

Is There a 'Glass Ceiling' for Female Managers in Singapore Organizations?

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This study presents an overview of glass-ceiling type barriers in organizations based on the perceptions of a sample of Singapore mid-level women managers. Previous studies indicated the existence of a glass ceiling in organizations and presented strategic recommendations with regard to what corporations could do to remove or reduce the glass ceiling. This study investigates how women in middle management perceive their career advancement opportunities and what they consider their organizations to be doing to support their advancement. Glass ceiling and informal structures in the organizations will be analyzed from the aspects of corporate climate, corporate practices, and corporate culture. The relevant questions are derived from the model developed by Bergman and Hallberg (2002). This study aims to answer whether there is a glass ceiling present in Singapore companies. The study begins with an introduction of the concept of a glass ceiling that prevents women from advancing, and then continues with previous studies on corporate climate, corporate practices and corporate culture, and data analysis of samples from Singapore organizations. The findings show that women middle managers in Singapore organizations face a glass ceiling in their working environment which, for example, inhibits the promotion of female managers, and entails a barrier to the career development opportunities of women presents that women do not have enough organizational support, including networking, mentoring, and family friendly initiatives.

Key words: glass ceiling, women middle managers, Singapore

Introduction

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing number of women in the labor force. A study by Powell and Graves (2003) indicates that the

proportion of women in the managerial ranks has increased in almost all countries. Women are demanding greater equality in the work environment. One of the main factors that needs to be considered in order to achieve equality in the work environment is gender differences. Gender differences and the mutual perceptions between men and women may vary across countries and their diverse cultures. Furthermore, contributing aspects such as education, government policies, media images, and opinion leaders can re-alter/influence gender differences and levels.

It can be noted that the proportion of women in lower and mid-level management positions has increased dramatically, while the proportion of women reaching top management positions or climbing up the corporate ladder has remained relatively small (ILO 2002). Circumstances do suggest that women in management are able to advance 'just so far' in corporate hierarchies, before encountering a 'glass ceiling' that prevents or reduces the likelihood of the reaching top management levels or executive status in a firm.

Although women are now graduating in higher numbers than men from educational institutions (Fagenson and Jackson 1994) and more women are entering the paid workforce (Hind and Baruch, 1997) and taking up managerial roles (Parker and Fagenson 1994), owing to the 'glass ceiling,' the poor representation of women at senior management levels continues. Aguinis and Adams (1998) indicate that in the USA, women fill less than 5 percent of top management positions. Davidson (1996) indicates that in the UK the figure is estimated to be less than 4 percent, and according to Uren (1999), in Australia the figure is approximately 3 percent. Wood and Lindorff (2001) further explain that gender differences exist in promotions to senior management, and this occurrence is noted worldwide. This study also aims to answer the question of whether a glass ceiling is present in Singapore companies, by studying a sample of Singapore mid-level women managers of organizations.

Literature Review

The glass ceiling is described as a 'well enshrined phenomenon supported by conclusive evidence,' according to Simpson and Altman (2003). According to Meyerson and Fletcher (2000), despite the increased numbers of women both participating in the workforce and achieving management positions, the 'glass ceiling' still exists. However, Sturges (1999) observes that men and women may differ in how they measure career success. Men appear to focus on external criteria, such as status and material success, while women focus on in-

ternal criteria, such as personal recognition, accomplishment, and achieving balance in their lives.

According to Linehan (2002), female managers in every country remain a tiny fraction of those in senior positions. Women managers report that a lack of career development opportunities has created problems in their careers (Rosen, Miguel and Peirce 1989). They also perceive that they have fewer opportunities than men for promotion to senior management (Parker and Fagenson 1994). Additionally, two-thirds of the women executives surveyed by Russel Reynolds Associates (1990) said they were not actively encouraged to participate in career development activities. A lack of a career has been cited as a problem encountered by Australian women managers (Smith, Crowley and Hutchinson 1993). This upper-level gender segregation results in women remaining concentrated at the bottom of the career ladder even in those areas that are traditionally female dominated. Linehan, Scullion and Walsh. (2001) indicate that female international managers have to overcome many additional overt and covert barriers before being developed for international assignment. The findings of a study by David (2001) show that there is evidence of a glass ceiling for women. David (2001) used random effects models and data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, and examined gender and race inequalities at the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentiles of white male earnings. The study found the evidence of a glass ceiling for women, but racial inequalities among men do not follow a similar pattern. Mavin (2000) also indicates that the glass ceiling issue has considerable impact on women's careers internationally. Furthermore, Chenevert and Tremblay (2002) also stated that even if female managers have a high level of education and the desire to progress in their careers, it remains the case that few achieve the same status or salary as their male counterparts, and that one of the reasons for this is the so-called 'glass ceiling.' Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) indicate that despite the increased number of women both participating in the workforce and reaching management positions, the evidence demonstrates that, for the majority, advancement to the very highest levels is rare and that the 'glass ceiling' still exists.

