

## BREAKING BARRIERS: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE GLASS CEILING ON PAKISTANI UNIVERSITIES

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### ABSTRACT

The glass ceiling is the concept related to barriers to upward mobility in the workplace, particularly for women and underrepresented groups. Glass ceilings refer to the invisible barriers preventing people from reaching higher positions despite their qualifications and experience. The primary objective of this research project was to recognize Gender Discrimination via Glass Ceiling effects, which involve vertical discrimination in terms of promotions and pay disparities. The researcher employed the positivist research paradigm. Under the typology of positivism descriptive method approach was used. The data were collected through a questionnaire. By examining the impact of glass ceilings, the study potentially identified areas where universities can improve their practices and policies to promote diversity and inclusion, to determine which method leads to better performance and outcomes for all students. The comparative aspect of the study (i.e., comparing private and public universities) also provided insight into how different types of institutions approach diversity and inclusion and how they impact student outcomes. Such findings could be used to inform policy decisions and provide guidance for universities looking to improve their diversity and inclusion efforts. Overall, the study has the potential to make an important contribution to the field of higher education, particularly in Pakistan, by highlighting the influence of glass ceilings on university performance and identifying potential strategies to address these issues.

**Keywords:** Glass Ceiling; Vertical Discrimination; Pakistani Universities

### INTRODUCTION

The term "glass ceiling" describes an unseen obstacle that blocked the movement of certain groups—especially women and minorities—upward in organizations, an obstacle that kept those groups from achieving their full professional potential. A systemic inequity exists across many different kinds of industries and societies, where people encounter caps and discrimination related to their sex, race, ethnicity, or other protected characteristics. The glass ceiling has become a potent symbol in workplace equality and diversity discussions, one that suggests an urgent need for change so that all sorts of individuals cannot just survive but also truly thrive in their workplaces (Muqadissa, 2004).

The dearth of women and minorities in the upper echelons of leadership and senior roles is usually called the glass ceiling. This situation has existed for quite some time. It has improved in some ways, but "some ways" is not very far—most ceilings are still pretty secure. The problem is not just in one field but is prevalent in many. Factors contributing to the glass ceiling include biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices that create barriers to advancement. These barriers may be subtle, such as unconscious bias in hiring and promotion decisions, or more overt, such as explicit discrimination based on gender or race. Regardless of the form it takes, the glass ceiling hinders the professional growth and development

of talented individuals, limiting their access to opportunities and impeding organizational diversity and inclusivity (Salwa, 1998).

The effects of the glass ceiling extend beyond the individuals directly affected. Companies that do not shatter the glass ceiling forfeit the unique viewpoints, skills, and backgrounds that women and minorities contribute. Studies repeatedly indicate that diverse teams and management foster improved decision-making, innovation, and overall corporate success. By perpetuating the glass ceiling, organizations not only deny individuals equal opportunities but also hinder their own growth and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global marketplace. Recognizing and addressing the glass ceiling is, therefore, crucial for achieving true workplace equality and fostering inclusive and successful organizations (Siddiqui, 2004).

Efforts to shatter the glass ceiling encompass various strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting equal opportunities and dismantling barriers to advancement. Organizations are increasingly adopting diversity and inclusion programs, implementing fair and transparent hiring and promotion processes, providing mentorship and sponsorship programs, and offering training on unconscious bias. Moreover, societal conversations and movements advocating for gender and racial equality have drawn attention to the glass ceiling issue, pushing for legislative reforms and cultural shifts. While progress has been made, eliminating the glass ceiling requires ongoing commitment and collaboration from people, businesses, and the entire community, to create a future where talent and meritocracy triumph over arbitrary barriers (Marger, 1999).

Gender discrimination is a widespread problem that involves treating people unfairly or with prejudice based on their gender, particularly targeting women and those who do not adhere to conventional gender roles. It manifests in various aspects of society, including the workplace, education, healthcare, and social interactions. Often, women are just not considered as relevant in certain societal spheres. They are still seen as less significant, and even though they have attacked this problem via gender studies, they are not winning the war by any stretch of the imagination. And it isn't just happening on the U.S. campus. When I was recently in Paris, I visited a roundtable

discussion at Sciences Po, one of the most prestigious universities in France, where the very same issue was brought up and debated among leading French intellectuals (Cotter et al., 2001).

