

# Is There a Glass Ceiling in Nepalese Commercial Banks?

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## Abstract

This paper aims to ascertain whether there are glass ceilings in Nepalese commercial banks. All of the female branch managers employed by Nepalese commercial banks made up the study's population. 144 women branch managers from commercial banks were taken as the sample size. The sample was drawn from the population using simple random sampling. Information from respondents was gathered through the use of a standardized questionnaire. The survey's questions were based on questions that were derived from (Bergman & Hallberg, 2000). With the aid of statistical techniques like percentage and frequency, a descriptive research approach was used. The glass ceiling variables that could impact women's career growth were corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practice. The findings showed that women generally had favorable perceptions of the glass ceiling factors (corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practices) that contribute to the presence of the glass ceiling. limitation of the study is that only female branch managers were included in the sample. The implications and scope for the future researcher are also covered.

Keywords: Glass ceiling, Corporate culture, Corporate climate, Corporate practice, Nepalese commercial banks

## 1. Introduction

Women's and gender issues in the workplace have been a key source of worry for career advancement in the business world. According to Alvesson and Billing (2010), the topic of females recently received much priority from the standpoint of professional advancement. This makes sense given that there are more women in the workforce than ever before, but that only a very small fraction of them hold senior positions in industry and government. According to some of the research, over the past 20 years, shown that been a rise in the number of females in entry-level and middle management levels, probably as a result of the work of the women's movement, political system policies, and business equal opportunity programs. But according to Meyerson and Fletcher (2000), at the top levels of business, there are very few women employed. According to Sever (2016), the glass ceiling is an impenetrable barrier that, regardless of a particular group's abilities or qualifications, prevents advancement in the workplace for women or any other minorities. With the exception of Nepal, the majority of the research described in the previous section was done elsewhere, therefore its findings might not be generalizable to the corporate sector in other nations. There may be a gap in how the findings of this study on the glass ceiling and women's career growth are applied in the context of Nepal. Therefore, the goal of this groundbreaking study is to not only provide empirical evidence to describe key aspects of the glass ceiling but also different aspects of the glass ceiling. According to the literature, the glass ceiling consists of mainly three factors (corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practice) (Jackson, 2001). This study's primary goal is to describe how the glass ceiling affects the career growth of women in Nepalese commercial banks. Ruiz (2022) mentions that only 6 percent of CEOs globally are women, despite gender equality being a recurrent topic on the agendas of governments, businesses, and organizations, and significant progress has been made in recent years. Given this data, we must promote a situational analysis and a discussion of the steps that must be taken to expedite change and guarantee that equity becomes a reality. Although there has been progressed, much more work needs to be done.

## 2. Literature Review and Research Hypothesis

One chief executive officer (CEO) is a woman, making her the first female CEO of one of Nepal's commercial banks, out of the 25 private commercial banks. Similarly, out of 2147 branch managers, 1922 (89.52 percent) are men and 225 (10.48 percent) are women. It demonstrates the low representation of women in management, even at lower levels. Thus, topics like gender inequality or the existence of a glass ceiling for women's career advancement in commercial banks can be brought up (Shrestha, 2019).

## **2.1 Glass Ceiling**

Corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practice could all be affected by the "glass ceiling" (Jackson, 2001). The phrase "glass ceiling" refers to the frustrations of working women at all levels who can see their goals but are prevented from achieving them by an imperceptible wall (Mavin, 2000). The following is a description of the barriers to women's career growth provided by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2002:

Women's advancement is largely hampered by cultural prejudices, gender stereotypes, and attitudes towards them, as well as the fact that they are not seen as the main source of revenue.

