

# THE EFFECT OF GENDER STEREOTYPE AND GLASS CEILING ON THE CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN ACADEMICS: A STUDY ON PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OF BANGLADESH

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**Abstract:** *This study aims at investigating whether the glass ceiling and the gender stereotype affect the career progression of female faculties at private universities in Bangladesh. It has also made an effort to disclose whether glass ceiling has any effect on gender stereotype. Using cluster random sampling technique, 167 female faculties of 10 private universities in Dhaka have been surveyed. Structural equation modeling technique has been used to analyze the hypotheses of the study. This study has found that glass ceiling has significant effect on the career stagnancy of female academics teaching at private universities. It has also revealed that glass ceiling has significant effect on gender stereotype at workplace. This paper will help the stakeholders realize the fact that women are facing difficulties in their career progression due to glass ceiling. It will also assist to identify pragmatic interventions to minimize the consequences derived from glass ceiling on female academics' career advancement in private universities of Bangladesh.*

**Keywords:** *Gender Stereotype, Glass Ceiling, Career Advancement, Women Academics, and Private University.*

## 1. Introduction

In the age of globalization women's career advancement is a vital issue that is a huge talking theme in the corporate world as well as in the whole society. Nowadays, women are very much concerned about their career progression maintaining their family responsibilities. Though it is well known that basically females are the main persons who take the responsibilities in child caring and other family duties, now this philosophy is changing gradually. Females are also becoming serious about their career and performing well in their job fields. Career advancement plays a significant role in the satisfaction of the employees. Organization will retain those employees who are competent and satisfied in their jobs. According to Bal et al., (2013), career advancement refers to achieving the top position in the organization. It can be defined in another way like, career advancement means experiencing in different professional fields to develop the career of a person. It is like a developer's dream to acquire versatile capabilities in the jobs. Various studies on the women career progression reveal that some individual and

situational factors have a significant value. Three individual factors like women's attitudes towards career advancement, work related demographics, and early socialization have significant value in women career advancement. Greenhaus (1993), Lobel and Clair (1992), Morrison (1982) and, Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) stated that women's attitudes like their high self-efficacy, a strong desire to succeed, outstanding career identities, favorable attitudes for relocation are also significant for women's career advancement. According to Pickersgill et al., (1996), if female wants to achieve the equal status in the work place then they need to attain the higher standard and it requires hard work in the organization. He also said that women are required to be more ambitious and competent than their male counterparts in the work station. Usually they do not attain the position with the same dignity and respect as their male colleagues get.

There is a barrier to the career advancement of women called 'Glass Ceiling'. According to Microsoft Encarta World Encyclopedia, Glass Ceiling is an unofficial barrier to the career advancement to women but it is an actual and very much powerful obstacle that hinders women to get upper level management roles. Nowadays, women related issues have come into the main discussion point in seminars and symposiums. Various types of workshops are being arranged throughout world to discuss different issues of women's career in different professional fields and it is because of the contribution of women in the labor market in the last half of the twentieth decade (Black, 1999; Caligiuri et al., 1999). Different studies demonstrate that women's enrolment in the entry and mid-level administrative position is increasing during the last two centuries. In 1980s, Ann Morrison introduced the term Glass Ceiling. It means some hidden obstacles that hide the natural talent of the women and prohibit women from capturing the top management of an organization (Maxwell, 2007). Naturally, women have to face various difficulties to climb to the top level position and it is true that those difficulties are artificially created by our male dominated society. 'Glass Ceiling' is such a metaphor that states the real situation of women in our society. There are some other words like 'glass elevator' and 'glass cliffs' which are also used to analyze and criticize the women to have the top level management position (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). A lot of researchers think that organizations still are under the dominance of male though the number of women employees is increasing day by day in the last few decades (Ballenger, 2010; Bimrose et al., 2014; O'Neil et al., 2008).

Like other sectors, the career growth of women in teaching especially in private universities is not satisfactory. There are 101 private universities in Bangladesh (Akteruzzaman, 2018). A good number of well-qualified female faculties are serving these universities from the very beginning of their establishment. But the rate of their career advancement is not high as compared to men. There is hardly any female faculty seen to occupy such top administrative positions as Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Treasurer, Dean, etc. It is even more regrettable that female faculties in private universities are seldom found in such senior academic positions as Professor or Associate Professor. This study, thus, is conducted to meet the following two objectives;

- (i) “To investigate whether the gender stereotype and the glass ceiling affect the career progress of female faculties at private universities in Bangladesh” and;
- (ii) “To identify whether gender stereotype has any effect on the existence of glass ceiling at private universities in Bangladesh”.