The effects of gender discrimination can be felt on both a personal and a societal level. They reach far beyond the actual moment of discrimination itself and can have serious and lasting consequences. Because they are rooted in deeply held beliefs and attitudes about what women and men can do and should do, these consequences are not just harmful to the people who are directly discriminated against but also to all of us. By letting half our population develop only partially or not at all, we are limiting our potential as a society to develop fully in all dimensions. Of course, these effects can be seen most clearly with women, who face many obstacles in the path of their development and the realization of their full potential. The sentence below emphasizes the adverse effects of gender stereotypes, like the kind that lead to violence against individuals just because of their gender, unequal power dynamics between genders, and the oppression of people who don't fit into the traditional male/female gender roles. Our society is built on taking collective action to address these types of issues and to promote the type of awareness that makes for a gender-just society. By challenging these harmful stereotypes, we can work toward the kind of society where individuals of all genders can pursue their life ambitions and make meaningful, world-improving contributions (Hiau, 2008).

From 2002 to 2007, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan carried out its five-year MTDf (Medium Term Development Framework), which was systematically implemented along an agenda of reforms. The MTDf set out three key components as the main organizing areas for its reforms. These were Access, Quality, and Relevance. The MTDf devoted a number of paragraphs to each area and told, in some detail, how it planned to proceed. When I looked at the MTDf, the area that most impressed me was Access.

The HEC has established Performance Evaluation Standards as a first step to get HEIs, in Pakistan, by the hand and toward excellence. The eleven standards get to the bones of things and allow HEIs in Pakistan to use them as steps to

climb toward regional and international prominence. Why prominence? Because the HEIs in Pakistan have no real standing in the regional or international rankings.

The concept of the glass ceiling relates to obstacles to upward mobility in the workplace, especially for women and minority groups. This study takes a close look at these glass ceilings in Pakistan's higher education sector, focusing particularly on private versus public institutions. Using the experiences of female faculty members at these universities, we unravel the layered obstacles to career advancement that come with a glass ceiling—obstacles that the women in our study, despite their qualifications, resolve to overcome. The study will also examine the role of organizational policies and practices in addressing these issues and will provide suggestions for policy guidelines regarding gender equity in the academic sector.

#### **Research Objectives**

Following were the research objectives of the study;

- To assess the perception of the existence and extent of the glass ceiling phenomenon among faculty, staff, and students in Pakistani universities.
- To identify and analyze the key barriers and challenges that contribute to the glass ceiling effect within Pakistani universities, with a particular focus on gender-based disparities.

#### **Hypotheses**

On the basis of the above mentioned objectives following hypotheses were developed;

(H0): There is no significant difference in the perception of the existence and extent of the glass ceiling phenomenon among faculty, staff, and students in Pakistani universities.

(H1): There is a significant difference in the perception of the existence and extent of the glass ceiling phenomenon among faculty, staff, and students in Pakistani universities.

(H02): There is no significant relationship between gender and the key barriers and challenges contributing to the glass ceiling effect in Pakistani universities.

(H12): There is a significant relationship between gender and the key barriers and challenges

contributing to the glass ceiling effect in Pakistani universities.

#### **Literature Review**

Barriers and biases in educational institutions have long warranted concern and attention. In particular, the glass ceiling—an almost invisible but very real barrier—has been the focus of many studies and much discussion. The glass ceiling affects not only K–12 education but also higher education. This review will examine how it affects the performance of universities in Pakistan, both in the private and public sectors. Why pay attention to university performance? The university sector is crucial to the development of any country because it breeds the essential leadership that a society needs. If the leadership in our universities can't or won't reach the top positions, that sector will underperform.

The writer and consultant Marilyn Loden first introduced the term "glass ceiling" in 1978. Loden used it as a metaphor to describe the way women were held back in the workplace, especially since it was a time when women's rights were being re-examined and women were just starting to enter the workplace in greater numbers. Since then, the term has come to be used primarily in relation to women. However, it should be noted that the barriers described by the term also affect, and in some cases predominantly affect, other underrepresented groups, such as ethnic and racial minorities (Lok A et al, 2017).

The 1980s saw the glass ceiling concept come to the fore, becoming a mainstay in discussions about workplace equality. It zeroes in on and aims to illuminate the stubborn disparities based on gender and race that persist in various industries and societies—the inequities that make it hard for any sort of diverse group to prosper and, in particular, for women and people of color (Brinton et al. 2016).

