

EFFECTS OF GLASS CEILING ON FEMALE EXECUTIVES' CAREER ADVANCEMENT: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON EMPLOYEES OF BANGLADESHI PRIVATE ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This report's aim is to know the present situation of women's career development in some selected private organizations in Dhaka city. Furthermore, readers would be able to know the perception or thinking of the employees about Glass Ceiling. A questionnaire is made which focuses on factors causing glass ceiling, its effects on performance and way to break the invisible ceiling. Responses were collected from 80 employees of both men (50) and women (30) and they are from different executive positions. Furthermore, three hypotheses were tested to find the perception and existence of glass ceiling in private organizations in Bangladesh. This paper also extracts some decision according to the findings of each questions. The findings of the study project various indications about the concerned issue. Exploratory factor analysis is used to study the indicators of glass ceiling. From analyzing the data, it can be inferred that respondents agreed to some extent about the existence of glass ceiling in their respective organization. The findings reveal that there are a few amounts of existence of glass ceiling in Bangladeshi private organizations. According to the respondent's opinion management's perception and senior male colleagues' acceptance are most significant factors for creating glass ceiling whereas Reward policy and unawareness of glass ceiling are the second most significant factors. On the other hand, respondent disagree about marriage as a contributing factor for creating glass ceiling effect in the organization. Whereas flexible working hour, willingness to accept work challenges, higher competency and women's competitiveness influences career advancement of women in an organization. Finally, report is concluded with a realistic note and some solutions as well for the organization. So that, the organization could do some more for the betterment of the women's career advancement by providing a family-friendly working environment in the organization.

Key Words: Glass Ceiling, Career Advancement, Women, Executives, etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade the percentage of female employees entering the job market has increased immensely. The trend in the increase maybe be a contributing factor to the changes in the society, where there shows a shift in the way of life. In Bangladesh, the number of females progressing towards higher education is increased. It is commonly believed that female employees have lower career progression in comparison to male employees. Most of the problems have been

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identified to be related to the existence of glass ceiling. By definition “glass ceiling” refers to the invisible barrier of impediments that exist in the organization that impedes on the career progression of female employees in an organization. It is not doubtful that there exists a barrier in the professional arena, which differentiates the two genders. There seems to be no doubt about the existence of gender equity in the labor market. Gender differences and the perceptions of men and women differ from nation to nation mainly because of the cultural diversity in the society. It is also noticeable that other contributing factors include the changes in the economy as well as the political situations in the country. Bangladesh is a nation that has been categorized by United Nations as a middle-income country which has also brought about demographic changes thereby employing new options and changing the trends at different levels. It is apparent that a large percentage of female employees are employed in the mid-level or lower level positions. Women leaders at the top level are significantly low and this maybe because of the discrimination that prevails. In Bangladesh the stereotype perception confers the changes in the attitudes towards the type of job roles and also business sectors where they are best suited to work. Because of the traditional concepts of women being for confined to household work and the maternal aspect subordinates often provide a different attitude towards their female subordinates, leading to a more conducive atmosphere in the workplace. In a report published in the financial express, it has been highlighted that there seems to be less than 1 per cent female leaders in the top managerial positions. It has also been speculated that the number the gender gap in the managerial position at mid-level and top level is regarded as a more male dominant sector of the organization. However, the complexity of the contributing factors and the conflicts are deeper.

i. Existence of Glass Ceiling in Organization

Glass ceiling has been in existence for a very long time from now. Since past, women were considered as substandard as men and were not receiving equal opportunities, education or prospects as their men counterparts enjoyed. But in recent times, various authors of gender inequality have dissimilar opinions about the existence of glass ceiling in organizations. Although authors settled on the great existence of glass ceiling in organizations, other authors like argued on the existence of glass ceiling. The existence of glass ceiling many organization’s top management levels. The extent to which employees believe gender difference existed for women in their organizations. The level of management (top, middle or lower levels) within the organization that employees believe gender difference is/are predominant.

ii. Causes and Effects of Glass Ceiling for Women

There are various causes of glass ceiling pointed out. One is societal preju

dices. In the society, women are respected for spending much time with husbands and children at home instead with time-consuming careers. As a result, women always feel that starting up a family causes glass ceiling and halts their career success. Organizational barriers and individual factors or group are differences as the two potential causes of the glass ceiling. Organization are the formal or informal institutional policies or practices against women, while individual factors or group differences are the personal characteristics or habits like fear, pride, lousiness, rudeness, callousness, time mismanagement, negligence, gossip, toughness, lack of self-confidence and loss of concentration, in women that drop them back in occupying higher organizational levels. Again, there are some business-based barriers to glass ceiling like prevailing policies that segregate human resources (for example, recruitment practices, job placement and rotational job assignments), lack of mentoring, lack of opportunities for career advancement and promotion, and lenient monitoring of sexual impurity practices such as sexual harassment, are human resource practices that causes glass ceiling against women at the workplaces and these are: the extent of seriousness and consistency by government courts to monitor, tackle and enforce law to of glass ceiling related complaints. Recently found some certain negative effects of glass ceiling on women. Like glass ceiling pauses females' interest for organizational leadership and organizational commitments.