CORPORATE CULTURE

The 'glass ceiling' could be reflected in corporate culture, corporate practices, and corporate climate. The term 'glass ceiling' is used to describe all the frustrations of working women at every level who can see where they want to get to but who find themselves blocked

by an invisible barrier (Mavin 2000). For ease of use, this work will no longer put the term 'glass ceiling' in inverted commas. The International Labour Organization (ILO) offers the following description of the obstacles to women's career development (ILO 2002):

Cultural biases, gender stereotypes, and attitudes against women, coupled with their not being viewed as primary income-earners, are the major obstacles to women's advancement.

An investigation of the glass ceiling suggests that beliefs and attitudes held by organizational staff, as well as the social structures of the organization, contribute to the barriers that impede women's career advancement. The literature on the glass ceiling suggests barriers that fall under the broad categories of corporate culture, corporate practices, and corporate climate. The [us] Federal Glass Ceiling Commission found evidence of initiatives that companies can take to reduce or remove career barriers to women and minorities, which they clearly outlined in their report (us Department of Labor 1995b). As is the case with the barriers, these practices generally fall under the category of corporate culture.

Cooper (2001) indicates that if organizations are interested in retaining talented women and minorities, a change in organizational culture is called for. Male-dominated organizations still appear to have perspectives that are incompatible with the advancement of women to upper management levels. Re-addressing human resource policies and practices and changing the organizational culture and executive attitudes should help organizations retain highly talented women.

Organizational culture is a very elusive concept due to the variety of perspectives that come under scrutiny in the academic literature. According to Robbins and Coulter (2003), corporate culture refers to the values, beliefs, and norms shared by organizational members that govern how they behave towards each other and outsiders. Furthermore, Deal and Kennedy (1982) indicated that organizational culture influences what employees can do and how they conceptualize, define, analyze, and address issues.

Schein (1992) perceives organizational culture as a pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. Such a pattern has worked well enough to be considered valuable and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems.

A study by Powell and Butterfield (2003) indicated that judgements about effective management continue to be based on an adherence to a purely masculine gender stereotype. Such a stereotype creates an incongruity between the role of management and the gender role of women pursuing a career in management. When women use a feminine management style, they are considered ineffective leaders (Cooper 2001). Powell and Butterfield (2003) further indicated that this mismatch in roles often leads to discrimination against women when it comes to top management positions.

Companies' short- and long-term objectives should include efforts to achieve diversity both at the senior management level and throughout the organization (Cooper 2001). Furthermore, Cooper indicated that performance appraisals, compensation incentives, and other evaluation measures must reflect the line manager's ability to set high standards and demonstrate progress toward breaking through the glass ceiling. Additionally, it recommends that while organizations cannot make members of society blind to differences in color, culture, or gender, they can demand and enforce merit-based practice and behavior internally.

Maier (1997) suggests that 'white-male managerial behavior' is unconsciously accepted as the norm to which everyone who wishes to be a manager must aspire. Maier suggests that succeeding by assimilation to this norm blinds white men to the potential limitations of the system and how others are disadvantaged by the system. Therefore, there is a need for the companies to provide formal training at regular intervals on company time in order to sensitize all employees regarding such matters and to familiarize them with the possible resulting benefits to the company.

In addition, corporate culture also influences and determines the orientation of the organization in relation to diversity. Diversity is an asset that, when managed properly, can translate into an environment where all employees can use their full potential and develop. Limited attention devoted to – and tolerance of – diversity translate, on the other hand, into an inhospitable and exclusionary environment for women. The literature suggests that few organizations embrace diversity effectively and adopt a holistic approach to eliminating unfairness and discrimination (Kundu 2003; Cooper 2001).

CORPORATE PRACTICES IN THE ORGANIZATION

In the organization, a lack of clear job descriptions for higher echelon jobs and a lack of formal systems for recruitment, in some instances, tend to create obstacles to such advancement. Furthermore,

the existence of informal male networks, sometimes referred to as 'old boy networks,' also tends to exclude women from top positions (ILO 2002).

