# Navigating the Glass Ceiling: Women's Career Challenges in Nepal's Banking Sector

**Sajeeb Kumar Shrestha\***
Faculty of Management, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
drsajeeb@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5227-771X


**Suman Kamal Parajuli**
Faculty of Management, Tribhuvan University
sumankamalparajuli@gmail.com


**Diksha Dhungel**
Faculty of Management, Tribhuvan University
**Corresponding Author\***

## Abstract

Background: Glass ceiling factors, such as organizational, social, and psychological barriers, continue to hinder women's career advancement, particularly in managerial roles. Despite increasing efforts to promote gender equality in the workplace, these factors still limit opportunities for women's development, especially in traditionally male-dominated industries like banking in Nepal. This study investigates how these factors influence women's perceptions of career development and whether they significantly impact their progress.

Methods: The research employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire distributed to 51 respondents in the banking sector. The survey measured perceptions of organizational, social, and psychological factors impacting women's career development. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the impact of these factors on personal factors related to career growth. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were also performed.

Results: The findings indicate that social factors significantly influence personal factors (B = 0.257, p = 0.035), suggesting that social barriers are key determinants of women's career development. Organizational and psychological factors, while positively related to personal

factors, did not show statistically significant effects (OFFF: B = 0.159, p = 0.164; PSFFF: B = 0.144, p = 0.275). The model explained 29.5% of the variance in personal factors, highlighting that additional unexamined factors may influence women's career perceptions.

Conclusion: Social factors have a significant impact on women's perceptions of career barriers, underscoring the need to address societal norms and biases that prevent women from advancing. Organizational and psychological factors, although relevant, were not statistically significant in this context. The study contributes to understanding the dynamics of the glass ceiling, particularly within Nepal's banking sector, and provides insights for policy and organizational change.

Novelty: This study offers a unique perspective on the glass ceiling in the Nepalese banking sector, providing empirical evidence of how social factors predominantly influence women's career progression. The findings suggest targeted interventions to address these barriers and promote more equitable career advancement opportunities for women in managerial roles.

**Keywords**: Bank, Career, Women, Social, Personal

## Introduction

Women are extremely valuable employees in organizations. Even in today's time though, many women still perceive a limitation to how much they are able to achieve in the workplace. This perception of upward limitation is termed "Glass Ceiling." We use social information processing theory in conjunctions with social identity theory to investigate the negative consequences of glass ceiling beliefs in the workplace (Javadizadeh, Ross, & Valenzuela, 2019). Glass ceiling, the metaphor, is an invisible barrier that impede the upward movement of women to high level management in the organization. Liberalized reforms and women-friendly environment in the banking sector not only weaken the male domination in that area but also attracted more women employees towards it. A persistent increase in percentage of women employees in the banking sector shows a positive sign of breaking of glass ceiling (Lathabhavan, Balasubramanian, & Natarajan, 2019).

The glass ceiling is a multifaceted phenomenon because it is the cause and effect of multiple factors. Sometimes the causes and effects are visible but sometimes they are hard to notice. However, results of various studies have confirmed the benefits of abolishing the glass ceiling in the organization to include the bringing in of a larger pool of talent to make the organization more representative, ethical, productive, innovative and financially successful (Northouse, 2013). The glass ceiling is manifested in multiple ways: such as different pay for comparable work, sexual, ethnic, racial, religious discrimination or harassment in the workplace, the prevailing culture of many businesses, lack of family-friendly workplace policies (Shrestha, 2021).

Glass Ceiling making tough for women to forward movement for superior positions & prevents them from getting in male-controlled or dominated occupations. Gender difference may be seen at every level within the type of lack of promotion opportunities, pay rates gap, under-representation of girls at leading positions, lack of career progress, etc. All such mentioned

notions prevent working women in reaching the next level in academic ladder. There should be equal opportunities to lean to employees to prove themselves.

Regarding the agenda mentioned above the paper is deeply specializing in working women employees in terms of things like organizational commitment, turnover intentions thanks to the cap issues at work place (Pothuraju & Alekhya, 2021).

The banking sector plays a pivotal role in the national economy, yet it has been traditionally characterized by a significant gender and diversity gap in leadership positions. The glass ceiling, an invisible but formidable barrier that limits the career progression of women and underrepresented groups, has persistently affected this industry. In the context of Nepal, Glass Ceiling Effect is a much disregarded topic. Though we talk about gender equality and equal opportunities for female in the workplace, we still cannot see many women at the top of the management. Hence, this research aims to analyze the pervasive impact of the glass ceiling phenomenon on women's career development within the commercial banking sector of Nepal by exploring the barriers and limitations faced by women and underrepresented groups in advancing to senior leadership positions.

