

THE PHENOMENON OF GLASS CEILINGS AND GENDER ISSUES IN WOMEN

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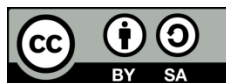
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ABSTRACT

As time goes by, women play a crucial role in improving the quality of both the public and domestic sectors. Negative perceptions that consistently emphasize women's presence in the workforce present a significant obstacle. One gender-related issue women face in advancing their careers is the glass ceiling. This study used a literature review method to further explore the glass ceiling and other gender-related issues that can impact women's careers. The results of this literature review indicate that while many women have overcome these barriers, the glass ceiling remains a crucial barrier to women's career advancement. Furthermore, this phenomenon contributes to social inequality, poor performance, and injustice for women within organizations.

Keywords: *gender, glass ceiling, gender equality, women.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over time, women have played a crucial role in improving the quality of life in both the public and domestic sectors. Increasing economic conditions have enabled women to contribute to improving the welfare of their families and the nation. However, women's issues are inextricably linked to the perception of Indonesian society, which has long viewed women as weak and unsuitable for education and employment. Feminine women and masculine men often impact the roles they and their partners should fulfill (Burke, 2000; in Muslim, 2017). For example, feminine women are assumed to be responsible for domestic work such as washing, cooking, and being housewives. Conversely, masculine men are responsible for earning a living outside the home. This distinction between occupations, embedded in social norms, not only places women in limited positions but also contributes to social inequality, placing men in a dominant position.

Gender-related issues persist in society, primarily due to the perception that some members of our society still consider women weak, dependent on their partners, who need protection and should not be leaders. This occurs in various workplaces for women,



for example, in offices, even at home, and then spreads to the political world. All of this suggests a small role for women in planning and implementing decision-making. Second, women are not focused on themselves, their interests, and their roles, but rather on the roles desired by men (Rokhmansyah, 2016).

This obstacle women experience in advancing their careers is known as the "glass ceiling" phenomenon. This phenomenon, unwittingly, illustrates a situation where a glass ceiling exists that hinders or limits women's ability to achieve power or the highest positions in their careers. This ceiling is the result of stereotypes that have long held that women's presence and position in positions are important considerations.

The term "glass ceiling" was first coined in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article about women in corporate life by Hymowitz and Schellhardt. The "glass ceiling" is a concept that refers to the barriers faced by women trying to attain senior or executive positions (and higher salaries) in corporations, government, education, and organizations (Sposito, 2013). Although many women have achieved high-ranking positions, only a small number have broken through to the top. This phenomenon is systematic, yet sometimes unrecognized forms of gender discrimination and oppression (Nozawa, 2010; Muslim, 2017). In some countries and various professional fields, the glass ceiling may be experienced by company leaders, while in others, it may occur at junior management levels or lower (Wirth, 2001).

Linda Wirth (2001), in her book "Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling," defines the "glass ceiling" as a term to describe the invisible, artificial barriers created by attitudinal and organizational prejudices that prevent women from senior executive positions. Regardless of the context in which the glass ceiling occurs in the workplace or in politics, this phenomenon is fundamentally a reflection of social and economic gender inequality.

In general, women have fewer opportunities for career advancement than men. According to Bjerk (in Muslim, 2017), the glass ceiling itself is a term that refers to women's opportunities to reach high-ranking positions in companies being quite limited, with only a small percentage able to occupy top positions. The glass ceiling can also be interpreted as a barrier preventing women from advancing to higher positions. Another definition states that the glass ceiling is the representation of women in top positions in companies, which is a minority. Numerous studies have examined women in the executive and legislative branches. This is because the number of women has undergone significant changes and increases, but this has not been matched by opportunities to obtain strategic positions (Partini, 2013).

Gender is a concept used to identify the differences between men and women from a non-biological perspective (Arbain, 2015). Sex refers to the biologically determined differences inherent in each sex, male and female. These differences are inherent in God's nature or decree, and are therefore permanent and universal. This contrasts with gender, which is defined as the differences in roles, characteristics, duties, and responsibilities of men and women that are shaped, created, and constructed by society and can change over time (Fibrianto, 2016).

