

# The Issue of Glass Ceiling: A study of what the HRM textbooks present

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## **Abstract**

Generally this conceptual study is a systematic attempt to find out what HRM textbooks present about the issue of Glass Ceiling (GC). Specifically five research questions were formulated and they were answered by adopting a desk research strategy. Relevant writings and explanations from 35 textbooks on HRM published by relevant authorities were examined. The study yielded findings consistent with the formulated five research questions and they are: there is indeed an issue called Glass Ceiling; its meaning is a barrier or barriers or a set of barriers which is/are invisible but real preventing advancement of women employees and minorities to top managerial jobs and positions in the organization; it is a problem to be concerned with owing to significant negative consequences; there are many reasons for the GC issue and 17 reasons were presented; and 19 remedies specified were found. These remedies can be recommended for organizations to melt the GC. However, there are some cautions to be considered.

**Key Words:** Career Management, Glass Ceiling, Human Resource Management, Textbook

## Introduction

Career Management (CM) is an important function of Human Resource Management (HRM) which is concerned with Career Planning (CP) and Career Development (CD). It is the HRM function that plans and develops careers of employees for the benefits of employees and the organization (Opatha, 2009). CP is the process by which one selects career goals-the future positions one strives to reach as part of a career- and the path to those goals; and CD is the process by which one undertakes personal improvements to achieve career plan (Werther and Davis, 1996). CM is the process for enabling employees to better understand and develop their career skills and interests and to use these skills and interests most effectively both within the company and after they leave the firm (Dessler and Varkkey, 2018). It is necessary to manage a successful career through sound planning and development though one has to spend considerable time, effort, and money to plan his or her career. It is costly for the organization too to do offering programmes of CP and CD to its employees. According to Schuler (1998) the investments of money and time are worthwhile because CM fulfils many important purposes for both employee and employer. Purposes of CM for employees include increasing possibility of getting promotions, helping reach the top of the profession, ensuring job security, increasing self-esteem, feeling comfortable in life, becoming a mentor, and becoming a role model for others to follow; and purposes of CP for organization include meeting internal staffing needs, creating a better image as a good employer attracting job applicants, reducing employee absenteeism and turnover, and enhancing productivity through improved value of the employee and satisfaction (Opatha, 2009).

One of the individual issues in CM is the Glass Ceiling (GC). Opatha (2009) discusses directly four issues which are considered as individual issues in CM, i.e. career plateaus, dual-career couples, dual-career paths for technical and professional employees, and job-hopping. Schuler (1998) discusses comprehensively various issues in CM and some of them are self-management, midlife transition, career plateaus, and career obsolescence. It has generally been heard that there is such an issue called Glass Ceiling globally as well as locally. It is interesting to know whether there is such an issue called Glass Ceiling in the way that is systematic. One might suspect that most of female managers and female academics too point out such an issue for taking an undue advantage. Is it relating to all people at work? Or is it relating to only women at work? Or is it relating to minority employees? An intellectual puzzle exists to investigate what it relates to. Should academics and practitioners in HRM be concerned with the issue and why? How to deal with the issue? To get right answers for the above will be useful academically and practically as well.

## Research Questions and Objective

Following research questions were formulated so that a systematic attempt could be made to find answers:

1. Is there such an issue called Glass Ceiling?
2. What is the meaning of Glass Ceiling?

3. Why is it a problem?
4. What are the possible reasons for the issue of Glass Ceiling?
5. What are the available remedies for the issue of Glass Ceiling?

The objective of this research paper is to find rich answers to those five research questions.

### **Method**

As this research paper gives a theoretical contribution it is considered as a conceptual study. In order to find sound answers for the five research questions systematically, a comprehensive literature survey was done by using the desk research strategy. Textbooks on HRM and Organizational Behaviour (OB) published by relevant authorities were utilized. Almost all the textbooks which were available to the researcher were utilized. There were textbooks with the title Personnel Management which was existent before the title HRM became popular. They too were utilized. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016) textbooks are useful source of theory in a specific area covering a broad range of topics, furthermore covering a topic much more thoroughly than articles can. Textbooks were developed by highly and appropriately qualified authors by using various works of various authors in addition to their own observations and experiences (Opatha, 2019). It is a well known practice that any course being taught in a degree programme offered by any recognized university in the world is based on at least one textbook, if not two or several ones.