1. To assess women's perceptions of glass ceiling factors affecting career development
2. To examine the relationship between glass ceiling factors and career development
3. To analyze the impact of glass ceiling factors on women's career development

## Literature Review

Karunarathne et al. (2022) analyzed the barriers of the glass ceiling effect among female employees in the banking sector. The major objective of the study was to find the impact of various barriers of Glass Ceiling among female employees. A descriptive and causal research design was used. 232 sample responses were collected. Primary data were used. Structured questionnaires were administered. Regression, correlation, and chi-square tests were done for data analysis. The study variables included the glass ceiling effect, barriers (individual, family, social, organizational), female executives and banking sector.

Agarwal et al. (2023) analysed on assessing glass ceiling and gender inequality for women employee in service sector. Major objectives were to see, if there is a glass ceiling in different service industries and to look into the effects of the glass ceiling on women's advancement in the workplace. Descriptive and causal research design was used. 145 sample responses were collected. Primary data were used. Structured questionnaires were administered. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The study variables included Glass ceiling, Gender inequality, Service industry, women employee, work life balance.

Khosla (2021) analysed on gender differences in perceptions about glass ceiling and effective commitment in the banking sector. Major objective was to examine the differences in perception of women and men about the glass ceiling phenomenon, its relationship with affective commitment and explored the gender differences in affective commitment. Descriptive and causal research design was used. 70 sample responses were collected. Primary data were used. Structured questionnaires were administered and survey was done. Correlation,

mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The study variables included glass ceiling, women, banking sector, commitment.

Mahat et al. (2022) analysed on women's articulates towards career advancement. Major objectives were to access the articulate of managerial women regarding their career advancement and to identify the different views between family types towards career advancement. Descriptive and causal research design was used. 45 sample responses were collected. Primary data were used. Structured questionnaires were administered and survey was done. T-test, frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used for data analysis. The study variables included articulates, career advancement, government-owned organizations, managerial, and women.

Mahat et al. (2022) analysed socio-culture and women's career development: references to government agencies of Nepal. Major objectives were to access the perception of women employee towards socio-culture factors in relation to career development, to examine the relationship between socio-cultural factors with career development and to identify the impact of socio-cultural factors with career development. Descriptive and causal research design was used. 134 sample responses were collected. Primary data were used. Structured questionnaires were administered and survey was done. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, correlation, and regression analysis were used for data analysis. The study variables included women career development, socio-culture, government agencies of Nepal.

**Research Methodology**

The causal research design was used to investigate the link between the dependent variable and the independent variables in this study. It is generally targeted at proving a hypothesis (Erickson, 2017). Causal-comparative research examines the possible causes influencing a specific situation by analyzing current effects and investigating their potential reasons. In this study, primary data was acquired through the administration of a structured questionnaire to employees in the commercial banking sector of Kathmandu Valley. All the elements from a data set are included in a population. One or more observations chosen at random from the population make up a sample. The Kathmandu Valley's individual investors was the study's target population. A sample of 51 respondents has been used for the study. Therefore, it is adequate according to the requirement. Convenience sampling was adopted for selecting the sample respondent in this investigation. Similarly, the inferential statistics are the methods that facilitate the estimation of population from the sample data, as well as estimate the relationship between the dependent and independent variable. For the inferential statistics, the correlation and regression analysis were performed. The SPSS software was used to analyze the data.

**Results and Discussion**
**Demographic Information**
On the basis of gender classification, the majority of the respondents were males (54.9 percent) followed by females (45.1 percent). The age of the respondents were classified into five

categories. Majority of the respondents belonged to the age group 24-39 (37.3 percent) followed by the age group 30-39 (33.3 percent). Similarly, the respondents belonging to the age group 40-49, 18-23 and 50 & above were 15.7 percent, 11.8 percent and 2 percent respectively. Regarding the education level, the majority of the respondents were master's degree holders (52.9 percent) followed by bachelor's (45.1 percent) and plus two (2.0 percent). In relation to the marital status, 58.8 percent were married while the remaining 41.2 percent were unmarried. Majority of the respondents worked as professional staff (39.2 percent) while others worked in supervisory position (25.5 percent), middle management (19.6 percent), office support (13.7 percent) and top managerial position (2.0 percent). Regarding the income, 35.3 percent of the respondents had an income between NRs.40,000-NRs.80,000, 29.4 percent had an income between NRs.20,000-NRs.40,000, 19.6 percent had an income between NRs.80,000-NRs.1,50,000, 7.8 percent had an income between NRs.1,50,000-NRs.3,00,000 and 3.9 percent of the respondents had an income below NRs 20,000 and above NRs. 3,00,000. Based on experience, the majority of the respondents had banking experience of 3 or fewer years (39.2 percent) followed by bankers with experience of 4 to 6 years (25.5 percent). Similarly, 13.7 percent of the respondents had banking experience from 7 to 10 years, 9.8 percent had banking experience from 16 to 20 years, and 5.9 percent had experience between 11 to 15 years and over 20 years.    Similarly, 78.4 percent of the respondents preferred to work with both males and females, 13.7 percent of them preferred to work with males, and 7.8 percent preferred to work with females at their workplace.

