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The Relationship between dimensions of glass ceiling and organizational commitment of women employees

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to determine the relationship between the dimensions of glass ceiling and the organizational commitment of women employees at University of Isfahan, which was conducted by a correlational-type descriptive method. The study population consisted of the women employees working at University of Isfahan, whose number stood at 428 individual and 202 individuals of them were selected using a stratified random sampling fit for the size. In order to collect data, two questionnaires glass ceiling and organizational commitment were utilized. For data analysis, Pearson correlation coefficient, stepwise regression, and multivariate variance analysis test were used. The findings of the research indicated that correlation coefficient between glass ceiling ($r=-0.215$, $p<0.01$) and family barrier dimension ($r=-0.174$, $p<0.05$) and social barriers ($r=-0.183$, $p<0.05$), as dimensions of glass ceiling, and organizational commitment is negative and significant. Among the dimensions of glass ceiling, social barrier was the best predictor of organizational commitment ($\beta=21.9$).

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues of organizations in the world is to establish a fair merit-based promotion system; despite the enormous efforts that have been made in this regard, promotion systems in many organizations still appear to be skewed. Particularly, how organizations treat women and their success and career progress path call for greater reconsideration. Women constitute almost half of human resource of organizations; particularly in Iran, due to the desire of women for higher education and employment in governmental organizations, the ratio of their presence and activities in organizations is ever growing. Any injustice exposed to them may

exert a negative effect on the productivity of half of the workforce of organizations. The metaphor glass ceiling is a phenomenon that increases the intensity of organizational injustice and strongly influences the quality of the activity of about half the population of an organization (Zohrei, 2009). Glass ceiling refers to barriers that hinder individual in an organization from making progress and reaching his full potential (Thomas *et al.*, 2013). First used in the Wall Street Journal (Weyer, 2007), the term was officially used by the United States Department of Labor (DOL) in 1991 in the result of a research conducted on 500 firms. According to a definition by the U.S. Bureau of Labor, glass ceiling is “those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevents women from advancing upward in the organization into management-level positions”. Although it was

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first used in the US, the term can be currently generalized to all the circumstances that women practically face in reaching top managerial jobs (Ghorbani *et al.*, 2014; Slaughter, 2015). A review of the research on the metaphor glass ceiling, indicated that the concept suggests the existence of impenetrable barriers posed by many international organizations, without legal validity simply on the basis of implicit and tacit agreement prohibiting the promotion of women in organizations (Wirth, 2001). Since glass ceiling is a complex phenomenon, factors contributing to it, which are referred to as barriers to promotion, are multiple and intricate, as they are not simply associated with the situation of women employment in organizations but rather it is extended to women's situation in society (Veale and Gold, 1988). According to Oakley (2000), what causes glass ceiling can be divided into two classes, those associated with the measures of organization including work-family conflict and communicative network, and the behavioral and cultural causes such as stereotypes and leadership style (Weyer, 2007). Work-family conflict suggests that women often lack the sufficient flexibility to work in the afternoon and beyond office hours. Therefore, they are stripped of many informal requirements, in which case, they are withdrawn from advancing into higher positions and promotion (Abdollahi, 2002); regarding communicative network, women have less interaction with powerful individuals in organization than men and they are not close to the center of powerful networks, and since access to powerful networks is positively related to organizational promotion, lack of the access to it causes glass ceiling in women (Esfidani, 2002). According to Oakley (2000), gender stereotype which is one of the behavioral and cultural factors is one of the most basic factors that hinders women's participation in society. Based on the belief, the second-hand role of women is promoted. Beliefs of this kind would destroy the whole women's belief about their ability (Taleghani *et al.*, 2009). Setting values for women's work is important because they have been always forced to prove their ability throughout the history, and they put effort into it in order to overcome the entire idea prevailing in workplaces which were often masculine. Seyed Javadin (2008) in his study proposed a model for the explanations of the causal relationship between glass ceiling and its barriers conformed that about 96 of

female managers have referred to the employment of certain management methods desired by male managers as factor of work progress; they claimed that current management patterns are full of masculine characteristics and practice, and it is exactly the patterns that put women in a dilemma. Glass ceiling is a 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. It seems that identifying the barriers that leads to the glass ceiling effect is very important in order to address for the workplace issues which relates to the inequity between men and women in the work place and develops strategies to address and improve the policies for preventing such things. Barriers to the promotion of women to management positions can be divided into three general categories; individual, organizational and cultural-social obstacles. women come across multiple and diverse barriers to their future progress even when promoted to managerial jobs, including that women have less motivation for leadership and management, and that women are in a position of weakness when it comes to time and energy in daily activities (Edirisinghe and Thalgaspitiya, 2016). Advocates of Marxist feminism contend that the foundation of the tradition in which women are treated has developed from private ownership, division of gender labor, and eventually a patriarchal family system. On the other hand, capitalism has been believed to be the key factor in reproducing the inequality. For a radical feminist, men's control over women (patriarchy) is the main issue, as they believe that women make a desperate attempt to put up a fight in order to liberate themselves from this control constraint. The main issue for socialist feminist is to explain how to combine capitalism and patriarchy (Mirkamali and Nastizaie, 2010). Although the rate of female employment has grown in recent decades, it is worth noting that the rate of female employment at labor and service level has been made equal to the rate of male employment at managerial and supervisory levels. As a matter of fact, almost half of jobs throughout the world have a history in "gender hegemony", a male hegemony; diversity of jobs for women is very limited compared to men (Aboim, 2016). In order to account for continuous gender differences in obtaining jobs, there are two types of general justification; Person-centered accounts and situational-centered accounts. The former deals with

