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## GLASS CEILING – STILL PREVAILS



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### ABSTRACT

“The glass ceiling is a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women from moving up the corporate hierarchy”. It is a myth that, now that women are business school graduates and a significant proportion of middle management, it is just a matter of time before they reach equality in board rooms and in the executive suites of the corporate world.

**KEYWORDS:** Glass Ceiling, middle management, Still Prevails.

### INTRODUCTION

This is a new word coined by Ann Morrison which explains the way women are restricted in reaching the top positions. She describes the glass ceiling as, “the glass ceiling is a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women from moving up the corporate hierarchy”. From their vantage point or the corporate ladder, women can see the high level corporate positions but are kept away from ‘reaching the top’. According to Morrison and her colleagues, “the glass ceiling is not simply a barrier for an individual, based on a person's ability to handle a higher level job, rather the glass ceiling applies to women as a group who are kept away from advancing higher because they are women”. Ann Morrison though spoke about the women from America, the situation in India is similar. Increasingly Indian women are bumping into a ‘glass ceiling’. Disparities in the proportion of women at higher levels of responsibility are due to both prejudices and discriminatory recruitment policies, as well as due to lack of career orientation and commitment on the part of women. Many private

concerns and even a few in public sector, state that they do not recruit women at managerial level as a matter of policy. Ann Morrison and her colleagues are of the opinion that, the situation of working women is depicted wrongly and that there is no major change in the position of working women, resulting in blocking them from getting to the top.

It is a myth that, now that women are business school graduates and a significant proportion of middle management, it is just a matter of time before they reach equality in board rooms and in the executive suites of the corporate world. The fact is, for the most part women are stuck in middle management. Despite persistence and hard work, women have made only incremental gains at the top level of business over the past two decades.

Women only make up 3.1% of senior executives at fortune 500 companies and at the fortune service 500 only 4.3% executives are women. Two separate studies show that women MBAs have always had better opportunities for management careers than their male counterparts. There are a number of myths regarding the position of women in corporates but the fact is they are very less in number at the top, whether in private or public sector; which is the effect of 'glass ceiling'. Breaking this ceiling is a challenge posed before modern working women.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

### **Women's work, its changing pattern and policy interventions**

This paper written by Mridul Eapen, who is with the Centre for Development Studies, Trivendram, beautifully evaluates at length, the level and pattern of female work participation in India. It also sates about the policy interventions and what we have achieved through the same. While explaining the features of the Indian labour market for women, the author has mentioned certain features which have drawn considerable attention; like; declining work participation rates of women workers particularly in rural areas, heavy concentration of women workers in agriculture, higher rates of female educated unemployment than male, persistent inequalities in earnings, perpetuation of a gendered work structure, women occupying the lower rungs of the labour market hierarchy.

To substantiate the features mentioned above and to come to the conclusion the author has used the two major sources of data, viz, the decennial population census and the various rounds of the National sample survey Organisation [NSSO]

Here is some interesting statistics from the paper -

- According to the latest round of the NSSO for the year 1999-2000, there were nearly 393 million workers in the country of which women workers numbered 122 million, constituting less than 1/3rd of the total workers.

- Women comprised only 17 percent of the organised sector employment in the late 90s.

- Women comprised only 14.23% in public sector while in private sector the employment was 22.99%.

- In unorganised sector the share of women in total employment was 92.86%.

- On the basis of this statistics the pattern of employment of women can be stated as -Gender discrimination continues to exist in the occupations women are engaged in as also is earnings.

- Even in 'Women friendly.' sectors like banking and IT, women still account for only 13% of the total workers in banking and they are being largely employed at the lower level.

- A recent study on the IT sector shows that while a large number of women are employed in this industry, most of them are at the lower end of the technology segment. This is definitely an eye opener regarding the pattern of employment of women.

After discussing the pattern of employment, the writer discussed about policy interventions to rectify the situation. In her discussion, she states that, 'Gender equality has been advocated in all policy documents and commissions of the government of India.' But at the same time is disappointed with the fact that, the policy interventions could not bring about much change in the pattern of employment as they have to go beyond just providing credit and need to tackle other aspects to be more effective.

The paper has gone a long way in bringing about the various problems that are faced by the working women.

### **WOMEN JUST 6% OF INDIA'S WORKFORCE**

The above article written by Mr. Ramu Banerjee in Times of India focuses on topics like, Bias at work, firms having no policy on harassment and gender bias in job. The article states the findings of first-of-its-kind study by the confederation of Indian Industry [CII] on women employment in the work place. The study was made of 149 companies which brought out many glaring facts. Viz.

