



## The Perceived Glass Ceiling and Intention to Stay: An Empirical Study on Female Employees

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Women are usually considered as underrepresented in all positions whether it be politics or business, and academics field has no exception in this regard. Using data on careers of distance learning institutes in Pakistan, we have studied gender differences regarding the decision to stay at university positions. This study investigates the glass-ceiling as a barrier to women advancement in distance learning educational institutes and how much they are motivated to stay in their organizations. An already developed questionnaire for glass ceiling and intention to stay were used for collecting the data from 250 female employees. SPSS-24 is used for data analysis. The findings witnessed that females working in distance learning institutes face a glass ceiling to some extent in their respective organizations which prevents them in promotion to senior level positions. Results indicate that 68% female employee believe that glass ceiling effect is existed in their organizations. This study claimed that glass ceiling has a negative impact on intention to stay in the organization. The study concluded that organizations in masculine culture/society like Pakistan face lower intention of female employees to stay in organizations due to the glass ceiling barriers. The report provides recommendations for creating a work-place environment through more progressing developmental policies.



## Introduction

The “glass ceiling” is a metaphor for considering gender discriminations. (Kumara, 2018). In recent years, problem of gender discrimination emerges as one of the hottest issues. Though the educational opportunities are set equally, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions (Petrangolo, 2019). Some researches demonstrate that there has been an addition in the percentage of females in management positions during the last few decades. But still, there are very few females working at the highest management positions of businesses. According to Roman (2017) glass is emerging variable and few researches are present on this variable.

Circumstances suggest that the glass ceiling is the vital reason that prevents women from reaching to the top management positions in the organizations. Although the percentage of pass out female graduates in educational institutes has increased than male. Now more females are entering and taking up managerial roles in the organizations but still, they are owing to the ‘glass ceiling,’ a barrier to women advancement at senior management levels. Martínez et al., (2021) indicated some internal barriers that women participants face in their way up the corporate ladder and glass ceiling played an important role among them. One previous research viewed that psychological attributes, social norms, and workplace flexibility are considered as important reasons for nurturing glass ceiling, that stops women from gaining high-income and high-status jobs (Bertrand, 2018). As per the study of Eghlidi and Karimi (2020), glass ceiling and organizational commitment has a negative relationship with each other. Employees are the asset of the organization and organizational goals cannot be achieved without their cooperation. Without them, no business results, organizational goals, or financial objectives can be achieved (Johanim, 2012; Islam et al., 2022).

Intention to stay is important for the organizations as employees make up a valuable asset for the organization (Honore, 2009; Halid et al., 2020). Employers should keep their employees satisfied so that they remain with the organization. They should not let their employees look for opportunities into other organizations by offering them better benefits. Various studies were conducted on the topic intention to stay and it has been observed that compensation and benefits play an important role in promoting the intention to stay of employees (Johanim, 2012; Scales & Brown, 2020).

A study conducted on single mother in Malaysia revealed that work family facilitation and family satisfaction play a mediating role between job characteristics and intention to stay (Noraani et. al, 2010). Moreover, a study conducted in Pakistan found that job burnout effects the intention to stay in the organization, which means that emotional exhaustion of an employee impacts the intention of the individual to stay in the organization directly and also through the mediating impact of emotional commitment (Muhammad & Umar, 2012). Similarly, Kumar et al., (2012) conducted a study in the fast-food industry in Malaysia found other factors impacting the intonation to stay, such as; organizational commitment, organizational culture, and person-organization fit.



The aim of this study is to find the state of glass ceiling in female employees and its impact on their intention to stay in the organizations. There has been an increase in the percentage of female employees at managerial positions but still, there are very few females who reach the top management positions of the organizations. Ezzedeen et al. (2015) in her study claimed that a glass ceiling exists for females as they still strive for executive careers in their organizations and they want a work-family balance. So, this research study was needed to address the issues of the continued under-representation of women in top leadership places in organizations. Previous studies on this topic have shown that motherhood career breaks can negatively impact the career advancement of females in organizations (Frühwirth-Schnatter et al., 2015).

Despite the negative traits of the glass ceiling, willingness to stay is the positive feeling of employees against the reasons that compelling them to stay in the organization (Kumar & Govindarajo, 2014). So, researchers in this study want to know the factors that compel females to stay rather leave their organizations. This study contributes in literature by providing the evidence about relationship of glass-ceiling and the intention to stay due to masculine culture in Pakistani educational Institutions Which Is Rarely Address.