## **2.2 Corporate Culture Hypothesis**

### **H<sub>1</sub>: Corporate culture as a barrier to women's career development**

Decisions about efficient management are still made based on a strict male gender stereotype (Powell & Butterfield, 2003; Jackson, 2001; Schein & Mueller, 1992). These preconceived notions cause an imbalance between the management role and the gender role of women who want to work in management. Women are condemned for being excessively forceful and domineering when they utilize the dominant male management style, and they are charged with inadequate leaders when they use a feminine management style (Jackson, 2001; Ragins et al., 1998). When it comes to high executive positions, discrimination against women is sometimes caused by this kind of incongruity in jobs (Powell & Butterfield, 2003). Women managers may experience uncomfortable sensations as a result of this position incongruity. Women managers frequently describe feeling uneasy and hesitant at work as a result of this conflict of responsibilities. It suggests that the alternative hypothesis H<sub>1</sub>: corporate culture as a barrier to women's career development

## **2.3 Corporate Climate Hypothesis**

### **H<sub>2</sub>: Corporate climate as a barrier to women's career development**

Jackson (2001), defines "organizational climate" as dominant corporate opinions about females' professional competence and dedication to their jobs. According to Knuston and Schmidgall (1999), attitudes toward women may lead to unwelcoming and depressing work situations. Given that women's participation, contribution, commitment, and competence are frequently questioned at work due to negative views and preconceptions about them (Jackson, 2001; Mott, 1998). Thus it suggests that the alternative hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>: Corporate climate as a barrier to women's career development

## **2.4 Corporate Practice Hypothesis**

### **H<sub>3</sub>: Corporate practice as a barrier to women's career development**

Knuston and Schmidgall (1999), argue that corporate practices include family-friendly programs, networking and mentoring, flexible work schedules, and training and development are the parts of corporate practices of the organizations. In order to increase emotional support, confidence, and work satisfaction, mentoring connections may be beneficial for women's success (Klenke, 1996; Ragins & Cotton, 1996). It suggests that the alternative hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>: corporate practice as a barrier to women's career development.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Socio-demographic Profile**

The socio-demographic breakdown of the respondents is shown in the following table using percentages and frequencies. It has been divided into five categories: marital status, age, education, service year, and monthly income.

Table 3.1: Social-demographic Profiles of Respondents

Status		Respondent	Percentage (%)
Marital Status	Unmarried	5	3.5
	Married	139	96.5
	Divorced	0	0
	Widow	0	0
	Total	144	100
Service Year	≤ 5	4	2.8
	>5 ≤ 10	40	27.8
	>10 ≤ 15	47	32.6
	>15 ≤ 20	35	24.3
	Above 20	18	12.5
	Total	144	100
Education	Bachelor	9	6.3
	Masters	135	93.8
	M.Phil	0	0
	Ph.D	0	0
	Total	144	100
Age	≤ 30	4	2.8
	>30 ≤ 35	48	33.3
	>35 ≤ 40	48	33.3
	>40 ≤ 45	19	13.2
	>45 ≤ 50	23	16.0
	Above 50	2	1.4
	Total	144	100
Monthly stipend including basic and extra	Less than 40000	0	0
	40001- 60000	25	17.4
	60001-80000	82	56.9
	Above 80000	37	25.7
	Total	144	100

One hundred forty-four female branch managers from 25 commercial banks were selected for this study. Married respondents made up the largest proportion of the sample (96.5 percent), compared to unmarried respondents (3.5 percent).

The majority of respondents (32.6 percent) had between >10 ≤ 15 years of working experience in the banking sector, compared to 27.8 percent who had between >5 ≤ 10 years, 24.3 percent who had between >15 ≤ 20 years, 12.5 percent who had more than 20 years of experience, and only 2.1 percent who had less than or equal to 5 years.

According to the report, the biggest percentage of respondents had master's degrees (93.8 percent), followed by bachelor's degrees (6.3 percent) in terms of educational attainment.

In terms of respondents' ages, the study revealed that the majority (33.3 percent) of respondents were between the ages of >30 ≤ 35 years and >35 ≤ 40 years, followed by >45 ≤ 50 years (16 percent), >40 ≤ 45 years (13.2 percent), ≤ 30 years (2.8 percent), and over 50 years (1.4 percent).

Regarding monthly stipends, basic and extra, 25.7 percent had income above Rs. 80000, 17.4 percent had income between Rs. 40001 and Rs. 60000, and 56.9 percent had income between Rs. 60001 and Rs. 80000.

## **3.2 Research Methodology**

### **3.2.1 Research Design**

The descriptive research design was used. This study obtained data from respondents by giving them structured questionnaires and asking them questions on the elements that contribute to the "glass ceiling." For this survey, a cross-sectional design was used. Twenty-five commercial banks' female branch managers make up the study's sample. Twenty-five commercial banks' websites were used to identify the 225 people who make up the entire population.