### **Existence of the Issue of Glass Ceiling**

French (1978) gives a brief description about CP and however, has not written an issue called Glass Ceiling. He focused on management and employee development and also discussed issues of management and development of engineers, scientists, and other professionals. William F. Glueck is one of the classic authors in HRM (then Personnel Management). He (1979) discusses CD as another approach to development of the employee. An issue called Glass Ceiling was not discussed.

Chruden and Sherman (1980) identified that there were barriers to advancement of women and even to their employment. They discussed about developing women for management positions. However, the issue of Glass Ceiling was not a mention. Stone and Meltz (1983) wrote a textbook on Personnel Management in Canada and they did not mention in it specifically the issue of Glass Ceiling. In fact they wrote a separate chapter on CP. Beach (1985) in his book titled *Personnel: The Management of People At Work* did not discuss the GC issue though he wrote a separate chapter on CD. Schuler and Youngblood (1986) wrote a comprehensive textbook titled *Effective Personnel Management*. They wrote a separate chapter on CP and Management though mentioning about the issue of Glass Ceiling was not. The main author namely Schuler published his fourth edition to the book with an author namely Huber in 1990. The title of the book was *Personnel and Human Resource Management* which has neither separate chapter on CP and Management nor mention of the issue of Glass Ceiling. They did another edition (fifth) to the book with the same title in 1993 and in the book the issue of Glass Ceiling was discussed in the second chapter (Characteristics of

the External and Internal Environment) though it too did not have a separate chapter on CM. Heneman III, Schwab, Fossum, and Dyer (1989), in their book titled *Personnel/Human Resource Management* do not discuss the issue of GC.

Graham and Bennett (1992) wrote a textbook titled *Human Resources Management*. They are UK academics and they did not discuss the GC issue. Bernardin and Russell (1993) wrote a textbook titled *Human Resource Management: An Experiential Approach* that gives a comprehensive description and explanation of the topic CD. Further they discussed special programs for women, minorities, and employees with disabilities. However, no mention about GC exists. By being UK academics Bratton and Gold (1994) did not particularly discuss CM in their book titled *Human Resource Management: Theory and Practice*. Singh, Chhabra, and Taneja (1995) wrote a textbook titled *Personnel Management and Industrial Relations*. They are Indian scholars and they did not discuss the GC issue. Being an Indian academic Matoria (1996) wrote a textbook titled *Personnel Management* and did not discuss CM in a chapter and also the issue of GC. Werther and Davis (1996) in their textbook titled *Human Resources and Personnel Management* discussed the issue of GC in a chapter titled International Challenges though they did not discuss it in the chapter titled Career Planning. In their first edition published in 1981 with the title *Personnel Management and Human Resources* the issue of GC was not discussed in the chapter titled Career Planning. Aminuddin (1997) wrote a book titled *A Guide To Human Resource Management*. He is a Malaysian scholar and he did not discuss the GC issue in his book. Harris (1997) in his book with the title *Human Resource Management: A Practical Approach* gave a detailed description and explanation of the GC. Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux (1999) discussed the GC issue under equal employment opportunity and affirmative action in their book titled *Human Resource Management*. They did not give a detailed description and an explanation with regard to the GC. They write that the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991 in USA established a Glass Ceiling commission to study the limited progress made by minorities and women, and also the act established an annual award for excellence in promoting a more diverse skilled workforce at the management and decision-making levels in business.

Bohlander, Snell, and Sherman (12<sup>th</sup> edition in 2001) wrote a comprehensive textbook titled *Managing Human Resources* which is recognized as the leader in introductory textbooks or the standard in the field of HRM according to the management and editors of South-Western College Publishing/Thomson Learning. They discussed the issue of GC in detail in their chapter titled Career Development. Being an Indian academic Pattanayak (2003) wrote a textbook titled *Human Resource Management*. In this book he did not present a discussion of the issue of GC. Kleiman (2004) wrote a textbook with the title *Human Resource Management: A Managerial Tool for Competitive Advantage* and discussed the GC issue in somewhat detail in the chapter titled Understanding the Legal and Environmental Context of HRM. Fisher, Schoenfeldt, and Shaw (2006) in their textbook titled *Human Resource Management* discuss the GC issue in their chapter titled Equal Employment Opportunity: The Legal Environment. UK two authors namely Beardwell and Claydon (2007) presented a contemporary approach to HRM in their book titled *Human Resource Management*. Their work was an edited one and did not have a special topic or subtopic on CM. However the