### **Literature Review**

Glass ceiling is considered as one of the persuasive factors for examining inequalities between men and women in the workplaces. Previous studies have demonstrated that the issue of the glass ceiling is one that affects women everywhere, regardless of culture or country (Bukstein & Gandelman, 2019, Chiang & Ohtake, 2014, Harb & Rouhana, 2020; ; Vui-Yee & Paggy, 2020). As per the study of Martínez et al. (2021), glass ceiling presented as an important internal obstacle that women employees face in their way up to the corporate ladder. Glass ceiling phenomena could be explained as an invisible top boundary in corporate ladders and other organizations, above which it is almost impossible for women employees to rise in the ranks (Sunanda & Shalaka, 2021).

Despite the fact, now more females are contributing to the workforce and achieving management positions but still, they are experiencing glass ceiling in the organizations. A study of Albrecht, Thoursie & Vroman, (2014) concluded that the glass ceiling is a white-collar process and it is usually found in executive-level employees working in both the private and public sector. Ezzedeen, et. al. (2015) claimed that the glass ceiling still exists for women as they strive for executive careers and they want a work-family balance. Glass ceiling has a significant impact on women's career even at the international level. Due to 'glass ceiling,' many females still have failed to achieve the same status or salary than their male colleagues even if they have a higher level educational background and desire to progress. The proportion of female employees in managerial positions is high but the proportion of females in advancement to highest levels is rare and that is the evidence of 'glass ceiling' still exists.

Corporate culture, corporate practises, and business climate are the factors that show the "glass ceiling" in firms, according to Mavin's (2009) study. The glass ceiling is also



referred to as an imperceptible hurdle that female employees may run into at every level of management, regardless of where they wish to ascend the corporate ladder. The International Labour Organization (ILO) claims that attitudes toward women, cultural biases and gender stereotypes, are the biggest obstacles to women's career growth. Organizational staff and social structures of the organizations believe that glass ceiling contributes to the obstacles that hinder women in career advancement activities. If organizations are interested to retain its talented female employees and minorities, then alteration in organizational culture is required as the existing culture of organizations is male-dominated.

As per the study of Sunanda and Shalaka (2021), women have to work more critically as compared to male colleagues in general to gain the same acknowledgment in the organization. Improper recruitment systems and an ambiguous job description are the reasons that tend to create hurdle in women advancements activities in the organizations. In addition, the existence of informal male networks is also a reason to exclude women from senior management positions. To support and retain the qualified females at management positions, there is a strong need to upgrade the organizational policies. Female employees from two different grounds and experiences come together to not only help each other through their routine work but upgrade their concerns towards professional success and retention (Reid & Sobczak, 2022).

Deficiencies in corporate practices are the reasons for glass ceiling e.g., mentoring, networking, family friendly initiatives and flexible working hours are the causes of prevailing glass ceiling in the organizations. There are still few organizations that make systematic efforts to assist their female employees by keeping them informed about all the training and career advancement opportunities. Organizational climate can be considered as and refer to prevailing corporate perceptions about women's professional capabilities and commitment to their careers. The perception difference between women role as a leader is developed based on the concept of "glass ceiling", the barrier of discrimination that preventing women from achieving top positions in leadership (Adams and Funk, 2012).

Intention to stay can be taken as an opposite thought to turnover intention and it can be defined as the willingness of employees to stay in the structure. Employees' intentions to stay are influenced by factors connected to their jobs and work environments. This study also showed that geographical diversity moderates the association between productivity and intention to stay and expectations realized. Heinrich and Sonnabend (2020) proved that obstacles for female employees who struggle for top positions in academics significantly affect on their stay decision in the university and as a result the supply of female talent decreases.

Eagly and Karau first presented the role congruity theory of bias against female leaders (2002). They demonstrated how perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles can give rise to two different kinds of prejudices, the first of which is a negative perception of women as potential leaders when compared to men, and the second of which is a negative evaluation of female behaviour that satisfies the requirements of a leadership role. According to Cowden and Creek's study from the

year 2021, gender role congruity is a key feature that separates men from women in business because women are rewarded for having more feminine traits, whereas men are awarded for having more masculine ones.