### **3.2.2 Sample Size**

Sample size has been determined using the following formula:

$$n = N/1 + N(e^2)$$

$$n = 225/1 + 225(0.05^2)$$

$$n = 225/1.5625$$

$$n = 144.$$

Where,

n= sample size, N= population, e= margin of error (5%)

Based on the formula for calculating sample size, 144 respondents who worked as branch managers made up the sample for this study.

### **3.2.3 Nature and Sources of Data**

This study's primary data was gathered using well-structured questionnaires to elicit thoughtful responses from the respondents. A self-administered online survey questionnaire was suggested for respondents who hold the position of branch manager in commercial banks with locations outside of the Pokhara and Kathmandu valley.

The websites of 25 commercial banks were used to identify the names, contact information, and email addresses of women managers. They were contacted by phone to ask them to participate in the study before sending them the online survey questionnaire. The online survey was completed by 38 of the 144 study participants, the majority of whom were from outside the Pokhara and Kathmandu valleys. The remaining participants (106 out of 144) filled out the survey questionnaire in person while the researcher visited them during regular business hours, some of them preferred to complete and return the forms the following day. Respondents from the valleys of Pokhara and Kathmandu could use this methodology. In order to reduce sampling errors or biases and provide representative samples, simple random sampling has been utilized to gather the data. For this study, a sample from 25 different commercial banks located in various parts of Nepal was selected at random.

### **3.2.4 Variables and Measures**

the Glass Ceiling Questionnaire (GCQ) was scored on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Strongly Agree and 5 being Strongly Disagree. Questions used in this study have been adapted from the women's workplace culture questionnaire (WWC) (Bergman & Hallberg, 2002)

## **4. Result and Analysis**

### **4.1 Respondent's Level of Agreement towards Items under Corporate Culture**

The following table presents the perception of the respondents towards the culture adopted by the organization.

Table 1: Respondent's level of agreement towards items under corporate culture

Agreement factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	TTL
The company believes that women are less qualified than men for senior leadership positions.	17	75	28	19	5	144
	11.8 %	52.1 %	19.4 %	13.2 %	3.5 %	100%
Organization perceives that men are better leader than women	12	93	13	20	6	144
	8.3 %	64.6%	9%	13.9 %	4.2 %	100%
Organizations' perception that women shouldn't hold positions of leadership over men.	13	80	35	14	2	144
	9.0%	55.6 %	24.3%	9.7 %	1,4%	100%
Women are viewed as ineffective leaders when they adopt a feminine management approach.	10	74	36	22	2	144
	6.9%	51.4%	25%	15.3%	1.4%	100%
Women are condemned for being excessively forceful and domineering when they adopt the dominating male management style.	4	62	49	24	5	144
	2.8%	43.1%	34.0%	31.8%	16.7%	100%

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree  
TTL = Total

According to table 1, 52.1 percent of respondents disagreed that organizations believe women are less qualified than males for senior executive positions. 64.6 percent disagreed with the statement "organization perceives that men are better leaders than women". 55.6 percent disagreed with the perception that women shouldn't hold positions of leadership over men. 51.4 percent disagreed with the perception that women are viewed as ineffective leaders when they adopt a feminine management approach. 43.4 percent disagreed that women are condemned for being excessively forceful and domineering when they adopt the dominating male management. The majority of the respondents disagreed with the five statements under corporate culture. This outcome is generally encouraging and requires that the first alternative hypothesis be rejected  $H_1$ : corporate culture as a barrier to women's career development so it can be concluded that organizational culture did not seem harsh to women's career development.

#### 4.2 Respondent's Level of Agreement towards Items under Corporate Climate

The following table presents the perception of the respondents towards the corporate climate of the organization.