book has a chapter titled Management Development for Different Contexts and Special Needs in which a detailed account has been given with regard to the progression and development of women managers including developing managers as international managers. However, they did not use the term GC. They observe that there is now overwhelming evidence to suggest that women are generally under-represented in UK management. Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2007) discussed the issue of GC as a special issue in employee development in their book titled *Human Resource Management*. They show that a major development issue facing companies today is how to get women and minorities into upper-level management positions-how to break the GC. Byars and Rue (2008) agree that there is a problem called GC. DeNisi and Griffin (2008) present the evidence of GC. According to them, while women comprise almost 50 percent of all managers, female CEOs head only 10 of the 500 largest businesses in the US. Opatha (2009), the author of this research paper being a Sri Lankan academic, mentions the GC in a skill builder rather than the text of the chapter on CM in his very comprehensive textbook titled *Human Resource Management: Personnel*. The skill builder shows a career issue at individual level, i.e. the GC.

Cascio (2010) writes in his textbook titled *Managing Human Resources* with regard to women in the workforce. However he does not mention the issue of GC. Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy (2010) discuss the issue of GC under managing diversity. According to them, the main complaint among female and minority employees is that they lack career growth opportunities. Ivancevich (2010) in the book titled *Human Resource Management* discusses the GC issue under CP and Development. According to him, researchers show that GC blocking upward career advancement of women and minorities is still a reality. Mathis and Jackson (2011) in their textbook titled *Human Resource Management* discuss the GC issue two times under equal employment opportunity chapter and talent management chapter. They mention that for years, women's groups have alleged that women in workplaces encounter a GC. Further they observe that women hold only a small percentage of the highest-ranking executive management jobs in big companies; and by comparison, women hold a considerably lower percentage of top management jobs in France, Germany, Brazil, and many other countries. Torrington, Hall, Taylor, and Atkinson (2011) are British academics who wrote a comprehensive textbook on HRM with the title *Human Resource Management*. They did not discuss directly about the GC issue though women employment and discrimination were discussed under equal opportunities and diversity. Schwind, Das, Wagar, Fassina, and Bulmash (2013) discuss the GC issue in their book titled *Canadian Human Resource Management*. They discussed it under diversity management. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) who are British authors wrote a very comprehensive textbook and according to its latest edition, Part V is about Learning and Development that has four chapters with titles Strategic learning and development, The process of learning and development, The practice of learning and development, and Leadership and management development which do not have a mention of the GC issue.

Bohlander and Snell (2017) in their textbook titled *Principles of Human Resource Management* discussed separately the GC issue under developing a diverse talent pool which is a subtopic

of the chapter on human resource planning and recruitment. They observed that still the entire picture is not a rosy one, and many qualified women who graduated from top MBA programs worldwide occupy lower-level management positions and have less career satisfaction compared with their male counterparts with the same education. Aswathappa (2017), who is an Indian academic, does not discuss specifically the issue of GC in his book titled *Human Resource Management*. Instead he discusses an issue called feminizing workforce. This refers to a situation in which more and more women employees work in organizations. However, he discusses gender inclusivity in order to increase women representation in senior management positions. Dessler (2018) in his fifteenth edition titled *Human Resource Management* gave a discussion of the GC issue in the chapter titled managing careers and retention. According to him, unfortunately many career development programs are not consistent with the needs of women. As an example they mention that family responsibilities in many women's lives are underestimated by many career development programs.

Refer to Exhibit 1. It presents availability or non-availability of a discussion of the issue of GC in the HRM textbooks utilized for this study.

**Exhibit 1 Availability or Non-availability of a Discussion of the Issue of GC in the HRM Textbooks**

No.	Author/s	Year	Country of Publication	Availability	Non-Availability
1	French	1978	USA		x
2	Glueck	1979	USA		x
3	Chruden and Sherman	1980	USA		x
4	Stone and Meltz	1983	Canada		x
5	Beach	1985	USA		x
6	Schuler and Youngblood	1986	USA		x
7	Heneman III, Schwab, Fossum, and Dyer	1989	USA		x
8	Graham and Bennett	1992	UK		x
9	Bernardin and Russell	1993	USA		x
10	Bratton and Gold	1994	UK		x
11	Singh, Chhabra, and Taneja	1995	India		x
12	Mamoria	1996	India		x
13	Werther and Davis (their first edition in 1981)	1996	USA	x	(x in 1981)
14	Aminuddin	1997	Malaysia		x
15	Harris	1997	USA	x	
16	Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux	1999	USA	x	
17	Bohlander, Snell, and Sherman	2001	USA	x	
18	Pattanayak	2003	India		x
19	Kleiman	2004	USA	x	