Gender stereotypes are broad categories that reflect impressions and beliefs about appropriate behavior for men and women. All stereotypes, whether related to gender, ethnicity, or other categories, refer to the image of members of that category (Rokhmansyah, 2016: 10). Kurnia (2004) explains that gender is generally distinct from

sex. Sex is considered a biological construct that each individual carries with them, in accordance with their nature from birth. This construct is fundamentally unchanging. Gender, on the other hand, is a social and cultural construct, and is dynamic. This construction is shaped through a long process of cultural life, over time.

This gender inequality is inherent in the emergence of stereotypes, namely the labeling or labeling of certain groups. The labeling of masculinity is applied to men, while the labeling of femininity is applied to women. Simultaneously, masculinity is constructed as more dominant than femininity (Kurnia, 2004). The image of women as burdened by children, marriage, and the home contributes to the ongoing segregation of the sexes in the workforce and gender inequality in wages. Organizations, jobs, and employers' expectations are still based on these gender assumptions (Janes, 2011).

However, the glass ceiling is often used to explain the disparate treatment of women and minorities in lower-level jobs. Cotter (2001) argues that the concept of the glass ceiling is increasingly being equated with generic forms of racial and gender inequality, and is losing its power to describe unique forms of inequality at the top of organizations. The assumption that this can occur in all jobs, but argues that if job boundaries are the same at all levels of the job hierarchy, the glass ceiling does not always occur because of gender inequality. Glass ceiling is a gender-specific phenomenon, and the idea of the glass ceiling effect implies that gender disadvantages are stronger at the top of the hierarchy than at lower levels and that these disadvantages become worse later in one's career (Sposito, 2013)

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is based on the glass ceiling phenomenon and several gender equality issues in the workplace, which remain crucial issues and can impact women's careers. The method used in this journal is a literature study, collecting data through a literature review and relevant sources to support the research. This study draws on various reading sources, such as books, journals, previous research, websites, and other scientific works, which are expected to provide further information and study.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Women in the World of Work

According to (Tjokroaminoto, 1996; in Habibah, 2015), the causes of women's low participation in development and their tendency to occupy a disadvantaged position are as follows:

- 1) The existence of masculine/feminine concepts of human roles as a result of biological determination often leads to the marginalization of women;
- 2) The existence of the concept of public/domestic roles, rooted in the perception that "women's role is at home," which results in a division between productive and reproductive functions between men and women;
- 3) The existence of the concept of "double workload," which suggests that women's primary role is at home as housewives, tends to hinder the process of fully realizing women's potential;



- 4) The existence of a syndrome of subordination and marginalized women has perpetuated the perception that women's roles and functions in society are secondary.

There is deep-rooted inequality in societal life, namely discrimination perpetrated by dominant individuals or communities, both structurally and culturally. Discriminatory treatment and inequality against women can cause harm and reduce the well-being of women as marginalized and subordinated groups. To this day, gender-based discrimination is still experienced by many people almost everywhere in the world, including in democratic countries. Seen from this perspective, women are most likely to experience discriminatory treatment, although it does not rule out the possibility that men can also experience it (Fibrianto, 2016).

Glass Ceiling as an Obstacle for Women in the Workplace

Women's career advancement in key positions encounters various obstacles, both cultural, social, and personal. This has created unequal gender constructions and relations within the government bureaucracy, creating a paradox because growth and access to structural positions are not linear (Partini, 2013). The majority of research conducted in the past 10 years supports that the glass ceiling phenomenon persists and poses a significant barrier for women in various sectors, including the nonprofit sector (CEO Compensation Study, 2009; Gibelman, 2000; Gose, 2004; Joslyn, 2003; O'Brien, 2008; Preston, 2009; as cited in Nozawa, 2010).

