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Designing a Glass Ceiling Management Model for Female Employees: A case study in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

Forouzan Habibi[1], Alireza Mooghali[2], Amir Hossein Amirkhani[3], Narges Abbasi[4]

[1]PhD student, Department of Management, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran
[2]Full Professor, Department of Management, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran
[3]Associate Professor, Department of Management, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran
[4]Associate Professor, Department of Statistics, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran

Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study was to design a glass ceiling management model for female employees in a case study at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. Glass ceiling refers to artificial and invisible obstacles, organizational decisions, and prejudices of the organization's officials that prevent the progress of qualified people or minorities (especially women) within organizations. The glass ceiling in this study is defined as obstacles to women in managerial positions at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

Methods: This is an exploratory research with a qualitative approach which was conducted through theme analysis. Its population included 15 experts in the qualitative phase, and 31 experts in the quantitative phase from Shiraz University of Medical Sciences and university professors. They were selected through forming a panel of experts for data collection. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. After collecting and summarizing the data, Atlas software and SPSS16.0 were used, respectively.

Results: 67 indicators were identified. Using the experts' opinions, validity analysis (cvr) and Cronbach's alpha in the experts' panel, these indicators were reduced to 49. They were placed in 7 components including individual, group, cultural, political, regulatory, structural, procedural, and content factors. These components were categorized into three dimensions.

Conclusion: Based on the results of this study in the behavioral dimension, the organization should divide the type of work based on physical and gender characteristics, and to consider social respect for women at the individual and group levels when defining their jobs. In the environmental dimension, women, due to their subtlety in affairs, can act as evaluators of the organization's strategies to respond to the environment (the environment includes consumers, competitors and facilities). Also, in the organizational dimension, policymakers need to be careful when legislating, so that managers pay attention to women's power when appointing them in managerial positions and cannot destroy equal opportunities for them by violating the laws.

Keywords: Glass ceiling management, Female employees, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

*Correspondence to:
Forouzan Habibi,
PhD student, Public Management, Human Resources, Department of Management, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran
Tel: +98 9179114310
Email: Forouzan.habibi90@gmail.com

Introduction

Glass ceiling is a term for the invisible obstacles to the advancement of women and minorities, which are often denied used by men and groups in the majority. This metaphor was first used by feminists to refer to obstacles to women's career advancement and reaching the top of the pyramid (1). The phenomenon of "women's failure to achieve top levels of management" is called the "glass ceiling". The term was used in 1990 to refer to the small number of women and minorities in the management of public and private sector organizations (2).

One of the important indicators considered as a criterion for gender development and women's empowerment is the level of women's participation in major decisions of the country as well as their presence in management positions (3).

Women's participation is so important that they are considered to be the first sector of productivity in the world, and with great care and attention, they will professionalize the level of jobs in organizations (4). It is also claimed that the absence of women in executive management positions is not due to lack of management skills, but due to environmental

factors and cultural conditions or the culture of the organization that governs highly patriarchal organizations (5). The glass ceiling prevents many women from climbing towards proper management and leadership (6). On the other hand, because the number of women at this level is scant, any mistake on their part will be magnified, and the result of the deviant effect is that if a woman fails in a senior position, then no woman should be placed in a similar position (7).

The fact that we do not have a strategy for the future, are confused in the current situation, and pay attention to issues such as gender and marginal issues causes the organization to deviate from its goals, while the existence of equal rights between men and women plays an important role in the development of the organization (8).

Also, it should be borne in mind that women spend most of their lives at home, and the most common reason they work is that they either want to live independently or really want an independent income; thus, women's working life needs to be taken into account in order to plan the future of the organization (9). Women, like many men, need the highest level of respect according to the hierarchy of needs and are very receptive to highly paid management and leadership positions as well (10).

