

## Exploring the existing glass ceiling in different professions in the context of Bangladesh Bangladeş bağlamında farklı mesleklerdeki mevcut cam tavanı keşfetmek

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### ABSTRACT

While the glass ceiling is an issue experienced by both women and minority groups, this study specifically examines the obstacles faced by women. Glass ceiling significantly hinders progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is shown in this study how glass ceiling is hindering to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study has also explored the unseen barriers that hinder women's job advancement and proposes strategies to eliminate them. This study is based on secondary sources. This study has revealed the presence of a glass ceiling in the ready-made garments, banking, telecommunication, financial institutions, and corporate sector. Furthermore, it has illustrated the causes and consequences of the glass ceiling and ultimately presented many tactics to eradicate the hidden obstacles faced by women.

**Key Words:** Glass Ceiling, Invisible Barrier, Gender Equality, Women, Inequality, Leadership

### ÖZET

Cam tavan hem kadınların hem de azınlık gruplarının deneyimlediği bir sorun olsa da, bu çalışma özellikle kadınların karşılaştığı engelleri incelemektedir. Cam tavan, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedeflerine (SKH) ulaşma yolunda ilerlemeyi önemli ölçüde engellemektedir. Bu çalışmada, cam tavanın Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma Hedeflerine (SKH) ulaşmayı nasıl engellediği gösterilmektedir. Çalışma ayrıca kadınların iş ilerlemesini engelleyen görünmeyen engelleri de incelemiş ve bunları ortadan kaldırmak için stratejiler önermiştir. Bu çalışma ikincil kaynaklara dayanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, hazır giyim, bankacılık, telekomünikasyon, finans kurumları ve kurumsal sektörde bir cam tavanın varlığını ortaya koymuştur. Dahası, cam tavanın nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını göstermiş ve nihayetinde kadınların karşılaştığı gizli engelleri ortadan kaldırmak için birçok taktik sunmuştur.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The glass ceiling refers to an intangible obstacle that women and minority groups face when trying to progress in their careers. It impedes women and underprivileged individuals from attaining higher positions inside the corporation. Afza and Newas (2008) provided a definition of the glass ceiling as an intangible obstacle that continues to exist within organizations, preventing women from achieving higher levels of career achievement. In 1986, Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt coined the term "glass ceiling" in an article published in the Wall Street Journal. They characterized it as the unseen obstacles that impede women's advancement in the American workforce (Wilson, 2014). The society of Bangladesh is characterized by male dominance. The male desires to exert dominance over the life of women. Consequently, women experience varying degrees of male dominance in all aspects of their lives and must struggle to secure their rightful entitlements in all spheres, including the family, society, and the entire state. Women were regarded by the society as reliant, obedient, and subordinate to men. In a patriarchal society such as ours, it is ingrained from the outset that men hold a position of superiority over women, both in their personal and professional lives, even within the state. Men are well-suited for administrative and management positions, whereas women are often found in traditionally feminine occupations such as school teachers, health and welfare officers and nurses. There is a prevailing assumption in the workplace that women are inherently less capable, both physically and intellectually, when it comes to certain demanding tasks. Furthermore, they exhibit a volatile temperament and demonstrate an absence in motivation (Zafarullah, 2000). Despite deserving higher positions within the firm, women are restricted these opportunities due to the presence of a glass ceiling. Additionally, they are not compensated equally to their male counterparts. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the existing glass ceiling in Bangladesh.

## 1. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on secondary materials obtained from relevant websites, journals, newspapers.

## 2. GLASS CEILING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

The concept of the glass ceiling, which refers to the invisible barriers that prevent women and minorities from advancing to the highest levels in a profession, is directly related to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations. The SDGs aim to address global challenges and promote a better and more sustainable future. Here's how the glass ceiling connects with specific SDGs:

### **SDG 5: Gender Equality**

- Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.

Breaking the glass ceiling is essential for achieving gender equality, as it ensures women have equal opportunities to reach leadership positions.

### **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**

- Target 8.5: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

- Target 8.8: Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

Removing the glass ceiling allows for a more inclusive and productive workforce, contributing to economic growth and ensuring decent work for all.