The above mentioned Commission's findings (vs Department of Labor 1995a, 33, in Cooper 2001) noted outreach and recruitment practices that do not reach women and minorities, and found that most of the companies surveyed had not expanded their traditional recruitment methods. Once hired, women are often initially placed in 'genderized' fields: channeled into personnel-related or highly technical and professional jobs that are not traditional positions that are on-track to the top, resulting in a 'glass wall.' Organizational policies need to be in place that support the promotion of qualified women to management positions, and which thereby attempt to retain this valuable resource. Recommendations for improving opportunities include expanding women's access to core areas of the business and to various developmental experiences, such as rotational and non-traditional job assignments that broaden the base of a candidate's experience and visibility (Cooper 2001).

According to Knuston and Schmidgall (1999), corporate practices include training and development, networking, mentoring, flexible working hours, and other family-friendly initiatives, for example, the provision of nursery services and day care centers, flex-time, and family support services, which can be helpful in terms of allowing the effective reconciliation of employees' multiple roles. Mondy, Noe and Premeaux (2002) further indicated that training and development are organizationally directed experiences designed to improve employee competency levels and enhance organizational performance. Insufficiencies in networking, mentoring, flexible working hours, and family friendly initiatives will indirectly strengthen the existence of the glass ceiling in the organization. Organizations are encouraged to select, promote, and retain qualified individuals, expand their recruitment practices, and seek candidates from non-customary sources, backgrounds, and experiences.

Wentling (2003) also indicated that women's advancement to top management is directly related to their increased knowledge and skills and the professional development opportunities made available to them throughout their careers. According to Cooper (2001), women's career development prospects are also affected by the variety of jobs or special rotational job assignments to which they are exposed, particularly in areas on the revenue-producing side of business. Furthermore, Metz (2003) indicated that few organizations, on the other hand, make a systematic effort to assist women by keep-

ing them informed of all training and career development programs available and by giving them access to these programs.

The study by Cooper (2001) indicated that recommendations for improving opportunities include expanding women's access to core areas of the business and to various developmental experiences, such as rotational and non-traditional job assignments that broaden the base of a candidate's experience and visibility. This is supported by the study of Gordon and Whelan (1998), where 65 percent of the women interviewed stated the need for continued achievement, accomplishment, and perceived value to the organization. Furthermore, they suggested that organizations must be willing to take a chance on talented women who have not held the prerequisite jobs but have the credentials for the position. Ragins, Townsend and Mattis (1998) also reported that 94 percent of the respondents regarded handling difficult or highly visible assignments as important to their success. Furthermore, their study showed that they have the need to seek out these assignments more so than their male counterparts. Ragins, Townsend and Mattis (1998) also reported that 99 percent of the female executives in their study reported 'consistently exceeding performance expectations' as critical or fairly important, stating that they feel the need to prove their ability repeatedly and over-perform in order to counter negative assumptions.

CORPORATE CLIMATE

As reported above, the glass ceiling can be reflected in corporate culture, corporate practices, and corporate climate. According to Cooper (2001), organizational climate refers to the prevailing corporate perceptions of women's professional capabilities and commitment to their careers. It also includes attitudes towards women that could result in unsupportive and discouraging work environments (Knuston and Schmidgall 1999). Klenke (1996) further indicated that in most organizations that are male-led, the male network still exists, and studies show that women have been largely excluded from these networks. The benefits of informal networking are well acknowledged as important to upward mobility, including information exchange, career planning and strategizing, professional support and encouragement, and increased visibility. Discomfort on both sides leads to this exclusion (Davidson and Cooper 1992). Many organizations still embrace a 'male-oriented' management style, where direct and aggressive behavior is the norm. However, when women embrace this style, they are frequently labeled as 'bossy' and 'pushy,' whereas men using the same behaviors are labeled 'leaders' (Davidson and Cooper

1992). In general, negative attitudes permeate the workplace, as regards questioning women's professional capabilities, inviting them in turn to work harder in order to prove their credentials and commitment (Ragins, Townsend and Mattis 1998).

According to Klenke (1996), interestingly, aggressiveness, objective thinking, dominance, competition, and decisiveness are characteristics often found in leadership research studies as amongst those characteristics considered by both men and women as desirable. However, when women display these traits, they often receive negative evaluations; while men displaying the same traits are positively evaluated. Women report the perception that if they adopt a 'feminine' managerial style, they run the risk of being viewed as ineffective, and if they adopt a 'masculine' style, they are criticized for not being feminine (Ragins, Townsend and Mattis 1998). As mentioned above, Ragins, Townsend and Mattis (1998) reported that 94 percent of the respondents regarded handling difficult or highly visible assignments as important to their success and 99 percent of the female executives in their study reported 'consistently exceeding performance expectations' as critical or fairly important, stating they feel the need to prove their ability repeatedly and over-perform in order to counter negative assumptions.