The underrepresentation of women and minorities in leadership roles and senior positions is one of the prominent features of the glass ceiling. Even though we've made strides in this area, it just doesn't seem to be the case that we're seeing the appointment of women and minorities to lead executive boards and serve in decision-making roles. I would assert that we're most certainly

seeing the appearance of a glass ceiling—if not a glass wall—in that historically male-dominated executive suites and decision-making arenas do not have a lot of women and minorities serving in those roles (Ellemers, N. 2018).

A number of factors keep the glass ceiling in place. Biases and stereotypes play a vitally important role in propping up gender and racial inequalities. For instance, women often face the not uncommon presumption that they're less competent and ambitious than their male counterparts. Meanwhile, minorities frequently bear the brunt of stereotypes that question their very fitness for leadership. Of course, these judgments aren't just unkind; they're also harmful to the organization as a whole, because people who are truly competent and ambitious are being overlooked and undervalued (Linkova, 2017).

The glass ceiling is also brought about as a consequence of discrimination and structure. When people of color and women attempt to ascend the corporate ladder, they face not only the usual challenges but also some unique to their identity. Lopsided access to opportunity, inadequate amounts of mentoring and sponsorship, exclusion from the informal networks that grease the wheels of corporate life, and the inevitable bias that comes with performance evaluation—these are just some of the ways that marginalized individuals hit the glass ceiling on their way upward (Nakitende, 2019).

The glass ceiling affects not just the people it directly touches but also organizations and society itself. When companies do not correct the glass ceiling, they do not reap the rewards of having teams and leadership with diverse perspectives, talents, and experiences. Many researchers have explored the subject of team and leadership diversity and have found that such diversity reliably produces better results—better decision-making, more innovation, and an increase in overall business performance. Companies that maintain a glass ceiling deny themselves these rewards and also fail to keep up in a global marketplace that is increasingly demanding and rapidly changing (Desender et al. 2016).

Shattering the glass ceiling demands a many-sided approach. Organizations that want to see women in leadership must do more than pay lip service to the idea. They must put in place diversity and inclusion programs that make a real difference;

establish clear, fair, and transparent hiring and promotion processes; and provide for the kind of mentorship and sponsorship that leads to success at the top. Unconscious bias must also be addressed via training that reaches not only the obvious targets (those who make hiring and promotion decisions) but also the rest of us (Ghouralal, 2019). Even though the glass ceiling may be cracked, it is still not broken. And to make sure that progress continues to be made, the private sector, led by the corporations that dominate our economy, must maintain relentless focus and commitment to this issue. The quality and quantity of our progress will be directly related to the quality and quantity of our attention. And for us to have the attention, this must be an agenda we embrace as meaningfully and sincerely as we can (Marquis et al, 2017).

The Task Force Report (2002) states that in Pakistan, both public and private universities significantly shape the higher education sector. The public ones receive government funds and are usually much bigger. The private ones are by and large much smaller, operate on private funds, and usually have a much more specialized academic offering. ... Regardless of ownership, the performance of universities in Pakistan can be gauged on the basis of multiple indicators—academic quality, research output, faculty qualifications, types of programs offered, enrollment, and infrastructure.

For decades, public universities in Pakistan have been the backbone of the higher education sector. Some of these institutions have a history spanning more than a century, while others are more recent developments. Many public universities in Pakistan enroll more students and offer a wider range of academic programs than do private universities. They are certainly more affordable, benefitting as they do from substantial government subsidies. These public universities, especially the older ones, have a generally solid reputation and are well accredited (Memon, 2007).

Public research universities in Pakistan contribute significantly to the generation of knowledge in many fields, including science and technology, engineering, and medical sciences. They house research institutes and centers that are well regarded in a number of disciplines. These universities have well-qualified and experienced faculties and offer academic programs in a diverse array of disciplines. Renowned in and outside the

country, most public research universities in Pakistan are now seen as leading research centers of excellence in many disciplines (Thaigarajale & Dale 2001).

In recent years, the private higher education sector in Pakistan has been witnessing an unmistakable growth area. With the overall enrollment in higher education growing from 900,000 in 2002 to over 1.3 million in 2012, the share of the private sector has increased to 44 percent. Offering a more focused, specialized, and market-driven approach to education, private institutions have set their sights on still more emerging fields and career-oriented programs. Class sizes are smaller. The technology needed to take private educational institutions into the next era is already in place. On the whole, private universities are offering win-win situations. Nonetheless, these very same institutions have uncertainties lingering in the cloud of their resources. What is the private means of change for an uncertain higher education landscape (Marginson & Considine 2000).