### **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities**

- Target 10.2: Empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status.
- Target 10.3: Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard.

Addressing the glass ceiling helps reduce inequalities within organizations and society, promoting fair opportunities for advancement for all individuals regardless of their background.

### **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**

- Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

Ensuring women and minorities can break through the glass ceiling leads to more inclusive and representative institutions, fostering justice and peace.

## **3. GLASS CEILING AND INDUSTRIES**

### **4.1. Glass ceiling in the corporate sector**

Hossain's (2016) research has demonstrated that Bangladeshi business sectors have exerted dominance over women in a predominantly male culture since their inception. Women are prohibited from making decisions due to societal ideals, cultural conventions, and religious beliefs. They experience social and cognitive neglect. Women in the office carry an equivalent amount of work as males. Most corporate workers believe that women are experiencing discriminatory practices that hinder their career advancement. The study conducted by Hossain (2016) reveals that management perspective and work environment are the primary factors that contribute to the creation of a glass ceiling in the workplace. Additionally, organizational policy and work-life conflict also play a significant part in this phenomenon.

### **4.2. Glass Ceiling in the Ready-Made Garments Industry**

In their study, Islam and Jantan (2017) found that organizational culture, social culture, and a lack of career motivation constitute significant impediments for female employees in the RMG enterprises of Bangladesh. The current organizational culture is impeding the establishment of a favourable work-life balance for women. Furthermore, the pervasive cultural bias against women in leadership roles inside the organization contributes to the underrepresentation of females in positions of leadership. The absence of individuals who actively support and promote career

advancement, both in both personal and professional settings, is a significant obstacle for women seeking to attain leadership roles in RMG enterprises.

#### **4.3. Glass Ceiling in the Financial Institutions**

Ali and Akter (2021) argue that organizational variables, specifically the lack of human resource practices, contribute to the creation of glass ceilings in the workplace. The representation of women in high leadership positions remains significantly lower than that of males. Women face discrimination from coworkers, staff, and superiors, resulting in unfair denial of advancements. Men are often favored for crucial positions, while women are excluded from delicate and significant roles solely based on their gender. The study of Ali and Akter (2021) concentrated on a comprehensive set of HRM practices, encompassing recruitment and selection, promotion and leave policies, training and development policies, equal employment policies, maintenance issues, and performance appraisal policies. These practices aim to mitigate the effects of the glass ceiling within an organization and facilitate upward mobility.

#### **4.4. Glass Ceiling in the Telecommunication Sector**

The disparity in job advancement between women and men, particularly in the telecommunications business, is evident. The telecommunication business is predominantly characterized by male dominance due to the prevalence of fieldwork and physically demanding tasks in most employment roles. The proportion of female employees in this area is extremely insignificant. The degree of conflict and the amount of motivation have been identified as the primary markers contributing to the emergence of the glass ceiling and the intricacy of the hierarchical hierarchy. Despite the implementation of the Bangladesh Labour Code 2006, the government has made adjustments to the labour sector in Bangladesh in recent years. However, numerous businesses have not yet implemented the adjustments in compliance with the policies. Organizations must undergo change in order to reduce their tendency to stereotype and minimize their conservative approach towards promoting female employees to higher positions in the company (Habib, 2015).

#### **4.5. Glass Ceiling in the Banking Sector**

According to the gender equality report for June-December 2023 by the Bangladesh Bank, the proportion of women increased somewhat from 16.29% in the previous year to 16.37% in December 2023. According to the BB research, although there has been an increase in the number of women employees in the banking sector, they are still not adequately represented in top management positions. Bankers assert that the underrepresentation of women in high-level positions in the country's commercial banks is primarily caused by a lack of family support, insufficient support for working mothers (including safe transportation and adequate maternity leave), cultural barriers, discrimination during the hiring process, and workplace harassment. The BB analysis revealed that women's presence on the board of directors of commercial banks amounted to a mere 13.51 percent. (The New Age, 2024).

Apart from these sectors, in all profession women are facing an invisible barrier in their career advancement.

