

# Developing a Conceptual model: Individual and Organizational Barrier on Glass Ceiling Effect (Sri Lankan Apparel Industry)

CHAMARI LALANTHI EDIRISINGHE

IHRA  
University of Colombo  
Sri Lanka

**Abstract-**This research paper set out proposing a conceptual model for empirical examination in order to investigate individual and organizational barrier which leads to glass ceiling effect. Researcher has explored specific variables associated with glass ceiling effect. By reviewing the existing literature two gaps were identified. The first gap which is about how individuals been them self as a barrier to create a glass ceiling effect and the second gap is how organization been a barrier to create a glass ceiling effect. However it is noted that glass ceiling effect and its contextual validity has not yet been explored in Sri Lanka, especially in apparel industry. So it seems that this study makes a great contribution to the existing body of knowledge with proposed conceptual frame work. So this study creates a great platform for forthcoming research on glass ceiling effect.

**Index Terms-**Female Executives, Glass Ceiling Effect, Individual Barrier, Organizational Barrier

## I. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the essence of glass ceiling effect is a major concern of both the business and academic spheres today. There is an increasing trend that women are entering to the labour market (Jackson & O'Callaghan 2009). But the problem is majority of top management positions in almost all countries are generally held by men and women are hold lower management positions by having less authority (Jackson & O'Callaghan 2009). When comes to the Sri Lankan apparel industry, it has been feminized with 90 percent of young women employees (Jayawardena & Senevirathne 2003). But the problem is, in all most all organizational top positions are hold by men and they are having more authority than their female peer workers (Jayawardena & Senevirathne 2003). So the concept of "glass ceiling" has been used to explain why women fail to climb to the upper range of the corporate ladder regardless of their qualifications or achievement (Appelbaum et al 2013). This is arising due to the barriers which they face once they try to climb their corporate ladder (Yokongdi & Benson 2011). Simply the glass ceiling can be defined as, set of barriers to career advancement for women (Jackson & O'Callaghan 2009). According to the Smith, Caputi and Crittenden (2012) glass ceiling describe as the obstacles that lead to the underrepresentation of women in leadership and upper level management positions in an organization. As stated by the Chernesky (2003) glass ceiling is a set of barriers and it is transparent, even it is transparent it is very strong. And also Holly (1998) explains that they can see through it but they can't break it without inflecting considerable damage. It seems that it is very important to identify the barriers which lead to the glass ceiling effect in order to minimize it or preventing on it.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section mainly provides a brief explanation to the literature related to the glass ceiling effect and its relationship with individual and organizational barrier.

### A. Glass Ceiling Effect

In recent years, women as well as gender issues have turn into a major area of concern (Gu 2015). Further Kiaye and Singh (2013) stated that the involvement of women in the world in general has been on the increase over the past several decades and it is continuously improve. Whilst female representation at lower and middle management is on the increase trend but this situation was not seen in top or senior management positions (Dimovski, Skerlavaj & Kimman 2010).

So the under representation of the female employees in senior or top management positions in organization describe as the term of glass ceiling (Hwang 2007). According to the Afza and Newaz (2008) the term "ceiling" explains the limitations or barriers that blocking the upward advancement and the term "glass" used to describe the transparency of a ceiling and it indicate, that the

limitations is not immediately apparent and it is normally unwritten and un official. Some of the definitions of glass ceiling effect are summarized in following table.

Table 1: Definitions of Glass Ceiling Effect

Definition	Source
Obstacles that lead to the underrepresentation of women in leadership and upper level management positions in an organization.	Smith, Caputi and Crittenden (2012)
Set of barriers and it is transparent, even it is transparent it is very strong because of that women should do a considerable damage to break it.	Chernesky (2003)
Set of barriers to career advancement for women	Jackson & O'Callaghan (2009, p.460).
An invisible barriers and it prevent women from moving senior positions as well as moving in to the executive levels of corporation worldwide.	Madichie (2009)
Preventing qualified female individuals from advancing upward in their organization in to the management level position'	Wrigely (2002 p.28).
A barrier that prevent women from ascending to senior management position in large corporation	Bombuwela& De Alwis (2013, p.6).

According to the Virakul (2010) women try to reach the top of their position but they does not have the clear understand about hidden power and complexities of human interaction between males and females in the work place because of that they may not able to break the glass ceiling. So, women managers continually received lower organizational rewards such as, pay, promotions, desirable work assignment and training opportunities (Chernesky 2003). Furthermore, Afza and Newaz (2008) stated management perception, work environment, work life conflicts, sexual harassment and organizational policy as dimensions which come under the glass ceiling effect.