Women are one of the most valuable assets of any country, especially in developing countries. In fact, their serious participation is the key to the growth and development of these countries, and as a part of a human society that have not been the subject of change or the source of change in recent centuries, they play a pivotal role in sustainable development. In fact, the requisite for achieving sustainable development is their actual and active presence and participation in the development process (11). Today, women have made significant advances in management, which have been possessed by men for many years (12). Failure to provide appropriate conditions or opportunities for the promotion of talented women to managerial positions will result in not using about half of the available capacities and talents. On the other hand, women have special abilities and soft skills in human resource management, skills that organizations need more today than ever before (13). The glass ceiling is defined as the prevalence of occupational discrimination which gradually results in a real but invisible obstacle to women's advancement to high positions of power and status. And in this prevalence, there is a weak approach that looks at human beings one-dimensionally, and this has led to women being viewed as stereotyped in their first presence in the

organization (14).

The most important reason for the existence of the glass ceiling in Iran is the existence of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are not limited to conscious attitudes, and these attitudes have a deeper place in the subconscious mind, which can even automatically lead to the formation of prejudiced and discriminatory behaviors and beliefs (15).

The glass ceiling has devoted a part of all humanities disciplines to itself and has become a thriving topic in scientific and executive circles, nationally and internationally. Today, women's managerial position is one of the most important topics not only in developing countries, but also in developed ones, where it has been considered by experts in various sciences, At the global level, international organizations pay special attention to the position of women in different countries. Hence, the issue of women, and especially their participation in high-level decisions and careers, has always been taken into account. Despite the plans that have been made in this area, the presence of women in managerial positions is still not significant, and it seems that women are facing many problems in their career advancement at the managerial level, which still remains a problem not only in developing countries, but also in developed ones, and experts have not been able to find the answer to it as they are supposed to. Proposing "Designing a Glass Ceiling Management Model for Female Employees in Shiraz University of Medical Sciences" as the subject of this paper, was an important step to disclose the inequality in the promotion of women's careers in Iran, especially in the health care system through further investigation and discussion and to act in line with countries that have accepted the elimination of discrimination against women. This research aims to achieve the following goals.

1. Identifying the dimensions and indicators of glass ceiling management of female employees at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

2. Assessing the level of glass ceiling management of female employees at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

3. Determining the effective factors in glass ceiling management of female employees at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences

4. Providing necessary strategies and suggestions for glass ceiling management of female employees at Shiraz University of Medical Sciences.

Methods
This is a qualitative-quantitative study which used

a thematic analysis and a quantitative approach to evaluate the proposed model. These two methods have been used, so that the model is first designed according to the experts' opinions and tested in several stages, and even to analyze the gap between the two classes of experts and female employees. Data collection in sampling for interviews continued until the categories reached the theoretical saturation. In the initial qualitative part of the model, we came across many indicators, of which 67 were finalized and then categorized with the help of the focus group (For the final confirmation of the components after the interviews, a 5-member focus group, which included university experts, was used).

In this study, in order to measure the reliability of the interviews, we used two methods of retest reliability and reliability between the two coders, confirming the high capability of the codes performed in the content analysis. After the reliability of the retest was qualitatively confirmed, to further assure content validity measurement (CVR method), we distributed the final markers among 15 PhD holders in the field of human resource management.

In the quantitative part, the indicators that had the highest content validity in the experts' views (the allowable CVR value for 15 people is 0.049) were confirmed; in order to assess the acceptability and desirability of the model, it was presented to 31 academic experts to further rate the effectiveness of each indicator, and to determine the level of the desirability of each indicator. At first, Cronbach's alpha method and internal convergence of the model were used to calculate the reliability coefficient of the measurement tool in this study. Indicators with no alignment and convergence or low reliability were corrected or removed. This step was identified as the third filter for confirming quantitative indicators, so that in addition to the final approval, indicators with the highest confidence level could be selected, of which 49 were finalized and screened.

Note that the allowable value for measuring CVR content validity for 15 people is 0.49 or 49%, and the minimum limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.7. The closer the correlation is to 1, the stronger the convergence between the components. Finally, to assess the current situation of female employees in Shiraz hospitals, a questionnaire was distributed among all 290 female employees (because glass ceiling is specific to women); as a result, we examined the gap analysis of the desired and current situation, and aimed to determine to what extent women expect a glass ceiling or women themselves are a factor in the glass ceiling.