Table 2: Respondent's level of agreement towards items under corporate climate

Agreement factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	TTL
Compared to men, women experience a more biased evaluation of their performance at work.	7	80	34	21	2	144
	4.9 %	55.6 %	23.6 %	14.6 %	1.4 %	100%
The organization views women's progress to the top positions as being unimportant since they do not serve as the key wage earners.	12	87	26	18	1	144
	8.3 %	60.4%	18.1%	12.5 %	0.7 %	100%
Barriers to women's advancement to the top positions are created by organizations' negative beliefs and stereotypes of women's professional ability.	5	94	13	29	3	144
	3.5%	65.3 %	9.0%	20.1 %	2.1%	100%
Organization perceives that women are less committed in the workplace	18	53	54	19	0	144
	12.5%	36.8%	37.5%	13.2%	0.0%	100%
Working life is characterized by negative attitudes toward women	5	56	74	8	1	144
	3.5%	38.9%	51.4%	5.6%	0.7%	100%
Women feel that because they are women, management, and superiors undervalue their ability to work while assigning them jobs.	11	94	9	22	8	144
	7.6%	65.3%	6.3%	15.3%	5.6%	100%
To advance to the same position, women must do better than their male counterparts.	7	95	9	28	5	144
	4.9 %	66.0 %	6.3 %	19.4 %	3.5 %	100%

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree  
TTL = Total

Table 2 shows that 55.6 percent disagreed that compared to men, women experience a more biased evaluation of their performance at work. 60.4 percent disagreed with the agreement factor “the organization views women's progress to the top positions as being unimportant since they do not serve as the key wage earners”. 65.3 percent disagreed with the statement “barriers to women's advancement to the top positions are created by organizations' negative beliefs and stereotypes of women's professional ability”. 36.8 percent of them disagreed with the statement “organization perceives that women are less committed in the workplace”. 51.4 percent were neutral with working life is characterized by negative attitudes toward women. 65.3 percent disagreed with the statement “management, and superiors undervalue their ability to work while assigning them jobs because they are women. 66 percent disagreed with the agreement factor “women have to perform better than their male counterparts to be promoted to the same position. The findings suggest that women

branch managers of Nepalese commercial banks seemed generally positive towards the organization's corporate climate, indicating that the organization seemed supportive of women's career growth. It suggests the rejection of hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>: Corporate climate as a barrier to women's career development

### 4.3 Respondent's Level of Agreement towards Items under Corporate Practice

The following table presents the perception of the respondents towards the practice adopted by the organization.

Table 3: Respondent's level of agreement towards items under corporate practice

Agreement factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	TTL
Women have fewer opportunities for professional development at work	4	97	13	23	7	144
	2.8 %	67.4 %	9.0 %	16.0 %	4.9 %	100%
The lack of a sufficient number of the women role model at top levels of financial institutions constitutes a barrier to women's advancement	9	86	10	27	12	144
	6.3 %	59.7%	6.9%	18.8 %	8.3 %	100%
Women lack sufficient organizational support to manage their obligations and professional obligations.	3	86	34	16	5	144
	2.1%	59.7 %	23.6%	11.1 %	3.5%	100%
Women's conflicting work and family demands are perceived negatively	2	61	58	19	4	144
	1.4%	42.4%	40.3%	13.2%	2.8%	100%
Corporate practices and structures that do not favor female employees	5	98	4	35	2	144
	3.5%	68.1 %	2.8 %	24.3 %	1.4 %	100%

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, and SA = Strongly Agree  
TTL = Total

Table 3 shows that the majority of the respondents (67.4 percent) disagreed with the statement "women have fewer opportunities for professional development". 59.7 percent of them disagreed that the lack of a sufficient number of role models at the top level constitutes barriers to women's advancement. 59.7 percent disagreed with the statement "women do not receive enough support for work-life balance". 42.4 percent disagreed with the statement "women's conflicting work and family demands are perceived negatively". Similarly, 68.1 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement "corporate practice and structures that do not favor female employees". The findings showed that most of the respondents had positive feelings towards corporate practices adopted by organizations and generally seemed positive for their career growth suggesting the rejection of hypothesis H<sub>3</sub>: Corporate practice as a barrier to women's career development

## 5. Discussions

The goal of this study was to better understand how women managers in Nepalese commercial banks felt about how corporate climate, corporate culture, and corporate practices affected their ability to progress in their careers. Regarding obstacles posed by corporate cultures, respondents said that these cultures were generally supportive and infused with positive attitudes toward women. It was consistent with (Jamali, et al., 2006), who discovered that Lebanese women managers generally view corporate culture as being supportive of their professional development.

