

Piercing the Gender Prejudice in Corporate Boardroom: An Exploratory Study of the Approaches for Redressing the Glass Ceiling Phenomenon in Asia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The glass ceiling is a metaphorical concept which represents the invisible barriers and biases that limit the advancement and upward mobility of individuals, particularly women and other underrepresented groups, in their careers. It alludes to the cultural and institutional barriers that keep capable individuals from rising to the top of leadership roles or realising their full potential inside the organisations. Taking cognizance of this matter, various nations around the globe have legislated and recommended gender-based quotas in corporate leadership which inevitably intends to ensure the appointment of women in leadership positions of renowned companies. Accordingly, this chapter intends to explore the factors which contributes to glass-ceiling phenomenon through the empirical survey and compare the affirmative actions implemented by of Asian nations to address the concerns related to glass ceiling. The chapter will also analyse the efficacy of the approaches adopted by China and India in ensuring gender diversity in the boardroom and executive designations.

INTRODUCTION

The glass ceiling is a metaphorical concept representing the invisible barriers and biases that limit the advancement and upward mobility of individuals, particularly women and other underrepresented groups, in their careers. It speaks about the cultural and institutional barriers that keep capable people from gaining top leadership positions or realizing their full potential inside organizations. The term implies that the barrier is transparent, making it challenging to identify and address. It suggests that despite qualifications, skills, and aspirations, specific individuals face unspoken limitations that hinder their progress beyond a certain level in the professional hierarchy. These limitations are often rooted in gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, or other factors that result in discrimination and unequal treatment. The phenomenon of the “glass ceiling” also describes the various barriers that women and people of minorities must overcome to advance in their careers. Many studies that backed the “glass ceiling” theory found that women generally face numerous barriers while choosing their career route (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997).

Additionally, certain unspoken obstacles restrict women from advancing to senior managerial positions in companies. Women face more obstacles than their male counterparts and require unconventional strategies to succeed. It has been observed that women are increasingly playing a significant role in many critical fields, including business, medicine, advocacy, accounting, biomedical, policing, and bureaucracy (Broughton et al., 2009). Hence, their participation and responsibilities have paced at an accelerated rate. Scholars have consensually agreed that the most prominent and influential metaphor to come out of the 20th century is the “glass ceiling.” The globe has undergone a tremendous transformation in contemporary technologies in the last few years. However, specific communities persistently need to pay more attention to the concepts of equality and justice. Thus, the “glass ceiling” metaphor is widely used to symbolize invisible barriers that prevent many women, people of colour, and ethnic minorities from reaching and holding onto the most important, influential, and lucrative positions in the workforce (Broughton et al., 2009).

The phenomenon limits career advancement opportunities, preventing qualified individuals from reaching top leadership positions. Consequently, this perpetuates gender inequality and reinforces societal norms that undervalue women’s contributions and capabilities. The lack of diversity and inclusion from the glass ceiling restricts access to diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences, impeding organizational growth and innovation. From an economic standpoint, the glass ceiling contributes to income inequality by perpetuating the gender pay gap and hindering overall economic progress. The unequal distribution of power and influence exacerbates this disparity, impacting productivity and social mobility.

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