20	Fisher, Schoenfeldt, and Shaw	2006	USA	x	
21	Beardwell and Claydon	2007	UK		x
22	Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright	2007	USA	x	
23	Byars and Rue	2008	USA	x	
24	DeNisi and Griffin	2008	USA	x	
25	Opatha	2009	Sri Lanka	x	
26	Cascio	2010	USA		x
27	Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy	2010	USA	x	
28	Ivancevich	2010	USA	x	
29	Mathis and Jackson	2010	USA	x	
30	Torrington, Hall, Taylor, and Atkinson	2011	UK		x
31	Schwind, Das, Wagar, Fassina, and Bulmash	2013	Canada	x	
32	Armstrong and Taylor	2014	UK		x
33	Bohlander and Snell	2014	USA	x	
34	Aswathappa	2017	India		x
35	Dessler	2018	USA	x	

Thus, 35 HRM textbooks which were available physically to the author of this research paper were examined. Out of 35 textbooks the ones which were published in 1970s and 1980s did not deal with the issue of GC. Also most of the textbooks which were published in 1990s did not deal with the issue. Why? This is an interesting question which does not have a clear-cut answer or definite answer. However, it is possible to mention several acceptable possible reasons for non-availability of discussion of the issue (in past two decades i.e. 1970s, and 1980s, and in almost half a decade of 1990s).

1. Generally women were considered as human beings who were supposed to feed their babies and nurture them. Giving birth to the baby, feeding the baby, and looking after the baby are naturally entrusted works for a woman. These works have been expected obligations of a woman who is fertile. These works have been considered by the society as admirable and worthy. Hence women were not expected to come to work in organizations and get promoted to managerial positions, at least middle and top ones. Consequently there was no genuine concern for an issue called CG.
2. During those years, almost all the managers in organizations were males. Only a few employees were females and most of them were non-managerial employees. Hence there was no problem of not promoting women employees to the managerial positions.
3. Managerial jobs were demanding, complex and had a lot of responsibilities. It may be that these jobs were unbearable for women employees or were not interesting to women employees. Hence it may be that almost all or many women employees did

not raise complaints or make grievances of not promoting them to managerial, particularly top positions in the organizations where they were working.

According to Exhibit 1, another finding is that all UK authors (numbering 5 textbooks) did not discuss directly the issue of GC. Except the textbook by Graham and Bennett (1992) and the textbook by Bratton and Gold (1994) all other textbooks (numbering 3) were published in 2007, 2011, and 2014. Torrington, Hall, Taylor, and Atkinson (2011) have discussed women employment and discrimination without a direct discussion of the GC. Beardwell and Claydon (2007) have given a detailed account with regard to the progression and development of women managers including developing managers as international managers, in addition to their observation of overwhelming evidence to suggest that women are generally under-represented in UK management. However, these authors have not used the term Glass Ceiling. One reason may be that the term was originated in USA. Another reason may be that UK legislation does not have a mention of the term GC (as mentioned in USA legislation).

Another finding from the Exhibit is that all Indian authors have not discussed the issue of GC. Aswathappa (2017) has not discussed specifically the issue of GC, but he has done a discussion of gender inclusivity so as to increase women representation in senior management positions. Another finding is that there was only one textbook published in Sri Lanka written by the author of this research paper in which the GC was noted.

### **Meaning of the Issue of Glass Ceiling**

Schuler and Huber (1993) define GC as invisible but seemingly unbreakable barriers and it relates to women and minorities. Further they write that women and minorities are still prevented from entering top executive ranks.

Werther and Davis (1996) in their textbook titled *Human Resources and Personnel Management* presented a comprehensive definition of GC. They write (1996, p. 595):

*“A glass ceiling refers to the idea that people can see higher-level positions but are locked from attaining those positions by a real but unseen barrier such as discrimination. The term is most often applied to the careers of women who are blocked from achieving the seniormost positions in a company. It also applies to foreign nationals who may be blocked from the seniormost positions in a company based in another country.”*

Accordingly they related GC to women and host country nationals employed by a global or multinational company.

Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux (1999) defined the GC as the invisible barrier in organizations that prevents many women and minorities from achieving top-level management positions. According to the definition, the GC relates to both women and minorities.