**Descriptive analysis of Personal factors**

Table 1: Perception on Personal Factors

| Code | Statements | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------|------------|------|--------------------|
| PF1 | I believe women are as capable as men of serving in senior executive positions. | 3.76 | 1.258 |
| PF2 | Women not being willing to make the sacrifices needed to get and remain in senior positions is an obstacle for women's career development. | 2.78 | 1.222 |
| PF3 | It is said that there is an invisible barrier or a GLASS CEILING that hinders or excludes women from advancement to upper management positions. Such a barrier also exists in today's commercial banking world in Nepal. | 2.49 | 0.946 |
| PF4 | I believe such barrier exists in my organization. | 2.29 | 0.901 |

Field Survey

The Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of the variable Personal Factors. The mean for

the statements PF1, PF2, PF3 and PF4 are 3.76, 2.78, 2.49 and 2.29 respectively. This demonstrates that the respondents are agreeing about the statement PF1, somewhat agreeing about statement PF2 and disagreeing about statement PF3 and PF4.

**Descriptive analysis of Psychological factors**

Table 2: Perception on Psychological Factors

| Code | Statements | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------|-----------|------|--------------------|
| PSF1 | Women's lack of sufficient self-confidence and timidity | 2.69 | 1.010 |
| PSF2 | Perceptions that women should not be in a position of authority over men | 2.37 | 1.216 |
| PSF3 | Women's lack of enthusiasm in taking on high-stake and challenging assignments | 2.63 | 1.131 |
| PSF4 | Perceptions that women's careers are not as important because they are not the primary family provider | 2.59 | 1.431 |
| PSF5 | Perceptions that men make better managers than women | 2.84 | 1.317 |
| PSF6 | Women's lack of ambition, in comparison to men | 2.88 | 1.366 |

Field Survey

Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis of the Psychological Factors. The mean for the statements PSF1, PSF2, PSF3, PSF4, PSF5 and PSF6 are 2.69, 2.37, 2.63, 2.59, 2.84 and 2.88 respectively. This demonstrates that the respondents are somewhat agreeing about the statements PSF1, PSF3, PSF3, PSF4, PSF5 and PSF6, whereas they disagree about PSF2.

**Descriptive analysis of Organizational Factors**

Table 3: Women's perception on organizational factors

| Code | Statements | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|------|-----------|------|--------------------|
| OF1 | In my organization, women are provided with equal opportunities to be promoted. | 3.41 | 1.043 |
| OF2 | In my organization, the number of women serving in managerial positions is increasing. | 3.49 | 1.138 |

| OF3 | Women are not easily promoted from entry-level positions into middle management. | 2.86 | 1.265 |
| OF4 | Women are underrepresented in the boardrooms. | 2.96 | 1.148 |
| OF5 | Women do not receive the same salaries as men that perform the same jobs. | 2.08 | 1.354 |
| OF6 | In my organization, competitiveness/assertiveness in women is viewed as a negative trait. | 2.51 | 1.317 |
| OF7 | In my company, women have to perform better than their male counterparts to be promoted to the same position. | 2.82 | 1.396 |

Field Survey

Table 3 presents the descriptive analysis of Organizational Factors. The mean for OF1, OF2, OF3, OF4, OF5, OF6 and OF7 are 3.41, 3.49, 2.86, 2.96, 2.08, 2.51 and 2.67 respectively. This indicates that the respondents somewhat agree with the statements OF3, OF4, OF6 and OF7, agree with statements OF1 and OF2 and disagree with the statement OF5 related to the organizational factors.

**Correlation**

Table 4: Correlations

| Correlations | | OFFF | SFFF | PSFFF | PFFF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OFFF | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | |
| | N | 51 | | | |
| SFFF | Pearson Correlation | .062 | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .665 | | | |
| | N | 51 | 51 | | |
| PSFFF | Pearson Correlation | .050 | .677** | 1 | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .725 | <.001 | | |
| | N | 51 | 51 | 51 | |
| PFFF | Pearson Correlation | .205 | .496** | .437** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .149 | <.001 | .001 | |
| | N | 51 | 51 | 51 | 51 |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | | |

Field Survey

The Pearson correlation analysis examines the relationships between four variables: organizational factors (OFFF), social factors (SFFF), psychological factors (PSFFF), and personal factors (PFFF). The correlation between OFFF and SFFF is weak and not statistically significant (r = .062, p = .665), indicating that organizational and social factors have little to no linear relationship in this sample. Similarly, the correlation between OFFF and PSFFF is weak and non-significant (r = .050, p = .725). However, SFFF and PSFFF show a strong positive correlation (r = .677, p < .001), suggesting a significant relationship between social and psychological factors. Additionally, SFFF and PFFF are moderately correlated (r = .496, p < .001), indicating a statistically significant relationship between social and personal factors. Lastly, PSFFF and PFFF also exhibit a moderate positive correlation (r = .437, p = .001), showing that psychological and personal factors are significantly related. Thus, while organizational factors (OFFF) do not seem to be strongly related to the other factors, social, psychological, and personal factors are significantly interrelated.