After collecting and summarizing the data, in the qualitative phase, the model was designed using Atlas software; in the quantitative phase, the following tests were conducted via SPSS 16.0 software: Cronbach's alpha test to evaluate the reliability of the research and correlation to examine the relationship between the variables. Before examining the causal relationship between the variables, a correlation test was carried out between the given variables, so that in case there were a correlation, the causal relationship could be examined. Finally, gap analysis was performed using excel software.

Statistical Population

In the qualitative phase of the study, the population included 15 experts from Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. The qualitative data were collected through forming a panel of experts. In this phase, purposeful judgment sampling was used.

In the quantitative phase, the components extracted through theme analysis were distributed among 31 experts. To assess the current situation and test the model, complete enumeration of female office workers was carried out in Shiraz hospitals, which was equal to 290 people.

The ethical considerations in this research were as follows: People entered to this study and filled out the questionnaires completely voluntarily, with their consent. After justifying the participants about the objectives of the project, confidentiality of the answers was emphasized and then the questionnaires were distributed anonymously. Also, the proposal of this study was confirmed by the ethics committee of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, with the ethics code IR.SUMS.REC.1398.1185.

Results
Qualitative Data Analysis

Figure 1 illustrates creating the main category of organizational factors resulting from data analysis using Atlas software, which is the output of the theme analysis before forming the panel of experts for the focus group. In the following section, the model indicators are examined randomly.

Quantitative Data Analysis

At this phase, using structuring and comprehensive themes, we placed the indicators in the questionnaire. After interviewing and extracting the code, and after the classification presented in Table 1, content validity was conducted through CVR method. To ensure the qualitative data and convert them to quantitative, we passed them through the content validity filter to
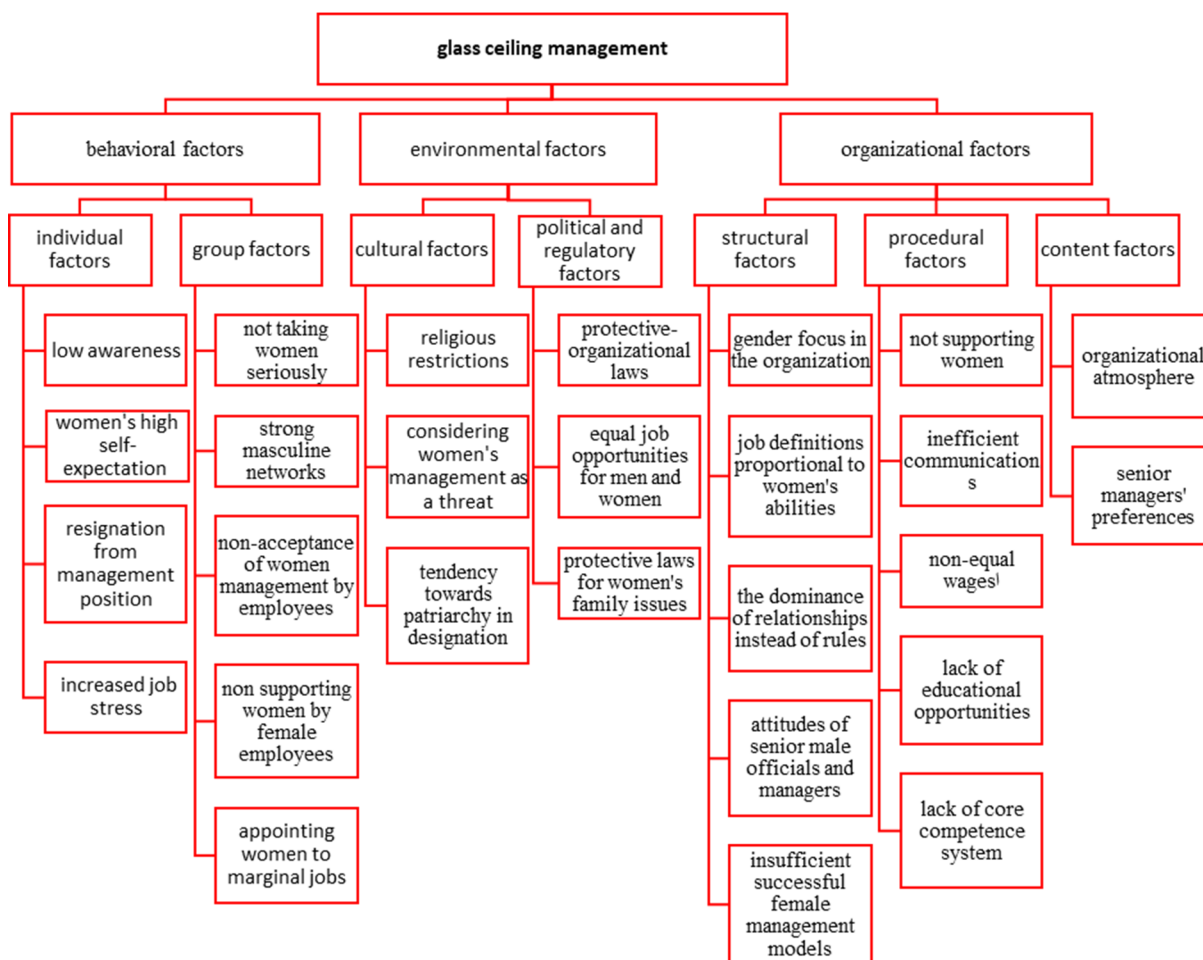
Figure 1: Diagram of Structural and Inclusive Themes