Bohlander, Snell, and Sherman (2001) present the definition of GC given by the US Department of Labor and it is “those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organizations into management level positions.” Thus, GC is a set of artificial barriers to prevent advancing qualified employees, particularly women to managerial positions in the organizations.

Kleiman (2004) defines GC as an invisible, yet very real, barrier found in the structure of many organizations that has stymied the advancement of women and other protected groups. Protected groups include minorities at work.

Fisher, Schoenfeldt, and Shaw (2006) define GC as the artificial barriers to advancement that women and other minorities face in the workplace. They mentioned that according to the report, i.e. “Report on the Glass Ceiling Initiative” issued by the US Labor Department, there a general paucity of women and minorities in top managerial positions in the nation’s largest corporations. Further they mention that women and minorities can see through but not get through.

Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2007) define GC as a barrier to advancement to higher-level jobs in the company that adversely affects women and minorities. They consider melting the GC as a special issue in employee development being faced by today’s organizations.

Byars and Rue (2008) write that GC refers to invisible, yet real or perceived, barriers found in many organizational structures that appear to stymie the executive advancement opportunities of women and minorities. According to this definition, barriers to the advancement of women and minorities to top positions in organizations may be real or perceived.

DeNisi and Griffin (2008) present a definition of GC, i.e. a barrier that keeps many females from advancing to top management positions in many organizations. This definition indicates that there are some women who could get promoted to top management positions but many females could not or cannot. Also the definition indicates that this barrier exists in many organizations. This definition does not include minorities.

Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy (2010) define the GC as the intangible barrier in an organization that prevents female and minority employees from rising to positions above a certain level. According to this definition, it indicates that female and minority employees could achieve growth opportunities or promotions up to a certain level. This may be first line management or middle management. However after that level there is an intangible barrier within the organization preventing female and minority employees from getting promoted.

Ivancevich (2010) defines the GC as a hypothetical barrier that seems to face minorities and women in advancing up the management hierarchy. According to his definition, the GC relates to both women and minorities.

Mathis and Jackson (2011) define the GC issue as discriminatory practices that have prevented women and other protected class-members from advancing to executive-level jobs. Here executive-level jobs mean top management jobs. According to them, this is an issue that describes the situation in which women fail to progress into top and senior management positions.

According to Schwind, Das, Wagar, Fassina, and Bulmash (2013), GC is invisible, but real obstructions to career advancement of women and people of visible minorities, resulting in frustration, career dissatisfaction, and increased turnover. In this definition, consequences of the issue of GC have been included implying the issue is important. Further they observe that promotional opportunities are visible, but invisible obstructions seem to block the way.

Bohlander and Snell (2017) write that the GC represents an invisible barrier that prohibits protected class members from reaching top organizational positions. Here protected class members mean employees who are women and minorities.

Dessler (2018) writes that there are subtle and not-so-subtle barriers to women's career progress such as underestimating family responsibilities, and unwritten codes that prevent women from rising in the hierarchy. He defines the GC as the totality of subtle and not-so-subtle barriers to women's career progress.

Exhibit 2 presents the definitions given above by various scholars with regard to the issue of GC.

#### **Exhibit: 2 Definitions of Glass Ceiling**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Author/Authors</b>	<b>Year</b>
1	Invisible but seemingly unbreakable barriers and it relates to women and minorities	Schuler and Huber	1993
2	A glass ceiling refers to the idea that people can see higher-level positions but are locked from attaining those positions by a real but unseen barrier such as discrimination. The term is most often applied to the careers of women who are blocked from achieving the seniormost positions in a company.	Werther and Davis	1996
3	An invisible barrier preventing women from advancing to higher levels within the organization	Harris	1997
4	The invisible barrier in organizations that prevents many women and minorities from achieving top-level management positions.	Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux	1999
5	The definition of GC given by the US Department of Labor is: "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organizations into	Bohlander, Snell, and Sherman	2001

