

## Factors Influencing Employees' Perceptions of the Glass Ceiling: Evidence from Pokhara City

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to identify the factors influencing employees' perceptions of glass ceiling in Pokhara Metropolitan City. The study adopted descriptive and casual comparative research design with a pre-validated 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was distributed online, and data were collected from a sample of 131 respondents using the convenience sampling method. The survey included employees from both the private and government sectors in Pokhara Metropolitan City. Three factors were chosen as independent variables; social factors, organizational factors and personal factors while glass ceiling perceptions of employees was taken as the dependent variable. The findings of the study revealed that social factors and organizational factors were found to have a positive and significant influence on glass ceiling perception while personal factors were statistically insignificant. The study identified social factors as a major contributor to the development of glass ceiling barriers for career advancement, especially within organizational environments. Therefore, organizations in Pokhara Metropolitan City could change their policies and work environment to provide a positive environment for employees' career progress and minimize the existence of the glass ceiling phenomenon in the future. Future research could incorporate additional factors such as psychological and working environment factors to further explore career advancement in other fields, such as the teaching profession.*

**Keywords:** Career advancement, glass ceiling, organizational factors, personal factors, social factors

### INTRODUCTION

The glass ceiling refers to an unseen obstacle that prevents ethnic minorities from advancing to higher-level positions in their careers, despite possessing the necessary skills and experience (Cook & Glass, 2014). This issue arises from stereotypes, exclusion from networks, and a lack of promotional opportunities (Afza & Newaz, 2014). These factors contribute to the difficulties ethnic

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minorities face in attaining leadership positions and feeling completely integrated in the workplace. It suggested that disadvantages related to gender are more severe at the top of the hierarchy than at lower levels, and that these disadvantages worsen as a person advance in their career (Cotter et al., 2001). However, obstacles to career advancement are faced by both men and women in the workplace, a "glass ceiling" occurs when a barrier prevents workers from moving up the career ladder based only on their gender and race (Foley, 1998). According to Damman et al. (2014), the glass ceiling means real barriers that come from people's personal biases. The glass ceiling is seen as an invisible barrier that makes it hard for these people to reach higher positions because they lack skills and unfair treatment. Babiker (2024) assessed the glass ceiling idea and its impact on racial and ethnic minorities in businesses, arguing that it is a particular form of discrimination and inequality. According to Smith (2011) illustrates that glass ladders are racially biased and mostly serve white males. Shrestha et al. (2024) examined that women occupied only 10.48 percent of these leadership roles, while men dominate with 89.52 percent. This significant disparity highlighted the persistent gender gap in senior management within the banking sector, reflecting broader societal and organizational challenges related to gender equality and the empowerment in Nepal.

Many studies show that within organizations, employees' career advancement and professional growth are affected by unseen obstacles (Adamovic, 2022; Ayub et al., 2019). They can be categorized as personal factors, social factors, and organizational factors. Such barriers hinder the progress of minority groups and, in particular, women from reaching top-level leadership positions (Adhikary, 2016; Dehaghani et al., 2013; Karaca, 2007). Therefore, this study is conducted within organizations in Pokhara Metropolitan City to investigate employees' perceptions of the glass ceiling. The main focus of the study is to identify factors that influence employees' perceptions of the glass ceiling within organization in Pokhara Metropolitan City. Similarly, how employees perceive organizational, social and personal factor as a glass ceiling barrier in Nepali employees. It helps organizations thereby establishing a balanced culture that encourages equal opportunity for all employees by removing biases. It also helps them in improving organizational rules regulating unbiased performance evaluation, reward systems, the fairness of promotions and recognition. Previous research focused only on women's perspectives of glass ceiling perception and included only women as the sample group.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The glass ceiling refers to barriers to job development caused by disparities in name, gender, physical appearance, or culture (Lu et al., 2020). Such discriminatory attitudes prevent qualified individuals, including women, racial and ethnic minorities (Cook & Glass, 2014). Cook and Glass (2014) define the "glass ceiling" as an invisible, systemic barrier that restricts women and ethnic minorities from attaining top leadership positions, such as CEO, even when they possess the qualifications and experience required for such roles. Decision makers are disposed to perceive women and minorities as less competent and less capable of running organizations than white males (Carton & Rosette, 2011). Carton and Rosette (2011) claimed that leaders often believe only outstanding individuals are good enough to manage during hard times. In struggling organisations, stereotypes are more common. However, when a company is not doing well, what people want in