personal traits such as assertiveness and achievement motivation. Accordingly, gender differences in job expectation and consequences depend on individual differences between women and men; that is, the belief is that the need for progress and assertiveness is less in women than men. On the contrary, the latter focuses on the effect of social fabric and institutions. Many researchers believe that women are not recruited in jobs they deserve to take just because of their gender. This type of prejudice is referred to as access discrimination, because it makes access to a profession probably blocked on account of an irrelevant characteristic. Obviously, women are not considered as competent as men in the workplace (Ebrahimpour *et al.*, 2011). Dost *et al.*, (2012) found that employee's organizational commitment is fairly influenced by glass ceiling. If organizations did not provide proper career advancement opportunity for women, they will inevitably face the loss of a large number of competent, adroit, experienced, and knowledgeable individuals. When women work in an environment dominated by gender discrimination and masculine stereotypes, they will demonstrate less organizational commitment (Rosin and Korabik, 1991). Therefore, glass ceiling is costly. The presence of glass ceiling may be very dangerous for organizations, today if managers fail to understand the significance of this axiom and fail to take a step to fix it, organizations will face numerous and costly problems such as absenteeism and replacement, reduction of organizational commitment and productivity, as well as loss of skilled female resources (Allahyari *et al.*, 2012). To ensure employees' organizational commitment, glass ceiling should be eliminated or reduced (Imam and Shah, 2013). With gender discrimination, members of organization sometimes set out to lodge objections and establish informal agencies. For this reason, attitudinal surveys can serve as an invaluable tool for understanding employees in organization better. One of the most important attitudes which is currently developed mostly in the studies of organizational and industrial psychology in the West is the problem of organizational commitment (Zarvandi, 2009). Researchers view organizational commitment as an important variable in understanding employee's behavior. Research has shown that organizational commitment can affect employee performance and the outcomes of organization such as intention to leave, sales and

profitability of institution as well as employee absenteeism. Therefore, organizational commitment can increase productivity, improve and increase quality of offering services (Seyed Ameri and Esmaeili, 2011). Commitment is kind of individual's attitude toward internal feelings about organization, job or group, which is influential in the judgment, performance and loyalty to organization. Commitment has two conditions; 1- holding a belief in order to obtain wishes and desires, 2- the behavior of person demonstrates her adherence to beliefs and her loyalty to them (Kouzes and Posner, 2011) Therefore, the committed employees have higher levels of organization's care as well as more experience than employees with less commitment (Kang *et al.*, 2011). Employees committed to organization prefer staying in organization, even if they are offered more appealing alternatives. Committed individuals have strong desire for staying in organization because they personally accept organizational values and goals, and actively become involved in organizational activities (Kim and Rhee, 2010). Porter defines commitment according to the general force of simulation (identification) and individual's participation in organization. The view develops from three factors which include:

- Accepting organization's goals and values
- Expressing desire for collaboration with organization in order to achieve organizational goals
- Expressing desire for staying in organization

Organizational commitment varies from person to person Mowday *et al.*, (1982) identified some factors as underlying causes of organizational commitment, which include personal traits, qualities relating to career, structural characteristics and work experience. In this viewpoint, commitment is viewed as a one-dimensional concept which simply focuses on affective commitment. Over years, scholars have changed the views of organizational commitment as one-dimensional concept to a multidimensional concept.