- The overall percentage of women in Indian workforce is just 6%
- There are only 4% women at the senior management level and almost none at all in the leadership role.
- 25% of women faced gender bias in jobs.
- 56% of the firms have no policy on harassment
- organisations accepted that women were not preferred for specific departments. 75% do not want women in production function, while 24% felt sales was not women's forte
- The most revealing fact was one that it is HR's contention that women were just not competent enough.

### **WOMEN ENGINEERS IN INDIA**

The authors in their above titled article have conducted a study on women engineers in India which includes the enrollment of girls in engineering colleges, the status of their employment, the positions held, women engineers view point about their employment, the employer's views and the recommendations for action.

The study reveals that there is definitely increase in the number of out-turn of women engineers. The profession which was male dominated previously, does not remain so in the recent times. At the same time, the study also reveals that, finding the first job after graduation is a major hurdle in the career path of women engineers. Resistance to the entry in the job market seems to be an issue. There is evidence of 'glass ceiling' that women rarely cross; this is evident from the fact that only 20% of the graduates of 1975-76 belonged to the upper management and this figure fell to 5% in the later years. Women engineers strongly expressed the view that they do not get what they deserve in terms of jobs, promotions, salaries as well as professional recognition. Apart from this the authors have also stated the employer's view point about women engineers.

The article concluded that, there is considerable unemployment and underemployment of women graduates. They have difficulty in being accepted as equals in a male dominated profession and they have difficulty in rising to the top.

### **WOMEN SCIENTISTS IN INDIA, NOWHERE NEAR THE GLASS CEILING**

The article writer Vineeta Bal herself being a biologist in India, is familiar with the area of biological researches, that is precisely the reason for her choosing the topic. In this article the writer

explained the reasons as to why the number of women entrants to natural sciences is basically low. She also explained how difficult it is for a women getting academic research position and maintaining her productivity in Biology. She strongly puts her point of view stating that the number of women scientists at top positions is very low and forget about the glass ceiling . To substantiate her stand she has given statistics which is interesting and thought provoking . The research output of high quality from Indian women scientists over past decade [ January 1994 to April 2004] amounted to 14.5% as against men scientists which stood at 85.5% . The presence of women scientists in research advisory committees of research institution in India is also very low which comes to an average of not more than 15% in institutions like DBT, CCMB, NICID etc. even in case of receipt of prestigious awards the percentage of women scientists on an average is as low as 5% over two decades.

With such a low profile of women scientists , the writer concluded that , in a patriarchal culture, even those women who try to break weak gender barriers in order to provide better living conditions too their families while pursuing their interest in the field are faced with many career difficulties. Many lose out in the pursuit of their profession in early phases. Even for those who cross this hurdle successfully , the profession can make them invisible –not rising far enough to step into leadership roles and not getting recognition.

**Table No.1: Profile of working women in Public Sector Undertakings in Solapur District**

Public Sector Undertakings	Total No. of working women	Class wise division of working women			
		Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
<b>Central Government</b>					
Railways	191	3	--	110	78
Postal dept	63	--	--	56	7
Income Tax dept.	--	--	--	--	--
Excise dept.	13	--	--	10	3
<b>Public Corporations</b>					
MSEB	69	--	2	38	29
BSNL	123	1	8	92	22
LIC	42	1	1	39	1
GIC	11	--	--	11	--
MSRTC	100	--	--	100	--
<b>Quasi / Semi Government</b>					
Nationalised Banks	225	--	10	205	10
<b>State Government</b>					
all departments	2216	68	352	810	986
<b>Local Government Bodies</b>					
Zilla Parishad	8595	26	263	3102	5204
Municipal Corporation	1900	--	22	90	1788
Nagar Parishad	565	--	25	233	307
<b>Total</b>	<b>14113</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>683</b>	<b>4896</b>	<b>8435</b>

Class I means the highest level in the hierarchy, followed by Class II, III and the Class IV being the lowest level in the hierarchy.



Source : (1) Statistical Abstract of Maharashtra State, Economic and Statistics Dept., Solapur District, Solapur (For State Govt. and Local Govt. bodies)  
 (2) Employment Exchange Dept. of Solapur District.  
 (3) By personal visit to every organisation / office.

The profile of working women in public sector undertakings in solapur district shows -

- a) There are 14,113 working women in PSUs in solapur district.
- b) Out of the total 14,113 working women in PSUs in solapur district, only 0.70% are working at top level i.e. at Class I level, while only 4.84% are working at Class II, 34.69% are at Class III and the majority are working at Class IV level and their percentage is 59.77.
- c) Majority of working women are concentrated in local government bodies, followed by state government while the no. of women working in central govt., public corporations and quasi govt. is very low.