a leader can change, and this can help reduce bias against minorities (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Women perceived emotional sensitivity, relationship style, and interpersonal abilities may be more highly appreciated in an organisation facing tough personnel decisions (Ryan et al., 2011). Ryan and Haslam (2007) examined occupational minorities may accept insecure leadership roles due to concern of limited future options. Kumari (2025) conducted that on analyzing corporate policies like diversity training, mentorship programs, flexible working arrangements, and anti-discrimination measures. The women and minorities to reach higher positions in organisations regardless of their qualifications and accomplishment (Afza & Newaz, 2008; Bazazo, 2017; Karaca, 2007; Malhotra, 2022; Smith, 2011). In the context of Nepal several research have been conducted on the glass ceiling (Acharya, 2021; Adhikary, 2016; Mahat, 2023). There has been very limited research conducted in Pokhara (Lama, 2019).

Social factors affect career advancement by creating difficulties for employees. Elements such as gender discrimination, socioeconomic background, stereotypes, segregation, and the challenge of managing multiple roles play a significant role in influential how individuals perceive these invisible barriers in the workplace (Acharya, 2021; Mahat, 2023).

*H1: There is a positive and significant impact of social factors on glass ceiling perception.*

Personal factors affect career advancement by creating problems for employees. Elements such as undertaking multiple roles, personal preferences, perception, self-esteem, self-motivation, and time management play a significant role in how individuals perceive these invisible barriers in the workplace (Acharya, 2021; Mahat, 2023).

*H2: There is positive and significant impact of personal factors on glass ceiling perception.*

Organizational factors affect career advancement by creating difficulties for employees. Elements such as organizational culture, organizational policies, mentor deficiency, and avoidance of informal networking play a significant role in determining how individuals perceive these invisible barriers in the workplace (Acharya, 2021; Mahat, 2023).

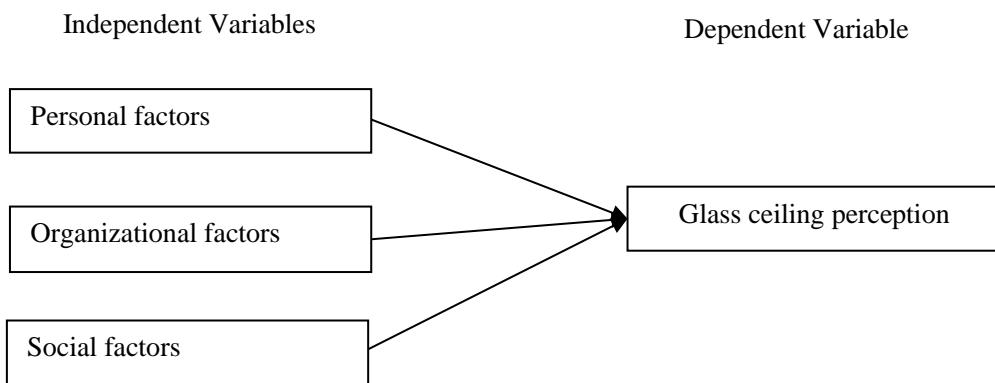
*H3: There is a positive and significant impact of organizational factors on glass ceiling perception.*