1.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1.1.1 Broad Objective

The Broad objective of the study is to know about the Effects of Glass Ceiling on Female Executives' Career Advancement in Bangladeshi private organizations. We can also know the causes, existence and overcoming ways of this invisible barrier in the women's professional life.

1.1.2 Specific Objective

The specific objectives of the study are

- To identify the contributing factors responsible for glass ceiling in private organizations.
- Evaluate the factors that influence career advancement for women in an organization
- Evaluate the level of gender related conflict in private organizations.
- Identify the factors that can be introduced and established by the organization to reduce the level of barriers for women.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research has made extensive use of both primary and secondary data. I

have collected all the primary data by administering a questionnaire to respondents in the selected companies. Interviews have also been conducted to access the information about the existence of glass ceiling.

1.2.1 Source of Data

For the purpose of the research, both primary and secondary data has been used. Secondary data has been gathered by extensive research of journals, articles, publications, books and websites. Aside to the secondary data, primary data has also been used for the purpose of the study. Questionnaire survey of 30 female and 50 male employees has been used for the purpose.

1.2.2 Sampling and Data Collection

The sample of the study covers the female and male employees from select private organizations in Dhaka. Keeping in mind that the data collection may be difficult. There are 30 female employees in the low and mid-level. 80 employees have filled up the circulated questionnaire out of the total population as primary data. The employees are from the Human Resource Department, Sales Department, Accounts Department and IT Department and so on.

1.2.3 Questionnaire Design and Testing

A structured, close ended questionnaire uses 5-point Likert scale; with end points ranging from "Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). Also, there are a few numbers of YES/NO questions. The respondents were also asked to indicate their age, position, Marital Status, Gender (top level, mid-level, low level).

Hypotheses to test

H1: Women are usually denied executive positions as a result of their limited leadership and management skills on the entry level.

H2: The concept that women have some physical or mental abnormality, which makes them stereotypically unsuited for managerial positions, is an example of gender stereotype.

H3: Women under-representation in managerial positions in private organizations is due to the lack of careful career planning by women.

Dependent Variables: The dependent variables utilized for this survey include; under-representation, denial of managerial position. The underrepresentation is the percentage of women being represented in the areas of management and professional employment. Denial of managerial position is the average number of women turned down for managerial positions and are equally or more educated than the men currently holding those positions.

Independent variables: The independent variables for this survey amongst others include misconception, physical and mental imbalance, over-representation, executive position, career plan, male behavior, ascribed status and gender stereotype.

1.2.4 Tools Used to Gather Information

The main tools used to gather information for the purpose of completing the report were questionnaire, interview and discussion with the officers, executives of various departments. Also, there are use of some graphical tools like bar chart in the analysis part.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- First of all, this report will be useful for the organizations.
- For the women who are now employed in the private organizations and for the unemployed women who are going to enter into the job sector. So, that they will get an idea about the organizational environment and conflicts.
- This would also be helpful for the male employees as they will be able to know the barriers that faces by the women in an organization. So, that they can contribute to make a better working environment for women.
- Undoubtedly, it is helpful for the society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The “Glass Ceiling” is a term which symbolizes a variety of barriers faced by women and by minorities as they seek to improve their employment status. Many studies confirmed the glass ceiling hypothesis and indicated that women in their early lives experienced a number of barriers during their decision of their career path (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997); and also invisible barriers, which continued to prevent women from moving up to a higher position in organizations (Adair, 1999; Baxter & Wright, 2000; Lyness & Thompson, 2000). Lyness and Thompson (2000) were curious about whether women and men executives followed similar routes in climbing the corporate ladder. In fact, they found that women face greater barriers and they need different strategies to succeed than do men. In order to be a successful executive, women have to overcome isolation, sex-stereotyping and performance pressures.

The “Glass Ceiling” is one of the compelling metaphors for examining inequalities between, men and women in the workplace (Burke and Vinnicombe, 2005; International Labour Office, 2004; McLeod, 2008). The expression has been used widely in the popular media as well as in official government reports and academic publications (Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration, 1994; Catalyst,