**Graph No. 1: Working Women of Solapur District – Class wise**

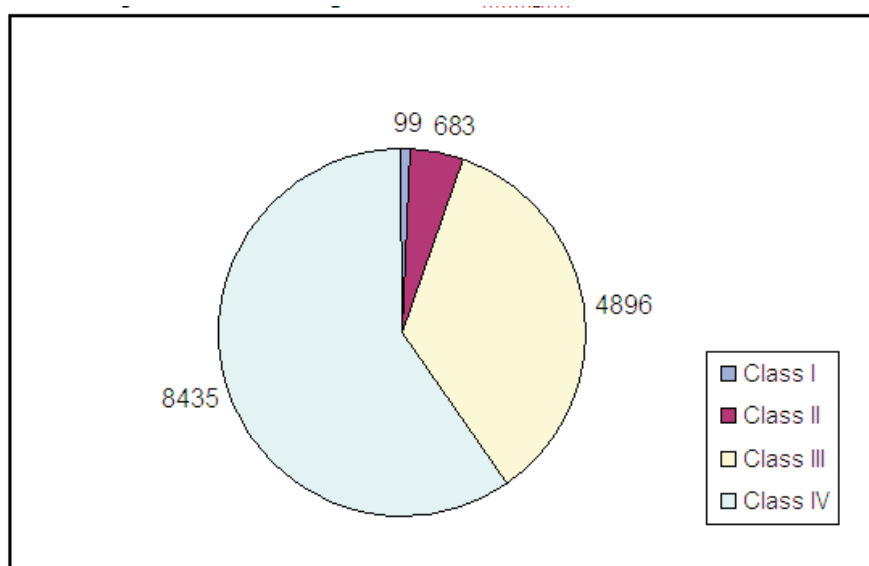
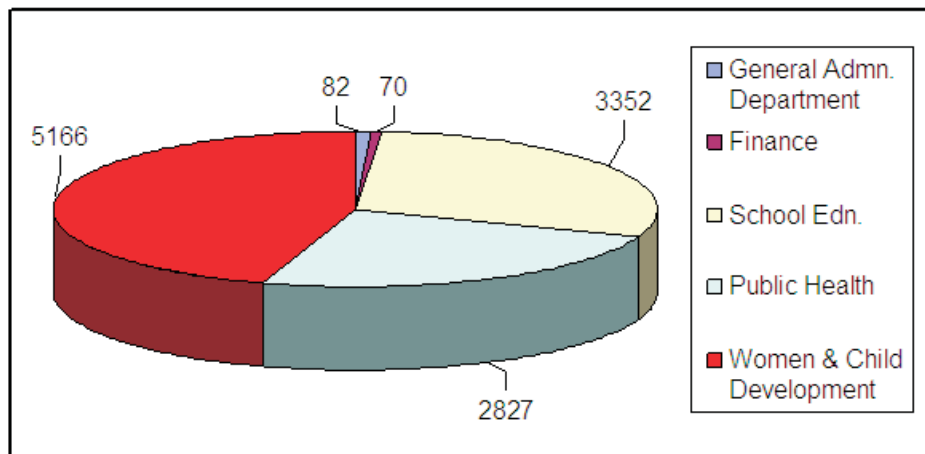
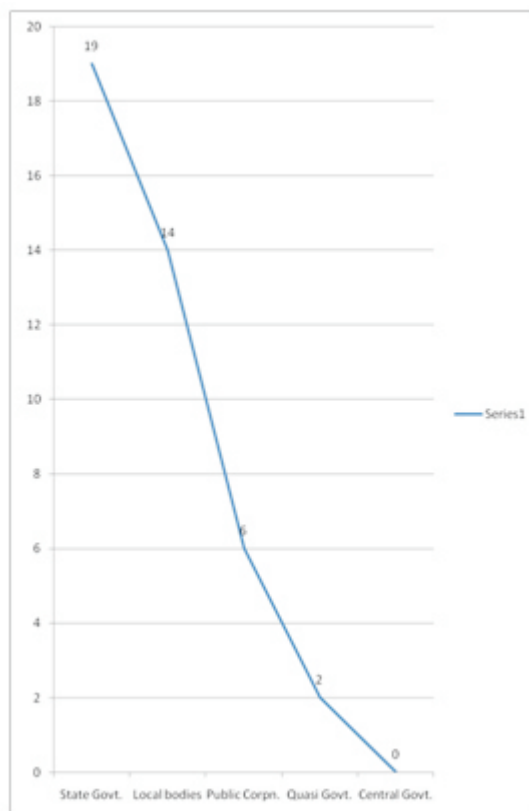


Table No. 1 highlights that the number of working women in education, health, women and childcare department as teachers, doctors, nurses is 80.38% as against the no. of women working in department of General Admn. which is 0.58 and Finance which is 0.49. The women working in various departments particularly, law and judiciary, women and child care, public health may be having certain special skills and educational qualifications. It was the researcher's interest to find out data regarding the skilled, specially skilled and unskilled working women in these various departments. This was necessary to find out the technical expertise acquired by working women. But, such data department wise was not available. Hence more details could not be given. The recent recruitments are skill base. Hence, women are acquiring such skills to enter into the organizations. This shows a change in positive direction as compared to the recruitment in the past, where women were entering only in the traditional job.