Shrestha (2019) investigated that there was presence of glass ceiling in Nepali commercial banks. The study identified a negative association between the glass ceiling and women's career development. In addition to, there was a significant influence of the corporate climate on their career development. Bhandari and Subedi (2024) found that Nepali women employees faced relatively few careers related challenges. In Nepali organizations, they were considered equally competent as their male counterparts in fulfilling their roles, responsibility and duties. Shrestha et al. (2024) found that social factors have a statistically significant impact on personal factors, serving as determinants of women employees' career development. Furthermore, organizational and psychological factors have positively non-significant effects. Shrestha (2025) investigated that organizational culture, organizational climate, organizational practice and women's career aspirations significantly impact women's career development in Nepali financial institutions with organizational culture having the negative impact regarding in commercial banks. Furthermore, the glass ceiling has an inverse impact on women's career progression within organizations (Akpan et al., 2025). In many research works found the issue of the glass ceiling has not been viewed from the perspective of employees' career advancement within the organization and focused different career level employee. Few studies have been done in Pokhara City about how employees perceive

the glass ceiling perceptions in an organization located in this area. Most studies have focused only on female employees when discussing the glass ceiling; to address this gap, the present study includes both male and female employees as the research sample group. Based on the above review and research hypotheses, the research framework for the study has been presented in Figure 1.

## Figure 1

### *Research Framework of the Study*



## METHODS

This study was based on both descriptive and causal comparative research design. The descriptive research design was adopted to examine the factors influencing the perception of the glass ceiling in career advancement in Pokhara Metropolitan City. Likewise, the causal comparative research design was used to analyze the effects of personal factors, social factors and organizational factors on glass ceiling perception. The population for the proposed study were unknown all working employees' government and private organization including banking sector. The survey questionnaire was distributed among working employees within Pokhara Metropolitan City through online, with a total of 151 employees in the survey using the convenience sampling method. Out of 151 questionnaires, the researcher distributed to 91 government employees and 60 private sector employees including banking sector. However, only 131 responses were completed; 81 responses from government sector and 50 responses from private sector. Therefore, overall response rate was 86. 75 percent. Consequently, the researcher used 131 completed responses as the sample size. The study is based on primary data and quantitative in nature. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed using Google forms via.email, Messenger, and WhatsApp. Initially, for pilot testing a draft questionnaire was distributed to 40 respondents due to evaluation of the questionnaires wording, instructions, structure and reliability of the items. A five-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The data was organized, managed, analysed and interpreted using both SPSS version 26 and Microsoft Excel 20 for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used like frequency, mean, percentage and standard deviation to describe the data. Correlational was established to show the relationship among variables. Davies (1971) to describe the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, are as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SF + \beta_2 PF + \beta_3 OF + ei$$

Where, Y = glass ceiling perception;  $\beta_0$  = constant; and  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  = the coefficient of the variables; SF = social factors, PF = personal factors, OF = organizational factors, ei = the error or the difference between the predicted and the observed value of Y.

A pilot survey was conducted with 40 respondents. Based on their feedback, the questionnaire was pre-tested and Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess internal consistency. The pilot test was conducted to check the reliability of the variables used in the study. The reliability of each variable was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with all values above 0.70 with societal factors: 0.810, personal factors: 0.820, organizational factors: 0.840, and glass ceiling factors: 0.760. So, Cronbach's alpha value indicates acceptable for internal consistency. The research framework developed for which influence the glass ceiling perception employees which are divided into three major variables, personal, social, and organizational factors. These factors were selected because many research works have used these factors as independent variables in similar research study (Karaca, 2007; Mahat; 2023 & Server, 2016). Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each variable using data from all 131 valid responses.

**Table 1**

*Reliability Testing of Final Sample*

| Variables                | Cronbach's Alpha |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Social factors           | 0.900            |
| Personal factors         | 0.851            |
| Organizational factors   | 0.912            |
| Glass ceiling perception | 0.770            |

*Note:* Authors' Calculation

Table 1 illustrates Cronbach's alpha values for each variable social factors, personal factors, organizational factors, and glass ceiling perception based on responses from 131 valid responses. All variables have Cronbach's alpha values above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, it indicates good internal consistency.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The demographic profile of the 131 respondents provides information on their gender, age, marital status, and highest level of education, along with job-related factors such as employment sector and monthly salary.