## 2. Literature Review

In the early twentieth century, there were few studies on the problems of employees. However, the term ‘Glass Ceiling’ was first introduced by Ann Morrison in 1980s where ‘Ceiling’ refers to some limitations that hinder the women in career growth and ‘Glass’ represents some transparent and unseen hindrances. According to Maxwell (2007), “Glass ceiling’ is a hidden barrier that hides the talent of women and keep them away from achieving the highest position of an organization”. So, ‘Glass Ceiling’ is a reality that prohibits the women in their career advancement. It is an unsanctioned barricade. In the organization, there remains discrimination based on age, race, religion, color, etc. There also exists the sexual preference in case of achieving the good position in the organization. Glass ceiling is such a barrier to the career advancement of women that they face different types of nepotism and favoritism in the form of age, race, customs, gender, etc. (Microsoft Encarta World Encyclopedia). According to Foush et al., (2017), for the top and mid-level management in public institutions women glass ceiling is widely prevalent. It is also found that the main causes of class ceiling are women’s personal habits and societal prejudice. They also found that in reducing glass ceiling both women and public institutions have significant roles. Al-Manasra (2013) said that glass ceiling is a form of gender discrimination that creates some barriers to the achievement of top position in their organization. Kwaku et al., (2014) found in his study that at the end of 2011 there were 36 available government positions and only 6 positions were fulfilled by women as the chief directors of a ministry. Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, the wife of the former Ghanaian president, was defeated in the presidential election because of glass ceiling (Quartey, 2016). According to Dubey (2015), there is a greater existence of glass ceiling on women career progression. Women always think that if they start a family it can create glass ceiling and halt their career success (Glass & Cook, 2016). According to Pruit (2015) and Mayock (2016), there are two potential barriers to women career advancement that are organizational barriers and individual factors or group differences.

According to the social cognitive theory, society sets for the role of a specific gender (Ashmore & Del Boca, 2013; Fiske, 2005). People who have a strong gender stereotyping mindset will hire employees with some favoritism and also evaluate them at the same mindset. The ‘gender-typed’ people will have the favoritism at the type of the rating and that may create a lot of problems and barriers to the achievement of top position of the management ladder (DeNisi et al., 1984). Another study (Wilson et al., 2000) said that individuals who have the traditional gender philosophy have a pronatalist mind where people perceive that women are created to involve in childbearing only and they cannot go for any other option like searching the employment as male. As a result, negative

implications like discrimination may result if the people apply gender-role stereotype while assessing the performance of female.

### **2.1. Gender–Role Stereotypes**

The term ‘Gender stereotyping’ refers to the process based on which male and female are assessed according to the culturally recommended way and put them under different classifications, build the barricades to the way of the progress both male and female (Agars, 2004). According to Schein (1973), gender stereotyping means the belief that one type of gender possesses a set of qualities and capabilities more than that of other type of gender. Another theory developed by Kelley (1967) is attribution theory where the definition of gender-stereotyping is well defined. According to this theory, the participants of one group with unique characteristics and qualities are well fitted for particular type of tasks that are accepted by the surroundings. Cambridge professor Brown (1995) said in his article that there are bundle of details for being stereotyped. He clarified it with the help of some demographic philosophies like religion, nationality, race, gender and prerequisite (Brown, 1995). In a male dominated society it is believed that, males are more fruitful and capable than females in managerial position (Tajfel, 1982). Females are not strongly fit for such professional and executive post. In another way gender stereotype means the role fixation that is basically associated with different genders. It is a philosophy that treats individuals based on sexual characteristics. These characteristics are related to physic, position and employment. Physical characteristics are related to the weight and positions are related to the nature of gender that is male or female. Naturally women are treated physically weak because of their skinny and slim body structure. Employment characteristics refer to the joining in a particular field that is articulated for a specific gender such as carpenter for male or nurse for female (Helgeson, 2002). Gender stereotype also includes different types of features explaining the differences between male and female by explaining their numerous duties and drawbacks (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly, 1987; Terborg, 1977). Gender stereotype also reveals that females are less efficient and less serious of achieving the target of the organization compared to males (Broverman et al., 1972). In the perspective of Bangladesh, though the chances of having jobs are progressively open for all, still females have to face gender bias for getting the same position at the work place. A small number of women are capable and smart enough to cope up with the rapid growth of the organizational structure and the demand of the modern society.