	management level positions.”		
6	An invisible, yet very real, barrier found in the structure of many organizations that has stymied the advancement of women and other protected groups.	Kleiman	2004
7	The artificial barriers to advancement that women and other minorities face in the workplace.	Fisher, Schoenfeldt, and Shaw	2006
8	A barrier to advancement to higher-level jobs in the company that adversely affects women and minorities.	Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright	2007
9	Invisible, yet real or perceived, barriers found in many organizational structures that appear to stymie the executive advancement opportunities of women and minorities.	Byars and Rue	2008
10	A barrier that keeps many females from advancing to top management positions in many organizations.	DeNisi and Griffin	2008
11	The intangible barrier in an organization that prevents female and minority employees from rising to positions above a certain level.	Gomez-Mejia, Balkin, and Cardy	2010
12	A hypothetical barrier that seems to face minorities and women in advancing up the management hierarchy.	Ivancevich	2010
13	Discriminatory practices that have prevented women and other protected class-members from advancing to executive-level jobs.	Mathis and Jackson	2011
14	Invisible, but real obstructions to career advancement of women and people of visible minorities, resulting in frustration, career dissatisfaction, and increased turnover.	Schwind, Das, Wagar, Fassina, and Bulmash	2013
15	An invisible barrier that prohibits protected class members from reaching top organizational positions.	Bohlander and Snell	2017
16	The totality of subtle and not-so-subtle barriers to women’s career progress.	Dessler	2018

According to Exhibit 2, GC involves a barrier or barriers or a set of barriers. These barriers are invisible but real. Invisible barriers mean obstructions which are not immediately apparent. They exist and operate to prevent advancement of women employees and minorities to top managerial jobs and positions in the organization. A careful examination of the above mentioned definitions given in the HRM textbooks (numbering 16) reveals that material differences among the definitions do not exist.

### **Glass Ceiling as a Problem**

The GC is a problem. Why? A problem can be viewed as a gap between what is existing and what should be with regard to something. When there are 100 employees who work as top managers in organizations in a certain industry it is possible to have an expectation that 50 top managers ideally need to be females so that real inclusivity gets established. When the actual situation is examined, it reveals that the number of top managers who are females is less than 10. Thus, there is a problem. This may be called under-inclusivity of women in top management in industry. The major reason for this is GC which itself is a problem. A significant gender-related problem that many organizations face today is the so-called GC (DeNisi and Griffin, 2008). The GC produces bad consequences such as job dissatisfaction, career dissatisfaction, absenteeism, tardiness, lack of innovation, reduced job performance, and turnover of female employees and managers. Further it is possible that women employees present grievances to the management that will have to take a lot of time, effort, and cost to settle them. A grievance means any discontent or dissatisfaction arising from a feeling or a belief of injustice felt by an employee or a group of employees in connection with the work environment (Opatha, 1994). Self presentation of grievance to the superior was the most popular method of grievance handling in Sri Lanka (Akuratiyagamage and Opatha, 2004). Thus managers will have to involve in handling grievances of their female subordinates resulting in displacement effect (employee work time diverted from production tasks to grievance processing) and worker reaction effect (reduced employee effort as a reaction to the perceived unfair treatment) (Opatha and Ismail, 2001). In many cases, women and minorities facing the GC decide to leave the corporate workforce, resulting in a drain of needed corporate and managerial talent (Ivancevich, 2010). The perception of the existence of a GC results in frustration, reduced job and career satisfaction, alienation from the workplace, and ultimately higher employee turnover (Schwind, Das, Wagar, Fassina, and Bulmash, 2013). On the other hand increased women participation in top management will result in recruiting top talent and expanding the employer's customer base (Segal, 2005 as in Ivancevich, 2010).

### **Reasons for the GC**

Schuler and Huber (1993) present a relatively lengthy explanation about the issue of GC. According to them, there are many reasons for the impasse, ranging from male managers' discomfort with female executives to women's pressures of balancing work and family concerns. They write that Felice Schwartz, founder and president of Catalyst, a research organization that studies work-family issues stress that in the minds of most men (and women) it exists that women have babies and they cannot be counted on to make a full-time, open-ended commitment to their careers. Further they write that Ms. Schwartz contends it costs companies more to employ women managers than men. Research shows that "given a man and a woman of equal abilities and motivation, investing in a woman is undeniably riskier" and the implication is that women are more likely to interrupt their careers, or forgo them altogether, to pursue motherhood (Schular and Huber, 1993). Schuler and Huber (1993, p.56) write:

*“In fact, one large industrial company estimates that turnover for top managerial women is approximately two and one-half times greater than for their male counterparts. These perspectives can dissuade corporate decision makers from spending the time, money, and effort to groom women for top spots in their corporations and are a major factor contributing to the glass ceiling.”*

Another reason for the GC is male managers' discomfort level with female managers. Further Schuler and Huber (1993, p.56) write:

*“According to Linda Jones, president of Women in Management, a professional group of 250 female executives, “Male CEOs accept women as professionals, but they’re not ready to accept them as true peers.” Margaret Henning, dean of the Simmons College Graduate School of Management, believes male executives are often disturbed by the thought of a woman taking their place. “Usually, he’s threatened because his identity as a male and his job are intermeshed.”*

Another reason given by Schuler and Huber (1993) is that many women have opted for staff jobs, as opposed to line-oriented jobs-the most likely track to senior management posts. This barrier has been somewhat self-imposed according to Schuler and Huber (1993). Furthermore Schuler and Huber (1993) discuss a reason that some organizations may have an influential “queen bee”-a female executive who enjoys being the only woman at the top and does her best to thwart the advancement of other women. Another reason given by Schuler and Huber (1993) is a cultural belief by many Americans that the male's job is more important than his spouse's, and that it is the male's duty to be the major contributor to household income. Indeed this cultural belief is being held by many Sri Lankans too.

Three reasons as factors which create a GC for women have been presented by Kleiman (2003). They are: (1) the stereotyped views held by male executives toward women, such as: women lack organizational commitment, being more concerned with the demands of family and parenthood, and women do not have the traits necessary for managerial success, such as aggressiveness and competitiveness; (2) the female's lack of opportunity to “bond” with other managers and executives, for example: women are often denied the opportunity to join their male counterparts on golf courses or at bars after hours; and (3) the subjectiveness of a firm's promotional procedures. Rather than selecting candidates on the basis of the qualities identified as necessary for the promoted position, the choice is subjective, and is often biased, example: too often, selections are made by male executives who choose other males who are most similar to them.

Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2007) present three reasons for the GC. The three reasons are (1) lack of access to training programs for women; (2) lack of appropriate developmental job experiences to women managers (male managers receive significantly more assignments which involve high levels of responsibilities); and (3) lack of developmental relationships such as mentoring to women managers (it is difficult to find mentors for women because of their lack of access to the “old boy network”, managers'

preference to interact with other managers of similar status rather than with line managers, and intentional exclusion by managers who have negative stereotypes about women's abilities, motivation, and preferences).

Three reasons for why the GC exist given by DeNisi and Griffin (2008) are (1) some male managers are still reluctant to promote female managers; (2) many talented women choose to leave their jobs in larger organizations and start their own businesses; and (3) some women choose to suspend or slow their career progression to have children.

Based on the writings by Dessler and Varkkey (2018) two reasons for the GC can be mentioned: (1) tokenism (appointing a small group of women to top management jobs, rather than more aggressively seeking full representation for women; and (2) gender-role stereotypes (the tendency to associate women with certain frequently non-managerial jobs).

### **Remedies for the GC**

It is possible to mention remedies for the GC given by the authors of the textbooks utilized for this study. Without making a repetition, an attempt was made to present the remedies. Remedies for the GC by Schuler and Huber (1993) are:

1. Management should accept women solely on their merits and value to the organization.
2. Do retraining women on how to 'fit' into the male-dominated upper management ranks. Women are supposed to alter their behaviour, making sure they are neither too masculine nor too feminine.
3. Heighten awareness of discriminatory attitudes and how this has an impact on work relationships.
4. Implement strategies that will tie elimination of such barriers into incentive plans.
5. Management should provide opportunities for women to gain experience, knowledge, and exposure as well as provide career planning.

Remedies for the GC given by Schuler (1998) are as follows:

1. Address the need to balance work and family by offering more generous adoption- and pregnancy-related leaves of absence, flexible hours, on-site child care, flexible projects, and opportunities to work at home.
2. Encourage mentorship programs as a means of giving everyone access to advice from the upper ranks.

There are three remedies for the GC which have been presented by Kleiman (2003), and they are:

1. Give effective diversity training that helps decision makers overcome their biases.
2. Provide women at work with training, career counseling, and mentoring.

3. Implement promotion procedures that are less subject to bias-procedures that ensure that candidates are chosen solely on the basis of their qualifications.

Based on research onto the actual practices of Deloitte & Touche, which is an accounting, tax, and consulting firm, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2007) present following recommendations for melting the GC:

1. Make sure that senior management supports and is involved in the GC program.
2. Make a business case for change.
3. Make the change public.
4. Gather data on problems causing the GC using task forces, focus groups, and questionnaires.
5. Create awareness of how gender attitudes affect the work environment.
6. Force accountability through reviews of promotion rates and assignment decisions.
7. Promote development for all employees.