## Model Summary

Table 5: Model Summary

| Model Summary[b] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1 | .543[a] | .295 | .250 | .58361 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), PSFFF, OFFF, SFFF | | | |
| b. Dependent Variable: PFFF | | | |

Field Survey

The model summary presents the results of a regression analysis where personal factors (PFFF) serve as the dependent variable, and organizational factors (OFFF), social factors (SFFF), and psychological factors (PSFFF) are the independent predictors. The R value of .543 indicates a moderate positive correlation between the set of predictors and personal factors. The R Square value of .295 suggests that approximately 29.5% of the variance in personal factors can be explained by the combined influence of organizational, social, and psychological factors. The Adjusted R Square value, slightly lower at .250, accounts for the number of predictors in the model and indicates that after adjusting for the complexity of the model, about 25% of the variance in personal factors is still explained. This shows that while the model captures a meaningful portion of the variance, there may be other factors influencing personal factors that are not included in this model.

## ANOVA

Table 6: ANOVA

| ANOVA[a] | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |

| 1 | Regression | 6.700 | 3 | 2.233 | 6.557 | <.001[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | Residual | 16.008 | 47 | .341 | | |
|   | Total | 22.708 | 50 | | | |
| a. Dependent Variable: PFFF | | | | | | |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), PSFFF, OFFF, SFFF | | | | | | |

Field Survey

The ANOVA table summarizes the results of the regression analysis, testing whether the model significantly predicts personal factors (PFFF) based on organizational factors (OFFF), social factors (SFFF), and psychological factors (PSFFF). The regression sum of squares is 6.700, indicating the amount of variance in PFFF explained by the predictors. The residual sum of squares is 16.008, representing the unexplained variance. The F-statistic of 6.557 with 3 degrees of freedom for the regression and 47 for the residual indicates the model's overall significance.

The p-value (Sig.) is less than .001, showing that the model is statistically significant, meaning the combination of organizational, social, and psychological factors significantly predicts personal factors. Thus, the predictors as a group provide meaningful insight into variations in personal factors.

**Impact**

Table 7: Coefficients

| **Coefficients[a]** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 1.295 | .418 | | 3.101 | .003 |
| | OFFF | .159 | .113 | .173 | 1.412 | .164 |
| | SFFF | .257 | .119 | .361 | 2.167 | .035 |
| | PSFFF | .144 | .130 | .184 | 1.105 | .275 |
| a. Dependent Variable: PFFF | | | | | | |

Field Survey

The regression analysis examines the impact of organizational factors (OFFF), social factors (SFFF), and psychological factors (PSFFF) on personal factors (PFFF). The constant value (B = 1.295, p = .003) indicates that when all predictors are zero, the expected value of personal factors is 1.295. Looking at the individual predictors, organizational factors (OFFF) have a positive but non-significant effect on personal factors, with a coefficient of .159 (p = .164). This suggests that while OFFF may have a small positive relationship with PFFF, it is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant.

Social factors (SFFF), on the other hand, show a significant positive relationship with personal factors, as indicated by a coefficient of .257 (p = .035). This implies that an increase in social

factors is associated with a meaningful increase in personal factors. Finally, psychological factors (PSFFF) have a positive coefficient of .144, but the relationship is not statistically significant (p = .275), meaning PSFFF does not have a significant impact on personal factors in this model.

Overall, the results suggest that among the three predictors, only social factors (SFFF) significantly influence personal factors (PFFF), while organizational and psychological factors do not show significant effects.

## Conclusion

This study examines the influence of organizational (OFFF), social (SFFF), and psychological factors (PSFFF) on personal factors (PFFF) affecting women's career development in the context of the glass ceiling. The findings reveal that social factors (SFFF) play a significant role, positively impacting personal factors with a meaningful effect. This suggests that social perceptions and dynamics are crucial in shaping women's career progression. However, organizational and psychological factors, while showing positive relationships, do not significantly affect personal factors, indicating that these elements may not be as influential in this context. The model explains about 29.5% of the variance in personal factors, meaning other unmeasured factors may contribute to women's perceptions of career development barriers. The study highlights the importance of addressing social barriers to help break the glass ceiling and promote gender equality in career advancement. These insights can guide organizations to foster a more inclusive work environment for women.

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