1990; Garland, 1991; Scandura, 1992; State of Wisconsin Task Force on the GC Initiative, 1993; U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). The barriers that prevent women from ascending to senior management positions in large corporations have often been described by the metaphor "Glass Ceiling", a transparent barrier which prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder past a certain point. (Morrison, White, Van and the center for Creative Leadership, 1987). As per Weyer (2007) the scarcity of female leaders is linked to ongoing prejudice and discrimination against women in the workplace. This refers although women are now capable of moving to upper levels, at some point they are halted by an invisible barrier. It applies to women as a group who are kept from advancing higher because they are women (Morrison et al., 1987). Auster (1993) points out, however, that the Glass Ceiling is not one ceiling or wall in one spot, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias that occur frequently in both overt and covert ways. The Glass Ceiling is also very visible to those whose careers have been affected by it. However, the term was used by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1991, in response to a study of nine Fortune 500 companies. The study defined that women and minorities encountered substantial Glass Ceiling barriers in their careers; these barriers were experienced earlier in their professions than previously thought. Researchers found that there are different kinds of GC barriers such as different pay for comparable work.(FGCC,1995), sexual, ethnic, racial, religious discrimination or harassment in the workplace, prevailing culture of many businesses, lack of family-friendly workplace policies (or on the flipside, policies that discriminate against people, non-parents, or single parents)...etc. Human resource experts are often in leadership positions that allow them to have a huge impact on organizations. Consequently, it is important that, they are knowledgeable about how the glass ceiling fact may directly or indirectly impact an organization's reputation, customer loyalty, and diversity of skill sets, growth potential and for its bottom line. Also, the Chief Executive Officer or president of an organization may tap Human resource experts for their advice and expertise on the strategic organizational changes that are necessary to reduce the existence of a GC so as to maximize an organization's performance and reputation. Most of the female felt that while their male counterparts did not have the responsibilities for housework and childcare during their work life, they personally continued to have these responsibilities and that these responsibilities increased their stress level, the family structure has a great impact on career success (Schneer and Reitman, 2002). According to the United Nations (2011), there has been significant progress in recent years: more and more women are seeking to transform politics itself, and women's groups are focusing on efforts to increase women's representation on the ballot to reinvigorate political accountability. Today, there are more women in government than ever before.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Respondents were asked a series of open questions, semi-open questions, multiple choice questions, dichotomous questions. Findings and Analysis are presented below based on the questions of the questionnaire used in this study:

a) Analysis of demographic information:

Female:

Topic	Percentage (%)
Female	37.5%
Position	Executive, Sr. Officer, Sr. Executive etc

Male:

Topic	Percentage (%)
Male	62.5%
Position	Executive, Sr. Officer, Sr. Executive, Manager, Assistant Manager etc.

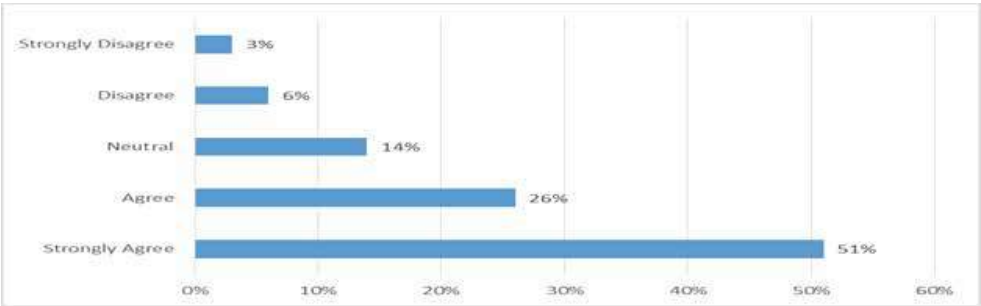
Results of the survey and Hypotheses test

The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation scores of the survey variables are illustrated in Table 1. It is evident from table 1 that respondent perceived that women are underrepresented in the areas of management (mean 2.31, standard deviation .871) The perception of the respondents is evident on the importance of ascribed status in gaining positions by belonging to the right family or the right socio-economic class can be a career barrier holding women back in Bangladeshi Private organization (mean = 3.21). However, the mean score values of variables measured in this survey are between 2.03 to 3.49. It is interesting to note that the under-representation of women in management positions in Bangladeshi Private organization is not due to the lack of careful career planning by women. Career plan variable also has a significant role in determining the career advancement of female Executives which supports one of the study hypotheses.

Table 01: Descriptive Statistics of Survey Variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Under representation	2.31	.871	<i>physical and mental imbalance</i>	2.33	.931
<i>Denial of managerial position</i>	2.03	1.089	<i>over-representation</i>	2.49	.743
<i>misconception</i>	3.14	.895	<i>executive position</i>	3.09	.866
<i>career plan</i>	3.09	.784	<i>male behavior</i>	2.61	1.532
<i>gender stereotype</i>	2.87	.698	<i>ascribed status</i>	3.21	.958

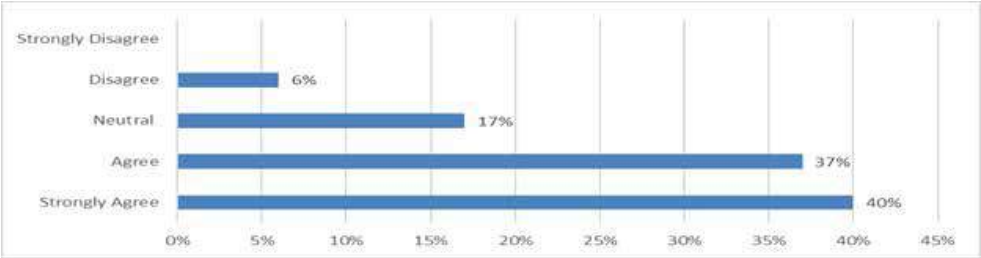
Q-1: Perception of management for women leadership.