Table 2 illustrates the demographic profile of respondents. Gender composition of the respondents revealed that gender consisted of 61.1 percent female and the other 38.9 percent being male. The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents (52.7 percent) are aged between 21 and 29 years. A very large share, 36.6 percent, between 30 and 40 years, and a relatively small group, 10.7 percent, between 40 and 50 years. The majority of respondents (58 percent) are unmarried, and married 42 percent of the respondents. Based on employment sectors, the data indicate that the highest number of respondents are employed in the private sector, and followed by those employed in the government sector. The distribution of monthly income among the respondents indicates that 13.7 percent earn less than NPR 20,000, 23.7 percent earn between NPR 20,000- 30,000, 29.8 percent earn between NPR 30,000-40,000, and 32.8 percent earn more than

NPR 40,000. Based on work experience, 40.5 percent have worked for up to 5 years, 25.2 percent have worked between 5-15 years, and 34.4 percent have worked between 15-25 years. Based on academic qualification, 45.8 percent have a bachelor's degree, 13.7 percent have an intermediate qualification, and 40.5 percent have a Master's degree.

**Table 2**

*Demographic Profile of Respondents*

| Characteristics                   | Category              | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender                            | Female                | 80        | 61.1    |
|                                   | Male                  | 51        | 38.9    |
| Age                               | Above 20 and below 30 | 69        | 52.7    |
|                                   | 31- 40                | 48        | 36.6    |
|                                   | 41 – 50               | 14        | 10.7    |
| Marital status                    | Married               | 55        | 42.0    |
|                                   | Unmarried             | 76        | 58.0    |
| Sector                            | Government sector     | 46        | 35.1    |
|                                   | Private sector        | 85        | 64.9    |
| Salary (monthly in thousands Rs.) | Below 20000           | 18        | 13.7    |
|                                   | Between 20000 - 30000 | 31        | 23.7    |
|                                   | Between 30000 - 40000 | 39        | 29.8    |
|                                   | Above 40000           | 43        | 32.8    |
| Working experience                | Below 5 years         | 53        | 40.5    |
|                                   | Between 5 – 15        | 33        | 25.2    |
|                                   | Between 15 – 25       | 45        | 34.4    |
| Academic qualifications           | Bachelor              | 60        | 45.8    |
|                                   | Intermediate          | 18        | 13.7    |
|                                   | Masters               | 53        | 40.5    |

*Note:* Field Survey

Table 3 illustrates that descriptive statistics of research variables. This reported a moderate level of agreement regarding organizational factors ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), which had the highest mean among all variables. This suggested that organizational-level barriers were perceived more prominently. Social factors showed a mean close to the neutral point ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ), indicating moderate perceptions of social influences. In contrast, personal factors had the lowest mean score ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), suggesting that respondents tended to disagree that personal-level variables significantly contributed to the glass ceiling perception. The glass ceilings perception showed a mean of ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ). It indicates that lower to moderate perceptions of glass ceiling barriers among respondents.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables*

| Factors                  | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------|------|----------------|
| Social factors           | 2.96 | 0.85           |
| Persona factor           | 2.42 | 0.75           |
| Organisational factors   | 3.37 | 0.84           |
| Glass ceiling perception | 2.70 | 0.83           |

*Note:* Author Calculation

## Personal factors

Respondents' perceptions of each personal factor were measured using the mean and standard deviation for each item. Table 4 illustrates that the descriptive statistics of personal factors influencing on the glass ceiling perception. Among the statements, the lowest mean score was reported for "I believe that my temperament and skill set are not as ready for higher-level work" (PF1) ( $M = 2.25$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ). It indicates that respondents disagreed with this statement. Similarly, "I am unable to work full-time" (PF2) and "I am reluctant to take responsibilities" (PF3) had relatively low mean ( $M = 2.34$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) and ( $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) respectively. It suggested that disagreement with these items as well. The statement "I have low confidence in my professional life and low self-esteem" (PF4) had a slightly higher mean ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ). Similarly, "I cannot manage time to train myself" (PF5) had a mean ( $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ). It means that a tendency toward neutrality. The highest mean was observed for "I cannot focus due to struggles with physical health and mental health issues at work" (PF6) ( $M = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ). It means that respondents somewhat agreed that health-related issues affect their professional focus.