### **2.2. Glass Ceiling**

The word ‘Glass Ceiling’ is a metaphor that has been studied in different fields like psychology, sociology, economics and management. According to Browne (1998), women are not capable of taking the responsibilities for authority and it has been labeled as “gossamer ceiling” as the organizations have some favoritism and biasness against females only and they are not much capable of adapting with the change. According to Barreto et al., (2009) and Burke and Innicombe (2005), ‘glass ceiling’ is the hidden barrier that prohibits the women to achieve the top most position in the ladder of their

careers. In every sector the presence of glass ceiling is perceived and it is more pervasive among the female academicians (Blue, 2014), private university in particular. Bain and Cummings (2000) conducted a research in USA on 10 universities and found that one-third of all academics were constituted by women, but among full professors only one of every 10 was a woman. However, glass ceiling causes huge disruption to the organization and the employee alike (Qu& Zhao, 2017). It decreases the productivity of employees by lowering the commitment level while leaving them stagnant in their career (Songini, 2009). It also allows the absenteeism rate and turnover cost to reach at the peak (Cotter, 2001). Some subtle and overt barriers are there and those barriers act as driving forces behind the activation of glass ceiling experienced by women in their career improvement (Barreto et al., 2009). The researchers based on their experimental research especially on management students and successful entrepreneurs have identified again the females' exploitation. The research pointed out that an organization will be willing to give the promotion to women when all other male persons will be incapable of improving the situation. Under this situation, females get promotion to management level position just to handle such failures because it is thought that female will handle situation wisely very rarely. Researchers have analyzed two approaches in research creating gender discrimination in leadership. The first approach is that women have a very few opportunities to get the upper level position compared to men. The second approach is that women have to face some society created cultures like gender stereotype and discrimination against women which are mainly responsible for creating the glass ceiling for women. Sticky floor is another barrier for women career advancement. An organization hires both the male and the female for the same rank but females are being paid low salary than male. This gap in the wage can create dissatisfaction in the work place and female may be demotivated to work more. The term 'sticky floor' may also be defined as the horizontal inequality that means females are discriminated in recruitment, training and development, and different assignments (Erik Ohls & Bihagen, 2006). Home sociology is one of the reasons of glass ceiling. In our society, males want more relaxation, social support and training and benefits and so on (Hartmann & Reskin, 1986). Another important reason is the sexist attitudes of our society (Ackler, 1990). It is like the stereotype that males are more capable and efficient for taking the decision, better leadership, utilizing power, having authority than females (Rosefed, 1990). There is another discrimination called statistical discrimination. As the female have to maintain more family responsibility, they may remain absent more at the workplace than men (DE, 2005).

### **2.3. Women Career Advancement**

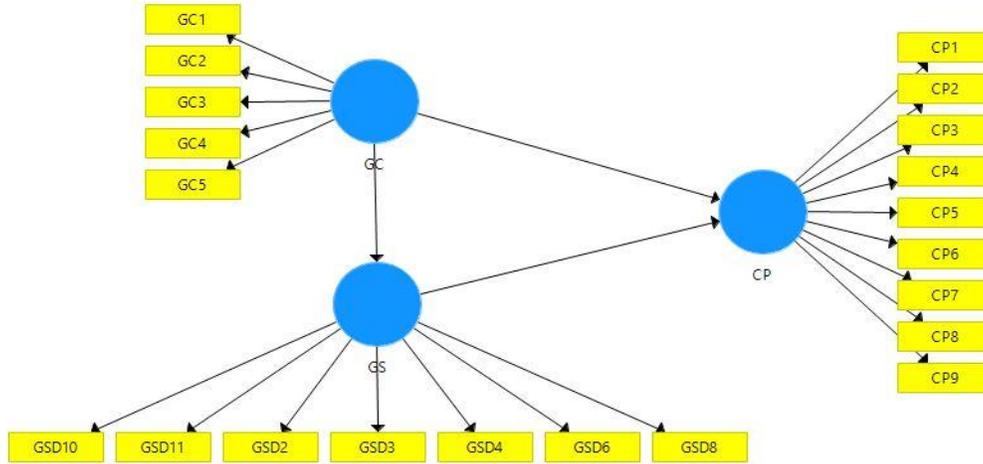
At present women career advancement is one of the big and vital issues in the field of management. This topic is very relevant in the field of service sector with reference to employment opportunities for women. Women are facing different types of difficulties in their career advancement. They have to overcome so many limitations to continue their profession in the male dominated society. Most of the women said that their husbands do not share the household chores as well as child caring responsibilities. If their husbands share these responsibilities, then women will get time to relax and can give more