Explanation: Women are seen most in the low and mid-level in the hierarchy. It is necessary for them to take on top level position and show their leadership skills as well. Employees who are in top level management were asked this question to answer whether it is important to take women’s in leading positions or not. Here, we can see in this graph that 51% respondents strongly agree with the statement that it is not important for women to take on the leadership roles. Also 26% of the respondents agree with that. On the other hand, only 3% of people strongly disagree with this statement and 6% of them disagree with the statement. Whereas, 14% of the people are being neutral.

Findings: As the majority of respondents (51%) Strongly agree with this statement, so it is accepted that it is not important for women to take on leadership roles.

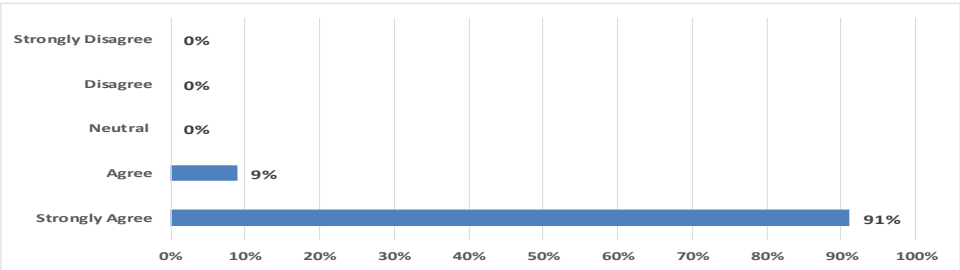
Q-2: Women and men are equally respected in workplace



Explanation: Gender Discrimination should be prohibited in everywhere to create a healthy working relationship. Male and Female both should be respected in the same way. We can see in this graph that 40% respondents strongly agree with the statement that women and men are equally respected in the workplace. Also 37% of the respondents agree with that. On the other hand, only 6% of people disagree with this statement. Furthermore, 17% of the people are neutral and there is no one to strongly disagree that.

Findings: The majority of respondents (40%) Strongly agree that in their workplace both men and women get the equal respect. So, to sum up, it is accepted that women and men are equally respected in the workplace. In fine, private organizations respect both the men women in a same way and some respondent added they strictly maintain this in the office.

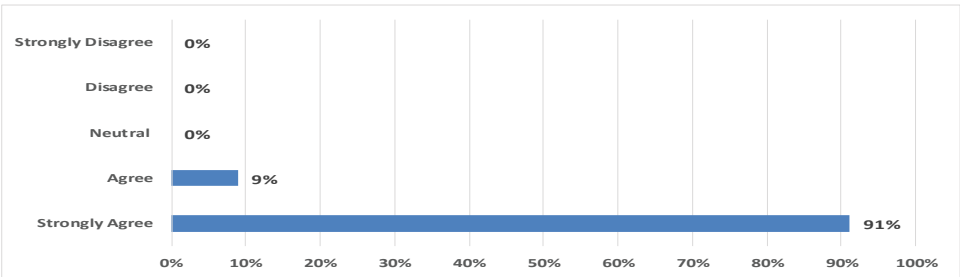
Q-3: Reward system itself a barrier!



Explanation: Reward is the way to motivate employees according to their performance. The graph shows here that 91% respondents strongly agree with the statement that sometimes reward system itself a barrier in creating glass ceiling. Also 9% of the respondents agree with that. Surprisingly, 0% of the respondents are neutral, disagree and strongly disagree with the statement.

Findings: The majority of respondents (91%) Strongly agree. So, we can say that it is accepted.

Q-4: Usually women are not aware about glass ceiling

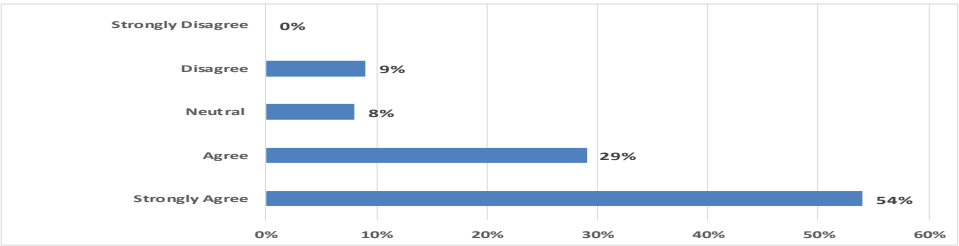


Explanation: Here we can see a mix type of responses. The graph shows here that 91% respondents strongly agree with the statement that women are not aware about glass ceiling except who are in the top position. Also rest of the 9% of the total respondents agree with that.

Findings: The majority of respondents (91%) strongly agree that women usually not

aware about glass ceiling. So, we can say that it is accepted.

