

# The Paradox of Glass Ceiling Effect: A Study on the Individual Barrier and Organizational Barrier among Female Executives in the Selected Large Apparel Industry, Sri Lanka

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.8.8.2018.p8042  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.8.8.2018.p8042>

**Abstract** - Glass ceiling effect and women is yet the most debatable topic even several years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. So this study attempts to identify how individual barrier and organizational barrier leads to create the glass ceiling effect among female executives in the selected large apparel industry, Sri Lanka. The sample of the study is 320 executive female employees who employed in large apparel industry, Sri Lanka. Data were collected by using a questionnaire, which consist of 50 questions/statements with 5-point scale. The data analyses include the univariate and bivariate analyses. From the results of the study it was proven that there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the barriers (Individual and Organizational Barrier) and glass ceiling effect. Where 36.2% of the variance of glass ceiling effect is explained by an individual barrier and 40.3% of the variance of glass ceiling effect is explained by an organizational barrier.

**Index Terms** – Glass Ceiling Effect, Individual Barrier, Organizational Barrier

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years' women and gender issues turn in to a major area of concern (Bombuwela & De Alwis 2013). And also Kiaye and Singh (2013) further stated that the participation of women in the world, in general, has been on the increase over the past years and it is continuously improving. So women are no longer employed to perform unskilled or semi-skilled jobs due to their access to education and as a result of that, they represent in all the functional areas of the organization (Kiaye & Singh 2013).

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 the disparity in the attainment of leadership positions. One of the prime reasons is an individual barrier that blocks the women attainment of leadership positions (Cross 2010). The individual barrier can be defined as, 'the extent to which individual barriers coming from themselves which influences the outcome' (Bombuwela & De Alwis 2013, p. 9).

And also, women career progression is hammered by the organizational structure and practices (Tlaiss & Kauser 2010). As per the Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) organizational culture, human resource practices, organizational networks, interpersonal relations, mentoring, role modelling and tokenism and minority presence identified as some organizational barriers for women advancement. The organizational barrier can be defined as, 'the extent to which the employees see the organization as being responsible for lack performance of the employee or the extent to which organizational barriers that coming from organizational structure and practices influence the employee development' (Bombuwela & De Alwis 2013, p. 9).

Due to above mention two different points it is important to identify the impact of the individual barrier and organizational barrier on glass ceiling effect which is timely required gender-related issue that prevents female employees to climbed their corporate ladder.

## **II. PROBLEM BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM OF THE STUDY**

Female representation at lower and middle management is on the increasing trend but this situation was not seen in the top or senior management positions in all over the world (Dimovski, Skerlavaj & Kimman 2010). As stated by the Bombuwela and De Alwis (2013) individual barrier is the most influential factors for women advancement. But Clrevenger and Singh (2013) stated female employees are stagnated in a certain position because their organization itself been a barrier for them to be a chief executive officer.

As per the Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics, Ministry of Finance and Planning (2014), women represent more than half of the Sri Lankan population but the labour force participation rate is comparatively less than the men. And their employment in managers, senior officials and legislators was less than the male employees (Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics 2013). Among all other employers in Sri Lankan manufacturing sector apparel industry is the single largest employer where the industry is feminized with 75 percent of female employees (Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics 2013). But all most all the top positions are held by men and around 67 percent female employees were in machine operative positions (Sri Lanka Department of Census and Statistics 2013). Therefor researcher addresses the research problem as, how individual barrier and organization barrier leads to create the glass ceiling effect among Female Executives in the Selected Large Apparel Industry, Sri Lanka?

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

The objective of the study is to find out how individual and organizational barrier impact on glass ceiling effect among female executives in the selected large apparel industry, Sri Lanka. The type of the study was analytical because this study attempts to establish the relationship between these independent variables and the dependent variable (Sekaran & Bougie 2010). And the type of the investigation is a correlational study which aims to outline the significant relationship between two variables (Sekaran & Bougie 2010). This is the field study because it examines how individual and organizational barrier impact on glass ceiling effect among female executives in the selected large apparel industry, Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study can be done in the natural environment where work proceeds normally, that is non-contrived setting (Sekaran & Bougie 2010). No, any artificial or contrived setting was created for the study. This study took over six months for the collection of data. The data for the study was collected within the particular time period and there was no subsequent extension of the research contemplated. Hence the study was cross-sectional in nature. For this study, the data were collected from each individual. Thus, the unity of the study is individual: female executives in the selected large apparel industry. The population of the study is female executives in the selected large apparel industry. The total population size is 1896. The sample size was 320 (Krejcie and Morgan Table 1970). In this study, both primary and secondary data collection methods were used. A questionnaire was used to collect primary data and the secondary data were collected from the various sources such as organization report, books, journals, government reports, internet and other publications. Data collected from primary sources were analyzed using the Microsoft Excel and computer-based statistical data analysis package, SPSS (version 16.0.) and the data analysis include univariate and bivariate analyses.