### 5.1 Corporate Culture

According to this study, the majority of respondents (52.1 percent) had a favorable opinion of how the company viewed women's capacity to hold top positions. This was consistent with the findings of (Thao, 2014), which revealed that the majority of respondents (63.2 percent) believed women had an equal number of abilities, knowledge, and skills as men did to hold high positions. According to this study, 55.6 percent of respondents do not agree with the organization's view that women shouldn't hold positions of responsibility over males. This was inconsistent with the (Thao, 2014) impression that women should not hold positions of leadership over males was cited as a significant obstacle by the majority of participants (35.5 percent). 64.6 percent of respondents disagreed with the perception of women are not a better leader. This result conflicts with (Thao, 2014), which found that 29.4 percent of respondents believed that perceptions that males make better managers than women pose significant obstacles to women's job advancement.

## **5.2 Corporate Climate**

The argument that an organization believes women's advancement to the top positions is unimportant since they are not the primary wage earners was rejected by 60.4 percent of respondents in this study. This finding was contrary to (Thao, 2014), who found that 35.3 percent of respondents felt that the Vietnamese society's perspective that women's careers are less significant than men's because they are not the primary breadwinners made significant obstacles to their career advancement. 66 percent of respondents disagreed that women must outperform males in order to get to the same position. This result was in contrast to (Jamali, et al., 2006) findings, which indicated that 44 percent of women believed that in order to advance in their careers, they needed to be more accomplished than males. 55.6 percent disagreed that women receive a more unfavorable assessment of their work performance than men. This result was in contrast to (Dimovski, et al., 2010) 37.5 percent of the respondents said that their performance at work had been unfairly appraised.

## **5.3 Corporate practice**

In this study, 68.1 percent of respondents disagreed with the claim that business structures and practices do not favor female employees. This was not in line with (Thao, 2014) 38.2 percent of participants believed that a substantial barrier to their professional progression was created by corporate practices and structures that favor male personnel. In this study, 59.7 percent of the respondents disagreed that there are not enough female role models at the top, which creates impediments to women's advancement. This result was incompatible with (Thao, 2014) 27.9 percent of those felt there were not enough women at the top of the Vietnamese banking industry. The statement that women's conflicting work and family responsibilities are seen adversely was rejected by 42.4 percent of respondents. This outcome was incompatible with the (Thao, 2014) 36.8 percent of respondents believed that women's job advancement is significantly hampered by the conflicting needs of work and family. Women have equal prospects for professional advancement, according to the majority of respondents (67.4 percent) in this study. This was in line with (Thao, 2014), which found that 55.9 percent of respondents said women had an equal opportunity to advance to higher positions and contrary to (Demovski, et al., 2010), the respondents (35.6 percent) believed that women at work have fewer opportunities for professional development. These encouraging results can thus be explained by the pattern of peaceful cohabitation between men and women that have developed in the setting of Nepalese commercial banks as well as by the unique efforts made in this industry to attract and retain women.

## **6. Conclusions**

Numerous encouraging results that paint an unexpectedly good picture of the experiences of women branch managers in Nepalese commercial banks support the rejection of all the hypotheses. The forward-thinking work habits and perspectives in the banking industry in Nepal may encourage other businesses to go beyond routine procedures and analytical frameworks and consider whether they are promoting the proper behaviors and results. Nepalese banks have had some success in addressing subtle or persistent forms of discrimination and establishing gender-inclusive work environments and policies. The finding definitely merits additional investigation in order to methodically and precisely describe the cultural and structural forces that have shaped the generally favorable impressions revealed in this article.

## **7. Implications**

This study aimed to examine the effects of corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practices on women's career advancement in Nepalese Commercial Banks. The results suggest that the common precepts

of the glass ceiling theory are not substantiated in the context of Nepalese commercial banks because of the generally positive inferences and perceptions provided by Nepalese women branch managers in relation to corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practice.

Nevertheless, the work might be seen as a starting point for further investigation in the area. These somewhat upbeat but ambiguous findings demand a second look. The validity of the results and their implications for Nepalese commercial banks might be evaluated using a bigger sample from the Nepalese banking industry. A fascinating comparison element might be added by conducting more research on Nepalese commercial banks and other important economic sectors.

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