concentration on their career development. As females carry out more responsibilities of their family, they become tired and stressed and their career is affected severely for that (Schneer& Reitman, 2002). On the other hand, males having family members and children may give more concentration on their career because their wives may look after them and their children. So, these males have the maximum chances to give the highest effort for their career progression. Another important issue is that married men who have working wives, one partner can provide different types of assistances to other partner about his/her job. Again married males having wives who stay all the time at home to serve the family are more successful than unmarried males. Female managers who have the lacking of their partner’s support are not as much successful as those female managers who have their partner’s support.

### 3. Research Framework and Hypothesis

This study assumed women’s career progression at private universities as dependent variable and the gender stereotype and the glass ceiling as independent variables. The model presented in figure-1 shows the paths associated with the relationships between the variables. The outline of the theoretical model of the study is shown in the figure-1. Figure 1 is the theoretical model relating to the constructs with each of their corresponding items:

Figure 1: The theoretical model of the study



**3.1 Hypotheses:** In order to test the degrees of influence of the glass ceiling and the gender stereotype as barriers on the career progression of women academics at private universities in Bangladesh, this study has drawn the following hypotheses:

**H1a:** Glass Ceiling (GC) as a barrier significantly influences the Career Progression (CP) of the private universities’ female academics in Bangladesh.

**H2a:** Glass Ceiling (GC) significantly influences Gender Stereotype (GS) at the private universities of Bangladesh.

**H3a:** Gender Stereotype (GS) as a barrier significantly influences the Career Progression (CP) of the private universities' female academics in Bangladesh.

#### 4. Methodology

**4.1. Sampling Area and Sample Selection:** This study was based on a field survey which was conducted in 10 private universities located at Dhaka city of Bangladesh. Since almost all of the private universities are Dhaka based, the study covered the Dhaka city only. Cluster random sampling technique was used to pick up the sample. The questionnaire was sent to 200 respondents, amongst them 167 were returned and hence analyzed in this study.

**4.2. Sources of Data:** Both the primary and secondary data were used in this study. Secondary data was collected from the existing literature and different published reports in the related field and the primary data was collected through a comprehensive questionnaire survey.

**4.3. Questionnaire Design:** A structured close ended questionnaire was used for collecting primary data. For the close ended questions five point Likert scale was used, where 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral (neither agree nor disagree), 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire included two parts. The first part covered the demographic profile of the respondents and the second part covered the statements relating to the gender stereotype and the glass ceiling as barriers experienced by the private university female faculties in their career pursue. The career progression of the female faculties was expressed in the questionnaire (see appendix) which would ultimately measure the career stagnancy in a specific position for long time of the respondents.

**4.4. Tools and Techniques:** Structural equation modeling (through Bootstrapping) technique was used to analyze the paths or to test the hypothesis of the study. Statistical package for social science (SPSS version 16) software was used for data processing and Smart PLS was used to analyze and interpret the results.

#### 5. Findings

**5.1. Validity and Reliability:** The reliability was assessed by considering Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Theoretically, the reliability is considered to be satisfactory when composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha have value greater than 0.70 (Hair et al, 2012). Table-1 shows that all the constructs have composite reliability values of more than 0.7 which is higher than recommended value and almost all the constructs have Cronbach's Alpha values of more than 0.7. Thus, the constructs are deemed to have adequate reliability.

**Table 1: Cronbach’s Alpha, CR=Composite Reliability and AVE**

Constructs	Alpha	CR	AVE	CP	GC	GS
CP	0.868	0.901	0.826	<b>0.909</b>		
GC	0.779	0.779	0.541	0.328	<b>0.736</b>	
GS	0.781	0.791	0.511	0.082	0.581	<b>0.715</b>

The validity was assessed by considering convergent and discriminant. The Convergent validity is considered to be satisfactory when measurement constructs have an average variance extracted (AVE) of at least 0.50 and items loading are well above 0.50 (Hair et al, 2012). Table-2 shows the item loadings. The item loadings, ranged from 0.639 to 0.961 are greater than the recommended level and the AVE (in the table 1), ranged from 0.511 to 0.826 which are also higher than the recommended value. Therefore, conditions for convergent validity are met.