Research background

Tiwari and Awasthi (2019) conducted a research with the title of the Effects of Glass Ceiling and Organizational Commitment on Corporate Women's Turnover Intentions and confirmed that Glass

ceiling negatively has impact on organizational Commitment. [Oreyzi et al., \(2014\)](#) conducted a research with the title of relationship of work-family conflict with organizational justice, organizational commitment and vitality, by considering the role of expatriate and normal work schedules, concluding that the negative relationship between work-family conflict and organizational commitment is significant. [Pirhayati et al., \(2012\)](#) conducted a research entitled relationship between work-family and family-work conflict and job engagement and desire for remaining in job among personnel of Mahshahr Petrochemical Company. The aim of the research was to explore the relationship between work-family conflict and job engagement and desire to remain in job. The results of the research indicated that there is a negative relationship between work-family conflict and job engagement. There was also a negative significant relationship between family-work conflict and desire to remain in job. [Sharafi and dehdashti shahrokh \(2012\)](#) performed a research entitled the relationship between family-to-work conflict of employee and co-workers' turnover intention and confirmed that work-family conflict with intention to leave is linked to the reduction of individual's job engagement. [Kolade and Kehinde \(2013\)](#) in a research entitled glass ceiling and women career advancement; evidence from Nigerian construction industry indicated that some of the barriers mentioned in the literature against women career advancement are prevalent in Nigerian construction, except the existence of equality in respect of male and female in terms of employment and career development opportunity. Moreover, low women participation in Nigerian construction industry begins in choosing course, education and continues throughout recruitment process. [Weng et al., \(2010\)](#) conducted a research with the title of the Relationship between career growth and organizational commitment stated that programs provided by organization for the growth of individuals' career advancement can increase affective, continuous, and normative commitment. [Pichler et al., \(2008\)](#), in a research entitled glass ceiling in human resources; exploring the link between women's representation in management and the practices of strategic human resource management and employee involvement, examined two hypotheses; that women are more to be concentrated in lower-level managerial positions that need employee participation (due

to a related emphasis on stereotypically feminine managerial abilities), and that women are more likely to be concentrated in lower-level managerial positions laying emphasis on the strategic human resource management (due to a related emphasis on stereotypically masculine characteristics). The results of the research confirmed the first but not the second hypothesis. [Lu et al., \(2008\)](#), in a research entitled work family demands, work flexibility, work-family conflict and their consequences at work, examined a sample of Taiwanese employees, concluding that for Taiwanese employees family work conflict is negatively and significantly related to organizational commitment. [Madani and Zahedi \(2005\)](#) conducted a research entitled factors influencing employee organizational commitment. The research was carried out as a case study into Fajr Gas and Bidboland Co. One of the findings of the research is that understanding organizational support is strongly correlated with organizational commitment. Another finding of the research is that job promotion opportunities are positively but weakly correlated with normative and affective commitment. However, they had more strong effect in the path pattern and in interaction with other variables. [Al- Ajmi \(2006\)](#) in a research entitled the effect of gender on job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees in Kuwaiti government ministries, found that the effect of gender on employee's understanding of job satisfaction and organizational commitment is not significant. In other words, men and women in Kuwait have equal job satisfaction and organizational commitment. [Allen and Meyer \(1990\)](#) in their research found 1- that promotion opportunity and career advancement are correlated with employee organizational commitment, 2 that the nature of work (job challenge) is correlated with employee's organizational commitment. [Morrison and Glinow \(1990\)](#) in a research showed that women who managed middle ranks of organizations were dissuaded because of lack of advancement and opportunities that were made available to men (due to the presence of barriers to women's advancement), and left the former organization, and also showed that they had lower organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The aim of the present study was to determine the link between dimensions of glass ceiling and organizational commitment of women employees at University of Isfahan. Thus, considering

this, the following hypotheses are put forward:

- Dimensions of glass ceiling are significantly related to the organizational commitment of women employees at University of Isfahan.
 - Dimensions of glass ceiling have predictability of the organizational commitment of women employees at University of Isfahan.
- This study has been carried out in Isfahan in 2019.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The study population consisted of women employees at University of Isfahan who were 428 individuals, and 202 individuals were selected using sample size Cochran formula in a stratified random sampling fashion with sample size; afterward, the number was chosen randomly in each section. The demographic characteristics of the research sample demonstrated that 428 individuals of the research sample (53.3 percent of female participants in this research) were between the ages of 30 and 40, and 44.7 percent of the sample had a bachelor degree. 56.6 percent of the statistical sample was contract employees and 50.8 percent had job tenure from 11 to 20 years. In total, of 202 questionnaires distributed among the women employees 199 questionnaires were collected.

Instruments

The instrument for collecting [Latifi and Karimi \(2015\)](#) glass ceiling questionnaire was based on the dimensions of demography, family, cultural, social, legal, and organizational barriers with 45 items and five-point Likert scale. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated to be 0.85 using Cronbach's alpha

coefficient. To measure organizational commitment, [Mowday et al., \(1979\)](#) organizational commitment questionnaire with 15 items and a 7-point scale were used. The questionnaire deals with adherence to organization's values and goals, desire for further effort in organization, and desire for remaining in organization. The reliability of the questionnaire was estimated to be 0.90 using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Data analysis