By considering the environment of Sri Lanka this study develops the conceptual model based on the five main elements as follows:

Table 2: Dimensions of Glass Ceiling Effect

Dimensions	Description
Management Perception	The extent to which that the management perceives that the female suitable holding leadership positions in the organization (Afza&Newaz 2008).
Work Environment	Surrounding that the employees are operate in (Afza&Newaz 2008).
Work Life Conflict	Push and pull between work responsibilities and family responsibilities (Nadeem & Abbas 2009, p.63).
Sexual Harassment	An unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that tends to create offensive work environment (Afza&Newaz 2008).
Organizational Policy	Formal document describing the organization's position on a particular aspect of compliance with regulations, standards, and guidelines (Afza&Newaz 2008).

### B. Barriers of Glass Ceiling Effect

There are several kinds of barriers that block women from rising to the most senior positions in the corporate world (Madichie 2009). 'barriers can be defined as a factor, events or phenomenon that prevent of controls access to individuals from making progress and barriers may be tangible or intangible, actual or perceived by the recipient' (Ismail & Ibrahim 2008, p.54).Some of the definitions of barriers that lead to the glass ceiling effect summarized in following table.

Table 3: Definitions of Barriers

Barrier	Definition	Source
Individual Barrier	The extent to which individual factors which are coming from themselves which influence their career advancement	Bombuwela& De Alwis(2013, p. 9).

	Lack on basic traits, skills and attitudes to succeed in leadership positions.	Singh & Terjesen (2008)
Organizational Barrier	The extent to which the employees see the organization as being responsible for lack performance of employee or the extent to which organizational barriers that coming from organizational structure and practices influence the employee development.  Corporate culture, corporate practices and corporate climate as organizational barrier.  Organizational culture, organizational and human resource practices, organizational networks and interpersonal relations, mentoring and role modeling and tokenism and minority presence.	Bombuwela & De Alwis (2013, p. 9).  Dimovski, Skerlavaj and Kimman (2010)  Tlaiss and Kauser (2010)

*C. Relationship between Glass Ceiling Effect and Barriers*

As stated by Jayawardane & Sajeewani (2017) education, experience can be taken as factors of individual barrier. But there is an increasing trend that the large numbers of women are graduating from educational institutes and they are gathering required experience as their male counterparts (Jayawardane & Sajeewani 2017). According to the Myers (2010) there is an increasing participation from the women in higher education and it is almost similar or greater than males but there is in disparity in the attainment of leadership positions. And also if women are lack on basic traits, skills and attitudes to succeed in leadership positions then they lacked on ambition and confidence which are critical qualities for hold the leadership positions in an organization (Singh & Terjesen 2008). As stated by the Smith, Crittenden and Caputi (2012) women behavior are nurturant, helpful, kind and sympathetic while men are assertive, ambitious, independent, forceful and self-confident which are highly important to hold the leadership positions.

As stated by the Bombuwela and De Alwis (2013) individual barrier is the most influential factors for women advancement. The findings indicate that male counterparts were overtly engaging in networking activities than the female counter partners, because of that men become even more visible than their female counterparts, while achieving top positions in the organization (Kiaye & Singh 2013). Furthermore Edirisinghe and Thalgaspitiya (2016) explain that there is moderately strong positive correlation between individual barrier and glass ceiling effect. Worrall et al (2010) outlined that lower self-esteem and confidence negatively affected for women career advancement. Cross (2010) in his research findings stated that thirteen of the thirty interviewees indicate that they want to achieve the senior management in the short term but individual barriers block their career advancement.

Women career progression is hammered by the organizational structure and practices (Tlaiss & Kauser 2010). Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) furthermore explains organizational culture, organizational and human resource practices, organizational networks and interpersonal relations, mentoring and role modeling and tokenism and minority presence identified as a factors of organizational barrier. Furthermore inadequate recruitment practices, lack of opportunity to participate in professional development, occupying staff versus line positions, a lack of understanding of, and commitment to, equal employment opportunity principles, the culture of an organization (Myers, 2010), standards in performance evaluation (Johns, 2013), transparency in promotion procedure and culture of long working hours (Cross 2010) are also comes under the indicators of organizational barrier.