ensure qualitative approval of the components.

Table 1, which is a combination of content validity (between 15 people) and internal reliability and correlation (between 31 people), indicates that the first column of content validity confirmes the indicators and moves to columns 2 and 3. If content validity in the first column is weak, it is deleted, and if the convergence is close to zero in the second column, it indicates the independence of the indicators from other dimensions of the model. Finally, if their Cronbach's alpha is less than 0.7, they are not validated. However, the research findings indicate the high validity and reliability of the three criteria. In the first column, according to the experts who had a positive view of these indicators and considered them necessary for the model, these factors can be effective in understanding the glass ceiling management. The second column confirmed the degree of the correlation of each component, and as can be seen, the correlation was positive, convergent, and direct. This level of correlation shows the strong convergence and alignment of the components that indicated agreement in the model. If one indicator is upgraded in this model, other indicators will increase as well,

and the indicators are somehow complementary. In one sample, it can be said that the lack of equal opportunity and increased stress have the most coordination in the glass roof model, and in a way, they can be considered as the strongest indicators of the model. The indicators of lack of support for women by female employees and stereotyped attitude to women's management had the least correlation and indicated the weak effect of this indicator along with other indicators of the model, and easily showed the relationship between the dimensions of the model. The third column, the Cronbach's alpha, was at its highest and close to number one. This indicated the high confidence of the whole members of the panel of experts. In general, these indicators were confirmed and finalized and could be relied on. Also, according to the experts (31 people), the level of these indicators is close to each other and they are finalized.

Gap Analysis

This section examined the pathology of the glass ceiling from the perspective of human resources and human resources experts at the workplace. Note that the desired situation was the mean of 31 university

