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## Women Empowerment through Breaking Glass Ceiling

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### **Abstract:**

*Building up of a society depends on the involvement of women in decision making. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, economic strength of individuals & communities. Women empowerment is an important tool in upliftment of economic, social & political status of women in society. So women have to be empowered in all aspects & areas. Inequality between men & women, discrimination, culture, stereotype attitude towards women are some of the predisposing factors which lead to exploitation & suppression of women.*

*Glass ceiling is a discriminatory barrier that prevents women from getting to top positions. Strategies for breaking glass ceiling play a crucial role for effective women empowerment. Women need to know their rights, be aware of obstacles, should possess abilities to access information & resources for decision making, can make alternatives & select the best one, self-identification of their hidden capabilities, potentialities, problem-solving skills. This paper focuses on how & in which areas the women are being suppressed & strategies, measures need to be taken, employed so that breaking of glass ceiling is done & sustainable development of women is achieved.*

**Keywords:** Glass ceiling stereotype, attitude, strategies, culture

### **1. Introduction**

A woman though had enough qualifications can not be able to reach peak positions because of many factors which will impede their progress and the term used to describe it called as "Glass Ceiling". The term Glass ceiling was first coined in 1984 in terms of leadership, equality with men in the workplace. In late 1970's -1980's women lacked needed skills, but in mid-late 1980's the scenario was changed and women took up higher education. Though the scenario was changing in women's education, still several factors impeding the progress the glass ceiling which was explained earlier.

### **2. What Is Glass Ceiling?**

Glass ceiling is used to describe invisible barriers ("glass", through which women can see elite positions but can not reach them ("ceiling"). It is a discriminatory barrier that prevents women from rising to top positions. It prevents qualified women from advancing upward into senior management level positions. It hinders the progress of women to upper rungs of ladder of career.

### **3. Objectives**

- To identify the barriers responsible for the hindrance of the growth of the women in their career.
- To list out the strategies that will break through glass ceiling
- To explore into deep insights of glass ceiling.

### **4. Methodology**

Data collection

- Primary
- Secondary
  - Mode of data selection : Secondary data
  - In this secondary data have been used. Secondary data was gathered from various journals, newspapers archives, sources of published and unpublished, websites.
  - Glass Ceiling: Ice Berg: Glass ceiling can be compared to an ice-berg.:

### **5. In What Way It Can Be Compared?**

The external part of the iceberg is visible, what we can see and the internal part is the invisible part what we can not see and it includes attitudes, values, assumptions, customs, etc. These factors of invisible part which varies from individual to individual are the barriers of glass ceiling. They play an important role which impact on the gender inequality, stereotype, prejudice etc.

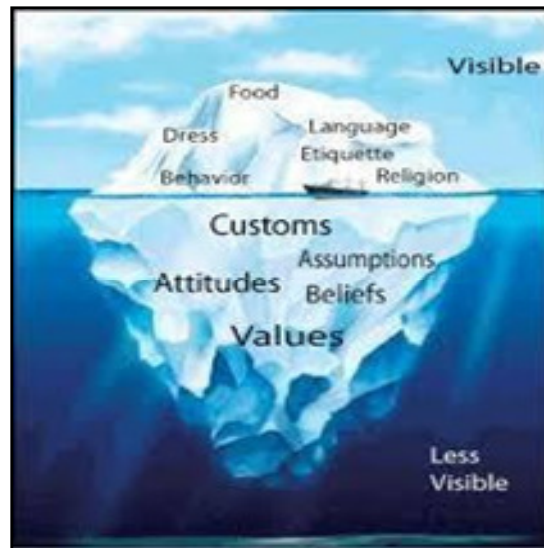


Figure 1

The invisible part, which includes attitudes, beliefs will be sowed by family initially. It is the responsibility of the society and the management at work place to let the unbiased culture towards women to flourish and condemn the biased culture.

## 6. Women Empowerment vs. Glass Ceiling

### 6.1. How Women Empowerment Justifies Breaking of Glass Ceiling?

#### 6.1.1. What Is Empowerment?

Empowerment means giving someone the authority, power. Is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. If women are empowered, if they are given power means giving importance obviously it is breaking glass ceiling.

#### 6.2. What Are the Barriers for Glass Ceiling???

The following are the barriers which affect women to occupy top positions. The barriers broadly can be classified as

- Socio-cultural
- Personal
- Organisational
- Governmental

Highlighted factors that has to be list out under socio-cultural are:

- Stereotype
- Prejudice
- Inherited culture
- Discrimination

#### 6.2.1. Stereotype

The term stereotype was derived from Greek words "Stereo" means "firm", "solid" and "typos" means "impression". Hence "Solid impression". Stereotypes are generalizations about a group of people where by we attribute a defined set of characteristics to this group.

#### 6.2.2. Prejudice

Can be defined as the preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience or state of holding unreasonable preconceived/judgements/convictions.

#### 6.2.3. Inherited Culture

Culture means set of shared values, beliefs, customs which are transferred from generation to generation. So it makes its impact on how a women should be treated, equality etc.

Discrimination: the prejudicial treatment of different categories of people upon the grounds of race, age, sex. It is the difference between things or treating someone as inferior based on their race, age, sex, nation, origin.

### 6.3. How Stereotype, Prejudice & Discrimination Differs From Each?

Stereotypes are regarded as the most cognitive component and often occurs without conscious awareness. Where as prejudice is the affecting component of stereotyping and discrimination is behavioural component of prejudicial relation. Stereotypes reflect expectations and beliefs about characteristics of members of groups, perceived as different from one's own, prejudice represents the emotional response and discrimination refers to actions.