According to the research findings total of 72 percent of the female employees noted organizational barrier such as the organization being very male-oriented, not concern about women's needs (Ismail & Ibrahim 2008). In terms of supervisor support in organizational set up, 56 percent of the women responded that they are treated fairly, that they have learned skills from their supervisors and their supervisors would help in their advancement (Ismail & Ibrahim 2008). But according to another research finding, majority of the respondents performances are not fairly evaluated by their superiors (Kiaye & Singh 2013). When comes to the organization culture almost 50 percent women are agreed culture is a barrier for them when they are try to reach the top of their corporate ladder (Clevenger & Singh 2013). Furthermore Edirisinghe and Thalgaspitiya (2016) explain that organizational barrier is the second most influential barrier on glass ceiling effect.

III. METHODOLOGY

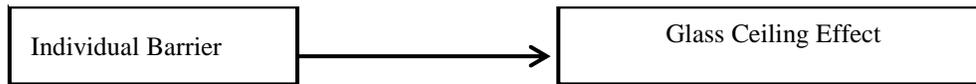
There are several databases and search engines, such as Emerald, Google Scholar, utilized in the study. This study contains a development of a conceptual model for empirical exploration of a phenomenon. Hence it analyses the prevailing literature for the organization of concepts and connections related to the phenomenon. Around 75 abstracts of articles were check to identify their applicability to the phenomena and 50 articles were finally selected and reviewed for identification of the concept and their relationship.

IV. RESULTS

The two gaps were identified after reviewing of the existing literature and it presented as follows:

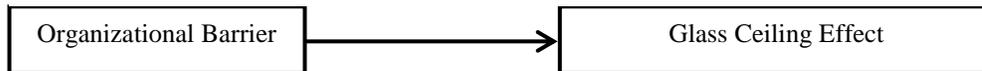
**Gap one:** Impact of individual barrier on glass ceiling effect, has been carried out in different organizational settings under different methodology with different cultural setting. And there is only one research findings which conducted by covering Sri Lankan apparel industry but it is limited to large apparel industry. And also there are few western studies which investigate its relationship separately (refer figure 1). So according to the available literature it seems that there is a wide gap between theoretical as well as the empirical explanations of the previous studies and it is notable that the findings of this study may help to fill this gap to a considerable extent.

Figure 1: Gap one



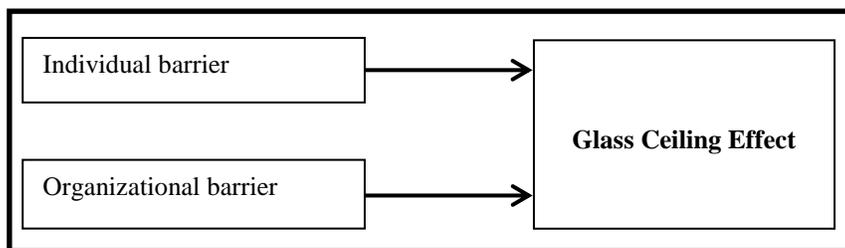
**Gap two:** A few western studies investigate the glass ceiling effect but not finalized how organization been a barrier to create a glass ceiling effect (refer figure 1). Moreover, as there is only one research finding which conducted by focusing Sri Lankan large apparel industry but it also not covers the entire industry. So it seems that there is a knowledge gap that could be attempted to address. As a result, this study pays more attention on the aspect of investigate the impact of organizational barrier on glass ceiling effect.

Figure 2: Gap two



#### A. Conceptual Model

The proposed conceptual model (refer figure 7) was developed based on variables and relationship identified through the literature review.



#### V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper mainly focuses to develop a conceptual model to investigate the impact individual barrier and organizational barrier on glass ceiling effect among female executive employees in Sri Lanka apparel industry.

Even though the proposed model is yet to be tested empirically, it provide the great contribution to the contemporary issues in human resource management literature as this paper addresses the knowledge gap of barriers on glass ceiling effect. Therefore, the proposed model of this paper will set a new direction for future research to understand whether there is an impact of individual barrier and organizational barrier on glass ceiling effect.

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#### AUTHORS

**First Author** – Ms.C.L. Edirisinghe, B.Sc. Human Resource Management (Special), University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, Institute of Human Resource Advancement, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, [chamariedirisinghe@gmail.com](mailto:chamariedirisinghe@gmail.com)

**Correspondence Author** – Ms.C.L. Edirisinghe, [chamariedirisinghe@gmail.com](mailto:chamariedirisinghe@gmail.com), +94719541241