According to Rosener (1990), once women are expected to assimilate and become part of the male network, there seems to be a trend away from that, particularly with the attention now being paid to women's leadership styles. However, in male dominated organizations, women often feel under-utilized and devalued. Women are not only excluded from informal networks, but also from important meetings where decisions are made. Women tend to be given lower level projects with less visibility (Cooper 2001). Furthermore, according to Cooper (2001), women's ideas are frequently discounted or ignored, creating the 'invisible-woman syndrome', and their actions are highly scrutinized and seen as a test case for women in the future.

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses aim at evaluating the impact of corporate culture on the advancement of women. As mentioned above, corporate culture refers to the values, beliefs, and norms shared by the organizational members, which govern how they behave towards each other and outsiders (Robbins and Coulter 2003). As reported above, organizational culture or 'the way we do things around here' influences what employees can do and how they conceptualize, define, analyze and

address issues (Deal and Kennedy 1982). Furthermore, Powell and Butterfield (2003) also indicate that effective management continues to be based on an adherence to a purely masculine gender stereotype. Such stereotypes create an incongruity between the management role and gender role of women pursuing a career in management. Cooper (2001) also indicates that when women adopt the predominant male management style, they are criticized for being too aggressive and bossy, and when they use a feminine management style, they are considered ineffective leaders. This mismatch in roles often leads to discrimination against women when it comes to top management positions (Powell and Butterfield 2003). Furthermore, Maier (1997) suggests that 'white-male managerial behavior' is unconsciously accepted as the norm to which everyone who wishes to be a manager must aspire. Maier suggests that succeeding by assimilation to this norm blinds white men to the potential limitations of the system and how others are disadvantaged by the system. On this basis, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1 *A culture where 'white-male managerial behavior' is prevalent inhibits the promotion of women managers.*

This hypothesis is used to assess the perspectives of women middle managers in organizations regarding career barriers stemming from the corporate culture of the particular organization.

According to Jackson (2001), 'organizational climate' is commonly used in the literature to refer to the prevailing corporate perception of women's professional capabilities and commitment to their careers. As reported earlier by Knuston and Schmidgall (1999), it also includes attitudes towards women that could result in unsupportive and discouraging work environments. Therefore, we propose a second hypothesis:

H2 *An organizational climate wherein the prevailing corporate perception is that women have lower professional capabilities and career commitment than men is a barrier to women's advancement.*

Corporate culture influences and determines the orientation of the organization in relation to diversity. Diversity is an asset that, when properly managed, can translate into an environment where all employees can use their full potential and develop. According to Kundu (2003) and Jackson (2001), few organizations embrace diversity effectively and adopt a holistic approach to eliminating unfairness and discrimination. Hence, Hypothesis 3 suggests that women work in the context of corporate cultures that fail to value diversity.

H3 *In Singapore companies, women work in the context of corporate cultures that fail to value diversity.*

The following hypotheses pertain to the impact of corporate practices on the advancement of women in the organization. As reported above, according to Knuston and Schmidgall (1999), corporate practices include training and development, networking and mentoring, flexible working hours, and other family-friendly initiatives. Mondy, Noe and Premeaux (2000) indicate that training and development are organizationally-directed experiences designed to improve employee competency levels and enhance organizational performance. Haslam and Ryan (2007) showed that women face equally invisible barriers beyond the glass ceiling as regards developmental opportunities. The literature suggests that managerial advancement is positively related to human capital credentials. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 suggests that women do not receive the development opportunities necessary for career advancement.

H4 *In Singapore companies, women do not receive the development opportunities necessary for career advancement.*

Various forms of organizational support have been identified in the literature, including networking, mentoring, and family-friendly initiatives. Networking is a sought after internal, mostly informal, relationship that results in several benefits, including, valuable information exchange, career planning and strategizing, professional support, and increased visibility (Adebowale 1994; Jackson 2001). Mentoring relationships are also potentially valuable for women's advancement in view of boosting emotional support and confidence and career satisfaction (Klenke 1996; Ragins and Cotton 1996). However, women in male-dominated organizations often have limited networking and mentoring opportunities. As reported earlier, women also report limited access to family-friendly initiatives (e.g. the provision of nursery services and day care centers, flex-time, family support services), which can be helpful in terms of allowing the effective reconciliation of their multiple roles (Davidson and Cooper 1992). In this context, Hypothesis 5 is put forward.

H5 *In Singapore companies, women do not have enough organizational support, including networking, mentoring, and family-friendly initiatives.*

Research Methodology

This paper is an exploratory study. Mid-level women managers in organizations in Singapore are proposed as the sample for the study.