**Table 4**

*Personal Factors of Glass Ceiling Perception*

| Statements  | Mean  | Standard Deviation |
|---|-------|--------------------|
|   | Value |                    |
| I believe that my temperament and skill set are not as ready for higher-level work (PF1)    | 2.25  | 0.97               |
| I am unable to work full-time (PF2)   | 2.34  | 0.90               |
| I am reluctant to take responsibilities (PF3)   | 2.27  | 1.03               |
| I have low confidence in my professional life and low self-esteem (PF4)                     | 2.48  | 1.02               |
| I cannot manage a time to train myself (PF5)  | 2.68  | 1.12               |
| I cannot focus due to struggles with physical health and mental health issues at work (PF6) | 2.80  | 1.13               |

*Note:* Author Calculation

## Social factors

Table 5 illustrates that the descriptive statistics of social factors influencing on glass ceiling perception. The statement "I feel society often holds people back from reaching their full potential" (SF1) had a mean ( $M = 2.87$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). It means that a slightly neutral to moderate agreement. Similarly, "I feel equal opportunities and safety for all employees are often compromised" (SF2) had a mean ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ). It suggested that moderate agreement. The highest mean was observed for "I see that biased perceptions affect performance at work" (SF3) with a mean ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ). It implies that respondents moderately agreed that biases impact workplace performance. Other items, including "I believe that societal expectations influence equality" (SF4) ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ). Similarly, "I think societal biases influence access to career opportunities" (SF5) ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), and "I believe people from certain socioeconomic backgrounds are often seen as more qualified than others" (SF6) ( $M = 3.02$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ). It also indicates that a moderate agreement.

**Table 5***Social Factors of Glass Ceiling Perception*

| Statements  | Mean Value | Standard Deviation |
|---|------------|--------------------|
| I feel society often holds people back from reaching their full potential (SF1)                   | 2.87       | 1.08               |
| I feel equal opportunities and safety for all employees are often compromised (SF2)               | 2.99       | 1.03               |
| I see that biased perceptions affect performance at work (SF3)                                    | 3.09       | 1.15               |
| I believe that societal expectations influence equality (SF4)                                     | 2.96       | 1.01               |
| I think societal biases influence access to career opportunities (SF5)                            | 2.93       | 1.07               |
| I believe people from socioeconomic background are often seen as more qualified than others (SF6) | 3.02       | 1.12               |

*Note:* Author Calculation**Organizational Factors**

Table 6 illustrates that the respondents' regarding organizational factors that contribute to the glass ceiling perception in the workplace. The mean values range from 3.31 to 3.58 on a five-point Likert scale. It means that a moderate level of agreement among respondents that organizational practices influence barriers to career advancement. The respondents moderately agreed that all employees do not receive equal opportunities for professional development ( $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ ) and that performance evaluations, promotions, and reward systems are often perceived as unfair ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ). The perception that organizational policies supporting professional advancement are lacking was also evident ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ). Unequal access to representation in policy decisions ( $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ) and insufficient mentorship or managerial training ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ) were highlighted as significant organizational barriers. Furthermore, favoritism in awarding leadership roles which deserving employees, was perceived as a prominent concern ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ). The results indicated that organizational practices significantly influence employees' perceptions of career ceiling.

**Table 6***Organizational Factors of Glass Ceiling Perception*

| Statements   | Mean Value | Standard Deviation |
|--|------------|--------------------|
| All employees do not receive the same opportunities for professional development at work (OF1)       | 3.31       | 0.95               |
| I feel unfair performance evaluation, undeserving promotion and reward system in the workplace (OF2) | 3.39       | 0.94               |
| I feel organizational policies that encourage professional advancement are lacking (OF3)             | 3.38       | 1.04               |
| I feel there is unequal access to opportunities for representation in policy decisions (OF4)         | 3.35       | 0.87               |
| I face a lack of mentorship and managerial training at the workplace (OF5)                           | 3.58       | 0.99               |
| I feel leadership roles are unfairly awarded due to favoritism, sidelining deserving employees (OF6) | 3.46       | 1.09               |