Table 1: Validity and Reliability Verification Analysis

Dimensions and classification of the subsets		Glass ceiling management indicators	CVR Content Validity	Internal correlation of indicators	Cronbach's alpha
Behavioral factors	Individual factors	1- Women's high self-expectation as being the solution to all problems	0.73	0.65	0.96
		2- Poor ability to manage teams	0.73	0.57	0.96
		3- Women's tendency to take on difficult tasks	0.86	0.59	0.96
		4- Job conflict with family responsibilities	0.73	0.65	0.96
		5- Strict discipline and being law-abiding in performing assigned tasks	0.86	.0.63	0.96
		6- Increased stress	0.73	0.75	0.96
		7- Stereotyped prejudices about women	0.73	0.40	0.96
	Group factors	8- Sacrificing women to appoint them to challenging jobs	0.86	0.57	0.96
		9- Not taking women seriously by men's networks	0.87	0.77	0.96
		10- Strong masculine networks of the organization	0.73	0.56	0.96
		11- Gender Attitude (Gender Supremacy and Separation)	0.73	0.64	0.96
		12- Non-acceptance of women management by employees	0.87	0.82	0.96
		13- Assigning women to challenging jobs	0.73	0.79	0.96
		14- Not supporting women by female employees	0.86	0.30	0.96
		15- Lack of friendly relations with colleagues and managers	0.73	0.67	0.96
		16- Appointing women to marginal jobs in the organization	0.73	0.39	0.96
		17- Women's unwillingness to enter political positions	0.86	0.73	0.96
Environmental factors	Cultural factors	18- Customary and religious restrictions	0.73	0.54	0.96
		19- Unrealistic stereotypes and negative social perceptions about women	0.86	0.42	0.96
		20- Existence of patriarchal culture	1	0.72	0.96
		21- stereotyped attitude towards women's management	0.73	0.33	0.96
		22- gender discrimination	0.73	0.62	0.96
	Political and regulatory factors	23- Lack of an organization to defend women's rights	0.86	0.64	0.96
		24- Weak protective laws	1	0.71	0.96
		25- Lack of adequate and equal job opportunities for women	0.73	0.80	0.96
		26- Work-family conflict	0.86	0.70	0.96
		27- Lack of encouragement from the spouse to work in the organization	0.73	0.79	0.96
		28- Existence of gender focus in organizational activities	0.86	0.80	.968
Organizational factors	Structural factors	29- Lack of sufficient power and freedom of action for women in managerial jobs	1	0.56	0.96
		30- Lack of job definitions proportional to women's abilities	0.86	0.72	0.96
		31- Lack of proper career path for women in organizations	0.73	0.63	0.96
		32- The dominance of relations instead of rules	0.73	0.64	0.96
		33- Weakness of comprehensive policies and procedures for women management	0.86	0.73	0.96
		34- Attitudes of senior male officials and managers	0.73	0.61	0.96
		35- Senior position based on physical strength	0.86	0.65	0.96
		36- Insufficient successful female management models in society	1	0.66	0.96
		37- Lack of serious and brave female leadership at high levels	0.73	0.71	0.96
	Procedural factors	38- Low turnout in legislative and governmental centers	0.86	0.54	0.96
		39- Weak presence in informal organizations	0.73	0.65	0.96
		40- Weakness in creating women's teamwork	0.86	0.64	0.96
		41- Housewives' income as the second income	0.73	0.69	0.96
		42- Restrictions on women's communication in the society	1	0.69	0.96
		43- Unequal training opportunities in the organization	1	0.50	0.96
		44- Using women in repetitive affairs	1	0.72	0.96
		45- Weakness of core competency in seniority selection	0.86	0.45	0.96
	Content factors	46- Switching goals with basic issues about women	0.86	0.76	0.96
		47- Inflexible working environment suitable for women	0.73	0.79	0.96
		48- Organizational atmosphere	0.86	0.71	0.96
		49- Low understanding of managerial skills and abilities in women	0.86	0.79	0.96