According to the Ministry of Manpower (2009), the employed female labor is more than 89,000. The samples was selected from the book published by the Ministry of Manpower, Singapore 1000, which recorded the information of the organizations registered and operate in Singapore. The samples was selected from those organizations with mid-level women managers employed in a section, department, or the whole organization, based on the previous research carried out by Kanter (1977). The structured questionnaire is developed with 5-point Likert scales for the corporate climate, corporate practices, and corporate culture items. Mailed questionnaires were used to collect the data required for the study, at the same time, correspondence through emails, and in depth interviews with the mid-level women managers were also conducted.

The women's workplace culture questionnaires developed by Bergman and Hallberg (2002) are proposed to be tested in the questionnaires. The study measures the views and opinions of the sample regarding the corporate culture, corporate practices, and corporate climate.

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a population of 35,000 to 40,000, an adequate sample size is 380. From January 2009 to May 2009, 1000 sets of questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, based on the criteria that the respondents needed to hold a mid-level management position and needed in order to have worked for the organization for a minimum of one year. 136 sets of questionnaires were returned. According to Sekaran (2003), questionnaires which are less than 25% completed should be eliminated from further data processing. After the data checking process, 120 completed questionnaires were selected for data analysis purposes, which accounts for a 12% response rate.

Results

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The 120 sets of questionnaires were analyzed for the respondents' characteristics. Of the 120 respondents, 68 respondents (56.7%) are in the age range of 30–39 years and only five respondents (4.7%) are in the age range of 60 years and above. 68 respondents (56.7%) are married, 43 respondents (35.8%) are still single, and only nine respondents (7.5%) are divorced. 48 respondents (40.0%) do not have children, while 29 respondents (24.2%) have three or more children. 46 respondents (38.3%) hold a post-secondary school qualification or associate's degree and 42 respondents (35%) have a bachelor's de-

TABLE 1 Respondents' Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Age</i>		
30–39	68	56.7
40–49	36	30.0
50–59	11	9.2
60 and above	5	4.2
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	43	35.8
Married	68	56.7
Divorced	9	7.5
<i>Number of Children</i>		
0	48	40.0
1	21	17.5
2	22	18.3
3 and above	29	24.2
<i>Education Level</i>		
Below post-secondary school qualification	19	15.8
Post-secondary school qualification or associate's degree	46	38.3
Bachelor's degree	42	35.0
Masters degree	11	9.2
PhD	2	1.7
<i>Total Year of Working Experience</i>		
Less than 10 years	47	39.2
10–20 years	44	36.7
20–30 years	20	16.7
30–40 years	9	7.5
Total	106	100.0

gree. Only 11 respondents (9.2%) have a masters' degree and two respondents (1.7%) have a doctorate. The largest group of respondents, a total of 47 (39.2%), have less than 10 years of work experience. 44 respondents (36.7%) have 10 to 20 years of work experience and only eight respondents (6.7%) have 30 to 40 years of work experience.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study applied the questions primarily derived from the studies developed by Bergman and Hallberg (2002). The first section of the questionnaire was designed to collect information regarding respondents' characteristics. The second section was designed to collect respondents' information regarding the culture of their organization.

The third section was designed to collect respondents' information regarding the impact of the organizational culture on their career development, while the fourth section addressed respondents' perspectives on professional development opportunities and organizational support within their organizations.

A five point Likert scale (totally disagree, disagree, slightly agree, agree, and totally agree) was used. The data obtained were analyzed using an SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) software program. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyze the data.

In table 2 constructs for corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practices are presented, using three measurement variables with 21 measurement items. Each of them was measured on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. When measuring the items, we asked respondents about their degree of agreement or disagreement.

These results suggest that the respondents find it more difficult for women to be themselves working independently at work. 48 respondents (40.0%) feel that they can be themselves at work. The findings also show that 35 respondents (29.2%) agree that it is difficult to assign tasks for women to go outstation or overseas.

In addition, respondents perceive that they can be themselves at work as the most important mean (3.791) of corporate culture. This is not surprising, given the knowledge that most women as a human resource equip themselves with the required knowledge and skills for the new century. In addition, respondents perceive that they can be themselves at work; it is evident that this is a measurement variable where the item has the lowest standard deviation (below 1), meaning that the item has the most explanatory power.

In Singapore, the organizations' management is still predominantly white and male. Many firms exercise control by white and male middle and top level management, especially in international firms. In Singapore, the senior positions are mainly held by the white and male expatriates in the international firms.

This finding is generally on the positive side and necessitates the acceptance of H1.

Organizational Climate Hypotheses

- H2 *An organizational climate wherein the prevailing corporate perception is that women have lower professional capabilities and career commitment than men is a barrier to women's advancement.*

The results for s3Q1 to s3Q13 are shown in table 5 and table 6.