*Note:* Author Calculation**Glass Ceiling Perception**

Table 7 illustrates the respondents' perception of the glass ceiling in the workplace. It showed that employees are most concerned about unfair performance evaluation and undeserving

promotions and rewards system ( $M= 3.14$ ), while issues such as lack of supportive organizational policies ( $M=2.96$ ), unequal access to representation in policy decisions ( $M=2.97$ ), and lack of mentorship and managerial training ( $M=2.54$ ). In contrast, fewer respondents feel that all employees lack of an equal opportunities for professional development ( $M=2.22$ ) or that favoritism strongly affects leadership appointments ( $M=2.38$ ). It indicated that perceptions of the glass ceiling are moderate agreement with the strongest concerns focused on fairness in evaluation and advancement

**Table 7**

*Employees' Perception of the Glass Ceiling in the Workplace*

| Statements   | Mean Value | Standard Deviation |
|--|------------|--------------------|
| All employees do not receive the same opportunities for professional development at work (GC1)       | 2.22       | 1.34               |
| I feel unfair performance evaluation, undeserving promotion and reward system in the workplace (GC2) | 3.14       | 1.32               |
| I feel organizational policies that encourage professional advancement are lacking (GC3)             | 2.96       | 1.17               |
| I feel there is unequal access to opportunities for representation in policy decisions (GC4)         | 2.97       | 1.12               |
| I face a lack of mentorship and managerial training at the work place (GC5)                          | 2.54       | 1.13               |
| I feel leadership roles are unfairly awarded due to favoritism, sidelining deserving employees (GC6) | 2.38       | 1.22               |

*Note:* Author Calculation

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between the dependent variables (glass ceiling perception) and independent variables (societal, organizational, and personal factors).

**Table 8**

*Correlation Between Dependent and Independent Variables*

|     | SF     | PF     | OF     | GCP |
|-----|--------|--------|--------|-----|
| SF  | 1      |        |        |     |
| PF  | .215*  | 1      |        |     |
| OF  | .504** | 0.134* | 1      | .   |
| GCP | .416** | .173*  | .401** | 1   |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*Note:* Author Calculation

Table 8 illustrates that the correlation between four variables; SF, PF, OF, and GCP, based on data from 131 responses. The results show that SF is moderately and significantly correlated with both OF ( $r = 0.504$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and GCP ( $r = 0.416$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), demonstrating that as SF increases, OF and GCP also tend to increases. There is a weaker but significant positive correlation between SF and PF ( $r = 0.215$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). PF shows a small but significant correlation with GCP ( $r = 0.173$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), but its correlation with OF is not statistically significant ( $r = 0.134$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). OF and GCP are also significantly correlated ( $r = 0.401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). To examine the impact

of social factors (SF), personal factors (PF) and organization factors (OF) on the glass ceiling perception in the workplace.

**Table 9**

*Regression Coefficients of Independent Variables on GCP*

| Model      | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients<br>Beta | t     | Sig   | Collinearity Statistics<br>VIF |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
|            | B                           | Std. Error |                                   |       |       |                                |
| (Constant) | 0.829                       | 0.334      |                                   | 2.483 | 0.014 |                                |
| SF         | 0.264                       | 0.089      | 0.271                             | 2.962 | 0.004 | 1.381                          |
| PF         | 0.085                       | 0.085      | 0.081                             | 1.013 | 0.313 | 1.049                          |
| OF         | 0.256                       | 0.091      | 0.254                             | 2.809 | 0.006 | 1.341                          |

$R^2 = 0.229$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.210$ ,  $F(3,127) = 12.552$ ,  $p = .0001$