Pakistan's private universities participate in research and innovation, even if their research output is not always comparable to that of public universities. The majority of private universities emphasize academic excellence and employee readiness among their graduates. They often achieve these ends through a commitment to teaching, extensive partnerships with local and foreign industries, and a strong emphasis on providing educational opportunities enriched by a global perspective. The universities' programs of studies are also governed by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, which ensures that they maintain both academic and institutional quality (Godfrey & Grasso (2000).

The universities in Pakistan demonstrate a wide range of performance, and this is true for both public and private institutions. A few public universities are highly regarded for their academic quality and for the volume and impact of the research they produce. However, some public universities are very much hobbled by a lack of funding, troubled infrastructure, and resource-poor faculties. Institutions that are private in nature vary just as much and in many of the same ways as public universities do. Indeed, some private universities are well recognized for a range of programs, for the qualifications of their faculties,

and for their general financial stability. On the other hand, some private institutions are not so well recognized and have even been accused of offering nothing more than degree mill-type programs ( Dunphy 2001).

The performance of universities in Pakistan can be gauged by using multiple ranking systems and assessment frameworks. The HEC (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) periodically releases a ranking of sorts—results from our last few visits out of 15 or so individual items scored produced a ranking of sorts (not our purpose here). The educational rankings are somewhat controversial, but they carry weight. Other international systems that don't have a dog in the fight include our universities in their ranking of sorts, too—QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education World University Rankings (Maassen & Vught 1994).

To sum up, universities in both the public and private sectors are making valuable contributions to the higher education landscape in Pakistan. They are doing this in a number of ways, not all of which we have had the space to cover in detail here. Both sectors have distinct and complementary strengths, and both have room to grow in certain areas. Public universities benefit from government support and have a long-standing presence, while private universities offer specialization and flexibility. The performance of universities in Pakistan can be assessed based on indicators such as academic quality, research output, faculty qualifications, student enrollment, and infrastructure. Ongoing efforts to improve the quality and relevance of higher education in the country are crucial to enhance the overall performance of universities and meet the evolving needs of students and the job market (Isani & Virk 2005).

### **Material and Methods**

HEC-recognized universities in the public and private sector was the population. There are total 177 universities in Pakistan. Punjab province is selected as it has highest no of universities (60 number) as compare to other provinces. Based on university size (no of employees) a list of universities was developed. 10% of universities were selected from this list. This was our target population. A stratified sampling technique was used to select universities from the public and

private sector from list of targeted universities. Then 25% university faculty members from each university were selected to collect data.

The population from which the sample was drawn consisted of 6,455 faculty members. The required sample size was 325. The researcher, however, used a larger sample of 650 from the population and received 484 usable questionnaires back from respondents, for a response rate of 74.5%. The vast majority of the sample was collected from employees at HEC-recognized universities.

According to Israel (2009), the instrument has three main sections. The first part covers the demographics of the respondents. One of the critical items from the demographics section of the instrument was about the gender of the respondent. Further to it demographic section also included information related to respondent's age and experience in academia. The second section of the instrument was adapted from Smith, Crittendne, and Caputi (2012). The questionnaire followed a five-point Likert Scale that ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. An example of a statement from the questionnaire was, "Women suffer more emotional pain than men when there is a crisis within their teams." I first posed the reasoning questions that were at the heart of this study to the discussions with several faculty and administrative staff members at public sector universities in Pakistan. These "glass ceiling roundtable discussions" served two purposes. First, they helped me elicit from the participants what they thought were the relevant reasons for the study issue. Tentatively, six different reasons emerged from these discussions and were incorporated into the process of data collection via a final administered questionnaire.

We assessed the reliability of the questionnaire by measuring internal consistency with the use of the Cronbach alpha. The Cronbach alpha gives an indication of how well a set of items "hang together," which can also be thought of as the internal structure of the questionnaire. In this case, we had 30 items that appeared to measure a single construct: internal motivation (or lack thereof) to be physically active. Our result ( $\alpha = 0.814$ ) indicated that the 30 items had very good internal consistency by Nunnally (1994) for the reliability of the scale.