## **IV. RESULTS**

To investigate the responses for independent and dependent variables of the female executive employees in Sri Lankan selected large apparel industry univariate analysis was conducted. The results of the univariate analysis were given in Table 1.

Table 1: Univariate Analysis

		Individual Barrier	Organizational Barrier	Glass Ceiling Effect
N	Valid	320	320	320
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		3.77	3.65	3.67
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4	4
Std. Deviation		.679	.630	.670
Variance		.460	.397	.449
Skewness		-1.011	-.845	-.182
Std. Error of Skewness		.136	.136	.136
Kurtosis		2.385	1.056	.326
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.272	.272	.272
Range		4	4	4
Minimum		1	1	1
Maximum		5	5	5

Source: Survey Data

As stated in table 01 individual barrier, organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect were normally distributed. Mean value of the glass ceiling effect is 3.67. it is at a high level and it indicates that female executives are facing the glass ceiling effect. As per the mean value of barriers of glass ceiling effect (Individual and organizational barrier), female executives were think that these barriers lead to creating the glass ceiling effect. Mean value of the individual barrier is higher than the mean value of the organizational barrier.

Bivariate analysis, Person’s correlation between individual barrier, organizational barrier, and glass ceiling effect among female executives in the selected large apparel industry, Sri Lanka were presented in Table 2 and Table 4 respectively. And the results of the simple regression analysis of individual barrier, organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect presented in table 3.

Table 2: Person’s correlation between individual barrier and glass ceiling effect

		Glass Ceiling Effect	Individual Barrier
Glass Ceiling Effect	Pearson Correlation	1	.602**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	320	320
Individual Barrier	Pearson Correlation	.602**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	320	320

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data

As per the results presented in table 2, Person’s correlation coefficient there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the individual barrier and glass ceiling effect ( $p < 0.05$ ). Further, this proves with the finding of a positive relationship between individual barrier and glass ceiling effect at 5% significance level ( $\beta = - 0.594$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). And as indicated by R-Square, which is presented in table 3, 36.2% of the variance of glass ceiling effect is explained by an individual barrier.

Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis

Variable	Individual Barrier	Organizational Barrier
Method	Linear	Linear
R-Square	0.362	0.403
Adjusted R Square	0.360	0.401
F	180.361	214.669
Significance	0.000	0.000
B-Constant	1.427	1.203
b-Value	0.594	0.675

Source: Survey Data

Person’s correlation coefficient between the organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect presented in table 4. According to the results, there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect ( $p < 0.05$ ). Further, this proves with the finding of a positive relationship between organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect at 5% significance level ( $\beta = - 0.675$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). As per table 3, R-Square value 40.3% of the variance of glass ceiling effect is explained by an organizational barrier.

Table 4: Person’s correlation between organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect

		<b>Correlations</b>	
		Glass Ceiling Effect	Organizational Barrier
Glass Ceiling Effect	Pearson Correlation	1	.635**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	320	320
Organizational Barrier	Pearson Correlation	.635**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	320	320

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey Data

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The first objective of the analysis is to study about whether the female executives face for the glass ceiling effect. As per the results of the analysis it indicates that majority of the female executives agrees with the statements where they facing for the glass ceiling effect. And the second objective of the study is to investigate the behavior of the individual barrier and the organizational barrier. From the results driven from the analysis it shown that, mean value of the individual barrier is higher than the mean value of the organizational barrier. The potential impact of individual barrier and organizational barrier on glass ceiling effect is the

final objective of this study. So according to the results, there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the individual barrier and glass ceiling effect where 36.2% of the variance of glass ceiling effect is explained by an individual barrier. When concern about the relationship between organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect results proven that there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the organizational barrier and glass ceiling effect where 40.3% of the variance of glass ceiling effect is explained by an organizational barrier.

By considering all these facts, we can conclude that individual barrier and organizational barrier impact on glass ceiling effect among female executives in the selected large apparel industry, Sri Lanka.

Based on the above findings of the study the following recommendations were made which could be extremely useful for the apparel industry for reduce or avoid glass ceiling effect by overcoming of barriers; Individual and organizational barrier, that leads to create the glass ceiling effect.

Gender unbiased company policies to safeguard women form gender related issues, create the work environment that the women can balance their multiple roles, in organizations where a woman's qualifications are found to be inadequate or inappropriate, organizations that are having financial ability they can sponsor women employees' studies and most importantly women needs to put their maximum effort to overcome the barriers which are come from them self that negatively affect them to climb their corporate ladder.

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