One study conducted by Brenda J. Wrigley (as cited in Kriyantono, 2015) aimed to identify factors that support and exacerbate the glass ceiling phenomenon for women in public relations and corporate communications management practices. This research identified five factors that contribute to the glass ceiling: denial of discrimination; socialization of gender roles; historical precedent (i.e., differential treatment of women and men that has accumulated over time and become customary); and corporate culture. This research also suggests a psychological process in the workplace that involves negotiating feelings about the glass ceiling. If this phenomenon creates a discrepancy for women and they still desire to work, they attempt to adapt and overcome this discrepancy.

Research conducted in several government institutions shows that female employees are mostly held in staff positions, while structural positions are still dominated by men (Partini, 1998; Susilaningsih et al., 2004; Inayatillah, 2008; and Raihan Putry, 2003; in Partini, 2013). Women who are able to occupy top career positions in the bureaucracy are still very rare. This fact indicates that women's position and presence in the bureaucracy in many regions are not considered equal partners to men; instead, women are positioned as competitors. This indicates that gender equality and justice are not yet fully within women's reach; they remain mere discourse and have yet to become reality (Partini, 2004; 2013).

This glass ceiling phenomenon often occurs in institutions that are biased against women and still adhere to a strong patriarchal system. Women often face difficulties in achieving higher careers because they are often perceived as subjects unequal to men. The differences that make it difficult for women to occupy important positions are more influenced by the structure and culture constructed by society in shaping social relations

(Partini, 2013). In Indonesia, this glass ceiling is based on a patriarchal societal culture that views men as more important than women (Sarwono, 2013; in Haris; 2019). Negative perceptions that consistently emphasize women's presence in the workforce are one of the obstacles women must overcome. Low trust in women's participation in the workforce leads to women being perceived as uncredible, unworthy, and often underestimated in the workplace. These assumptions often hinder women from developing their careers. Women's career advancement in key positions faces various obstacles, both cultural, social, and personal (Partini, 2013).

According to Paula Nicolson (2015), in her book "Gender, Power, and Organization: A Psychological Perspective on Life at Work," there are three types of discriminatory processes that maintain patriarchal structures and systems:

- 1) Socio-material contexts where obvious structural barriers such as lack of childcare facilities, lack of female-friendly role models, or mentors discriminate against women;
- 2) Discursive barriers, namely hidden perspectives on women's advancement and support within organizations, such as prejudiced attitudes, beliefs, and exclusive, male-prescribed behaviors;
- 3) The unconscious, or intrapsychic, psychological impact of patriarchal organizations on women's motivation and self-esteem, combined with the reflexive relationship between biographical context and knowledge. This is often hidden from the women themselves, as the impact of patriarchal culture permeates the discourses women use to achieve reflexive self-evaluation.

The glass ceiling occurs at different levels and depends on how far women have progressed within the organizational structure. In some countries and in various professional fields, the glass ceiling may be experienced by company leaders, while in others it may occur at junior management or lower levels (Wirth, 2001). Not only are jobs more gendered, but also the ways in which these gender processes operate are unfair or discriminatory, with feminine work being perceived as less paid and valued, and as having less authority (Stivers, 2000; in Rodriguez, 2011). Women are more likely to be in management positions, and in some jobs they are likely to earn less than men in comparable positions (Gibelman, 2000; in Nozawa, 2010).

4. CONCLUSION

Through this literature review, it can be concluded that despite the increase in female workers in several sectors, women continue to occupy low-level positions of authority due to the glass ceiling, a phenomenon where qualified and competent women look up through the glass ceiling and can see what they are capable of achieving, but invisible barriers prevent them from breaking through. The description presented in this study shows that many women have been able to overcome existing barriers, but not comparable to women who are still trapped at the lower levels and still have to compete with men. The glass ceiling is a visible and invisible barrier that separates levels of professional and organizational hierarchy for women. The glass ceiling phenomenon not only causes obstacles to women's career advancement but also causes social inequality, poor performance, and injustice for women in an organization. These obstacles can also include



unequal distribution of tasks so that women cannot demonstrate their potential in the workplace. In general, I have not seen how this paper analyzes the glass ceiling phenomenon from a communication perspective. The title and discussion are still too general and need to be made more focused. Literature review as a method should be able to present debate and discourse related to the phenomenon studied and related case studies, not stopping at the elaboration of the concept definition.

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