The universities in which the pilot testing was conducted were not included in the study's sample. For content and face validity, we worked with seven academicians who are experts in human resource management and education. We also performed face validity with five Ph.D. scholars and two consultants. They provided valuable recommendations that led to the incorporation of several changes into the questionnaire. After the pilot testing, we finalized the questionnaire. The pilot testing yielded 40 responses, which is considered adequate for a pilot test. We used the finalized questionnaire to collect data from male and female faculty members at the targeted universities (Hill, 1998; Isaac & Michael, 1995; van Belle, 2002). The outcomes from the pilot testing were satisfactory, without any issues arising that would suggest the need for changes in wording or sentence structure. The three focus-group participants were then asked to reflect on each of the items.

A survey-based technique was employed to collect the data. The researcher herself, along with some contacts, administered the questionnaire. The purpose and necessity of the research were elaborated to the potential respondents. Different sections of the instrument were explained to them. They were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. They were asked to provide their responses as truthfully and as candidly as they could. Seven hundred (700) questionnaires were administered, and a return of 546 (546) was achieved. Of these, 546 (546) were usable.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis revealed an equal distribution of respondents by gender, with both males and females constituting 50% of the sample. This counterintuitive finding can be attributed to the use of purposive sampling in a context where females are underrepresented in the workforce. The percentage of female respondents was kept at 50% to align with the research context's objective of examining barriers to women's advancement in the workplace. The length of professional experience was another significant factor in the research design. Approximately 75% of the respondents reported having less than 20 years of experience, with the remaining 25% citing more than 20 years

in the workforce. However, none of the respondents had experience exceeding 30 years.

**Tests of Normality**

When various statistical tests are performed, they necessitate that the data be normally distributed. This is a fundamental assumption underlying many of the statistical analyses we apply. To determine whether the data we collected and subsequently pooled together can be considered normal, we performed a test of normality on it. Specifically, we calculated the skewness and kurtosis of our data. The values were then interpreted with the help of guidelines that indicate the range of perfect and poor normality for

both measures. Our interpretation of the test results indicated that our data can be considered normal..

**Existence of Glass Ceiling**

To meet the research's aims and objectives, it was necessary to investigate whether a glass ceiling exists in the public sector universities of Pakistan. We conducted a one-sample t-test. This is a parametric test that allows the researcher to establish whether the mean of a group of observed values is significantly different from a known or hypothesized mean. The table below represents the test and the values obtained when the hypothesized population mean was set at 3.

**Table 1**  
**One-Sample Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std-Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Glass Ceiling	473	3.2705	.67331	.02455

  

Test Value=3				
	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Glass Ceiling	t	9.603	473	.000

The study's outcomes are thus reported in the table above. They provide the observed values for the glass ceiling in a selection of public universities in Pakistan. For observed values in that selection of universities, at the 0.05 level of significance, the glass ceiling was statistically different from and higher than the hypothesized mean value of 3. One-sample t-test results suggest that the glass ceiling exists in the selected observed value system since the mean value of the sample is statistically different (significantly higher) from the

hypothesized mean value of 3. Thus, the existence of a glass ceiling in the selection of public sector universities in Pakistan was confirmed.

**Gender Biases, Social Internal Structure, and Glass Ceiling**

The replies were recorded. To fulfill the aforementioned research aim, we employed descriptive statistics, generating the following table as a result.

**Elements of Glass Ceiling**

	Total
Gender Biases	341
Reason GC Social Internal Struc. Of Org.	139
Any Other	42
Total Responses	522

Following the analysis, two elements of the glass ceiling—gender bias and social internal structure—were found in public sector universities

of Pakistan. The highest number of respondents (65%) from the public sector universities perceived that gender bias was the top reason for the presence

of the glass ceiling. This is a much higher number than any other reason given. The second reason—the social internal structure of the organization—was perceived by only 27% of the respondents. This is a very low percentage considering that the social internal structure is an insidious part of any organization. Eight respondents considered issues like "self-pity" and "low output at the workplace" to be factors.

The factors associated with the glass ceiling could not be determined, so the phenomenon's overall percentage of influence is relatively low compared to the other rankings. Thus, the "glass ceiling" ranks last among the hypotheses. Data from this study confirm that our prediction about gender biases and social internal structures in public sector universities of Pakistan is correct. These two factors are the main underlying causes of the glass ceiling in these institutions.

