promoted and pessimistic glass ceiling beliefs must be kept in check by providing appropriate training or counselling to avoid exhaustion. Glass ceiling restrictions are the same for all women, regardless of their location. Only the extent to which the barrier is applicable varies from one country to the next. Only a few women have held executive positions in the Indian banking sector, and female employees make up less than a quarter of the workforce, demonstrating the existence of a glass ceiling in the Indian banking sector. A hopeful look forward to future says, by 2050, India is likely to have more banking assets and surpassing other economies all over the world, it may likely to be Towards the shattering of glass ceiling in the Indian banking sector 251 placed in third largest banking sector position (Jaffry et al., 2008). Even majority of women left behind in this story of growth, there are some sectors in India like banking which shows a steady increase in women employment [Bezbaruah,

(2015), p.32]. In India, in terms of gender equality in board room table, firms within the financial services sector and other service oriented sectors performing better than that of industry sectors (de Jonge, 2014). It is critical to take steps to break the glass ceiling and involve more women in the workforce in order to reap the full benefits of talented individuals, regardless of gender.

LIMITATIONS:

Finally, it would be interesting to expand the scope of our research beyond the geographic regions that was studied. Self-reporting styles may be associated with problems of social desirability. However, the data were collected anonymously and study participants were assured of confidentiality.

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