The method used in this study is a correlational descriptive-type method. It is an applied research by nature. In order to analyze the research findings, Pearson correlation coefficient, stepwise regression, and multiple variance analysis using SPSS 19 were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of [Table 1](#), indicated that correlation coefficient between glass ceiling (family barriers, social barriers) and organizational commitment is negative and significant. That is, there is a negative and significant relationship between glass ceiling and organizational commitment ($r=0.215$). The relationship between personal barriers, legal barriers, cultural barriers, organizational barriers and organizational commitment is no significant.

result of the first hypothesis is consistent with that of [Oreyzi Samani et al., \(2009\)](#), [Pirhayati et al., \(2012\)](#), and [Lu et al., \(2008\)](#), concerning the negative link between work-family conflict and organizational commitment, [Sharafi and dehdashti shahrokh \(2012\)](#) concerning the positive link between family-work conflict and intention to leave, and [Oreyzi et al, \(2014\)](#) concerning the negative link between promotion

Table 1. Correlation between dimensions of glass ceiling and women employees' organizational

Criterion variable: Organizational commitment			
Statistical indicators			
Predictor variable	R	R ²	P
Glass ceiling	** -0.215	0.046	0.007
Personal Barriers	-0.0134	0.018	0.072
Family Barriers	* -0.174	0.030	0.021
Cultural Barriers	-0.115	0.013	0.212
Social Barriers	* -0.183	0.033	0.013
Legal Barriers	-0.113	0.013	0.127
Organizational Barriers	-0.044	0.002	0.561

*p<0.05 **p<0.01

opportunity and Morrison and Glinow (1990) a positive significant relationship exist between advancement opportunity and organizational commitment; however, it should be noted that the items of glass ceiling questionnaire and foregoing barriers are similar to these studies. The findings of the research can be explained that since family barriers, particularly family-work conflict, are one of the barriers that deprive women of continuing their work in their job path, if there is family-work conflict, women are dispossessed of essential flexibility at work; as a result, they intend to have control over their working hours and cease to remain loyal and committed to organization. Social barriers and available beliefs about women could also enhance the second-hand role of women, and sometimes it may suggests that even women themselves admit to take over primary and essential tasks with regard to feminine duties, which causing them to lose their concentration at work and become dissuaded, as well as exerting a negative effect on their organizational commitment. Since the university fail to consider essential flexibility for women’s work schedules in order to solve family-work conflict and reduce their concern about it, women employees would have less organizational commitment and demonstrate positive desire for other job opportunities suggested by other organizations in order to develop their career path, if they encounter these barriers.

Findings of Table 2 concerning the second hypothesis, it is indicated that the best predictor was organizational commitment in the first stage of social barriers among the variables of interest in the regression. According to the results of stepwise

regression analysis, the relationship between dimensions of social barriers and organizational commitment was significant. In the first step, the coefficient of social barriers could explain 21.9 percent of organizational commitment variance. According to the result of the second hypothesis, it can be said that due to the presence of gender stereotypes and presuming men to be only breadwinner of family, and presence of negative attitudes like these in the society in respect of women employment, sometimes women themselves are convinced to take over spouse and mother roles, and then they are also convinced that they cannot achieve their goals and desires. Following this belief in women, the primary condition for taking on commitment, which holding on to a belief to obtain demands and desires, is spoiled, and therefore their organizational commitment decline. It is worth noting that given the responses provided by women employees at university, the finding has a stronger explaining quality; in the sense that, findings indicate that the more social barriers are, the greater the likelihood of women advancement into higher levels will be. The presence of negative attitudes in society toward women will increase as such and women cannot reach higher levels, and this has a negative impact on women’s organizational commitment and loyalty.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the research indicated that correlation coefficient between glass ceiling) $r=-0.215$, $p<0.01$) and family barrier dimension) $r=-0.174$, $p<0.05$) and social barriers) $r=-0.183$, $p<0.05$), as dimensions of glass ceiling, and organizational

Table 2: The ability of glass ceiling dimensions for predicting organizational commitment

Statistical indicators	Criterion variable	Predictor variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Beta	t	P	R	R ²	F	P
			B	Standard Error							
		Constant number	5.906	0.380	-	15.553	0.001				
	Organizational commitment	Step 1 Social Barriers	-0.288	0.104	-0.219	-2.774	0.006	0.219	0.048	7.697	0.006

p<0.01

commitment is negative and significant. Among the dimensions of glass ceiling, social barrier was the best predictor of organizational commitment ($\beta=21.9$). Based on the results, the following suggestions can be made to reduce the barriers to glass ceiling and increase organizational commitment of female employees:

- Allocating flexible working hours in organization and preferably flexible work shifts in order to avoid role interference and work-family conflict.
- Holding briefing sessions for the families of women employees with respect to acquaint them with women's duties and tasks in order to justify that greater involvement of women in managerial arena no only benefit women but also the whole society, as they are not in conflict with other roles of women.
- Providing equal opportunities for women promotion and granting them freedom of action in order to increase their job commitment

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy have been completely observed by the authors.

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