**Graph No. 2: Working Women in Traditional and Non Traditional Departments**

School Education, Public Health, Women & Child Development are the Traditional Departments where women have been working since the emergence of the concept of 'Working Women' while General Administration and Finance are the Non-Traditional Departments.

**Graph No. 3: Improvement in Hierarchy of Respondents - Organisationwise**



The Graph No. 3 indicates the number of respondents who have improved their Class or level in the hierarchy or are promoted. Out of the total sample size of 705 how many respondents are promoted from one Class to another is noted in the table. The data shown in this table is important from the view point of knowing the rate of promotions that the working women in PSUs have and for the further analysis of difficulties in promotions if any.

It is observed that out of the total sample size of 705, 54 respondents are from class I, 132 are from class II, 157 are from class III and 362 are from class IV.

01) Out of the sample of 705 respondents, considered in the above sample, the promotion in the all classes have been 41 as under.

<b>Class</b>	<b>No. of Promotions</b>
III	23
II	18
I	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

The net effect of promotion in class II has been zero since the inflow and outflow to this class has remained the same.

02) The organisationwise analysis of promotions in the table has yielded following results.

<b>Organisations</b>	<b>Promotions</b>
State Govt.	19
Local bodies	14
Public Corp'n.	06
Quasi Govt.	02
Central Govt.	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

It is evident that the highest no. of promotions have taken place in the state govt. whereas the lowest have been in central govt. The local govt. bodies have attained the second place.

### **03) The percentage of promotions to the total no. of respondents is 5.82 which is considerably low.**

The rate of promotions as such, need to be taken into consideration along with the total number of male employees and women employees, the percentage of male employees who are promoted and the percentage of women employees who are promoted, to come to any major conclusion. This was not possible as the total data regarding the same was not available.

**Table No. 2: Position Regarding Promotions**

Sr. No.	Particulars	Organisationwise number of respondents.					Total	% to Total
		Central	Corporation	Quasi	State	Local govt. bodies.		
1	Once	-	4	2	17	12	35	4.96
2	Twice	-	2	-	-	1	3	0.43
3	Thrice	-	1	-	1	-	2	0.28
4	More than thrice	-	1	-	-	-	1	0.14
5	Never	13	9	7	76	420	525	74.47
6	Not applicable	-	-	2	17	120	139	19.72
	Total	13	17	11	111	553	705	100.00

Source : Field Work

Promotion from one class or level to the higher one is always associated with prestige, status, job satisfaction and the indicator of positive environment in the organisation. At the same time not getting promotion generally leads to dissatisfaction, loss of interest in job and negative environment in the organisation. As such it is always a very sensitive issue from the employees point of view. The table indicates how many times the respondents are promoted during their service period. 4.96% respondents are promoted once, 0.43% are promoted twice, 0.28% are promoted thrice, 0.14% are promoted more than thrice, while 74.47% of the respondents never got any promotion. At the same time 19.72% of the respondents stated that, promotion is not applicable to them as they are working either on temporary basis, contract basis, as badli workers or on honorarium ! The overall picture shows that, only 5.81% of the respondents got promotion, while 74.47% are never promoted while for the remaining 19.72% respondents, promotion is out of question.

The organisationwise analysis shows that in central government the rate of promotion is Nil, followed by local government and state government where the promotions are bare minimum. In Quasi government the rate of promotion is better than these organisations while it is the public corporations where the promotions are maximum as 47.06% of the respondents are promoted at least once from the day they joined their services.

**CONCLUSION:****The Study reveals:**

- In central government , the percentage of working women at Class I in the hierarchy is just 0.02%.
- Out of the total working women in public corporations, only 0.01% are working at Class I level in the hierarchy.
- In quasi government the percentage of women working at Class I in the hierarchy is nil.
- In state government departments, the total no. of working women at the highest level in the hierarchy, at Class I is 0.48%
- In local government bodies, the percentage is 0.18%

In all, the total percentage of working women at Class I level in the hierarchy in Solapur district is just 0.70%. Maximum number of women are working at the lowest level of hierarchy i.e. at Class IV.

Inspite of all the efforts of Govt. to eliminate gender bias, to have gender sensitized

environment, and providing equal opportunities to all, the 'Glass Ceiling' still prevails in and is going to be major hurdle in progress of the nation in years to come.

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