Table 2: The result of gap analysis

Model markers	Desired state	Current state	Difference	Percentage of difference
Women's high self-expectation as being the solution to all problems	4.12	2.98	1.14	22.92
Poor ability to manage teams	4.03	1.46	2.57	51.40
Women's tendency to take on difficult tasks	3.83	2.15	1.68	33.60
Job conflict with family responsibilities	4.51	1.81	2.70	54.04
Strict discipline and law-abidance in performing assigned tasks	4.22	1.92	2.30	46.10
Increased stress	4.19	3.25	0.93	18.69
Stereotyped prejudices about women	4.25	3.46	0.78	15.78
Sacrificing women in appointing them to challenging jobs	3.90	2.95	0.94	18.89
Not being taken seriously by men's networks	4.06	3.07	0.99	19.84
Strong masculine networks of the organization	3.77	3.29	0.48	9.62
11. Gender Attitude (Gender Supremacy and Separation)	4.09	3.37	0.72	14.41
12. Non-acceptance of women management by employees	4.32	2.90	1.41	28.38
13. Assigning women to challenging jobs	4.22	1.99	2.22	44.58
14. Not supporting women by female employees	3.96	2.93	1.03	20.66
15. Lack of friendly relations with colleagues and managers	4.32	2.36	1.95	39.07
16. Appointment of women to marginal jobs of the organization	3.70	3.05	0.65	13.02
17. Women's unwillingness to enter political positions	3.87	2.29	1.57	31.48
18. Customary and religious restrictions	3.83	2.26	1.57	31.47
19. Unrealistic stereotypes and negative social perceptions about women	3.87	2.01	1.85	37.14
20. Existence of patriarchal culture	4	3.71	0.28	5.65
21. A stereotyped attitude towards women's management	3.87	3.08	0.78	15.62
22. gender discrimination	3.77	3.21	0.56	11.20
23. Lack of an organization to defend women's rights	3.48	3.44	0.04	0.85
24. Weak protective laws	3.70	3.63	0.07	1.436
25. Lack of adequate and equal job opportunities for women	3.96	3.27	0.69	13.83
26. Work-family conflict	3.58	2.89	0.68	13.75
27. Lack of encouragement from the spouse to work in the organization	4.45	3.05	1.39	27.86
28. Existence of gender focus in organizational activities	3.64	2.90	0.74	14.90
29. Lack of sufficient power and freedom of action for women in managerial jobs	4.38	3.36	0.99	19.81
30. Lack of job definitions proportional to women's abilities	4.19	3.05	1.14	22.83
31. Lack of proper career path for women in organizations	3.80	3.22	0.57	11.57
32. The dominance of relationships instead of rules	4.22	3.18	1.03	20.72
33. Weak inclusive policies and procedures for women management	3.93	2.59	1.34	26.84
34. Attitudes of senior male officials and managers	4.03	3.26	0.77	15.40
35. Senior position based on physical strength	3.96	2.72	1.24	24.87
36. Insufficient successful female management models in the society	3.83	2.15	1.68	33.60
37. Lack of serious and brave female leadership at high levels	4.12	2.38	1.73	34.78
38. Low turnout in legislative and governmental centers	4.09	2.18	1.90	38.14
39. Weak presence in informal organizations	4.29	2.26	2.02	40.42
40. Weakness in creating women's teamwork	3.70	2.16	1.54	30.81
41. Housewives' income as the second income	3.74	2.75	0.98	19.73
42. Restrictions on women's communication in the society	4.25	2.64	1.61	32.26
43. Unequal training opportunities in the organization	3.80	2.45	1.35	27.09
44. Using women in repetitive affairs	4.35	2.39	1.95	39.16
45. Weakness of core competency in seniority selection	3.83	2.24	1.59	31.87
46. Switching goals with basic issues about women	3.83	2.64	1.19	23.94
47. Inflexible working environment suitable for women	4.45	2.74	1.70	34.13
48. Organizational atmosphere	4.09	2.76	1.33	26.69
49. Low understanding of managerial skills and abilities in women	4.22	3.13	1.08	21.75

experts, faculty members, and masters' opinions in the field of human resources, and the current situation was the mean of 290 female employees' opinions in Shiraz hospitals.

Table 2 shows the result of gap analysis between the desired situation, which is the opinion of 31 experts (in experts' opinions, the main factors that could affect the glass ceiling and gave it the highest score were the basis for choosing the desired component). it should be taken into account that the experts considered the maximum effect for each component, which is considered in a general, desirable way and without any specific orientations; they considered these indicators as essential and optimal for the glass ceiling management. Likert scale (1 to 5) was used to score the questions; the experts' opinions for all indicators were above average and their effectiveness was over 70%. Working women scored the current situation, according to the environment in which they worked, below average or average, which indicated women's low expectations of the indicators of glass ceiling. It can be said that women are somewhat satisfied with the current situation and are less concerned about promotion and obtaining managerial positions. The range of changes between the current and the desired situation is very high, so that it encompassed both sides of the Likert spectrum (the upper limit was the desired state and the lower limit was the current one), indicating that the staff felt the glass ceiling and the perceptual distance between professionals and employees was very large.