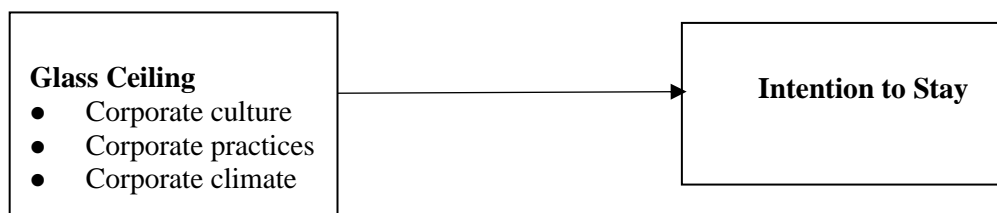
On the other hand, intention to stay is an easier variable to measure as information can be collected from employees about their intention to stay within the organization. According to Hewitt (2004) Intention to stay can be described as the level of employees' commitment with the organization and the extent to which they want to remain in work with the employer. As per the research of Min and Yoon (2021), glass ceiling perception has negative relationship with work engagement and service orientation. Moreover, glass ceiling has a negative and significant relationship with organizational commitment (Eghlidi and Karimi, 2020). It is suggested that importance is given to intention to stay rather than to turnover as employees leaving the organization cost higher than retaining an existing employee. Objectives of this study are:

- To find out the existence and level of glass ceiling in female employees.
- To find out the impact of the glass ceiling on intention to stay.

### Theoretical Framework:

The present study going to analyze the impact of glass ceiling on the intention to stay with respect to the female employees. The underlying theory for this purpose is role congruity theory of prejudice and figure 1 represents conceptual framework of this study.

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study**



As per the study of Eghlidi and Karimi (2020), glass ceiling and organizational commitment has a negative relationship with each other. As per the research of Min and Yoon (2021), glass ceiling perception has negative relationship with work engagement and service orientation. Moreover, glass ceiling has a negative and significant relationship with organizational commitment (Eghlidi & Karimi, 2020). Moreover, Roman (2017) examines that glass ceiling has positive impact on intention to quit and negative impact on career success. As, nature of variable intention to stay is positive just like the career success and organizational commitment. Hence the nature of the impact of glass ceiling on intention to stay is also positive. In this regards current research proposes the following hypotheses.

H1: Find out the existence and level of glass ceiling in female employees.

H2: Glass ceiling has negative impact on intention to stay.



## Research Methodology

The study objectives are to identify the association of glass ceiling with the female employees along with analyze its impact on employee's intention to stay in an organization and also the level of glass ceiling. Women employees working in the setting of distance learning educational sector are taken as the population of this study. 5-point Likert scale is used to get the respondents' opinions. Structured questionnaire for glass ceiling developed by (Vlado & Miha, 2010) which is adopted for data collection purpose. Similarly, the intention to stay questionnaire developed by Roodt (2004) is utilized for this study. The sample size is 250 which is calculated by using the rule of thumb (5 to 10 participants per item) suggested by (Kass & Tinsely's, 1979). Total filled questionnaires received were 201 which makes 80% response rate.

## Data Analysis and Interpretations

All responses from the questionnaire were coded in SPSS for data analysis and hypotheses were tested with the help of regression analysis. The study questionnaire is categorized in two sections, the first section is comprised of respondent's response regarding independent and dependent variables and second section is comprised of items to know respondents' background information such as gender, age, marital status, education and work experience). The following table are representing the demographic details of the study respondents.

**Table 1: Demographics of study respondents**

	Demographics	Frequency
<b>Organization type</b>	Public	163
	Private	38
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	83
	Married	109
	Widow	0
	Divorced	9
<b>Age group</b>	18-25	11
	26-30	75
	Above 30	115
<b>Education</b>	Intermediate	0
	Graduate	21
	Masters	52
	M.phil	128
	PhD	0
<b>Work experience</b>	Less than 1 year	8
	2 to 5 years	61
	More than 5 years	132



The demographics table 01 showed that most of the study respondents are married and having age group of above 30 years. Moreover, the majority of our respondents are highly qualified and the majority of them are having more than 5 years' work experience in their respective organizations.

**Table No 2: Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Glass ceiling	3.3862	.42085	201
Intention to stay	2.9276	.64364	201

Value of mean in table 2 shows that the respondents' responses range from undecided to agree about the existence of a glass ceiling in their respective organizations. They perceived glass ceiling to some extent in their organizations which prevents them in their career advancement activities. Results indicate that 68% female employees agree that glass ceiling effect is prevail in their organizations. Hence, glass ceiling effect is very prominent in Pakistani organization. This is all about the hypothesis no 1.

**Table No 3: Correlation Analysis**

	Glass ceiling	Intention to stay
Glass ceiling	1	
Intention to stay	-.218**	1

Value of  $r$  (0.218) indicates that there is a weak association between glass ceiling and female employees' intention to stay in an organization. Furthermore, the value of adjusted  $R$  square (0.043) indicates the model explains 4.3% variations in intention to stay caused by a glass ceiling.