Based on the writings by Dessler and Varkkey (2018) two special (not mentioned above) remedies for melting the GC can be mentioned as follows:

1. Eliminate practices which may seem gender neutral but in fact disproportionately affect women such as late-night meetings and golf course membership.
2. Avoid inflexible promotional ladders (such as “You must work 8 years of 50-hour weeks to apply for partner”) which can put women at a disadvantage because they often have more responsibility for child raising chores or taking care of elderly.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Use of generally accepted research methods was not adopted for this research paper as it is not a traditional research paper. Being a conceptual paper this paper was written to find answers for four research questions. The first one was: “Is there such an issue called Glass Ceiling? Yes indeed. Out of 35 textbooks examined for the study 16 textbooks directly discuss the issue of GC.

The second research question of this study was: “What is the meaning of Glass Ceiling?”. The examination of the definitions given in the HRM textbooks (numbering 16) reveals that there are no material differences among the definitions. GC involves a barrier or barriers or a set of barriers which is/are invisible but real preventing advancement of women employees and minorities to top managerial jobs and positions in the organization. Thus, the GC relates to both women and minorities. However, most of the definitions relate to women.

The third research question was: “Why is it a problem?” It is indeed a problem because it has bad consequences. Negative consequences include job dissatisfaction, career dissatisfaction, absenteeism, tardiness, lack of innovation, reduced job performance, grievances and turnover of female employees and managers.

Forth research question was: “What are the possible reasons for the issue of Glass Ceiling?” The relevant textbooks present seventeen reasons: (1) in the minds of most men (and women) it exists that women have babies and they cannot be counted on to make a full-time, open-ended commitment to their careers; (2) it costs companies more to employ women managers than men; (3) male managers’ discomfort level with female managers; (4) many women have opted for staff jobs, as opposed to line-oriented jobs-the most likely track to senior management posts (self-imposed barrier); (5) employment of an influential “queen bee”—a female executive who enjoys being the only woman at the top and does her best to thwart the advancement of other women; (6) a cultural belief that the male’s job is more important than his spouse’s, and that it is the male’s duty to be the major contributor to household income; (7) the stereotyped views held by male executives toward women, such as: women lack organizational commitment, being more concerned with the demands of family and parenthood, and women do not have the traits necessary for managerial success, such as aggressiveness and competitiveness; (8) the female’s lack of opportunity to “bond” with other managers and executives, for example: women are often denied the opportunity to join their male counterparts on golf courses or at bars after hours; (9) the subjectiveness of a firm’s promotional procedures. Selections are made by male executives who choose other males who are most similar to them; (10) lack of access to training programs for women; (11) lack of appropriate developmental job experiences to women managers; (12) lack of developmental relationships such as mentoring to women managers; (13) some male managers are still reluctant to promote female managers; (14) many talented women choose to leave their jobs in larger organizations and start their own businesses; (15) some women choose to suspend or slow their career progression to have children; (16) tokenism (appointing a small group of women to top management jobs, rather than more aggressively seeking full representation for women; and (17) gender-role stereotypes (the tendency to associate women with frequently non-managerial jobs).

Fifth research question was: “What are the available remedies for the issue of Glass Ceiling?” Remedies given in five textbooks were mentioned and the total number of remedies is 19. These remedies can be recommended for any organization that wants to break the GC so as to avoid resultant bad repercussions. Women representation in top management in organizations will get a natural progression when organizations become genuinely interested in attracting, developing and retaining talent regardless of gender. The GC will be eliminated only when all employees are evaluated, hired, and promoted on the basis of merit (Byars and Rue, 2008). However some cautions exist. Segal (2005 as in Ivancevich, 2010, p. 458) writes:

*“To obtain the benefits of gender diversity, some employers consider gender favorably in hiring and promotion decisions. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects women (among others) from employment discrimination, but it also restricts employers’ freedom to consider gender to women’s advantage.”*

Further he mentions that employers cannot reserve positions for women though they can and should increase the diversity of the applicant pool. For the purpose of attracting and

retaining women, an organization can adopt increasingly flexible policies. However, it is unlawful-and unfair- for the employers to deprive fathers of the same accommodations that they provide to mothers (Segal, 2005 as in Ivancevich, 2010). Another possible danger is reverse discrimination (Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw, 2006). The organization makes sure that nonminority males are not discriminated owing to the need of increasing women inclusivity.

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