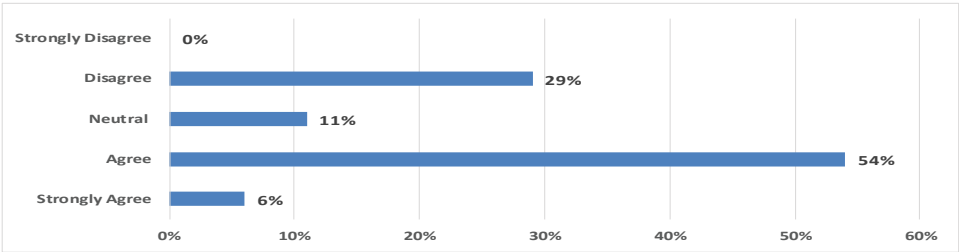
Q-5: Men can perform better as leader than women



Explanation: The graph shows here that 54% respondents strongly agree with the statement that men can perform better as leader than women. Also 29% of the respondents agree with that. On the other hand, 0% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Furthermore, 8% and 9% respondents are neutral and disagree with that.

Findings: The majority of respondents (54%) strongly agree that men can perform better as leader than women. So, we can say that it is accepted.

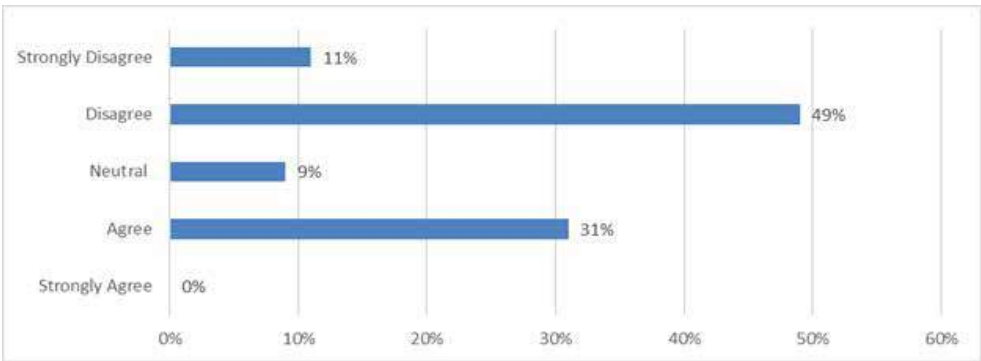
Q-6: Competitiveness in women is viewed as a negative trait



Explanation: The bar chart shows that 54% respondents agree with the statement that the competitiveness in women often seen as a negative trait. Also 29% of the respondents disagree with that but no one strongly disagree that. 11% of the employees are neutral here. Lastly, 6% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement.

Findings: The majority of respondents (54%) agree that women’s competitiveness seen as negatively in the workplace.so, it is accepted. A few of them also mention that sometimes the competition among women seen as a negative trait.

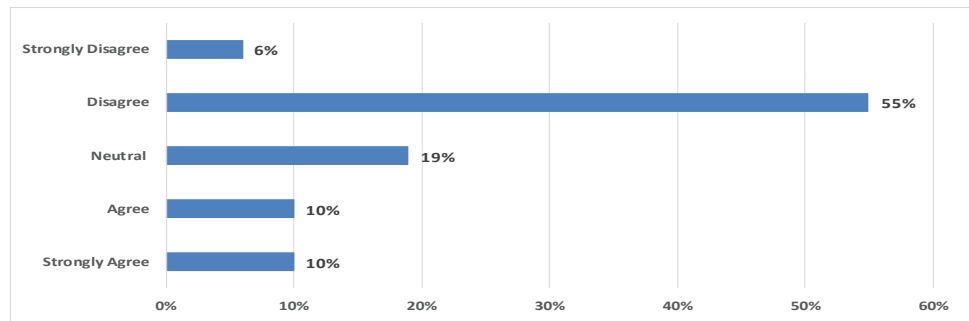
Q-7: Women' are not easily promoted



Explanation: This chart shows that 49% respondents disagree with the statement that women are not easily promoted form entry level to mid-level. Also 11% of the respondents strongly disagree. On the other hand, there are 31% respondents who said that they agree with the statement and no one strongly agree with that. Lastly, 9% of the respondents are neutral with the statement.

Findings: The majority of respondents (49%) disagree that women are not easily promoted form entry level to mid-level in the workplace.so, it is rejected. The respondents of private organizations said they are lucky that they do not have this kind of restrictions in case of promotion because it is totally based on the work back-ground.

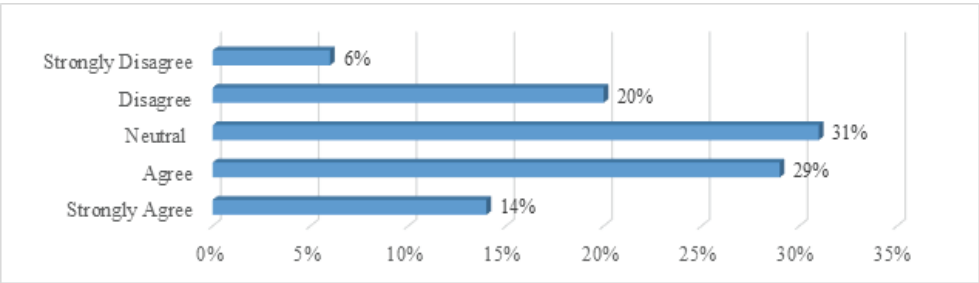
Q-8: Standards are higher for women than men.