## **4. SEVERAL EFFECTS OF GLASS CEILING**

### **5.1.Reasons Behind Existing Glass Ceiling**

The glass ceiling in Bangladesh is perpetuated by a combination of cultural, social, economic, and institutional factors. Here are the key reasons behind its existence:

- Stereotypical undervaluation of women's capabilities in the workplace.
- Challenges related to child-care responsibilities that disproportionately affect women.
- Women often have less access to professional training and development opportunities, hindering their career progression.
- Gender bias in hiring and promotion practices can prevent women from advancing to senior positions.
- Social underestimation and lack of respect for women's professional achievements.
- Scarcity of family support for women pursuing career advancements.
- Organizational cultures and practices can be inherently biased against women, making it difficult for them to navigate their way to top positions.
- Additional work efforts required from women due to gender-based expectations.

These barriers contribute to women being passed over for promotions, receiving less pay than male colleagues for the same job, and experiencing microaggressions and isolation at work (Shetu and Ferdous, 2017).

### **5.2.Implication of Glass Ceiling on the Women**

The glass ceiling affects women in Bangladesh in several ways:

- It restricts career opportunities and progression, often preventing women from reaching top-level positions.
- Women face management perceptions that may doubt their capabilities or commitment to work due to gender stereotypes.
- The work environment can be challenging due to gender discrimination, leading to lower job satisfaction and higher job switching rates.
- Work-life conflict is exacerbated for women who struggle to balance professional responsibilities with societal expectations of their roles at home.
- Sexual harassment in the workplace is a significant barrier that can deter women from pursuing career advancement.
- Organizational policies may not be supportive or flexible enough to accommodate the unique challenges faced by women.

These factors collectively contribute to a disparity between male and female participation at decision-making levels and can lead to discriminatory rewards and recognition for women's work (Ali and Akter, 2021).

### **5.3.Impact of Glass Ceiling in the Way of Bangladesh to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

- Women in Bangladesh face significant obstacles in reaching leadership positions in various sectors, including business, politics, and civil society. This limits their influence and contribution

to decision-making processes. Without equal representation, policies and practices may not fully address the needs and rights of women, perpetuating gender disparities.

- The glass ceiling contributes to gender wage gaps and limits women's career advancement opportunities. Women are often underrepresented in high-paying industries and leadership roles. Economic growth is hampered by the underutilization of women's potential, leading to lower overall productivity and innovation.
- Social norms and cultural practices in Bangladesh often marginalize women and minorities, making it harder for them to break through the glass ceiling. Persistent inequalities prevent equitable access to opportunities and resources, undermining social cohesion and inclusive development.
- The glass ceiling results in a lack of diversity in leadership within institutions, which can lead to biased decision-making that does not reflect the needs of all segments of society. Institutions may be less effective and less trusted if they are not representative of the population they serve, hindering efforts to build strong and just governance systems.

#### 5.4.Strategies to Overcome the Glass Ceiling in Bangladesh

Several measures can be adopted to remove glass ceiling in all professions in Bangladesh which are given below:

- **Policy Reform and Enforcement:** Strengthening and enforcing policies that promote gender equality and prohibit discrimination in the workplace.
- **Education and Skill Development:** Expanding access to education and professional training for women and marginalized groups to prepare them for leadership roles.
- **Mentorship and Networking:** Creating programs to support mentorship and professional networking for women and minorities to help them advance in their careers.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Conducting campaigns to change societal attitudes and cultural norms that perpetuate gender biases and stereotypes.
- **Workplace Reforms:** Encourage organizations to adopt gender-sensitive policies, such as flexible working hours, parental leave, and childcare support.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Implementing mechanisms to monitor progress towards gender equality in leadership and hold organizations accountable for discriminatory practices.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The glass ceiling refers to an intangible obstacle that women and minority groups encounter. This study demonstrates that women encounter it in every profession inside our country. They are being denied their rightful role in the organizations. There is still question about their capability, which hinders their progress in attaining higher positions inside the organization. The glass ceiling in Bangladesh is a complex issue rooted in cultural, social, economic, and institutional factors. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach involving policy reform, education, workplace changes, and societal attitude shifts. By tackling these root causes, Bangladesh can make significant progress towards gender equality and the broader Sustainable Development Goals.

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