### 6.4. Personal: Work-Family Balance

Women is a multi-role player. She plays a dual role to handle family and also at work place. Though women supposed to be a "home maker"

### 6.5. Organisational

In any organization, the management should be accountable in being responsible to its employees irrespective of the gender differences. They must treat women and men employees equally at work place.

- Gender-pay inequality: Differences in pay for men and women should be prevented. Equal pay for work should be employed by the management.
- Type of leadership style: Any organization should treat human resources as social but not economic. Best leadership style has to be employed by the management which enhances the morale of the employees. The style has to be same for both men and women.

It would be best for the organization to go for Democratic or participative leadership style rather than Autocratic leadership style.

### 6.6. Governmental

It is the responsibility of the government too to promote the progress of the women in all fields and measures and steps have to be taken by the government in making amendments, in law making

### 6.7. Gender Indicators

Gender indicators are criteria or measure against which changes can be assessed. They may be numbers, facts, opinions or perceptions. Gender indicators refer to either quantitative (statistical data) or qualitative (attitudes, feelings, opinions, people's experiences).

### 6.8. What Is the Need for Gender Indicators

- They enable better planning and actions
- Used for holding institutions accountable for their contributions on gender equality.
- They can help to bring out the changes

### 6.9. Gender Inequality Index (GII)

Gender inequality index remains a major barrier to human development, Women are discriminated against in health, education etc. Gender equality index measures human development costs of gender inequalities. Thus higher GII value the more disputes between females and males. The GII values vary tremendously across countries, they range from 2.1 percent to 73.3 percent. India stands place

### 6.10. Reports On Gender Equality:

❖ A 2014 report released by the *United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* clearly indicates that while progress on women's political participation continues to be largely positive across the world, the *glass ceiling* remains firmly in place for women at the highest levels. By 1st January 2014, there were 36 countries with 30 per cent or more women ministers, a jump from 26 in 2012.

❖ In terms of the private sector, the latest report, which is based on the research from the *International Business Report (IBR)* in 2013, explores the global shift in the number of women at the top of the business world. Key findings from the survey indicate that 24 percent women hold senior management roles globally, a three point increase over the previous year. The proportion of businesses employing women as CEOs has risen from 9 percent to 14 percent. Only 19 percent of executive positions around the world are held by women.

### 6.11. Some of Women Who Combat Break Glass Ceiling



Figure 2: Janet Yellen  
Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> (FORBES MAGAZINE 2014)

Chair, Federal Reserve, United States. Yellen is the first woman to head the most influential central bank in the world.



*Figure 3: Dilma Rousseff  
Ranked 4<sup>th</sup>. (FORBES MAGAZINE 2014)  
President, Brazil. One of the world's most powerful heads of state.*



*Figure 4: Mary Barry, CEO, General Motors, USA  
Ranked 7 (FORBES MAGAZINE 2014)*



*Figure 5: Sherly Sandberg  
Ranked 9 (FORBES MAGAZINE 2014)  
COO, Facebook, United States.*



*Figure 6: Serena Williams  
2015 Australian single's women winner*



Figure 7: Malala Yousufzai

Is a Pakistani activist who fought for female children education and the youngest nobel-prize laureate.



Figure 8: Tamanna

ACTRESS Tamanna entered business (WHITE&GOLD). Diversification in work is seen in women which is a good sign.

#### 6.12. Strategies/Steps to Overcome Barriers of Glass Ceiling

##### ➤ Strategy 1: culture

What is culture??

Culture includes values, knowledge, customs, attitudes etc.

- Inherit Good Culture At Grass Root Level(Family):

An individual attitude, personality, opinions etc. are set by the family. Family plays a crucial role in sowing the seeds of culture about how to respect women, importance of women, equality of women than that of men. Hence, drastic changes need to be brought out at family level

- Inculcate Unbiased Culture In Society

It is not only the responsibility of the family but also the responsibility of the society in cultivating and promoting a unbiased culture..Herited culture depicts in behavior. Hence the society should treat women equally as that of men.

- Habituate Undiscriminated Culture At Work Place:

It is the social responsibility of the management to habituate undifferentiated culture towards women in its policies, practices, promotions, pay etc and see to that no glass ceiling hinders their growth. Flexi-time options at work to balance family and work.

##### ➤ Strategy 2: know your value:

Other's wont fully value your skill, expertise and potential unless you do. Most of the women have a tendency to under-estimate than men.Is the challenge and time for the women to find potentialities in them.

##### ➤ Strategy 3 : be conscious and aware of the rights

##### ➤ Strategy 4: Come Out of the Zone and Take the Initiative: Women have to come out of the box, shell which was imposed on her from generations that she was only restricted to "kitchen".

##### ➤ Strategy 5: Participative Management, Women Empowerment: The management at work should encourage participative management ,involve employees in decision making and empower women by giving authority

##### ➤ Strategy 6: be optimistic, avoid pessimistic thoughts.

##### ➤ Strategy 7: at work place managemnet should emphasize on "Intellectual Capital" irrespective of the gender.

##### ➤ Strategy 8: avoid autocratic,adopt democratic leadership style Challenges :C3

- BE CONFIDENT (Women)

- Culture (AT 3 levels which was explained above)
- Contribution(From society, women, family towards women empowerment)

### 7. Conclusion

Breaking of glass by women is possible only by means of breaking the stereotypes, preconceived notions and by promoting unbiased, undiscriminative family, society and organization, which paves a path for women development and which subsequently leads to a country's development.

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