Explanation: This chart shows that 55% respondents disagree with the statement that standards are high for women than men. Also 6% of the respondents strongly disagree that. Similarly, there are 10% respondents who said that they agree and 10% strongly agree with the statement. Lastly, 19% of the respondents are neutral with the statement.

Findings: The majority of respondents (55%) disagree that standards are high for women than men. To sum up, the hypothesis is rejected.

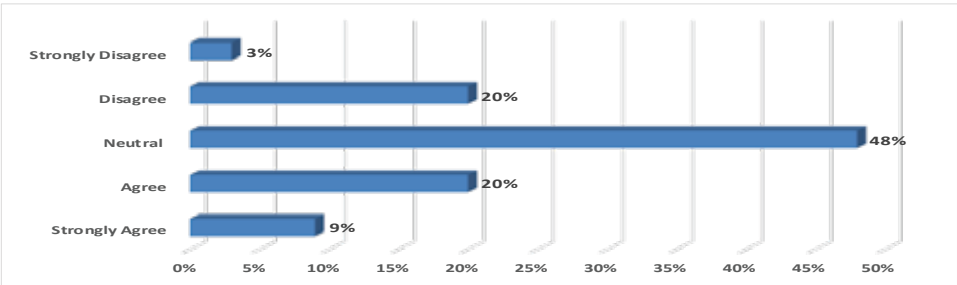
Q-9: “MARRIAGE” is an obstacle



Explanation: This chart shows that 31% respondents remain neutral with the statement that marriage is an obstacle for women’s career development. However, 29% of the respondents agree with that and 14% strongly agree because they think marriage is an obstacle for women. Similarly, there are 20% respondents who said that they disagree and 6% strongly disagree with the statement with that.

Findings: As most of the respondents (31%) are neutral so that it is neither accepted nor rejected.

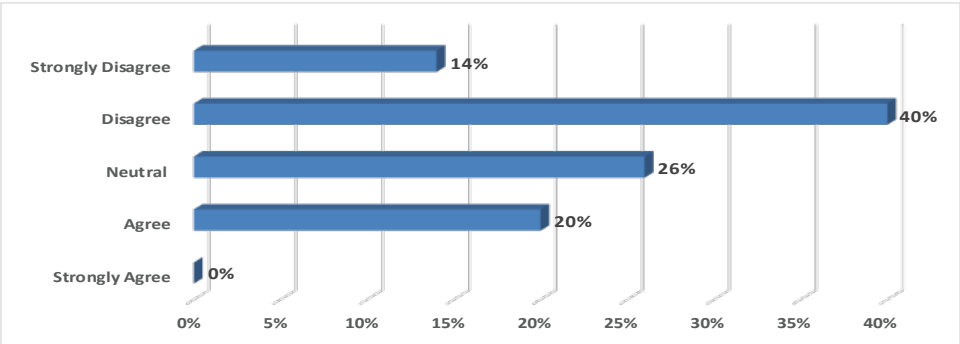
Q-10: Women are placed in positions beyond their level of competence



Explanation: Here we can see in the pie-chart that 48% respondents are neutral with the statement and that is Women are placed in positions beyond their level of competence. However, 20% of the respondents disagree and 3% of them strongly disagree with the statement. Also, 20% respondents agree and 9% strongly agree with the statement.

Findings: As most of the respondents (48%) are neutral with the statement so that it is neither accepted nor rejected.

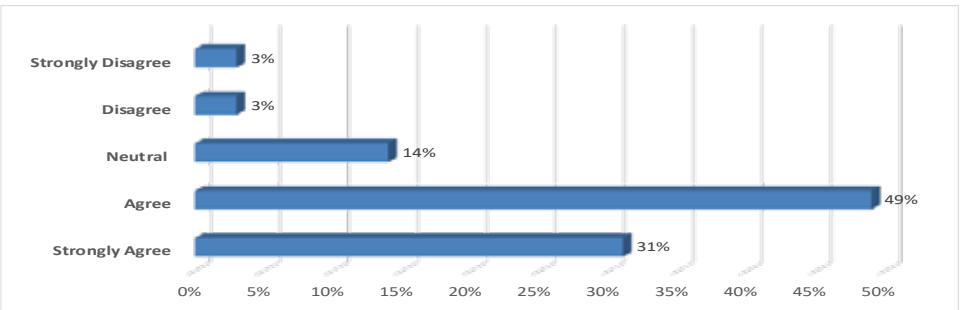
Q-11: women are likely to face the barriers



Explanation: Again, we can see in the chart that 40% respondents disagree with the statement and that is usually women are likely to face barrier than man. However, 26% of the respondents are neutral and 20% of them agree with the statement. Also 14% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. 0% strongly agree with the statement.