**Table 2: Items’ Cross Loadings**

Items	CP	GC	GS
CP1	0.961		
CP2	0.913		
GC1		0.827	
GC2		0.847	
GC3		0.824	
GS10			0.902
GS11			0.877
GS4			0.639
GS8			0.655

The discriminant validity was assessed by considering the square root of the AVE and cross loading matrix. For satisfactory discriminant validity the square root of the AVE of a construct must be larger than its correlation with other constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). The square root of the AVE of each latent construct, bolded on the diagonal, shown in Table-1, is greater than their corresponding correlation, representing that the data used for this study has good discriminant validity. And all other inter-item correlations are below the .80 threshold (Sarstedt, 2014) indicating the distinctness of each construct.

**5.2. Model Fit Indices:** The goodness of fit of the model is measured by two fit indices as: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). A value less than 0.10 or of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1998) is considered a good fit. The NFI is then defined as 1 minus the Chi<sup>2</sup> value of the proposed model divided by the Chi<sup>2</sup> values of the null model. Consequently, the NFI results in values between 0 and 1. The closer the NFI to 1, the better the fit. NFI values above 0.9 usually represent acceptable fit (Lohmöller, 1988). Table-3 shows the value of model fit indices of the model. It shows

that the value of SRMR for the estimated model is .045 which is lower than the model fit threshold and the value of NFI is .919 which is higher than the model fit threshold.

**Table 3: The Model Fit Indices**

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.045	0.045
d_ULS	0.090	0.090
d_G1	0.060	0.060
d_G2	0.052	0.052
Chi-Square	27.884	27.884
NFI	0.919	0.919

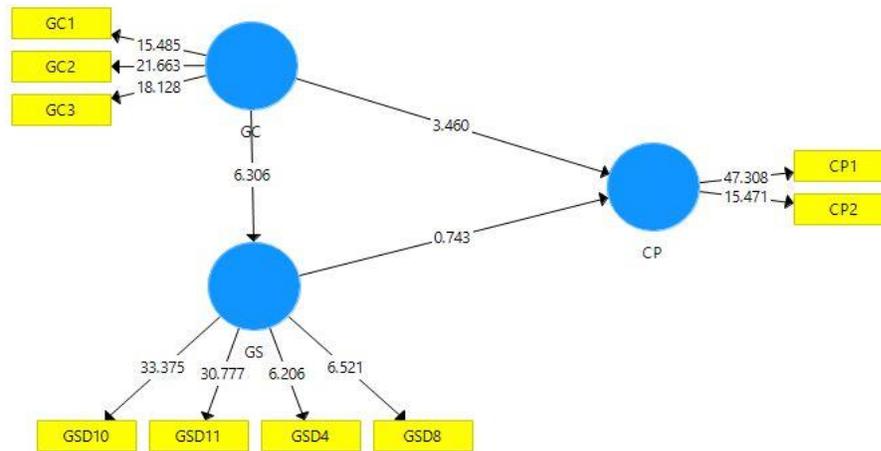
**5.3. Hypotheses Testing:** The structural model was constructed to identify the path relationships among the constructs in the research model. Bootstrapping method was used to test the hypothesis. The study tests the relationship between endogenous and exogenous variable by *t-statistics* and *P value*. The study has found that GC ( $t = 3.460$ ) had significant effect on the career progress of women faculties in private universities of Bangladesh since it has the *t* value of more than 1.96, while GS ( $t = 0.743$ ) had no significant effect on the career progress of women faculties at private universities in Bangladesh since it has the *t* value of less than 1.96. And GC ( $t = 6.306$ ) has significant effect on the GS at private universities in Bangladesh since it has the *t* value of more than 1.96. Therefore, among the hypothesis, H1 and H2 are supported. On the other hand, hypothesis H3 is not supported. The remarks and results are shown at a glance in table-4.