Discussion

First of all, it should be mentioned that women's situation in cities for promotion is related to their slowness and unwillingness for higher positions, which has been confirmed in this study; also, women are more involved in family and household affairs to the extent that in informal issues related to work they have the least activity and spend all their time in the official affairs of the organization. As a complement to men, they make the least effort to meet the motivational needs in the workplace. On the other hand, the hospital is a specialized environment where doctors and staff are in two very different spectra, so that women working in the workplace negatively respond to the indicators, which in a way have evaluated these factors somewhat positively. Examining the model showed that in the two spectra, which were specialists and experts in the first part, they all confirmed the high level of alignment of the components, but in their current situation at the workplace, women acknowledged that the working

situation was not that difficult that could not be dealt with, and that the glass ceiling was a product of women's thoughts in the city of Shiraz, because their expectations are trapped in a professional bureaucratic structure. Of course, it should be borne in mind that women may be satisfied with their current working conditions, and that initial job security may be sufficient for them; also, they accept looking at a job alongside a secure working life and do not like transfers, so that they have the slightest participation in informal activities in creating groups and associations in a complementary work environment. Since the level of the components have been raised in a negative and deterrent perspective, the experts' opinions have been considered as the components which have the greatest effect on the glass ceiling. At the operational level, the views of the female staff in Shiraz hospitals indicated that they were satisfied with their current situation.

Innovation in this research and its contribution to knowledge production can be attributed to the fact that the research had a strong internal convergence which occurred between experts and female specialists; also, the experts first proposed barriers in the model which caused it to grow negatively. The experts, with a very high reliability, suggested that the level of the glass ceiling was not very important to them and was somewhat satisfactory. On the other hand, this model was a function of other models, was designed with a pathological approach in organizations, and was an extension of other existing models.

Given the results of this study, suggestions are provided for researchers in the management field to conduct future research projects. In order to better assess the model, several populations should be studied in this regard, so that the results of the opinions, based on the circumstances, can be adapted by this model. Conducting comparative studies in this field can also be one of the perspectives ahead of researchers.

In any research, the researcher will face obstacles and limitations, some of which can be controlled and managed by the researcher and some are out of control. This research was no exception and faced optional and mandatory obstacles and limitations.

1-Involvement of personal issues and inner desire of people in filling out the questionnaires

2-Time and space constraints which affect the generalizability of the results obtained

Conclusion

Based on the results of this research in the behavioral dimension, it is suggested that in any organization,

there are factors that are derived from the nature of individuals' behavior and the type of their perceptions of themselves and their expectations of the organization. These factors may be adjusted by stereotyped physical errors and cause dissatisfaction of female employees in the organization; also, gender should not be considered as the basis and affect human behavior. The organization should try not to divide the type of work based on physical and gender characteristics, and in defining women's jobs, social respect at the individual and group level needs to be taken into account for women in terms of employment. To realize women's rights in specialized departments where women are involved in administrative affairs, it is necessary to legally regulate and balance work in the ministries to the lowest levels of work and introduce their rights to them because the dynamism of a society and the foundations of any institution depend on women and they are at the center of all affairs and can cause improvements in any field.

As to environmental dimension, it is suggested that all employees are affected by the environment and most of them even meet the environmental needs, and women can play the role of evaluators of the organization's strategies to respond to the environment due to their delicacy and insights (environment includes consumers, competitors and facilities). Organizational precision, elegance, and agility can be attributed to women; this is a perfect example of organizational agility that is inherent in women. Thus, the organization must first consider that each person has capabilities and abilities and must teach them to their human resource managers to properly transfer people in organizational positions and do not consider any discriminations. In this study, the environment arises from cultural and regulatory factors, but it should be known that these two types can be both visible and invisible in the promotion of women, and that it also depends on the views of women in the organization. Also, one of the factors that prevent geographical and vertical promotion in the organization is the cultural factor for working women. For example, we have heard that families move to other cities because of their men's job positions, but this is not true for women because they have accepted the second priority in the family economy and this is culturally institutionalized, which is a mental barrier to the advancement of women. Moreover, it has become difficult to revive high organizational positions for women in regional transfers, and every woman only wants to grow in her region, which itself is a mental glass ceiling that women have created themselves. It is recommended that women, given their job prospects, should form self-help organizations (NGOs) and supportive associations that aim at strengthening women's work culture and career advancement.

Also, in the organizational dimension, sometimes policies lead to the enactment of laws that are actually in favor of men and to the detriment of women in achieving career success. Therefore, given that in recent years women have proven their ability in managerial fields and participated in politics, policymakers need to be careful when making laws so that managers can pay attention to women's capacities in employing women in managerial positions and cannot destroy equal opportunities for women by violating laws.

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