Findings: As majority of the respondents (48%) disagree with the statement so that it is rejected because no only women but also man face some barriers.

Q-12: “Flexible Working Hours” to break the ceiling.

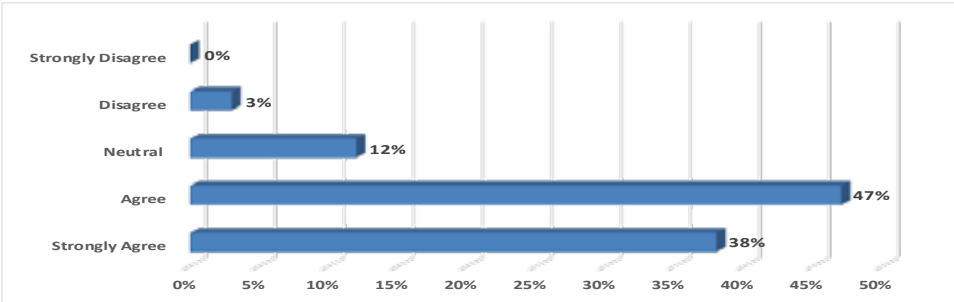


Explanation: We can see here that 49% respondents agree with the statement and that is to break the glass ceiling flexible working hours needs to be provide by the organization. Moreover, 31% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement. But 3% of them strongly disagree and another 3% disagree with the statement. But 14% respondents are neutral with the statement.

Findings: As most of the respondents (49%) agree with the statement that organiza-tion should provide flexible working hours to break the glass ceiling, so that it is accepted. Well in that case this facility is not provided by the organization. For

single parent it is difficult to maintain the daily 9-5 working hours. Some also added that the company should start this facility.

Q-13: “Promote Gender-Neutral Relationship” to shatter the glass ceiling.

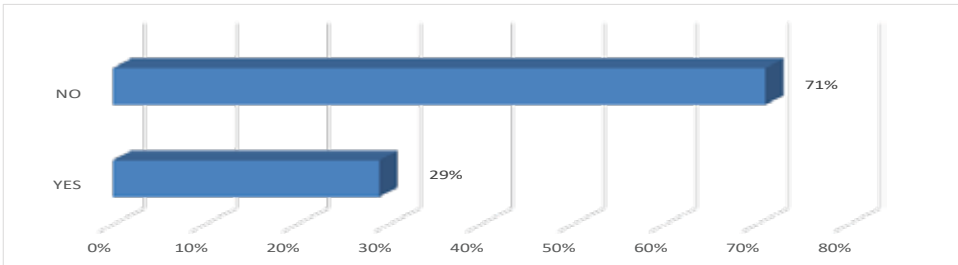


Explanation: We can see in this bar-chart that 47% respondents agree with the statement and that is to break the glass ceiling gender-neutral relationship should be promoted by the organization. Further, 38% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement. But 3% of them disagree and 0% strongly disagree with the statement. But 12% respondents are neutral with the statement.

Findings: As most of the respondents (47%) agree with the statement that organization should promote gender-neutral relationship to break the glass ceiling, so that it is accepted. The concept is still not clear by all of the respondents. Gender-Neutral relationship should be promoted and take this matter seriously by doing training, seminars, discussions among the employees.

b) Analysis of some yes/no questions:

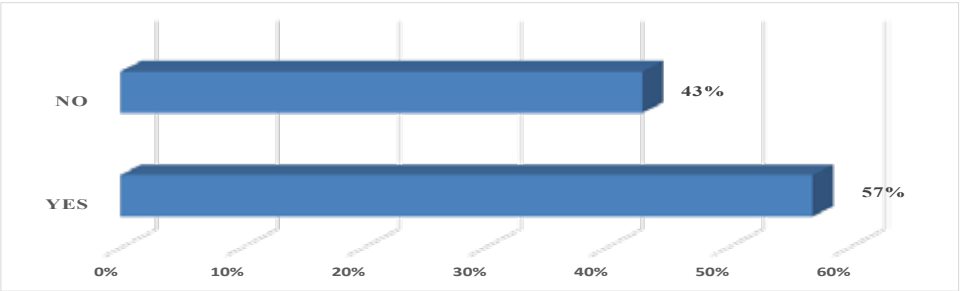
Q-14: MEN make better managers than WOMEN



Explanation: There are two categories (YES/NO) as it is a yes/no question. Here we can see that 71% of the respondents are against the statement that men make better managers than women. And rest of them 29% are in favor of this statement.

Findings: As the majority of the respondents do not think that men can better managers than women so cannot accept this. It is rejected.