### **Results and Discussions Summary**

The well-known phenomenon of the glass ceiling is relatively new in Pakistan, and the available literature is scarce. Therefore, I attempted in this research to fill this gap. My study's purpose was to find out if the glass ceiling exists in public sector universities of Pakistan, and I derived the research objectives accordingly. I surveyed some employees of a public sector university and employed one sample t-test for data analysis. I found out that the glass ceiling exists in the public sector universities of Pakistan.

The analysis showed that the different components of the glass ceiling existed at public sector universities in Pakistan and that these components were biased against both women and men, generally and individually. Specifically and in general, the biases are against women's advancement, which is what the glass ceiling is innately all about. Two biases were found to be the most prevalent and, unfortunately, almost taken for granted by a fair number of people: first, that women cannot and should not be leaders; and second, that women who do lead are not and cannot be legitimate leaders (Levine & D'Agostino, 2018; Nandy et al., 2014; Powell, 2018; Thams et al., 2018). Talks with the respondents supported the conclusions drawn from the numbers. The quantitative data were validated and substantiated by solid prior evidence from the field (Akhtar,

1996; Al-Khalifa, 1990; Deem, 2005; Limerick et al., 1995; Walsh & Morley, 2005; Williams, 2005). Consequently, this study's results align with prior research asserting that the glass ceiling exists in higher education. The organizations within that sector—which are presumably similar to those in the nonprofit and public sectors in many other ways—have an internal structure that makes it hard for women to be recruited. They also have some biases, a culture that is somewhat resistant to women, and an internal structure that offers very few upward mobility opportunities for women, especially in administration (Johns, 2013; Linnabery et al., 2014; Snaebjornsson et al., 2015). Our research aligns with the data. We found that there exist barriers in the organizational structure that contribute to the glass ceiling. We achieved our research objective, which was to identify strategies that might help us understand how to "melt" the elements of the glass ceiling. We discussed these strategies with our research partners—both men and women who work in or have worked in the financial services sector—during a series of conversations.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The research concludes that a glass ceiling exists in the public sector universities of Pakistan. It goes on to identify the gender-based and social internal structure factors of these organizations as the basis of this ceiling. The report laments the small number of women in the workforce, attributing it to "prejudice, unfairness, and inequality in treatment with them (Weyer, 2007). Women who work face discriminatory stereotypes that act as a brake on their advance up the career ladder. These stereotypes are so deep-rooted that they often go unnoticed. As a result of these preconceived notions about women in the workplace, we fail to recognize and value their hard work and dedication. Even when women do break through the career barrier, they are often not given the same opportunities as their male counterparts, especially when it comes to leading an organization (Crosby et al., 2004).

To ensure that working women can maintain their jobs and be more committed and engaged, the provision of some individual facilities is necessary. This is especially true for working mothers, who need certain essential provisions if they are to work outside the home. We focus here



on two provisions: adequate daycare, and proper medical facilities. Both are in short supply in Pakistan's public universities.

Inadequate daycare facilities can drain the morale of working mothers to the point that they may think of quitting or going part-time—a choice most of them would rather not make. Having daycare centers in our public universities, with a sufficient number of qualified teachers and in a medically safe environment, can go a long way toward enabling the academically qualified women we produce to participate in the workforce in the same numbers and with the same ease as men. Indeed, the Mother Act served as a vehicle through which we set about empowering our women to break the Glass Ceiling. And break it, they must (Siraj & Sadiq, 2016). Pakistan exhibits a bias against women. This is supported by Becker's (2011) taste discrimination theory. The study's findings align with this theory, which holds that the marginalized—whether in terms of gender, race, or color—get special treatment in terms of ceilings, which might also be termed glass ones. These ceilings are present in our public sector universities. In the light of our findings and the data we've collected in the past year, we make the following recommendations:

### Recommendations

1. An awareness program that is objective-based should be devised for the public sector. inclusiveness should be launched,

2) The organization should fix a quota for women in its internal structure. It should also tackle the different factors responsible for the glass ceiling in Pakistan's higher education sector as per the strategies provided to help melt that ceiling. The personnel selection and promotion boards of Pakistan's public charter universities should be inclusive and meritocratic.

The approaches taken to break the glass ceiling in Pakistan's public sector should serve as a model for university policymakers and human resources departments. How often do we research the less visible barriers to women's progression in universities? This is a starting point, not an endpoint. Our cover story recommends more research on this topic, not just in public sector universities, but across the private sector as well, and in different provinces of Pakistan. Moreover, it encourages using other levels of educational

institutions, from secondary schools to degree-granting institutions, as subjects for similar research.

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