TABLE 2 Constructs for corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practices

Measurement variables/Items
<p><i>Corporate culture</i> (s2Q)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is more difficult for women than men to be themselves working independently at work (s2Q1). • Women think that they can be themselves at work (s2Q2). It is difficult to assign tasks for women to go outstation or overseas (s2Q3).
<p><i>Corporate climate</i> (s3Q)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women receive more unfair judgements of their work performance than men (s3Q3). • Women think that they have been unfairly judged (s3Q4). • Negative perceptions and stereotypes about women’s professional capabilities constitute barriers to women’s advancement (s3Q5). • Negative perceptions and stereotypes about women’s commitment to their career constitute barriers to women’s advancement (s3Q6). • Working life is characterized by negative attitudes towards women (s3Q7). • Women believe the way they have been addressed at work by management and superiors has been influenced by negative attitudes towards them because they are women (s3Q8). • Men fail to pay attention to what women say at meetings (s3Q9). • Women feel that they have to be extra well prepared for talking professionally to men in order to make them pay attention to what they say (s3Q10). • Women think that they have to be more accomplished in their work than men in order to be promoted (s3Q11). • As women, they must be more accomplished and ‘pushy’ to be promoted (s3Q12). • Organizations value diversity (s3Q13).
<p><i>Corporate practices</i> (s4Q)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have fewer opportunities than men for professional development at work (s4Q14). • Women think that they receive fewer opportunities for professional development than they wish for (s4Q15). • As a woman, if you experience difficulty at work, you have somebody or somewhere to turn to (s4Q16). • Women think that men receive more organizational support and trust than women (s4Q17). • Women would prefer to receive more support and trust at work (s4Q18). • Women receive enough organizational support in order to manage their professional work and their domestic responsibilities (s4Q19). • Women think that they need more support than they currently receive to manage their ‘double role’ (s4Q20).

Adapted from Bergman and Hallberg (2002).

These results suggest that the respondents consider that the cultures of their organizations are generally not supportive of positive attitudes towards women. This is shown in table 5, which il-

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TABLE 3 Research findings for questionnaires on corporate culture by frequency and percentage

Corporate culture	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Totally agree
S2Q1	5 (4.2%)	15 (12.5%)	20 (16.7%)	50 (41.7%)	30 (25.0%)
S2Q2	3 (1.7%)	8 (6.7%)	33 (27.5%)	48 (40.0%)	28 (23.3%)
S2Q3	10 (8.3%)	18 (15.0%)	31 (25.8%)	35 (29.2%)	26 (21.7%)

TABLE 4 Research findings for questionnaires on corporate culture by mean and standard deviation

Corporate culture	Mean	Standard deviation
S2Q1	3.583	1.134
S2Q2	3.791	0.906
S2Q3	3.408	1.155

illustrates overall agreement with prevailing attitudes, performance evaluations, and the manner in which women have been treated and addressed at work. The findings for s3Q3 show that 44 respondents (36.7%) agree that their work performance has been more harshly evaluated than that of their male counterparts. This finding is further supported by s3Q4, which shows that 45 respondents (37.5%) agree that they have been unfairly judged. With reference to s3Q5 and s3Q6, most of the respondents slightly agree that negative perceptions and stereotypes regarding women's professional capabilities and commitment to their career constitute barriers to women's advancement. With reference to s3Q7, 47 respondents (39.2%) slightly

TABLE 5 Research findings for the questionnaires on corporate climate by frequency and percentage

Corporate climate	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Totally agree
S3Q3	8 (6.7%)	13 (10.8%)	27 (22.5%)	44 (36.7%)	28 (23.3%)
S3Q4	10 (8.3%)	16 (13.3%)	25 (20.8%)	45 (37.5%)	24 (20.0%)
S3Q5	7 (5.8%)	10 (8.3%)	35 (29.2%)	46 (38.3%)	22 (18.3%)
S3Q6	5 (4.2%)	13 (10.8%)	33 (27.5%)	42 (35.0%)	27 (22.5%)
S3Q7	6 (5.0%)	21 (17.5%)	22 (18.3%)	47 (39.2%)	23 (19.2%)
S3Q8	7 (5.8%)	18 (15.0%)	32 (26.7%)	40 (33.3%)	23 (19.2%)
S3Q9	6 (5.0%)	27 (22.5%)	24 (20.0%)	39 (32.5%)	24 (20.0%)
S3Q10	5 (4.2%)	13 (10.8%)	31 (25.8%)	46 (38.3%)	25 (20.8%)
S3Q11	4 (3.3%)	15 (12.5%)	44 (36.7%)	30 (25.0%)	27 (22.5%)
S3Q12	7 (5.8%)	16 (13.3%)	30 (25.0%)	41 (34.2%)	26 (21.7%)
S3Q13	6 (5.0%)	10 (8.3%)	38 (31.7%)	42 (35.0%)	24 (20.0%)