*Note:* Author Calculation

Table 9 illustrates that the regression results examining the influence of social factors (SF), personal factors (PF), and organizational factors (OF) on employees' perception of the glass ceiling (GCP). The model explains approximately 22.9 percent of the variance in GCP ( $R^2 = 0.229$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.210$ ), and the model is statistically significant ( $F(3,127) = 12.552$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). It indicates that the model has a good fit. The results show that social factors ( $B = 0.264$ ,  $\beta = 0.271$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ) and organizational factors ( $B = 0.256$ ,  $\beta = 0.254$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ) have significant positive effects on glass ceiling perception. It means that higher levels of these factors are associated with stronger perceptions of the glass ceiling. In contrast, personal factors do not significantly predict GCP ( $B = 0.085$ ,  $\beta = 0.081$ ,  $p = 0.313$ ). It means that personal attributes do not meaningful to determine employees' perceptions of glass ceiling. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all predictors range from 1.049 to 1.381. Therefore, there was the absence of multicollinearity. The analysis indicates that social factors have a positive and significant influence on glass ceiling perception ( $\beta = 0.264$ ,  $t = 2.962$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This means that there is an increase in social factors, glass ceiling perception also increases significantly. This is supported by H1. The analysis shows that personal factors do not have statistically significant influence on glass ceiling perception ( $\beta = 0.086$ ,  $t = 1.013$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). This means that changes in personal factors do not significantly affect the perception of the glass ceiling. Therefore, this is not supported by H2. The findings show that organizational factors have a significant and positive impact on perception of the glass ceiling ( $\beta = 0.256$ ,  $t = 2.809$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that increase organizational factors result in a significant rise in perception of the glass ceiling. This is accepted by H3.

## DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to identify the factors influencing employees' perceptions of glass ceiling in Pokhara Metropolitan City and to assess whether employees differ in their perception of the glass ceiling. This study examined three factors as barriers to the glass ceiling perceptions; organizational factors, social factors, and personal factors. The significant impact of social factors consistent with previous research demonstrating that cultural norms, stereotypes, and societal expectations support invisible career barriers (Acharya, 2021; Mahat,

2023; Cook & Glass, 2014). This finding consistent with the observations made by Kahkha et al. (2015). Similarly, the strong role of organizational factors is consistent with studies highlighted how unfair evaluations, limited networking access, inadequate mentorship, and biased promotion systems contribute to workplace inequalities (Afza & Newaz, 2014; Karaca, 2007; Shrestha, 2019). In contrast, personal factors were found to be insignificant, which contradicts some earlier Nepali studies that suggested lack of confidence, role conflict, and limited time for training as determinants of career advancement (Acharya, 2021; Mahat, 2023). This inconsistency supported the argument that glass ceiling barriers primarily from structural and systemic issues rather than individual shortcomings Cook and Glass (2014). This study identifies social factors as a barrier of glass ceiling perceptions. With highest value of social factors with standardized coefficients beta value 0. 271. This study consistent with the (Adhikary, 2016; Azeez & R G, 2018; Lama, 2019). Therefore, the social factor has the more influence on early-career employees' perceptions of the glass ceiling, followed by the personal and organizational factors.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are three factors that influence employees' perception of glass ceiling. These factors are social factors, organizational factors, and personal factors. Personal factors such as confidence, motivation, personal goals, self-esteem, self-trust, and individual preferences influence how individuals perceive their career barriers. Social factors including gender roles, socioeconomic background, and stereotypes strongly contribute to the perception of glass ceiling. Organizational factors like company culture, reward systems, policies, and promotion practices were found to have a positive and significant impact on how employees perceive career barriers. The perception of a glass ceiling within an organization leads to significant retention problems as employees feel disengaged and demotivated. This disengagement reduces entire work engagement and productivity. The systemic loss is compounded when promotion criteria appear biased employees' feelings of unfairness and exclusion. Such barriers stand-in a workplace climate where employees' sense limited opportunities for advancement, which undermines morale and increases turnover. Organizations could implement inclusive policies and practices, such as fair reward systems, transparent performance, and merit-based promotions, to retain talented employees by providing clear career growth opportunity. The implications of the study that policymakers, government organizations and private sector should emphasize fair performance evaluation, develop transparent promotion systems, strengthen mentorship programs, and inclusive organizational cultures to reduce perceived career barriers. Furthermore, societal awareness programs and community-level interventions are essential to challenge stereotypes and promote equitable career opportunities. Future research could incorporate additional factors such as psychological and working environment factors to further explore career advancement in other fields such as the teaching profession.

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