**Table No 4a: Regression Analysis**

Model	R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.043	.62980



**Table No 4b: Regression Analysis**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.920	1	3.920	9.883	.002 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	78.933	199	.397		
	Total	82.853	200			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Glass ceiling

b. Dependent Variable: Intention to stay

The above table shows that the p-value (0.002) which is less than “ $\alpha$ ” (0.05) value, so it means that glass ceiling has a significant impact on intention to stay with regards to the female women employees.

**Table No 4c: Regression Analysis**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.054	.361		11.228	.000
	Glass ceiling	-.333	.106	-.218	-3.144	.002

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to stay

In above tables beta coefficient represents the association between glass ceiling and intention to stay is negative which means, with the 1 unit increase of glass ceiling the female employees intention to stay in an organization will decrease by 0.333 times units.

As per results in a coefficient table, we can observe that the p-value of the glass ceiling is less than the alpha value which shows that glass ceiling has a significant impact on female employees' intention to stay in an organization. As per the literature review corporate culture, corporate practices, and corporate climate are such factors which become the cause of glass ceiling in organizations. According to the study of Mavin (2000), corporate culture, corporate practices, and corporate climate are those construct which are used to reveal 'glass ceiling' in the organizations. Moreover, we come to know that female employees perceived a glass ceiling to some extent in their organizations which prevents them in their career advancement. There is a negative association between glass ceiling and intention to stay. As the glass ceiling increased in any organizations, it will decrease the intention to stay of female employees. So, supervisors or head of departments should take proactive measures to reduce the glass ceiling in their organizations, if they want to female employees to stay in their organizations. This result is finding of this research.

## Conclusion

The objective of this study to analyze the effect of glass ceiling as a barrier to women advancement on their intention to stay in the organization. The study results showing





that then women at one point get stuck in their careers due to the invisible obstructions in career advancement.

As per the previous literature the glass ceiling existence is not particular about any culture and nation regardless of that it is faced by female employees over all the world. (Bukstein & Gandelman, 2019; Castagnetti & Giorgetti, 2019; Chiang & Ohtake, 2014; Cho et al., 2014; Harb & Rouhana, 2020; Scicchitano, 2014). A per research of Heinrich & Sonnabend (2020), found that when the women want to move on the top positions, they faced glass ceiling effect in their career specially in academia. Moreover, glass ceiling effect on their stay decision in the university. Result of current study is the similar with the result previous study and 68% respondents agree that glass ceiling effect is prevail in educational institute of the Pakistan,

It has been found that as the glass ceiling increases, the intention to stay of female employees in their respective organizations decreases accordingly. Intention to stay has been described as extent to which employees want to remain in work with the employer and their organizational commitment increases (Hewitt, 2004). There is a significant weak negative association of glass ceiling with work engagement and organization commitment (Eghlidi & Karimi, 2020; Min & Yoon, 2021)

Women who join organizations where males and females work together often face barriers in promotions. It can be due to corporate culture, corporate practices and corporate climate (Mavin, 2000). So, it can be concluded that organizations in masculine culture/society like Pakistan face lower intention of female employees to stay in organizations due to the glass ceiling. Cowden & Creek (2021) found that gender role congruity is the key element that segregate between business women are paid according to their feminine characteristics and male businessmen are paid according to their masculine characteristics.

Therefore, organizations have to be very cautious regarding making of promotional policy so a major chunk of their resource does not leave their organizations. This costs the organization a huge investment in recruiting and hiring new employees when eventually females leave organizations due to barriers to advancement. Hence, instead, a point comes when women start thinking to leave the organization, management should be proactive in forming promotional policies which benefit not only women but also males equally.

### **Limitation and Implications of the study**

Similar to other researches, this study cannot be waived from limitations. The scope of this research is limited to only the educational sector. Women working in other organizational settings may have different opinions. In this study glass ceiling is measured as a uni-dimensional variable, impact of glass ceiling dimensions on intention to stay should also be taken for future studies. Moreover, there may be many other variables which might affects the women employee's willingness to continue in an organization, that should also be the focus in future studies.

This study also has some practical implications; the proportion of females working in organizations is increasing and they make up a big chunk of our human resource. Their



retention should be the priority of organizations. This result also benefits the society of Pakistan by suggesting that this society reduce the level glass ceiling among female employees. Any society can grow prosperously if that society encourage the female employees to stay longer in their organization. But this will promote by reducing the level of glass ceiling.

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