TABLE 6 Research findings for the questionnaires on corporate climate by mean and standard deviation

Corporate culture	Mean	Standard deviation
S3Q3	3.541	1.201
S3Q4	3.475	1.152
S3Q5	3.550	0.968
S3Q6	3.525	1.052
S3Q7	3.341	1.205
S3Q8	3.350	1.192
S3Q9	3.275	1.194
S3Q10	3.616	1.014
S3Q11	3.516	1.099
S3Q12	3.350	1.220
S3Q13	3.575	0.992

agree that work life is characterized by negative attitudes towards women. Meanwhile, the finding of s3Q8 shows that the largest group of respondents (40, or 33.3% of the respondents) consider that the way they have been addressed at work by management and superiors has been influenced by negative attitudes towards women.

The findings of s3Q9 show that 39 respondents (32.5%) slightly agree that men fail to pay attention to what women say at the meetings. This suggests that the 'invisible woman syndrome' was perceived as a particularly salient issue in the Singapore context. In addition, the findings of s3Q10 show that 46 respondents (38.3%) agree that women have to be extra well prepared to talk professionally to men in order to make them pay attention to what they say. In addition, respondents feel that having to be extra well prepared to talk professionally to men in order to make them pay attention to what they say, is the most important mean (3.616) of the corporate climate.

With reference to s3Q11, 44 respondents (36.7%) slightly agree that women think that they have to be more accomplished in their work than men in order to be promoted. For s3Q12, 41 respondents (34.2%) agree that women must be more accomplished and 'pushy' to be promoted. This shows that the respondents consider aggressiveness and higher achievement as necessary for promotion.

The findings from the different questions regarding corporate climate suggest that H2 is supported in the Singapore context. Overall, the respondents have reported dissatisfaction with the cultures of their organizations, the psychological environment created, and its underpinning values/attitudes. The acceptance of H2 suggests that Singapore organizations have not yet been successful in creating an

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TABLE 7 Research findings for questionnaires on corporate practices by frequency and percentage

Corporate climate	Totally disagree	Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Totally agree
S4Q14	8 (6.7%)	8 (6.7%)	35 (29.2%)	43 (35.8%)	26 (21.7%)
S4Q15	7 (5.8%)	25 (20.8%)	31 (25.8%)	39 (32.5%)	18 (15.0%)
S4Q16	1 (0.8%)	6 (5.0%)	21 (17.5%)	75 (62.5%)	17 (14.2%)
S4Q17	6 (5.0%)	11 (9.2%)	45 (37.5%)	46 (38.3%)	12 (10.0%)
S4Q18	5 (4.1%)	7 (5.8%)	35 (29.2%)	42 (35.0%)	31 (25.8%)
S4Q19	5 (4.1%)	11 (9.2%)	43 (35.8%)	53 (44.2%)	8 (6.7%)
S4Q20	4 (3.3%)	10 (8.4%)	32 (26.7%)	43 (35.8%)	31 (25.8%)

TABLE 8 Research findings for questionnaires on corporate practices by mean and standard deviation

Corporate culture	Mean	Standard deviation
S4Q14	3.650	1.074
S4Q15	3.375	1.061
S4Q16	3.850	0.729
S4Q17	3.375	0.970
S4Q18	3.766	0.967
S4Q19	3.416	0.875
S4Q20	3.783	0.945

appropriate gender-inclusive culture, which promotes/rewards congruent values/attitudes. Therefore, there is a need to look into this issue in order to ensure equal opportunities for evaluation of women as a human resource in Singapore organizations.

H3 *In Singapore companies, women work in the context of corporate cultures that fail to value diversity.*

The results from this survey suggest that 42 respondents (35.0%) agree that the organizations value diversity. In the Singapore context, organizations make consistent efforts at embracing diversity effectively.

Corporate Practices Hypotheses

H4 *Women do not receive the development opportunities necessary for career advancement.*

The results for s3Q1 to s3Q13 are shown in tables 7 and table 8.

These results suggest that the respondents consider that the practices of their organizations are generally that women receive fewer opportunities for professional development. As shown in table 7, for

s4Q14, 43 of the respondents (35.8%) think that women have fewer opportunities for professional development at work. With reference to s4Q15, 39 respondents (32.5%) claim receiving fewer opportunities for professional development than desired.