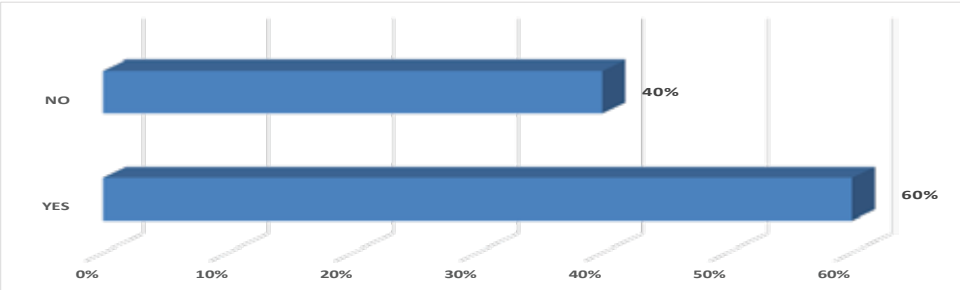
Q-15: A woman should perform better to be promoted



Explanation: From the chart we can see that 57% of the respondents are in favor of the statement which is surprising that a woman should perform better than a man to be promoted. Only, 43% of the respondents are against this statement.

Findings: As the majority of the respondents (57%) are in favor of this that a woman should perform better than a man to be promoted, so it is accepted.

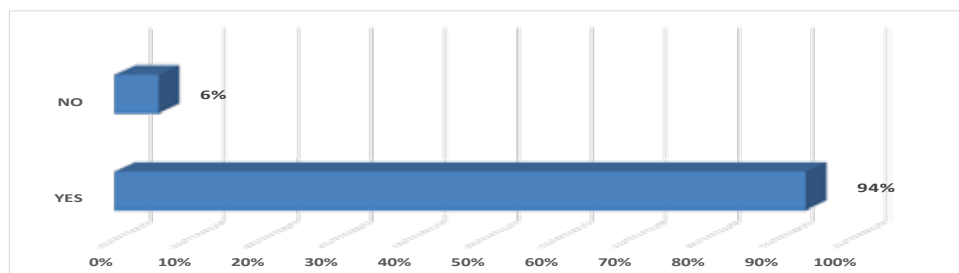
Q-16: The number of women serving in managerial positions increasing.



Explanation: From the chart we can see that 60% of the respondents are in favor of the statement that the number of women serving in managerial positions increasing in their workplace. On the other hand, 40% of the respondents are against this statement as they do not know the accurate information.

Findings: As the majority of the respondents (60%) are in favor of this so it is accepted.

Q-17: Women should talk about this invisible barrier



Explanation: This is a serious matter and women should talk about it more often. This is not a matter to be ashamed of. In this bar-chart we can see that 94% of the respondents are in favor of the statement that women should talk about this invisible barrier. Only, 6% of the respondents are against this statement.

Findings: As the majority of the respondents (94%) are in favor of this so it is accepted women should talk about the barriers they face.

CONCLUSIONS

"Women have broken through the glass ceiling, and they're now more and more in the power seats." Said by "Aretha Franklin". There will be barriers, but women need to be strong enough to shatter the ceiling. The rules, regulations, standards should be same for all the men and women in an organization. For me, an individual should be judged as a person not by his/her gender. Then, there will be an equality for men, women and minorities. The findings depict that there is an existence of glass ceiling in a little amount in the Bangladeshi Private organizations and they should take some initiative to help female employees to break the ceiling. According to the findings found from the survey, I have given some recommendation as well. However, there are some issues that needs to be established and improved by private organizations and hopefully they will overcome this soon for the betterment of the females' career. The perception that females are not dedicated to work just because they have to contribute a lot to the family should be avoided. If a woman is eligible for a position she should be hired. She should not be replaced by a man because of her gender. Throughout the entire career a woman should be judged according to her performance in a fair way and that should be the only criteria. To sum up, from my observations, I would say that the organizations should be more open in case of recruiting the females as they have a few numbers of female employees in the higher position also in mid-level position.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are some solutions to eliminate the glass ceiling in the organization. Such as;

- Educating the employees on the contribution of women to organizational development
- Educating women on important managerial attitudes such as sociability, calmness, confidence and professionalism, empowering women through education, creating interpersonal communication and networks.
- Providing flexible working schedules that could be used to break through glass ceiling for women in the institutions.
- Maintaining some strict rules and regulations against adverse unprofessional acts, such as sexual mistreatment and bribe taking can reduce stereotyping of women. According to, a clearly stated punishment for sex harassment or a bribe, could reduce glass ceiling in the single most important strategy to overcome the effects of glass ceiling is the persistent creation.
- Encouraging Women to work on their natural instincts and characters so that they can be humble, focus on important matters of the organization and stop unnecessary quarrelling, fighting and argument.
- Promoting Gender Neutral relationship among the employees through seminars, meetings, discussions.
- Giving chance to the women to take on senior position and have faith on them.
- Any kind of gender biased affirmative actions of the organization should be prohibited.
- Establishing a full of diversify workforce where women and minorities will get the equal respect and responsibility.
- Promotion should be based on performance.
- Respecting every woman in the organization whether she is younger or older.
- Should be more open about recruiting the female

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