**Table 4: Testing of hypotheses**

Paths	Hypotheses	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Remarks
GC -> CP	H1a	0.327	0.093	3.460	0.001	Supported
GC ->GS	H2a	0.493	0.076	6.306	0.000	Supported
GS -> CP	H3a	-0.079	0.106	0.743	0.457	Not Supported

**5.4. The Structural Model:** Figure 2 shows the structural model of the study. It shows the *t* values for every path and the corresponding items under each construct (variable). With the comparison of the theoretical model, the corresponding items of some constructs are eliminated because of their poor loading values in order to get a good model fit.

Figure 2: The Structural Model of the Study



## 6. Discussion

On the whole glass ceiling and gender stereotype are not myths; they are rather phenomena at workplace experienced by our female colleagues. De Alwis and Bombuwila (2013) conducted a study on private sector organizations in Sri Lanka and revealed that the glass ceiling and women career development have a moderate negative relationship. Fosuah et al., (2017) examined that women glass ceiling is widely prevalent in top and middle management levels within public institutions of Ghana. A study of Du Plessis et al., (2015) reported that glass ceiling exists in the Vietnamese banking sector that prevents women from advancing to top positions. Al-Manasra explored in his research that the impact of the glass ceiling is more significant than the impact of family and social commitments on women career progress in Jordanian organizations. Like glass ceiling, gender stereotype is a certain and meaningful contributor to the limited presence of women in high-level positions (Agars, 2004). Mohajeri and Mousavi (2017) concluded in their study that gender role stereotype and social attitudes towards women are viewed as key challenges to the participation of women in senior administrative positions. Black and Turner (2016) mentioned in their research paper that gender stereotypes significantly contribute to a lower proportion of women than men in securing graduate level jobs, six months after leaving seven top UK universities.

However, the gender stereotype and the glass ceiling and their interaction with the career advancement of women are a hot focus in human resource management researches. Therefore, a number of researches were conducted by the researchers of different countries including Bangladesh in order to identifying their presence on the way of women career progression, their possible consequences and the remedies to mitigate them. But their focusing areas mainly were different corporate companies' female employees. No studies have yet been carried out on the effect of gender stereotype and glass ceiling on the career advancement of women academics at private universities in Bangladesh. So the authors took the initiative to conduct a study on this topic. This study

has scrutinized that glass-ceiling barrier is a significant factor not only limiting female faculties' career advancement at private universities in Bangladesh, but also strengthening the gender stereotype at workplace. Most female academics are experiencing that they are rarely assigned such duties by the top management that can upgrade their personal, curricular and extracurricular skills which are needed to learn higher position's responsibilities. They are also provided with little opportunities or insufficient facilities to receive higher training for top position. In addition, this paper suggests that glass ceiling promotes gender stereotype which are treated as a threat in the way of women academics' career progress. Women are being stereotyped and discriminated in numerous ways due to prevailing of traditional and stereotypical gender norms. Female are thought to be too emotional and less dynamic and consequently are unable to work under stress and are unfit to perform in continuous hard work. However, this study has sought to provide guidance to the academics, university authorities, and all concerned as to some obstacles associated with female academics career progression. Despite equal contribution to teaching at private universities, women academics still face significant barriers which affect greatly their professional development and career advancement.

## **7. Conclusion**

The findings of this study will help the faculties serving different private universities of Bangladesh to be aware of the glass-ceiling barrier and its effects on the way of their career progression. It will also be useful to the concerned authority of the university and the society at large to realize the fact and improve the overall societal and organizational culture to lessen the said barrier and thus help continue and advance the teaching career of the female faculties without having many hurdles. Like other studies, this study is not free from limitations. Our sample consisted of 167 female faculties serving in 10 private universities located at Dhaka in Bangladesh may limit the generalizability of the results. The female faculty members of the private universities located outside Dhaka did not participate in this study. The study could be strengthened by increasing the sample size as the data analysis results and findings might differ significantly when the sample size is increased or decreased. As only 10 Dhaka based private universities do not represent the whole private universities in Bangladesh, the inclusion of more universities both inside and outside Dhaka would create a more diffused results and findings. Besides, the questionnaire consists of the statements relating to only two barriers (gender stereotype and glass ceiling). There might have more barriers influencing career advancement which need to be reported in the future study. Authors of this study hope that this work would be of further help for researchers to identify pragmatic interventions in order to "Minimize the devastating consequences derived from the barrier of glass ceiling on female academics' career advancement at private universities in Bangladesh" and "Create a safe and women-friendly environment helpful to continue a smooth career and climb to the top of the professional ladder".

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