In aggregate, the results presented in table 7 lead to the acceptance of H4. The respondents are dissatisfied with the opportunities for career development. The results are congruent with the findings on corporate climate that the respondents (mid-level women managers) agree that they have fewer opportunities for professional development than men in their organizations. These results suggest that the respondents are more pessimistic regarding the accessibility of career development opportunities made available in their firms. The results overall suggest that the respondents feel particularly disadvantaged in relation to career and professional development opportunities in their firms.

H5 *In Singapore companies, women do not get enough organizational support, including networking, mentoring, and family-friendly initiatives.*

Several questions were used to test the hypothesis relating to organizational support. With reference to s4Q16, 75 respondents (62.5%) indicated that they had someone to turn to at work in difficult times. The findings of s4Q17 show that 46 respondents (38.3%) agree that men receive more organizational support and trust than women. With reference to s4Q18, 42 respondents (35.0%) reported that they would prefer to receive more support and trust at work, suggesting that the existing levels of organizational support made available in the context of Singapore organizations are inadequate. Also with reference to s4Q20, 43 respondents (35.8%) agree that they need more support than they currently receive in order to manage their 'double role.' This could be the case because they do not receive enough support at their organizations. The findings lead us to accept H5. It suggests that women in Singapore organizations do not receive enough organizational support, including networking, mentoring, and family friendly initiatives. Therefore, Singapore organizations should provide more support for women as a human resource by assisting them at work.

Discussion and Managerial Implications

This research study examines mid-level women managers' perception of the existence of a glass ceiling in Singapore organizations from the aspects of corporate culture, corporate climate, and cor-

porate practices. The findings show that the culture of Singapore organizations inhibits the promotion of female managers and that they do not receive the development opportunities necessary for career advancement or organizational support, including networking, mentoring, and family-friendly initiatives. The findings of this study are expected to shed some light on the glass ceiling faced by women as a human resource, particularly from the perspective of mid-level women managers. With respect to barriers stemming from the corporate culture, the respondents considered the cultures of their organizations to be generally unsupportive and as evidencing the need to improve the attitudes towards women. In addition, the findings also suggest dissatisfaction with prevailing organizational practices and career development opportunities.

From the perspective of corporate culture, the largest group of respondents (41.7%) felt that it is more difficult for women than men to be themselves while working independently at work (s2Q1). In addition, the largest group of respondents (40%) felt that it is difficult to assign tasks for women to go outstation or overseas (s2Q2). The largest group of respondents (29.2%) are independent, as the findings for (s2Q3) show that women think that they can be themselves at work.

The largest group of respondents (32.5%) experienced the 'invisible women syndrome' (s3Q9) and considered (37.5%) that their performance at work had been unfairly judged (s3Q4). The respondents (35%) also considered that they worked in the context of a corporate climate that values diversity (s3Q13).

In parallel, most of the respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with prevailing organizational practices. The largest group of respondents (39.2%) considered that the opportunities for professional development made available in the context of their organization were inadequate (s4Q15). For the findings related to organizational support, the largest group of the respondents (35%) expressed dissatisfaction with levels of support and trust provided at work (s4Q18), and the largest group of respondents (38.3%) considered that men received more organizational support and trust than women (s4Q17). The largest group of respondents (35.8%) conceded that they need more support in order to manage their double role.

The findings can be attributed to a pattern of harmonious coexistence between women and men that has evolved in the context of Singapore organizations. Under the globalization trend, it is important to pay attention to the productivity of women as a human resource, in order to leverage the intellectual capital of the entire

workforce, and to retain competent, experienced, and loyal managers, irrespective of gender.

Conclusion

This research study examines the effects of corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practices on the existence of a glass ceiling from the perspective of mid-level women managers in Singapore organizations. The findings suggest that the common precepts of the glass ceiling theory are supported in the Singapore context. However, further research in this field is expected to develop more complete questionnaires and with larger sample sizes. Getting the relevant respondents to participate in the research was the major problem that this study faced. When approached, many of them refused to participate. This problem and other issues have contributed to the limitations of the study. The major limitation of the study was the low number of respondents. While the number of respondents who participated in the study may have been low, this might be overcome in the future if more respondents could be encouraged to participate.

This research suggests opportunities for researchers interested in further exploring the glass ceiling effect in organizations. More empirical research is needed and would be particularly useful in providing more empirical evidence to support the findings. Additionally, there is a need then to conduct studies on the glass ceiling effect in organizations from the perspective of women at lower level or top level management in order to develop a more comprehensive theory and understanding of the corporate culture, corporate climate, and corporate practices and to eradicate the glass ceiling effect in organizations.

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